Analyzing Procrastination in College Students

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Introduction

Over the years, several studies have reported that 80 to 95 percent of college students procrastinate academically (Steel, 2007). This problem affects students worldwide, both academically and emotionally. This study sought to analyze the factors behind this phenomenon and different study methods that can solve this problem. The needs assessment approach and coding analysis were used. By understanding these impediments to academic success, students can better learn and grow.

Conclusion and Analysis

The findings confirm that certain study habits can reduce procrastination. One notable finding is that CBT heavily impacted emotional factors, aligning with previous research (Watson, 2001). Highlighting, summarizing, and rereading were found to be ineffective possibly because they are known to be passive. Overall, it was found that active engagement with the material is helpful for deeper learning. The study's limitations are that human bias might have affected data collection and some variables were overlooked (e.g., economic factors).

Research Methodologies

An observational approach was taken by collecting data from existing research papers, questionnaires, and media. The data collected was primarily qualitative. Many small samples of the college student population in the United States were used for more accurate results.

Data collection happened during January 7th to February 12th, 2025. Coding analysis was conducted afterward, organizing data into sub themes (e.g., lack of energy) and umbrella themes (e.g., emotional factors). The results were organized into visual graphics to clearly understand and identify trends. The goal of this process was to make effective inferences and conclusions on which study habits can reduce procrastination.

Figure A2: Flowchart with key steps of the research process

RQ: What are the key causes of procrastination among college students that negatively affect their academic performance, and what are effective study habits that can reduce procrastination among college students?

Data and Findings

15 sources were found on procrastination factors, while 84 sources were found on study habits.
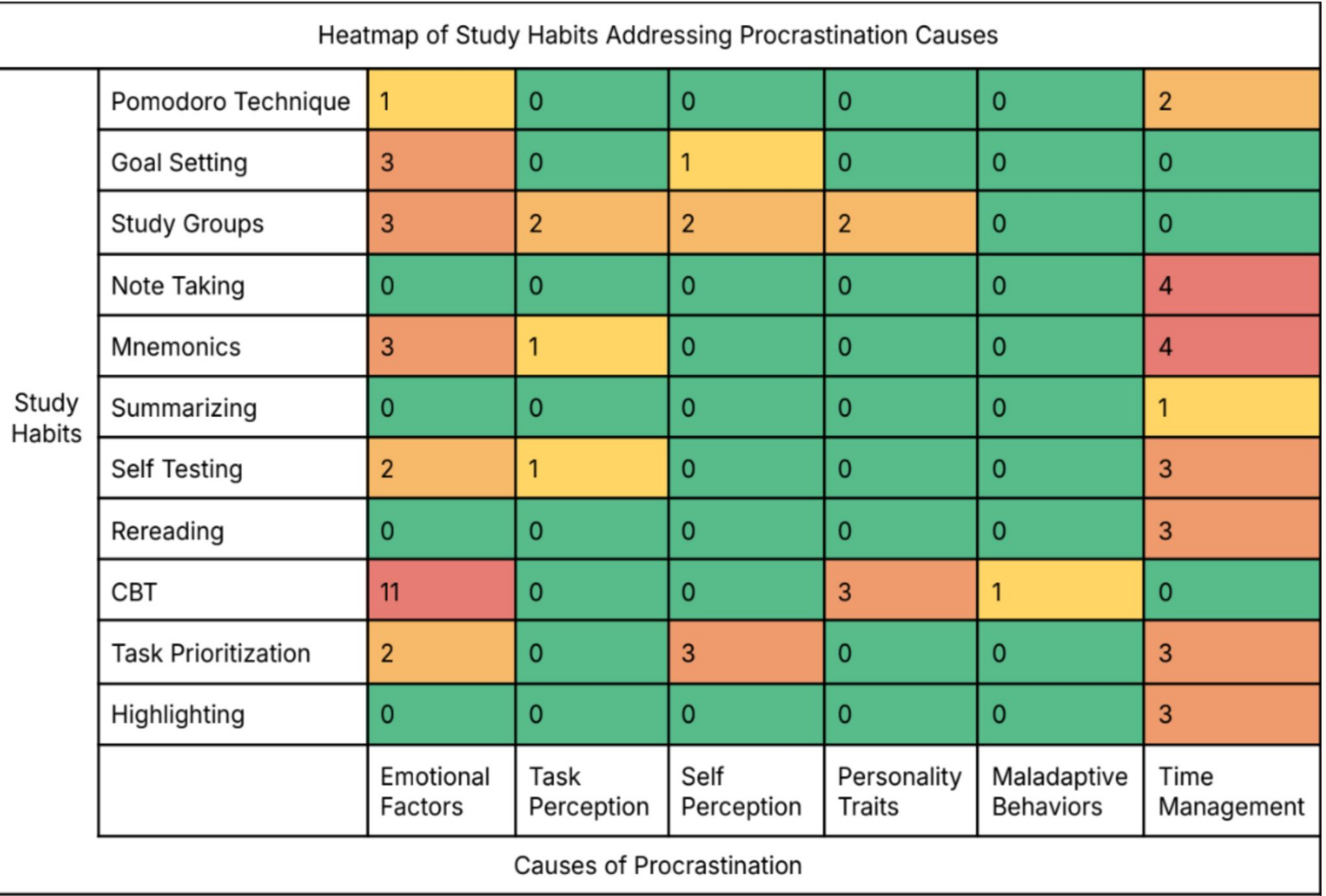
Heatmap of Study Habits Addressing Procrastination Causes

