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Analyzing the Relationship between Multidimensional Perfectionism and Educational Procrastination in University Students

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Abstract

To create perfectionism in academic work, intentionally postponing the completion of the academic task for making it highly approvable and perfect for one's self and others i.e., peers, teachers, supervisors, and readers, students frequently practice this phenomenon in academia. Therefore, the research aimed to explore the linkage between multidimensional perfectionism and educational procrastination among university students of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan, Pakistan. Three hundred and thirty-five students (*N*=335), including (*n*=165) males and (*n*=170) females, were approached from Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan through purposive sampling. The age range of participants was between 18-25 years. All the students were asked to fill out the demographic variables sheet along with the questionnaires, i.e., Almost Perfect Scale-Revised and Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students (PASS). Results revealed that students with higher scores on the perfectionism scale revealed more academic procrastination. Therefore, the results provide support for the role of perfectionism in the maintenance of educational procrastination. Gender-based differences were also observed and it was found that female university students tend to procrastinate more than male university students. However, no significant effects of demographics such as family systems and residence (urban or rural living) of the participants were noticed to be associated with multidimensional perfectionism and educational procrastination.

Keywords. *educational procrastination, multidimensional perfectionism, university students.*

Introduction

Delaying the completion of study-related tasks is a much-reputed and universal fact in the academic world. Students frequently postpone activities that are required to study, knowing the fact that they will suffer even more because of the delay (Steel & Klingsieck, 2016). Perfectionism has two distinguished aspects: (1) fault-finding attempts, i.e., establishing high expectations and expecting nothing less than perfection from yourself, and (2) worrying along with fastidiousness, i.e., being obsessively self-critical and concerned

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about others' perceptions of one's capability and finding it hard appreciating one's accomplishments. Separating these two, a recent meta-analysis-based study revealed a more complicated association with delaying academic tasks (Sirois et al., 2017). Setting extremely ambitious standards, aiming for perfection, and critically examining one's behavior are all examples of perfectionism (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Perfectionism is often thought of as a two-dimensional trait, with one trait indicating healthy or adaptive fastidiousness and the other indicating pathological or dysfunctional fault finding (Stoeber & Otto, 2006).

Though the concepts of fastidiousness differ, many people agree that various aspects of fastidiousness have negative effects on psychological wellness, inter connectedness betwixt people, and efficiency related to academia or vocation. Higher concerns about creating flaws, maladaptive confusion, negative self-criticism, unachievable or extra higher levels or demands related to performance, and good suitability to assess one's work not meeting the standards placed by self, have all been described as problematic aspects of fastidiousness (Slaney et.al, 2001). These attributes have been incorporated into multidimensional higher-order categories of maladaptive fastidiousness, self-critical fault finding, or simply maladaptive fastidiousness (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Students with high academic achievement get less satisfaction or pleasure in their jobs, yet they often feel adjustable and negatively evaluate themselves, resulting in procrastination. About half to a quarter of high-standard school and college student samples have been found as maladaptive perfectionists, having elevated self-criticism and anxiety about making mistakes (Boone et al., 2010).

Educational procrastination is described as deferring an academic task due to a discrepancy in intention and behavior, resulting in negative consequences for the procrastinator (Setiawan, 2019). Procrastination is the propensity of an individual to put off the time-consuming duties that he or she faces daily. The procrastinator knows what he or she wants to do and is willing to complete these chores, but he or she puts them off (Andangsari et al, 2018). Evaluation anxiety, perfectionism, and low self-confidence were identified to be dominant procrastination factors in a factor analysis study (Lenggono & Tentama 2020). Delaying study-related tasks is a common trait in students when it is topen down papers, preparing for exams, or reading academic stuff (Bobe et al., 2022). Approximately 70% of undergraduates admitted to postponing academic tasks (Schouwenburg et al., 2004). Academic procrastination has been shown to have negative implications, scoring fewer grades and higher stress levels (Zarrin et al., 2022). Students that procrastinate are found to be doing a variety of other, typically more enjoyable engagements, such as TV watching, having more sleep, family talks, and excessive time spent with friends (Pychyl et al., 2000).

