



Academic procrastination among college students with learning disabilities: The role of positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism in terms of gender, specialty and grade

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was three folds: to explore whether there were relationship between academic procrastination and positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism of college students with learning disabilities, the extent to which positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism of college students with learning disabilities predicts academic procrastination, and whether level of academic procrastination tendency among college students with learning disabilities differs according to demographic variables. The research is based on a convenience sample of 80 undergraduate students from a variety of departments at Zagazig Faculty of Education, Egypt.. Findings indicated that there was a positive correlation between academic procrastination and Positive Self-Oriented Perfectionism, while no significant correlation was determined between academic procrastination and Negative Self-Oriented Perfectionism. According to the multiple linear regression analysis results, Positive Self-Oriented Perfectionism, and Negative Self-Oriented Perfectionism account for 22% of academic procrastination. Positive Self-Oriented Perfectionism made a positive contribution to the model, Negative Self-Oriented Perfectionism made no significant contribution, which indicated that The only significant predictor was Positive Self-Oriented Perfectionism. The independent t-test showed that undergraduates' academic procrastination scores did not differ significantly according to gender. One-way ANOVA showed that undergraduates' academic procrastination scores did not differ significantly according to grade. The independent t-test showed that undergraduates' academic procrastination scores did not differ significantly according to Specialty.

Keywords. Academic procrastination, college students, positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism, gender , specialty , grade

Introduction

Procrastination has typically been defined as a trait or behavioral disposition to postpone or delay performing a task or making decisions (Milgram et al., 1998; Haycock et al., 1998; Kachgal et al., 2001). Additionally, procrastination has been seen as an impediment to academic success because it decreases the quality and quantity of learning while increasing the severity of stress and negative outcomes in students' lives (Howell & Watson, 2007). The literature has examined procrastination because it involves affective, cognitive, and behavioral mechanisms (Chu & Choi., 2005).

It is argued that identity style, self-consciousness, and perfectionism are underlying traits of procrastination. Procrastination may also be linked to depression, anxiety, and self-esteem. In addition, perfectionism has also shown a significant relationship with depression and anxiety (Stober & Joormann, 2001).

Some students procrastinate until anxiety and worry reaches its highest level, then they feel motivated to do their work. Students' beliefs about their procrastination are related to their motivational beliefs (Wolters, 2003). Students will be more likely to procrastinate if they believe they are not able to complete certain tasks and the tasks they believe they have the ability to complete will be done without procrastination. Chu & Choi (2005) state that there are two forms of procrastinators: a) passive procrastinators and b) active procrastinators. Passive procrastinators are the ones who

will fail to complete the task in time, whereas active procrastinators will postpone their task until the last minute, those are the ones who “work better under pressure.”

Procrastination and Perfectionism

Perfectionism has been defined as multidimensional (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale includes six factors: 1) concern over mistakes, 2) personal standards, 3) parental expectations, 4) parental criticism, 5) doubts about actions, and 6) organization (Frost et al., 1990). Perfectionists tend to be highly concerned about their mistakes, have high personal standards, and tend to be extremely organized. In addition, they are susceptible to parental criticism and expectations (Stober et al., 2001).

According to Miquelon, Vallerand, Grouzet, & Cardinal (2005), perfectionism is also divided into self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), other-oriented perfectionism (OOP), and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP). SOP is the intrapersonal aspect of perfectionism and OCP and SPP are interpersonal. Research has found that SPP has consequences on students' psychological adjustment such as lower self-esteem, depression, anxiety, avoidant coping, fear of negative evaluation and so forth (Miquelon et al., 2005).

A plenty of research has shown that procrastination is negatively correlated with self-oriented perfectionism (Klibert, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & Saito, 2005; Saddler & Buley, 1999; Seo, 2008). SOP is the tendency for a person to hold high standards for his or her own performance (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Klibert et al., 2005), and research argues that such a perfectionist does not delay his or her work. By managing his or her time well, a self-oriented perfectionist avoids compromising the quality of his or her results.

Onwuegbuzie (2000) explored the relationship between procrastination and perfectionism in a graduate student population. The participants involved in the study were 135 graduate students from a graduate-level research methods class at a university in the southeast United States. Of the participants, 92.6% were female and the age range of students was 21 to 51 with a mean age of 26. Students were given the Procrastination Assessment scale-Students (PASS) and the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) and asked to fill out the surveys.

