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Perfectionism, Self-Esteem, and Procrastination

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The present study was conducted to evaluate procrastination among students and its relationship with perfectionism and self-esteem. A sample of 100 college students comprising of 50 females from Kinnaird College for Women and 50 males from Forman Christian College a Chartered University Lahore were selected. Tuckman Procrastination Scale (TPS; Tuckman, 1991), Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS; Frost et al., 1990) and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1965) were administered. Results of Pearson Product Moment Correlation revealed that perfectionism was positively correlated with procrastination. However, self-esteem was negatively correlated with procrastination and perfectionism. Independent Sample t-test analysis indicated that males scored higher on one dimension of perfectionism i.e. concern over mistakes and procrastination, whereas women had higher self-esteem. These findings highlighted the need for active measures to reduce the causes and consequences of procrastination for university students.

Keywords: Perfectionism, self-esteem, procrastination, Pakistani students

The current study was undertaken to evaluate the relationship between perfectionism, self-esteem and procrastination. Time is a valuable asset especially in educational sector but surprisingly there is a dearth of literature on procrastination related issues among students in Lahore. Ferrari, Johnson and McCown (1995) defined procrastination as a deliberate act of delaying on starting or completing a task, to the point that the person starts feeling uncomfortable. About 70% of the students procrastinate on activities regularly (Goode, 2008). Procrastination is quite prevalent in college students and it is associated with irritation, regret, self-condemnation, low self-esteem, despair, test anxiety, and lower GPAs (Burka & Yuen, 2008; Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995; Schraw, Wadkins & Olafson, 2007). Monchek and Muchnick (1988) summarized the consequences of procrastination in two domains including concrete and emotional consequences. The concrete consequences include missed deadlines, lost opportunities, lost income, lower productivity, waste of time, and loss of standing among associates.

The emotional consequences include lower morale, higher stress anger frustration,

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and lower motivation. The effect of procrastination on performance of an individual has great importance in an academic setting. Several studies have found a significant link between procrastination and unfavorable academic consequences represented variedly as poor grades, course withdrawal, delayed submission of assignments, decreased long-term learning, lower test scores, and lower grade point average (Solomon, & Rothblum, 1984; Johnson, & Bloom, 1995; Akinsola, & Tella, 2007). Students who possess perfectionist traits show more procrastination on academic activities (Solomon &

Rothblum, 1984; Akkaya, 2007) in attempts to produce best results (Ferrari, 1992). Perfectionism has been defined as the setting of extremely high and unrealistic standards for performance (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). Perfectionism can be adaptive or maladaptive (Hamachek, 1978). Adaptive perfectionism includes characteristics such as; organization and order, high personal standards and fewer tendencies to procrastinate. In contrast, maladaptive perfectionism includes characteristics such as; excessive doubts about their actions, concern over mistakes and have higher tendency to procrastinate. Frost et al. (1990) suggested that perfectionism is multidimensional in nature i.e. concerns over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubting of actions and organization. Perfectionism has been found to be negatively correlated with self-esteem (Ferrari, 1991; Spatz, 2001). Perfectionists develop unrealistic expectations for themselves when they are unable to meet their set goals and they end up feeling like a failure and thus having low self-esteem. Coopersmith (1967) defined self-esteem as the evaluation one keeps of him or herself, good or bad, shows the extent to which one believes in him or herself as worthy, competent and successful. According to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2004) low self-esteem has been identified as an associated feature of almost 24 mental disorders. Researchers have found a significant negative relationship of self-esteem with procrastination and perfectionism (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Dunkley, Berg, & Zuroff, 2011).

In the light of existing literature it was hypothesized that procrastination will be positively correlated with perfectionism and negatively with of self-esteem; there will be no significant gender difference in perfectionism however male students will be higher on self-esteem and procrastination than female college students.

Method

Participants

A sample of 100 college students comprising of 50 females from Kinnaird College for Women and 50 males from Forman Christian College a Chartered University participated. The participants were B.A. /B.Sc. (Honors) college students with an age range of 18-24 years.

Measures

Tuckman procrastination scale (TPS; Tuckman, 1990). The Tuckman Procrastination Scale (Tuckman, 1991) is a 16 item scale which provides a general index of academic procrastination. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). Scores can range from 16 to 64 with higher scores indicating a greater tendency to procrastinate. Validity of this measure is based on a correlation of -.54 between scale scores and a behavioral measure of self-regulation, with a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of .86 to .90 (Tuckman, 1990).

Frost multidimensional perfectionism scale (FMPS; Frost et al., 1990). The Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale is a 35 item questionnaire designed to measure perfectionism. The scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). It has 6 subscales including Concern over Mistakes, Personal Standards, Parental Expectations, Parental Criticism, Doubts about Actions, and Organization. Each of the six subscales is scored by summing the items. There is an overall perfectionism score which is the sum of the subscales. The scales Internal consistency alpha is .77 to .93 and the construct validity is .42 to .87 (Frost et al., 1990).

Rosenberg self-esteem scale (SES; Rosenberg, 1965). Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale consists of 10 statements related to an overall feeling of self-worth or self-acceptance. The items are answered on a four-point scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree). Scores on SES range from 0-30, between 15 and 25 are within normal range whereas a score below 15 suggest low self-esteem. The reliability of the instrument is .85 to .88 and the Internal consistency alpha is .67 to .83 (Rosenberg, 1965).