Educational procrastination is defined as voluntarily delaying a planned course of action in spite of the likelihood that it will worsen as a result of the delay (Steel, 2010). According to a survey of Malaysian undergraduates, academic procrastination has negative impacts on academic achievement and mental well-being, which resulted in increased substance addiction (Chua et al., 2021). Although the study demonstrated that perfectionism was linked to academic procrastination, more research is needed to identify the elements that cause academic procrastination. Perfectionism has already been described as a probable antecedent to procrastination and a recurrent correlate. A widespread assumption regarding the nature of procrastinatory behavior has been that it stems from having unrealistically ambitious standards (Flett et al., 2004). Another research examined perfectionists' goal-related behavior and found that they had trouble completing goals due todelaying because they fear failure (Mahboobi & Tamannaeifar, 2020).

Researchers also examined the correlation between perfectionism and study-related task delays in university students studying online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The research was based on a quantitative correlation including 366 participants recruited through purposive sampling. Self-oriented perfectionism was found to have a significant negative relationship with academic procrastination, while socially prescribed perfectionism had a substantial positive effect on academic procrastination (Kathleen & Basaria, 2021). In conclusion, the evaluation of the literature offers a thorough investigation of the complex connection between perfectionism and academic procrastination among university students. It is worthy knowledge that putting off doing academic work can have detrimental effects on both academic performance and psychological health. It has been determined that multidimensional perfectionism, which is characterized by the pursuit of excellence and self-criticism, can both contribute to and result from procrastinating tendencies.

Rationale of the study

The goal of this study was to understand more about the relationships between multidimensional perfectionism and educational procrastination and how they affect university students' learning habits. It has been commonly recognized through empirical findings that when the delaying of tasks is linked with studying, it negatively affects the academic performance, increases stress as well as lowers ones' general well-being. In order to design effective intervention and support programs, to consider the factors that influence this behavior should be a priority among researchers and counselors. The study's goal was to fill this literature gap and provide understanding of how these variables interact and might affect the academic performance which has negative consequences later on the development of the Nation as a whole. Therefore, the findings of the current study may potentially aid in the development of more targeted interventions facilitating teachers and counselors how they can help students manage their academic skills. This would definitely promote well-being by addressing particular parts of perfectionism that cause procrastination in students.

Hypotheses of the study

The following are the hypotheses of the current study:

H1: Multidimensional perfectionism has a positive correlation with educational procrastination.

H2: Multidimensional perfectionism influences procrastination in university students.

H3**:** Effects of multidimensional perfectionism on educational procrastination differ in terms of gender.

H4**:** Effects of multidimensional perfectionism on educational procrastination differ according to the family system.

H5: Effects of multidimensional perfectionism on educational procrastination vary according to the areas students live in i.e., urban or rural.

Materials and Methods

Participants

Participants in the present research were 335 students (165 males, 170 females). They were approached from various Departments of Bahauddin Zakariya University, Multan through purposive sampling. The age of the participants was between 18 to 26 years. The total mean age of subjects was M=21.5, SD= 2.20, the mean age of male students was M=22, SD=2.60, and the mean age of female students was M=21, SD=1.70.

Inclusion/ Exclusion Criteria

All the participants who were within the age range of 18 to 26 years old and enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs currently enrolled in different disciplines of Bahauddin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan, were included in the study, whereas the students with more than 26 years of age, not enrolled in the university, or enrolled in post-graduate programs were excluded from the study.

Instruments

Two instruments were used for the present survey, 1: The Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS); 2: Almost Perfect Scale-Revised. Additionally, students were asked to complete a short demographic sheet indicating their gender, age, residence (urban or rural), family system, and current semester.

Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS): The PASS, which was developed by Solomon and Rothblum (1984), is divided into two sections. Section-I task delay and related issues whereas Section-II explored the reasons for the postponement. The PASS items pertaining to (a) the frequency with which respondents procrastinate on a task and (b) whether their procrastination on that task is a problem **(**were summed to provide an overall measure of academic procrastination, with total scores ranging from 12 to 60, as recommended by the authors (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Higher scores indicated self-reported procrastination in the classroom. The coefficient alpha reliability estimates of the PASS measures was α= .810 for the study tasks postponement scale in the study.

Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R): Slaney et al. (1996) developed the Almost perfect scale (The APS-R) which is comprised of twenty-three (23) items. All items have been rated on a 7-point Likert scale, 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree. High Standards (7 items), Order (4 items), and Discrepancy (12 items) are the three factors on the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R) of 23 items. There are two types of perfectionism: acceptable and abnormal perfectionism. The APS-R is frequently used to distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionists. Standards and Order are high for both adaptive and maladaptive perfectionists, but Discrepancy is greater for maladaptive perfectionists. A maladaptive type of perfectionism is defined by a high Discrepancy Scale score combined with a high Standards score. Maladaptive simply means being less flexible to the point of dissatisfaction, inability to achieve goals, or simply a constant feeling of "not good enough". The reliability of this scale was α= .925.