The PASS questionnaire was made up of six lists of academic tasks, which included writing a term paper, studying for exams, maintaining progress on weekly reading assignments, following through on administrative jobs, being present at meetings, and following through on scholastic tasks.

Participants were instructed to complete three rating scales for each of the six tasks identifying the rate at which they procrastinated on the given task. A rating of 1 referred to “Never procrastinate,” while 5 referred to “Always procrastinate.” The participants were also asked for their opinions related to seeing procrastination as a problem (1 refers to “Not at all a problem” and 5 refers to “Always a problem”) as well as desire to decrease procrastination (1 refers to “Do not want to decrease” and 5 refers to “Definitely want to decrease”). Frequencies were added up to show the overall measure of academic procrastination, with total scores that ranged from 12 to 60.

High scores indicated self-reported procrastination on academic tasks. The second part of the PASS instructed students to reflect on the last instance in which they procrastinated on writing a term paper or dissertation, and to indicate how much, if at all, each of 26 reasons corresponded with why they engaged in procrastination. A rating

of 1 referred to “Not at all reflects why I procrastinated” while 5 referred to “Definitely reflects why I procrastinated.”

Students mostly responded that fear of failure and reluctance to start a task were reasons for procrastination. The MPS was made up of 45 questions in a 7 point, Likert-type design, which measured three aspects of perfectionism including self oriented, other- oriented, and socially prescribed. A high score on any section indicated perfectionist tendencies.

Onwuegbuzie (2000) found that 41% of the graduate students who participated in this study stated that they “nearly always” or “always” procrastinated on writing an academic paper, while 39.3% procrastinated on learning material for exams, and 60 % procrastinated on weekly reading for class. The study also indicated that graduate students were 3.5 times more likely to procrastinate on weekly reading assignments than undergraduate students. Some limitations of the study were the lack of demographic statistics relating to ethnicity, school size, and socioeconomic status of students. The majority of participants were female (92.6%) which may have affected reliability of the study.

Researchers have divided perfectionism into positive and negative constructs (Terry-Short, Owens, Slade, & Dewey, 1995). Positive perfectionism is similar to an individual’s need for achievement; it is defined as the motivation to achieve a goal in order to obtain a favorable result. Negative perfectionism is the motivation to reach a goal to avoid negative consequences (Burka & Yuen, 2008, Flett & Hewitt, 2006; Haase & Prapavessis, 2004; Lotar & Kamenov, 2006). Neither positive nor negative perfectionism has been looked at in relation to procrastination, though it has been shown that negative perfectionism is correlated with self-handicapping (Lotar & Kamenov, 2006), the act of intentionally lessening the quality of one’s work. Since procrastination is sometimes considered to be a means of self-handicapping (Burka & Yuen, 2008), it is possible that negative perfectionism and procrastination may be positively correlated. Additionally, similar to those who fear failure, negative perfectionists might postpone tasks to say they would have done better had they applied themselves earlier. Thus it may be theorized that negative perfectionists procrastinate in order to avoid the risk of trying and disappointing themselves.

Thus the purpose of the recent study was to explore the role of positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism can play in predicting Academic procrastination among college students in Egypt. The present study seeks to give answer to the following questions

1. Is there a significant relationship between academic procrastination and positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism of college students with learning disabilities?
2. To what extent does positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism of college students with learning disabilities predict academic procrastination?
3. Does level of academic procrastination tendency among college students with learning disabilities differ according to demographic variables?

Method

Participants

The research is based on a convenience sample of 80 undergraduate students (50% males, 50% females) from a variety of departments at Zagazig Faculty of Education, Egypt. The mean age was 19.1 years (SD= 9.5). The participants were classified as having some kind of LD. The criteria for the diagnosis of LD are determined by a

measure of learning disabilities “learning disabilities screening test (Mourad Ali, 2009) , which include indicators of cognitive abilities and achievement abilities.

In addition, they all have a normal range or above IQ, but they failed their exams in two subjects or more. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaires during class time in several large courses .The students were notified that participation in the research was voluntary and anonymous.

Psychometric Measures

Academic Procrastination Scale(APS; Justin, 2011). The APS was developed by means of a pilot study and the SONA participant pool at the University of Texas at Arlington. Item analysis, ensuring that items were highly correlated with total test scores, was used as one criterion for item selection.