Study Habits	Emotional Factors	Task Perception	Self Perception	Personality Traits	Maladaptive Behaviors	Time Management
Pomodoro Technique	1	0	0	0	0	2
Goal Setting	3	0	1	0	0	0
Study Groups	3	2	2	2	0	0
Note Taking	0	0	0	0	0	4
Mnemonics	3	1	0	0	0	4
Summarizing	0	0	0	0	0	1
Self Testing	2	1	0	0	0	3
Rereading	0	0	0	0	0	3
CBT	11	0	0	3	1	0
Task Prioritization	2	0	3	0	0	3
Highlighting	0	0	0	0	0	3

Causes of Procrastination

Figure C3: Heat map illustrating the relationship between procrastination factors and study habits.

Study Habit	Benefits and Tips	Effectiveness
Self-Testing	- Improves GPA and retention - Practice test/quiz >Self explanation > Flashcards, self questioning	High
Task Prioritization	- Enhances organization, reduces stress - Keep track important dates, prioritize tasks over distraction	
CBT	- Highly effective for anxiety, stress, ADHD, suicidality - Example: Therapist and patient collaborate to find/replace distortions	
Goal Setting	- Enhance commitment, learning goal > performance goal - Negative feedback improves goal setting	
Study Groups	- ~4-6 students in a group - More effective for people with tendency to seek out peers for guidance	
Note Taking	- Improves recall, task engagement - Self recorded notes+provided lecture notes optimal	Moderate
Mnemonics	- Boosts short-term memory, declines in long-term retention - Brief, well related to content = more useful	
Pomodoro Technique	- Less study time, more focus - ~7-20 days to master, ideal intervals: 20-35 min	
Summarizing	- Improves comprehension, memory retention - Suggested methods: Generalization and argument repetition	Low
highlighting	- Improve memory retention - Adjusting font size, boxing certain words most effective	
rereading	- Helps immediate memory retention - spaced rereading effective (e.g., lags of 15-30 min; 2 day; 1 week)	

Figure C4: Table illustrating benefits/tips of each study habit and effectiveness

Implications and Next Steps

These findings highlight the effectiveness of certain study methods and the importance of active engagement with the material being learned. Based on the data, several implications arise. Schools can implement workshops targeting specific aspects of procrastination and instructors may incorporate team-based learning in their curriculums. Students should develop awareness about this issue so that they can make informed decisions on how to better study.

Further long-term research on study habits are needed, as it is uncertain if these benefits persist over long periods of time. Moreover, different populations of students can be researched, as this study did not focus on specific populations. Overall, this study leads to questions about interventions in school and patterns of study methods among students.