Procedure

In the beginning, two self-report questionnaires and a demographic variables sheet were distributed among the participants in the following order: (1) the Study's demographics variables sheet, (2) the Procrastination Assessment Scale for Students (PASS), and (3) Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R). Before collecting the data, permission was taken from the Chairmen/ Chairperson(s) of the related Departments. The consent of the students was taken for their participation. All the participants were properly guided and instructed to fill the questionnaires. Before responding to each statement, all participants were asked to read the instructions carefully. Overall, respondents took ten to fifteen minutes to fill out the questionnaires. Participants were de-briefed about the purpose of the research. It took about three to four months to collect and analyze the relevant data through Pearson's correlation, t-test analysis, and regression analysis to find out the relationship, effects, and differences among the research variables. Data was statistically analyzed by using SPSS (20.0).

Table 1

Mean, Standard Deviation & Cronbach Alpha of the variables (N=335)

Variables	*M (SD)*	*K*	*α*
Perfectionism	18.10 (23.03)	23	.925
Procrastination	111.71 (16.40)	44	.810

Note. M=Mean, *SD*=Standard Deviation, *α* =Cronbach Alpha

Table 1 shows the Mean, Standard Deviation & Cronbach Alpha of the variables. The results revealed that the perfectionism scale and procrastination scale are highly reliable in the current study.

Table 2

Regression analysis of Multidimensional Perfectionism as a predictor of Educational Procrastination (*N*=335)

Predictor	B	Std. Error	*B*	*t*	*p*
(Constant)	31.582	1.842		17.142	.000**
Perfectionism	.049	.017	.158	2.921	.004*

Note.R^2= .025, *F*= 8.531, **p*< 0.05

Table 2 shows that multidimensional perfectionism has a minute impact on educational procrastination. Findings reveal that multidimensional perfectionism leads to educational procrastination with a percentage variance of 2.5%.

Table 3

Multiple regression analysis showing high standard, order, and discrepancy as a predictor of Educational Procrastination (N=335)

Variable	*B*	*SE*	*t*	*p*	95% CI
Constant	104.83***	4.33	24.221	.000	[96.31, 113.34]
High standard	.08	.16	.492	.626	[-.24, .40]
Order	-.38	.25	-1.521	.130	[-.87, .11]
Discrepancy	.22*	.09	2.402	.017	[.04, .41]
R^2	.017				

*Note. *p<.05, **p<.01, ***p<.001.*

Table 3 shows the impact of a high standard, order, and discrepancy on educational procrastination among students. The R^2 value of .017 revealed that the predictors explained a

very minor 1.7% variance in the outcome variable with F=2.91, $p<.05$. The findings revealed that only discrepancy ($\beta=.17$, $p<.05$) predicted educational procrastination

Table 4

T-test results comparing Males and Females on Multidimensional Perfectionism and educational procrastination (N= 335).

	Male (*n*=165)		Female (*n*=170)			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
High Standard	36.59	9.65	35.14	8.66	1.364	.258
Order	20.12	5.29	20.09	5.16	.028	.591
Discrepancy	52.29	13.01	52.46	12.08	-.119	.406
Fear of Failure	11.33	3.27	11.46	3.65	-.300	.057
Dependency	5.55	2.01	5.79	2.15	-.976	.704
Decision making	6.04	1.75	8.07	2.04	-.106	.006
Time Management	9.07	2.30	8.95	2.75	.402	.115
Lack of Assertion	5.68	2.68	5.87	2.42	-.625	.342
Rebellion against Control	5.43	2.06	5.55	2.24	-.442	.352
Low Self-esteem	5.40	1.72	7.57	2.16	-.685	.005
Aversiveness of Task	8.09	2.79	8.56	3.03	-1.336	.366
Evaluation Anxiety	2.61	1.25	2.79	1.30	-1.174	.806
Risk-Taking	6.25	2.23	5.96	2.37	1.022	.601
Fear of Success	5.47	1.96	5.74	2.90	-.859	.367
Peer Pressure	5.69	1.95	5.59	2.04	.436	.519

Note. $*p<0.05$.