The APS consists of 25 items and has exhibited a high reliability, $\alpha = .95$. Using item discrimination indicators for item retention, however, may have auto-inflated reliability to some extent. Nevertheless, reliability was extremely high. The APS was validated using 86 undergraduates consisting of diverse academic majors and years of college completion. Items were scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale where 1 indicates disagree with the item and 5 indicates agree with the item. For example, a participant who agrees to the question “I put off projects until the last minute” would be indicative of an individual who procrastinates to a greater extent. Items were reverse scored for all scales when applicable, and a total across items was created.

The Positive and Negative Perfectionism Scale (PANPS; Terry-Short et al., 1995) The PANPS is a 40 item self-report measure designed to measure positive and negative perfectionism. It was developed with a sample of 281 participants, including individuals with eating disorders, depression, athletes and controls.

The PANPS items were derived from a range of scales including eating disorder scales (EDI; Garner et al., 1983; SCANS; Slade & Dewey, 1986), the BPS (Burns, 1980), the MPS-H (Hewitt & Flett, 1991) and the Neurotic Perfectionism Questionnaire (NPQ; Mitzman, Slade, & De wey, 1994). The scale has been found to have a consistent factor solution comprised of two factors; 70 positive and negative perfectionism (Haase et al.,1999, 2002; Terry-Short et al., 1995).The PANPS has also been found to have good internal consistency, ranging from .83 - .88 (Haase et al., 1999, 2002).

The questionnaire is answered on a five point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. There are 20 items on the positive perfectionism subscale and 20 items on the negative perfectionism subscale. The scores can range from 20-100 on both the negative perfectionism and positive perfectionism subscales, and the total perfectionism score can range from 40 -200. Higher scores indicate a higher degree of perfectionism. An example of a positive perfectionism item is; “I like the challenge of setting very high standards for myself” and an example of a negative perfectionism item is; “When I achieve my goals I feel dissatisfied”.

Procedures

Scales were administered to students in groups, in a class environment. Before administration of the scales, students were given the requisite information about the aim of the research and how the measurement scales should be answered. Firstly, the relations between students’ academic procrastination and perfectionism were investigated. Then, it was investigated whether academic procrastination differed significantly according to the independent variables in the personal information form.

Data were analyzed using SPSS 15.00. Pearson’s product moments correlation coefficient, multiple linear regression analysis, the independent t test and one-way ANOVA were used for data analysis. Significance was set at a minimum of 0.05, while other significance levels (0.01 and 0.001) are also shown.

Results

As shown in Table 1, there was a positive correlation ($r = 0.54, p < 0.00$) between academic procrastination and Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism, while no significant correlation was determined between academic procrastination and Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism.

Table 1. *Correlation between academic procrastination, positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism.*

Variables	Academic Procrastination	Positive Self–Oriented Perfectionism	Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism
Academic Procrastination	1.00
Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism	.54 **	1.00	
Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism	.12	.17	1.00

Note: ** $p < .01, N = 80$

Table 2. *Multiple linear regression analysis results for the prediction of academic procrastination.*

Variables	B	β	T	P	R	R ²	ΔR^2	F
Fixed	52.00	-	18.341	0.000				
Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism	0.647	0.632	20.563	0.000	0.632	0.29	0.29	82.12
Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism	0.131	0.139	1.625	0.285				

According to the multiple linear regression analysis results, Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism, and Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism account for 22% of academic procrastination variance ($F= 82.12, p < 0.05$) (Table 2). Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism made a positive contribution to the model ($\beta = 0.647, p < 0.05$), Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism made no significant contribution, which indicated that The only significant predictor was Positive Self–Oriented Perfectionism ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3. *Academic procrastination variations on the basis of gender.*

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Female	40	74.675	8.237	0.529	-
Male	40	72.325	7.986		

The independent t-test showed that undergraduates' academic procrastination scores did not differ significantly according to gender ($t = -0.529, p > 0.05$). (Table 3).

Table 4. *Academic procrastination variations according to grade*

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	443.438	3	147.813	.400	.735
Within Groups	28081.450	76	369.493		
Total	28524.888	79			

One-way ANOVA showed that undergraduates' academic procrastination scores did not differ significantly according to grade ($F = .400, p > 0.05$). (Table 4).

Table 5. *Academic procrastination variations according to specialty*

Group	N	Mean	SD	T	Sig
Arts	40	77.125	9.332	.429	-
Science	40	75.575	8.967		

The independent t-test showed that undergraduates' academic procrastination scores did not differ significantly according to Specialty ($t = .429, p > 0.05$). (Table 5).

