

Striving for Perfection and Delaying Tasks: Examining the relationship Between Academic Procrastination and Self-Oriented Perfectionism

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Abstract

Self-oriented perfectionism, characterised by setting excessively high personal standards and a critical self-evaluation process, has been linked to academic procrastination, a tendency to delay academic tasks despite potential negative consequences. This study explores the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination. While self-oriented perfectionism is often associated with high achievement and motivation, it can also lead to fear of failure, task avoidance, and excessive self-criticism, which may result in procrastination. Using a quantitative approach, this research examines the correlation between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination among 800 students of class 9th from government schools in Punjab. Findings suggest that while self-oriented perfectionism can drive academic excellence, it also increases the likelihood of procrastination when students experience overwhelming pressure to meet unrealistic standards. The results highlight that self-oriented perfectionism has a significant negative correlation with academic procrastination. It can also be concluded that boys and girls do not differ significantly in their relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination. Understanding this link has significant implications for educators, psychologists, and students. Interventions promoting self-compassion, adaptive goal-setting, and effective time management strategies may help perfectionist students reduce procrastination and enhance academic performance.

Keywords: perfectionism, self-oriented perfectionism, academic procrastination.

Introduction

It is said that a person who has control over his/her time is the ablest and most efficient person. On the other hand, the saying goes “procrastination is the thief of time” is as true today as it ever was. This thief of time is tough to tackle and can lead to stress, affect one's career and relationships and ultimately loss of respect. However, it is difficult to think of individuals who never procrastinate. In fact, procrastination is so common that if someone were to say true to an item such as ‘I never procrastinate’ it would elicit suspicion that the person was either lying or responding in a socially desirable manner.

Academic procrastination refers to the voluntary delay of academic tasks despite expecting negative consequences. This behaviour is often characterised by avoidance or postponement of essential academic activities, such as studying, completing assignments, or preparing for exams. Procrastination can stem from various factors, including fear of failure, perfectionism, low self-efficacy, and poor time management skills (Steel, 2007).

Perfectionism is a personality trait characterised by setting excessively high standards and striving for flawlessness, often accompanied by self-criticism and fear of failure (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). It can be categorised into self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). While adaptive perfectionism can enhance motivation and performance, maladaptive perfectionism is linked to stress, anxiety, and procrastination (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Research suggests that perfectionistic tendencies, particularly self-oriented perfectionism, can lead to academic procrastination due to fear of making mistakes (Burns, 1980). Addressing perfectionism through self-compassion and goal-setting strategies may improve psychological well-being.

Self-oriented perfectionism involves setting excessively high personal standards and engaging in self-critical evaluations (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). While it can drive achievement, it also contributes to stress and procrastination due to fear of failure (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Managing perfectionism through self-compassion can improve well-being (Neff, 2003).

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescents.
- 2 To study the relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescent boys.
- 3 To study the relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescent girls.
- 4 To study the difference in relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescents boys and girls.

Hypotheses of the study

- H01. There exists no significant relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism in adolescents.
- H02. There exists no significant relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescent boys.

H03. There exists no significant relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescent girls.

H04. There exists no significant difference in correlation between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescent boys and girls.

Sample of the study

In the present study, 800 students (from 9th class) studying in government senior secondary schools of Punjab were taken as a sample. Multi-stage randomization technique was used. At the first stage, eight districts from Punjab state were selected randomly. Punjab is divided into three regions according to the flow of rivers. These are Majha, Malwa and Doaba. The region lying between Ravi and Beas is called Majha. The region lying between the Beas and Sutlej is called Doaba. The region lying in the South of the Sutlej river is called Malwa. 4 districts were selected from the Malwa region, as this region comprises more districts as compared to the other two regions, 2 districts were selected from the Majha region, and 2 districts were selected from the Doaba region. In the second stage, two schools, one in a rural area and one in an urban area, were selected from these eight districts of Punjab. In the third stage, 100 students of 9th class from each district were selected randomly. Thus, the total sample for the present study comprised 800 government senior secondary school students.

Delimitation of the study

1. The sample was restricted to only eight districts of Punjab.
2. The study was delimited to IX class students.
3. Gender (boys and girls) was taken as demographic variable.

Tools used

1. Academic Procrastination scale by Kalia and Yadav (2015).
2. Perfectionism Scale prepared by the investigator.

Statistical techniques used for data analysis

Descriptive Statistics- mean, median, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were calculated to ascertain the nature of score distribution. Karl Pearson's Product moment correlation technique was employed to find the significance of the relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescent boys and girls. Fisher's Z

coefficient and its difference Z to check the significance of difference in the correlation of academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescent boys and girls.