Table 4 indicates significant gender differences in the subscale discrepancy and low self-esteem in educational procrastination. Results show that females reported more procrastination in decision-making and low self-esteem as compared to male students.

Table 5

Correlation matrix of Multidimensional Perfectionism and Educational Procrastination (N=335)

Sr.no.	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1.	Discrepancy	-														
2.	Order	.50**	-													
3.	High Standard	.63**	.72**	-												
4.	Peer Pressure	.01	.01	-.01	-											
5.	Fear of Success	.01	.05	.01	.19**	-										
6.	Risk-Taking	-.01	.04	.06	.23**	.15**	-									
7.	Evaluation Anxiety	.08	.02	.01	.08	.07	.16**	-								
8.	Averseness of Task	.01	-.11	-.07	.14*	.02	.20**	.30**	-							
9.	Low Self-esteem	.11*	-.05	-.07	.24**	.07	.01	.17**	.28**	-						
10.	Rebellion against Control	-.01	-.04	-.03	.21**	.18**	.21**	.17**	.17**	.18**	-					
11.	Lack of Assertion	.02	-.10	-.10	.18**	.11*	.22**	.17**	.13*	.07	.19**	-				
12.	Time Management	.08	.01	.06	.09	.09	.20**	.67**	.36**	.14*	.13*	.21**	-			
13.	Decision making	.13*	-.06	.07	.15**	.09	.16**	.14*	.26**	.18**	.19**	.31**	.13*	-		
14.	Dependency	.11*	.08	.03	.28**	.17**	.11*	.15**	.14*	.17**	.18**	.29**	.14*	.18**	-	
15.	Fear of failure	.11	-.00	-.02	.14*	.23**	.06	.20**	.14**	.30**	.16**	.26**	.15**	.18**	.33**	-

Note. *p<0.05, **p<0.01.

Table 5 explains the correlation between multidimensional perfectionism subscales and educational procrastination. The discrepancy is found to be significantly correlated with low self-esteem (r=.11*, p<0.05), decision-making (r=.13*, p<0.05), and dependency (r=.11*, p<0.05). No correlation was observed among other subscales of the procrastination scale.

Table 6

T-test analysis showing family system differences for Multidimensional Perfectionism and educational Procrastination (N= 335)

	Nuclear (N=232)		*Joint (N=103)*			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*p*
High Standard	35.53	9.10	35.72	8.78	-.177	.962
Order	20.28	5.23	19.70	5.10	.952	.782
Discrepancy	52.45	12.53	52.32	12.02	.090	.840
Fear of Failure	11.55	3.60	11.15	3.40	.969	.173
Dependency	5.84	2.11	5.47	2.10	1.483	.899
Decision making	6.07	1.98	6.05	1.93	.106	.307
Time Management	8.84	2.70	9.32	2.42	-1.533	.396
Lack of Assertion	5.86	2.37	5.72	2.80	.483	.963
Rebellion against Control	5.63	2.26	5.27	2.01	1.364	.334
Low Self-esteem	5.69	2.02	5.16	2.04	2.209	.538
Averseness of Task	8.41	3.05	8.47	2.80	-.168	.177
Evaluation Anxiety	2.75	1.29	2.73	1.31	.160	.567
Risk-Taking	6.02	2.32	6.14	2.38	-.413	.603
Fear of Success	5.76	2.88	5.45	2.04	.994	.533
Peer Pressure	5.59	2.04	5.72	1.98	-.553	.797

Note. **p*<0.05.

Table 6 indicates that there are no significant differences related to the family system's effects on Educational Procrastination and Multidimensional Perfectionism among students.

Table 7

T-test analysis showing living system differences for Multidimensional Perfectionism and Educational Procrastination (N= 335).

	Urban (N=232)		*Rural (N=103)*			
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*T*	*p*
High Standard	35.90	8.83	34.90	9.33	.953	.161
Order	20.35	4.92	19.56	5.72	1.294	.007
Discrepancy	51.91	12.16	53.51	12.76	-1.104	.765
Fear of Failure	11.25	3.62	11.82	3.34	-1.372	.238
Dependency	5.79	2.11	5.58	2.11	.828	.758
Decision making	5.92	1.98	5.92	1.98	-2.058	.514
Time Management	8.95	2.70	6.39	1.88	-.446	.243

Lack of Assertion	5.71	2.37	9.09	2.45	-1.133	.654
Rebellion against Control	5.47	2.17	6.05	2.80	-.525	.328
Low Self-esteem	5.45	2.09	5.61	2.23	-.933	.110
Averseness of Task	8.49	3.06	5.68	1.91	.620	.305
Evaluation Anxiety	2.64	1.29	8.28	2.78	-2.191	.471
Risk-Taking	5.83	2.31	2.97	1.27	-2.596	.857
Fear of Success	5.75	2.87	6.54	2.33	.914	.789
Peer Pressure	5.44	1.98	5.47	2.10	-2.540	.699

Note. $*p<0.05$.