Discussion

This study examined the relationships between academic procrastination and Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism and Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism in college students with learning disabilities as an attempt to broaden and contribute to the small amount of evidence in this area. The findings of this study indicated that there was a positive correlation between academic procrastination and Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism, while no significant correlation was determined between academic procrastination and Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism.

This finding is similar to the other studies which reported that there was a positive correlation between academic procrastination and Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism, while no significant correlation was determined between academic

procrastination and Negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism (Klibert et al., 2005; Saddler & Buley, 1999; Seo, 2008; Trezza , 2011).

The present study divided Self –Oriented Perfectionism into positive and negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism, and found that only positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism was correlated with procrastination.

Although another study (Sud and Prahba, 2003) found that negative Self –Oriented Perfectionism was correlated with maladaptive traits such as test anxiety and worry, as well as lower GPA, the present study found that this variable was not related to procrastination, and it supported the findings of Trezza's study (2011) .

Another variable that may account for the relationship between academic procrastination and Positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism is self-efficacy. Research has suggested that the negative relationship displayed between positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism and procrastination may be a result of self-efficacy as a mediator variable (Seo, 2008). This particular 2008 study showed that in a population of female Korean college students, students with higher levels of Self –Oriented Perfectionism tended to have higher levels of self-efficacy. Chu and Choi (2005) found that active procrastinators who choose to procrastinate and view it as a positive learning strategy tend to have higher levels of self efficacy than passive procrastinators who view procrastination in a negative way.

It also targeted a difference in levels of academic procrastination tendency among college students with learning disabilities according to demographic variables; namely gender , grade and specialty . Results indicated that there were no differences in levels of academic procrastination tendency according these variables .

The result of this study also showed that procrastination tendency does not differ according to gender. This finding goes on the same line with some researchers who found that there were no difference between men and women in procrastination tendency Beswick et al., 1988; Effert and Ferrari, 1989 ; Ferrari, 1992; Milgram et al., 1993; McKean, 1994; Ferrari and Emmons 1995; Johnson and Bloom, 1995; Haycock et al., 1998; Hess et al., 2000; Ferrari, 2000; Kachgal et al., 2001; Watson 2001; Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Alexander and Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Erkan , 2011).

The result of this study indicated that academic procrastination tendency of college students with learning disabilities does not differ significantly according to their grade. This may be because they lack motivation to learn as they are learning disabled students. This finding does not support that of Erkan (2011) which indicated that there were academic procrastination tendency of undergraduates attending school of physical education and sports differs significantly according to their grade .This may be because his sample were not academically failure students , and due culture differentiation .

The result of this study indicated that academic procrastination tendency of college students with learning disabilities does not differ significantly according to their specialty .Again this may be because they were learning disabled students ,and this type of students lacks motivation to learn , specially that students graduate from the universities and stays for a long lime without work .

The study accounted for 0.29% of the variance in academic procrastination scores. Results of the multiple regressions indicated that positive Self –Oriented Perfectionism was a significant predictor of procrastination; that is, students motivated by the desire to meet a self-determined standard of performance were less likely to delay their

academic tasks than students without this motivation. This goes on line with the finding of Trezza (2011).

Limitations and Further Study

One limitation of the current study stems from the fact that academic procrastination was assessed via a self-report instrument, rather than on actual behavior, because it is possible that students may give socially desirable responses. Although self-report measures provide a simple, time efficient approach to measuring aspects of human thought and behavior, the limitation of these measures must be considered in this study. Self-report bias describes when people answer questions about themselves in a manner that is socially desirable, and they often respond in a way they want to see themselves rather than the truth. However, according to Rothblum et al. (1986, p. 388), ‘self-reported procrastination has been validated against delay in taking self-paced quizzes (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), delay in submitting course assignments (Rothblum, Beswick & Mann, 1984), delay in participation in psychology experiments (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984), and lower course grades (Rothblum et al., 1984)’. Nonetheless, future studies in this area should consider using behavioral measures of academic procrastination in addition to self-report instruments.

A second limitation of the current study stems from the fact that the scope of the study is limited to the data collected from college students with learning students. Hence, further research with larger and more demographically diverse populations with random selection would strengthen the findings of the study.

These limitations notwithstanding, this study extends previous research and contributes to the existing literature base on the role of positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism on academic procrastination of college students with learning disabilities. There are limited published research studies in this topic area using Egyptian samples and the present study fills this specific gap, providing some insight into understanding the role of positive and negative self-oriented perfectionism on academic procrastination of college students with learning disabilities.

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