Acknowledgements

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References
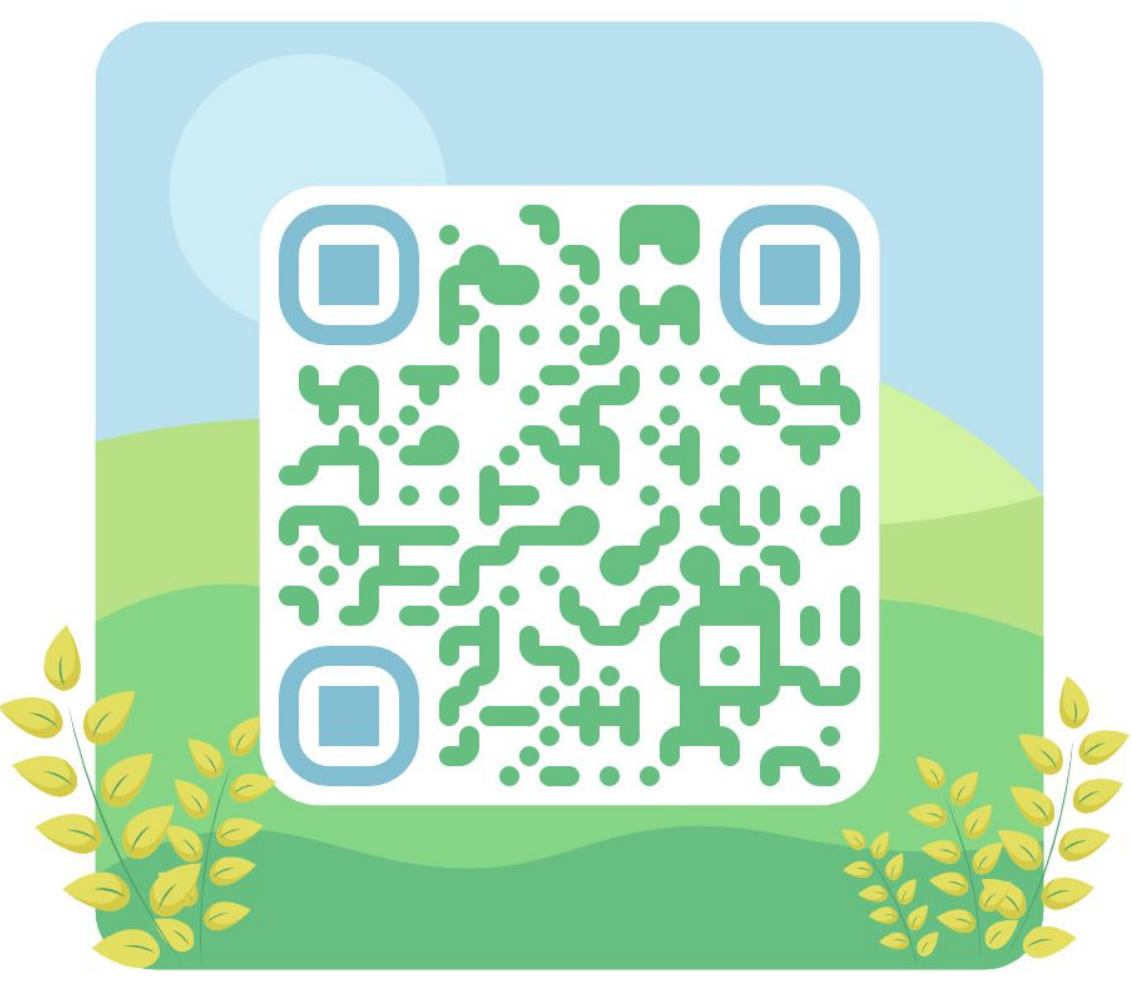
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INTRODUCTION

80 to 95 percent of college students procrastinate academically (Steel, 2007). This study sought to:

- ❖ analyze the factors behind this phenomenon
- ❖ Research different study methods that can solve this problem.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The needs assessment approach was taken to identify needs of college students to improve academic performance