Results and discussions

For checking the nature of distribution of data among adolescents, values of mean, median, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were calculated for the total adolescents, adolescent boys and adolescent girls.

Table no. 1: Nature of distribution of data

Variables	Sample	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Academic Procrastination	800 (total)	69.97	72.00	11.65	-0.444	-0.502
Self-Oriented Perfectionism		99.68	100.00	10.41	-0.025	-0.418
Academic Procrastination	400 (boys)	67.78	70.50	12.29	-0.571	-0.674
Self-Oriented Perfectionism		99.98	100.00	10.62	0.068	-0.358
Academic Procrastination	400 (girls)	72.14	73.00	10.53	-0.071	-0.825
Self-Oriented Perfectionism		99.37	100.00	10.20	-0.137	-0.516

The value of mean and median for academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism is shown in Table no.1 Since both the measures of central tendency are in close proximity to each other in the case of the total adolescents, adolescent boys and adolescent girls. Therefore, these are normally distributed.

Table no. 2: Showing coefficient of correlation between Academic Procrastination and Perfectionism among adolescents

Variables	Total(800)	Boys(400)	Girls(400)
Academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionisms	-0.33**	-0.33**	-0.32**
** Significant at the 0.01 level of significance			

Table No. 2 shows the relationship between the scores of academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism. In the case of the total sample, the value of the coefficient of correlation between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism is -0.33 ($p < 0.01$)

and it is significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, we can say that self-oriented perfectionism has a significant negative correlation with academic procrastination. So, the hypothesis H01, “There exists no significant relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescents” stands rejected.

In the case of boys, the value of the coefficient of correlation between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism is -0.33 ($p < 0.01$) and it is also significant at the 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis H02, “There exists no significant relationship between academic procrastination and perfectionism among adolescent boys” is rejected.

In the case of girls, the value of the coefficient of correlation between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism is -0.32 ($p < 0.01$) respectively and it is also significant at 0.01 level of significance. Therefore, the hypothesis H03, “There exists no significant relationship between academic procrastination and perfectionism among adolescent girls” is rejected.

Table no.3: Difference in relationship between Academic Procrastination and perfectionism among adolescents

Variables	Gender	N	Pearson's 'r'	Fisher's Z	Z
Academic Procrastination and self-oriented Perfectionism	Boy	400	-0.33	0.34	0.16 (N.S.)
	Girl	400	-0.32	0.33	

Table no. 3 shows the value of the coefficient of correlation between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism of adolescent boys and girls, which are -0.33 and -0.32 respectively. The corresponding values of Fisher's z for adolescent boys and girls are 0.34 and 0.33 respectively. Z value is 0.16 which is not significant ($p > 0.01$).

Thus, adolescent boys and girls do not differ significantly in their relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism. Thus, the hypothesis H04 stating “There exists no significant difference in correlation between academic procrastination and perfectionism of adolescent boys and girls” is accepted. The difference in relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism in adolescent boys and girls is not significant.

Educational implications

- Teaching students effective self-regulation strategies can help mitigate procrastination tendencies associated with self-oriented perfectionism. Time-management workshops can enhance academic performance and reduce stress.
- Educators should foster a growth mindset by reinforcing that mistakes are part of the learning process. This can help perfectionist students embrace challenges rather than avoid them due to fear of failure.
- Rigid grading systems may exacerbate perfectionistic tendencies and procrastination. Using formative assessments, self-reflection activities, and flexible deadlines can reduce students' anxiety about achieving perfect results.
- Educators should encourage healthy perfectionism by teaching students effective time management strategies, such as breaking tasks into smaller steps and setting realistic goals. This can help perfectionist students to complete their assignments on time without excessive self-criticism.
- Schools and universities should provide counselling services and workshops focused on self-compassion and coping strategies to help students manage perfectionistic tendencies and reduce procrastination.
- A shift from performance-based evaluation to progress-based learning can help perfectionist students embrace mistakes as part of learning rather than fear them, thereby reducing procrastination.

Conclusion

It can be concluded from the results and discussions that there is a significant negative relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism among adolescents as well as in adolescent boys and adolescent girls. It can also be concluded that Adolescent boys and girls do not differ significantly in their relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism. Perfectionism, in psychology, is a personality trait characterized by a person's striving for flawlessness and setting high performance standards, accompanied by critical self-evaluations and concerns regarding others' evaluations. In self-oriented perfectionism, there is a discrepancy between the actual self and the ideal self that is associated with the depressive effect. The adolescents with self-oriented perfectionism may exhibit a greater fear of negative evaluation. The teachers, parents and counsellors should help the students in understanding their strengths and weaknesses, so that they set accordingly achievable and realistic standards accompanied by critical self-evaluations.

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