Procedure

Permissions were sought from the authors of the instruments and then from the administration of Forman Christian College. First of all, consent from the participants was taken. The participants were informed about the purpose and aim of the study and the instructions regarding questionnaires were explained to them. Group administrations of the questionnaires were carried out while it took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete these forms.

Results

The Mean, Standard deviation, Correlation and Independent Sample t-test were used to analyze data.

Table 1

Pearson Product Moment Correlations, Mean and Standard Deviation between Subscales of Perfectionism, Self-Esteem and Procrastination in College Students (N=100).

	PER	CM	PS	PE	PC	D	O	PRO
P	.33**	.32**	-.08	.21*	.39**	.42**	-.25*	-.04
SE	-.42**	-.42**	.05	-.21*	-.47**	-.53**	.24*	-.46**

Note: PER= Perfectionism CM=Concern Over Mistakes, PS=Personal Standards, PE=Parental Expectations, PC=Parental Criticism, D=Doubting of Actions, O=Organization, P=Procrastination, SE= Self-Esteem

** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05.

Table 1 depicted a significant positive correlation between procrastination and perfectionism and self-esteem was found to be negatively correlated with procrastination and perfectionism.

Table 2

Independent Sample t-test for Gender Differences on Perfectionism, Self-esteem and Procrastination.

Measures	Male		Female		t	Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD		
Perfectionism	96.16	12.47	90.14	90.14	1.86	.37
COM	28.22	5.22	25.54	25.54	2.08*	.41
Personal standards	24.08	5.04	23.58	23.58	4.91	.09
Parental expectations	18.36	3.68	17.62	17.62	0.84	.17
Parental criticism	12.02	2.78	11.14	11.14	1.26	.25
Doubting of actions	12.98	3.34	12.06	12.06	1.28	.25
Organization	21.16	4.84	22.68	22.68	-1.92	.38
Self-esteem	16.72	3.51	19.30	19.30	-3.19**	.63
Procrastination	50.38	8.56	46.64	46.64	1.98*	.46

Note: df= 98, **p<0.01, *p<0.05, COM= Concern Over Mistakes.

Table 2 shows that there are no significant gender differences in perfectionism. However, females scored higher than males on only one dimension of perfectionism i.e. concern over mistakes. Significant gender differences were found in self-esteem and procrastination where females scored higher on self-esteem and males scored higher on procrastination.

Discussion

Findings of the current study revealed a positive correlation of procrastination with concern over mistakes, parental expectations, parental criticism, and doubts about actions. It has been suggested that individuals who possess maladaptive perfectionist traits were high on perfectionism dimensions including concern over mistakes, and doubts about actions (Frost, 1990). Moreover, it was indicated that high perfectionists were procrastinators since a positive relationship was found between procrastination and perfectionism.

It was hypothesized that there will be a negative relationship between procrastination and self-esteem. The hypotheses was partially supported as it was found that self-esteem was negatively correlated with procrastination, concern over mistakes, parental expectations, parental criticism, and doubts about actions. Hollender (1965) described perfectionists as excessively sensitive to rejection and overly concerned about social approval. Based on this suggestion, it was indicated that any negative disapproval from others will reduce self-esteem of maladaptive perfectionists (Rice, Ashby, & Slaney, 1998). Similarly, any negative evaluation about self will lead to procrastination on academic tasks. Hence, maladaptive perfectionism and high procrastination is associated with low self-esteem.

The researchers found a positive relationship between self-esteem and organization. As discussed earlier, adaptive perfectionists are high on self-esteem (Ashby and Rice, 2002) and organization a dimension of perfectionism (Frost et al., 1990). Since low self-esteem has been found among individuals in the present study, hence the positive relationship between self-esteem and organization indicates that individual were also low on organization.

Results of the current study depicted that males are high on procrastination and concern over mistakes which is consistent with the previous researches (Arslan, Hamarta, Üre & Özyesil, 2010; McArdle & Duda, 2007). Males engage in poor time management which is associated with high procrastination. Furthermore, authoritarian parenting style is mostly used with males associated with high perfectionism. Therefore males were high on procrastination and perfectionism in the current study.

The findings suggested that males were low on self-esteem than females which is consistent with the literature indicating that maladaptive perfectionism and high procrastination are contributing factors, leading to low self-esteem.

Limitations and Recommendations

The small sample size and age restrictions limit the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, a few studies have explored the relationship of procrastination with anxiety and depression (Senécal, Vallerand, & Robert, 1995; Akkaya, 2007). Also a little has

been known about relationship of procrastination with motivation, self-efficacy and self-concept etc. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to explore the relationship of procrastination with anxiety, depression, motivation, self-efficacy, self-concept, perfectionism and self-esteem, to have a better understanding of procrastination behavior.

Implications

Several implications can be concluded from the findings of the present study. College counselors should be hired and they in collaboration with the teachers should enhance the level of frustration tolerance for imperfection and self-esteem among students. Moreover time management skills should be taught to individuals in growth groups for reducing procrastination.

Conclusion

In conclusion, college administration should develop and implement preventative, awareness and educational programs for factors that contribute to the high perfectionism, low self-esteem and high procrastination tendencies among college students.

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