Table 7 indicates that there is no significant effect of living in Urban or Rural areas on Educational Procrastination and Multidimensional Perfectionism among students.

Discussion

The present research was based on tentative assumptions regarding multidimensional perfectionism and educational procrastination. Researchers aimed to conduct research to determine the link between multidimensional perfectionism and educational procrastination; to assess the impact of multidimensional perfectionism on educational procrastination and to find out in relation to gender differences, family system, and living areas (urban and rural residences) of the research participants if there was an impact on the research in constants.

It was hypothesized that gender differs significantly in educational procrastination and perfectionism. Table 4 indicates significant gender differences in the subscale discrepancy and low self-esteem in educational procrastination. Results show that females reported more procrastination in decision-making and low self-esteem as compared to male students. Existing literature also supports the above-stated assumption in another study conducted by Hasmayni (2020), where the difference in educational procrastination based on students' gender was measured and the results found that female students tend to display higher procrastination behavior compared to male students.

It was also hypothesized that multidimensional perfectionism would have a significant impact on educational procrastination. According to Table 2, there was a minute but significant impact of multidimensional perfectionism on educational procrastination rather than a promising influence. Similarly, in the case of subscales of perfectionism, Table 3 shows the impact of a high standard, order, and discrepancy on educational procrastination among students. These results are in line with the findings of Kurtovic et al. (2019), which were reported as perfectionism and all three dimensions of perfectionism significantly predicted procrastination.

According to Table 5, multidimensional perfectionism discrepancy is found to be significantly correlated with low self-esteem (r=.11*), decision-making (r=.13*), and dependency (r=.11*) on educational procrastination subscales whereas no correlation was observed between perfectionism and other subscales of procrastination scale. A research model for studying educational procrastination based on multidimensional perfectionism in school students was studied and the results found that there was a correlation between classes of perfectionism and academic procrastination (Borjali & Kiamanesh, 2018). Another study stated that academic procrastination and perfectionism have significant positive correlation (Jadidi et al., 2011).

Lastly, the proposed study also investigated whether family size and living areas have any effects on learners' educational procrastination and perfectionism. However, according to Table 6 and Table 7, no significant differences were observed between students' living areas and family systems' affecting their educational procrastination and perfectionism. This notion has been supported by research that concluded that there was a scarce effect of family size on students' academic procrastination and perfectionism (Black et al., 2005). Another study assessed the relationship between procrastination and academic achievement of high school learners and revealed that there were no significant correlations between procrastination, gender, age, residential area, and family system (Joubert, 2015).

Conclusion

To sum up, the purpose of the present study was to investigate the relationship between multidimensional perfectionism and academic procrastination among university students in Multan, Pakistan. Therefore while analyzing multidimensional perfectionism (including its subscales i.e., high standard, order, and discrepancy) the study's findings showed its strong relationship with delaying academic tasks. The effect of multidimensional perfectionism on putting off studying however was shown to be minimal. The study draws the conclusion that multidimensional perfectionism does not substantially contribute to educational procrastination in this situation. The study also looked at gender variations in multidimensional perfectionism and procrastination in the classroom. The findings corroborated the theory and revealed prominent gender differences with female university students showing higher levels of perfectionism and academic procrastination than their male classmates.

Implications and Future Recommendations

The research illuminates a potential link between university students' multifaceted perfectionism and postponing their academic work. This realization might aid in understanding how perfectionistic attitudes could cause academic delays in researchers and instructors. Universities may create support programs that address both procrastination and perfectionism, improving students' academic performance and overall well-being by focusing on both interrelated issues. The study's conclusions can be used by the institutions' counseling centers to provide relatable advices to those students specifically, who struggle with perfectionism and its connection to procrastination as it might hinder their academic performance later negatively influencing empowerment in their career. The study calls for more investigation into the underlying processes linking procrastination and perfectionism which might lead to more thorough knowledge and targeted treatments of the issue discussed in the current study.

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