- ❖ collected data from existing research papers, questionnaires, media
- ❖ The data collected was primarily qualitative.
- ❖ Data collection: January 7th to February 12th, 2025
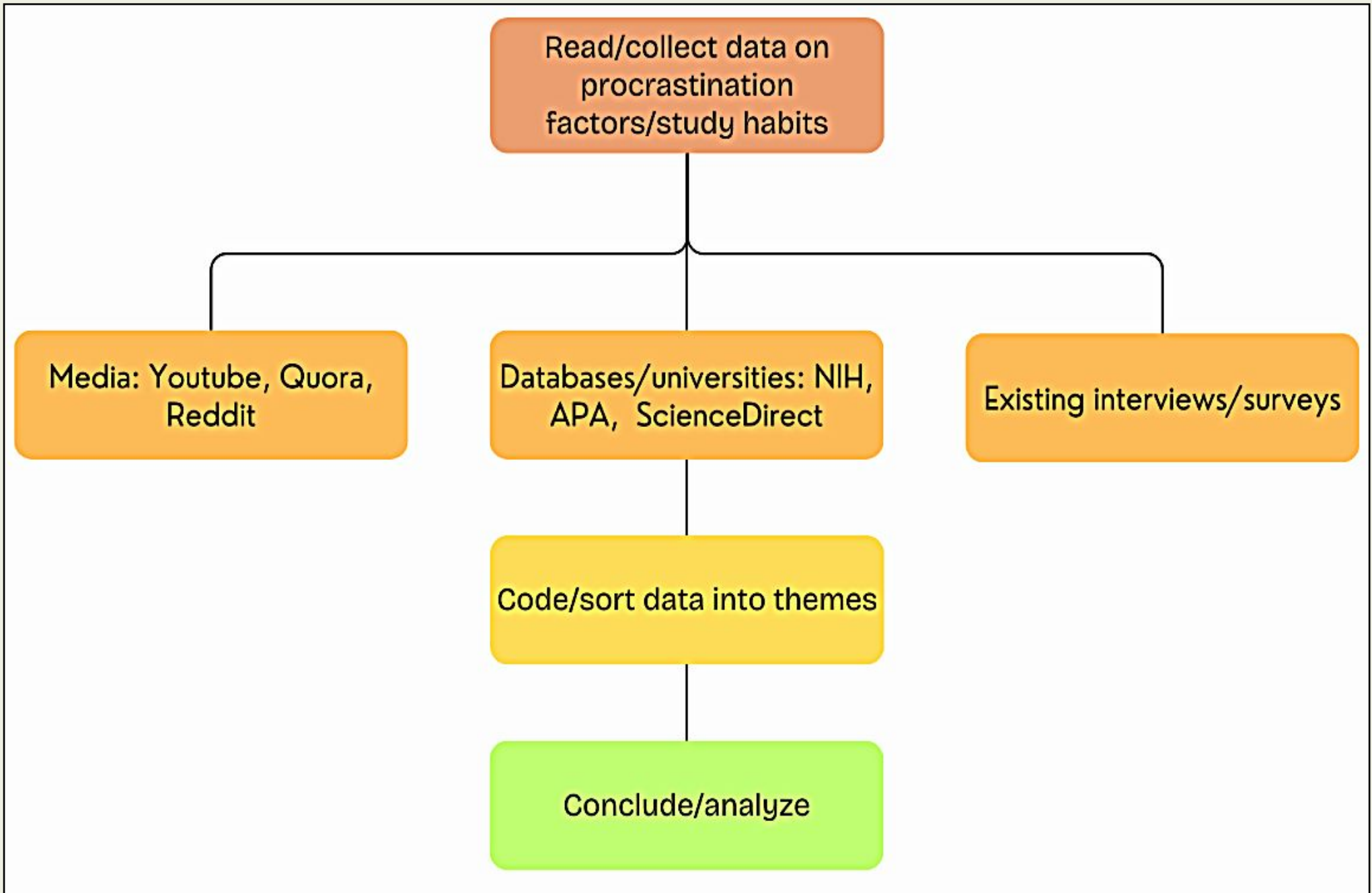- ❖ Coding analysis: data organized into themes

Figure A2: Flowchart with key steps of the research process

What are the key causes of procrastination among college students that negatively affect their academic performance, and what are effective study habits that can reduce procrastination among college students?

DATA AND FINDINGS

Heatmap of Study Habits Addressing Procrastination Causes

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CBT	11	0	0	3	1	0
Task Prioritization	2	0	3	0	0	3
Highlighting	0	0	0	0	0	3

Causes of Procrastination

6 key causes of procrastination, 11 different study methods were gathered through 99 sources.

- ❖ CBT strongest relationship with factors related to emotion (11)

Figure C3: Heat map illustrating the relationship between procrastination factors & study habits.

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- ❖ Most effective: goal setting, study groups, self-testing, task prioritization, CBT
- ❖ Moderately effective: pomodoro technique, note taking, mnemonics
- ❖ Least effective: highlighting, summarizing, rereading

Figure C4: Table illustrating benefits/tips of each study habit & effectiveness

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CONCLUSION AND ANALYSIS

- ❖ CBT impacted emotional factors, aligning with previous research (Watson, 2001)
- ❖ Active engagement with the material is helpful for deeper learning

Limitations:

- ❖ human bias
- ❖ overlooked variables (e.g., economic factors).

IMPLICATIONS/NEXT STEPS

- ❖ Potential student & study habit mismatch
- ❖ School workshops
- ❖ Team-based learning curriculums
- ❖ Simplifid CBT resources
- ❖ Limits in school-provided resources

Further research:

- ❖ Uncertain if benefits persist over long periods of time

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES