

## **Impact of Self-Efficacy and Perfectionism on Academic Procrastination among University Students**

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The present study aimed to explore the Impact of Self-Efficacy and Perfectionism on Academic Procrastination among University Students. It was hypothesized that self-efficacy and perfectionism would have significant impact on academic procrastination. Sample consisted of ( $N=240$ ) university students, including both boys ( $n=136$ ) and girls ( $n=104$ ). Participants were approached using convenient sampling technique. General Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995), Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Hewitt, Flett, Turnbull-Donovan, & Mikail, 1991) and Academic Procrastination Scale (McCloskey & Scielzo, 2015) were used in the study to measure the constructs. Results indicated that there is a significant correlation between Self-Efficacy, Perfectionism and Academic Procrastination. Regression analysis revealed that there is a significant negative impact of Self-Efficacy and Self-Oriented Perfectionism on Academic Procrastination. While Socially-Prescribed Perfectionism and Other-Oriented Perfectionism both are positive predictors of Academic Procrastination. T-test analysis revealed significant gender differences with respect to perfectionism and academic procrastination. Limitations, practical implications, and suggestions for future research were discussed.

*Key words.* Self-Efficacy, Perfectionism, Academic Procrastination

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To procrastinate or delay the work without any important reason is the most prevailing phenomenon in the field of psychology. Delaying the work is becoming a more prevailing habit in youth especially in students as they try to escape from undesirable tasks without any important reason. Perfectionist individuals set high standards for themselves and sometimes for other individuals too. Such people want to do work according to their set standards and hence, they do not procrastinate tasks based on the perception of doing everything in a perfect manner or may procrastinate when perfectionist standards are set for others. Students mostly try to escape from difficult or aversive tasks because they do not have the belief on their abilities. If the students have high beliefs on their abilities, they do not delay their work without any important reason.

Self-efficacy can be defined as the beliefs a person holds with regard to his abilities and capabilities to attain some particular task achievement successfully. The concept of self-efficacy was discussed elaborately by Bandura (1997) and holds strong historical background of self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1997), self-efficacy is the energy and potentials in organizational settings and courses of actions required to forthcoming situation. He explains self-efficacy as determinants to describe our way of feeling and thinking that either we have strong beliefs or not. Self-efficacy is highly responsible for our striving energies and expectations. Low level of self-efficacy induces negativity and promotes negative forces for failures, badly affecting a person's performance. A high degree of self-efficacy promotes performance of individuals that they will gain their achievement with strong beliefs and think that they can have capacity to achieve success. Self-beliefs play essential role in our

cognitions, performance and achievement, and bring effective outcomes of person's actions with holding positive expectations. It increases the level of struggle in people and makes them to show remarkable results of their struggle.

Self-efficacy affects individual in different ways; it is highly linked with the choice of particular actions which are actually part of our behaviours. People attempt to take part in those actions and situations in which they imagine themselves as confident and competent; preferring not to engage in events for which they do not have expected outcomes (Van der Bijl & Shortridge-Baggett, 2002).

Bandura (1997) identified four sources regarding self-efficacy. Firstly, mastery experiences are the most effective positive experience that enhances the level of self-efficacy. Secondly, vicarious experiences such as observing someone (role model) is also the appropriate way of increase self-beliefs. Thirdly, verbal persuasion from parents, teachers, or coaches etc can increase the belief in our abilities. Lastly, emotional and physiological states can also affect self-efficacy, for example, depression and anxiety can lower the self-efficacy while positive emotional states can boost our self-efficacy.

Kuzucu & Klassen (2008) found that there is correlation between academic procrastination and self-efficacy among school students and results revealed that self-efficacy is a stronger negative predictor of academic procrastination. Seo (2008) conducted research and the results of his study shown that the self-efficacy has a negative impact on academic procrastination.

Perfectionism is setting of higher values or standards by an individual for doing a task that are critically evaluate by the individual himself (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). Adler (1956) was the first to describe the theory of perfectionism. He argued that struggle for perfectionism is an inborn ability and it is considered normal because of the propensity of the human beings, but argues the difference between healthy perfectionism, which involves goals that are obtainable and maladaptive perfectionism, which lead to obsessive order and fear of critique. High personal standards are not always problematic. According to Canadian Psychological Association (2009), perfectionism is a personality trait that is linked with a greater amount of interpersonal, emotional, and success related problems. It is not considered as a disease, but it is a susceptibility factor that creates difficulties in the life of adults (CPA, 2009).

Many researches considered perfectionism as multidimensional, rather than uni-dimensional construct (Frost et al., 1990). Perfectionism is a multidimensional construct that means that it has both interpersonal and personal aspects (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). The three main dimensions of perfectionism are other-oriented perfectionism (OOP), self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), and socially-prescribed perfectionism (SPP) (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

Self-oriented perfectionism (SOP) is the motivational force for setting of high standards for oneself and the assessment of one's behaviour is based on these high standards. Self-oriented perfectionism is the aspect of behaviour which includes perfectionist behaviour from, and toward the self. It involves establishing high criteria which are associated with productivity and success in career. This aspect of perfectionism involves critical self-evaluation with focus on error and short comings and stronger motivation to be perfect (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Other-oriented perfectionism (OOP) is setting of idealistic standards for others and then doing harsh assessment of other individuals based on these high standards set for them. If others do not live up to these expectations, the result may be lack of trust, other-oriented fault, and feeling of resentment towards other individuals. It involves having high and unrealistic expectations from other persons (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Socially-prescribed perfectionism (SPP) is the aspiration to accomplish the expectations and goals that are set for them from the other individuals. It is a belief that others expect one to meet their

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expectations. It includes the awareness that others have demands towards you for being a perfectionist (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

Cakici (2003) found a negative relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism, while positive relationship was found between procrastination and others-oriented perfectionism. Wernicke (1999) proposed that a correlation is present between academic procrastination and socially-prescribed perfectionism.

In the literature of procrastination, the term “Procrastination” emerged from a Latin word, which mean “forward or onward, presumptuous, or in favour of,” and *crastinus*, meaning “of tomorrow” (Klein, 1971). Procrastination is the act of unnecessarily putting off everyday jobs to the point that someone start to feel uneasiness (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Procrastination can be permanent or temporary and can be defined as a rationale of the behavioural output, the cognitive output, putting off making a decision or putting off the action (Dewitte & Lens, 2000).

Academic procrastination involves failing to carry out an action within the needed duration or delaying the task till the last-minute performance one eventually intends to accomplish (Wolters, 2003). Academic procrastination can lead to the failure of achievement of academic goals on intended time which results in the progress of emotional distress in persons (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995). It also leads to the incompetent behavioural consequences and person may feel problems in dealing with surroundings effectively (Milgram, Mey-Tal, & Levison, 1998).

Fundamental components of psychoanalytic theory and technique have systematically explained the student procrastination behaviour. The psychodynamic approach gives significance to defective parental techniques and earlier childhood experiences and on the probability of a person to procrastinate (Burka & Yuen, 1983; Ellis & Knaus, 1977). Behaviour theory explains reinforcement, inspiration, and punishment and reward factors in the behaviours of human beings. Thus, behaviourism introduces a wide variety of significance for personality reasons for procrastination. The primary feature of behaviourist theory is that they outlook the motivational atmosphere as the major determinant feature in the learning of human beings. Briody (1980) originate that lack of motivation is linked with the behavior of student's procrastination. Research proved that students procrastinate because of lack of motivation.

Previous research show that conscientiousness is a personality characteristic which can drastically predict procrastination as compared to the other domains of personality. These studies reported that the persons who established conscientiousness were found to be less probable to procrastinate. On the other hand, those who established low levels of conscientiousness were reported to have higher inclination to procrastinate (Watson, 2001). Milgram, Mey-Tal, & Levison (1998) conducted a research for finding out the association between procrastination and its associated variables amid 85 female and 115 male students, results of the study conclude that the females were less likely to procrastinate than males. In the same way, Senecal, Koestner, & Vallerand (1995) did a research with 498 French Canadian junior university students and find out the influence of independent self-regulation as an interpreter of academic procrastination. In their study, female university students show low level of procrastination in comparison to the male students. They described these sex base dissimilarities on procrastination by the statement that females are inherently more encouraged as compared to the males.

The present study aimed to check the impact of self-efficacy and perfectionism on academic procrastination among university students. This study was conducted to investigate that to which extent self-efficacy and perfectionism will cause the students to show academic procrastination. Research has been done in the past on these variables separately or with

other variables. The present study conducted so as to probe and scrutinize the relationship between these three variables i.e. self-efficacy, perfectionism and academic procrastination. These three variables are assumed to have great impact on young adults. This is because academic procrastination poses a hindrance in the way of success for students. So, the present study highlighted some factors related to procrastination that will help students to identify some causes of procrastination. Moreover, this area is more explored in the field of academics by this study.

### Hypotheses

1. There will be a significant correlation between self-efficacy, perfectionism, and academic procrastination among university students.
2. Self- efficacy will negatively predict academic procrastination.
3. Self-oriented perfectionism will negatively predict academic procrastination.
4. Other-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism will positively predict academic procrastination.
5. There would be significant gender-based differences in academic procrastination.

### Method

#### Research Design

In the present study, correlational survey research design was used.

#### Sample

The sample of the present study consisted of students ( $N= 240$ ). Data was collected from the students of BS ( $n=66$ ) and MSc ( $n=174$ ). Both men ( $n=136$ ) and women ( $n=104$ ) were included. Data was collected from the students at University of Sargodha, Sargodha. Convenient sampling technique was applied to collect the data from the participants.

**Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria.** Sample was only taken from the students at University of Sargodha, on the basis of their gender and education systems. Only the students of BS and MSc were included in the study. Uneducated people and students of other than Sargodha University were excluded. The details of participants are given below.

**Table 1**

*Demographic information of participants (N = 240)*

Characteristics	Categories	<i>f</i>	%
Gender	Male	136	56.7
	Female	104	43.3
Education	BS	66	27.5
	MSC	174	72.5

#### Instruments

**General Self Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).** General Self Efficacy Scale developed by Schwarzer & Jerusalem (1995). The scale consisted of 10 items, which measure self-efficacy containing 4- point Likert type response pattern that range from (1= *not at all true* to 4 = *exactly true*). Low scores indicate low level and high score indicate high level of self-efficacy. Score can range from 10-40. The author has reported the reliability of scale .80.

**Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Hewitt, et al. 1991).** In the present study, Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale developed by Hewitt, et al. (1991) was used to

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measure perfectionism. It has total 45 items divided into three sub-scales which are self-oriented (SO), other-oriented (OO), and socially prescribed (SP). All sub-scale consisted of 15 items. High score on all subscales represented a propensity to be perfectionist on that measured aspect. The responses were given upon a 7-point Likert type Scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree. The negative items (2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 19, 21, 24, 30, 34, 36, 37, 38, 43, 44, and 45) were reverse scored. Hewitt and Flett (1991) reported coefficient alpha of .86 for self-oriented perfectionism, .82 for other-oriented perfectionism, and .87 for socially-prescribed perfectionism.

**Academic Procrastination Scale (McCloskey & Scielzo, 2015).** In the present study Academic Procrastination Scale developed by McCloskey & Scielzo (2015) was used to measure Academic procrastination. Scale consisted of 25 items, it was 5-point Likert type response pattern ranging from (1= Disagree to 5 = Agree). Low scores indicate low level and high scores indicate high level of Academic Procrastination. The scores on the scale range from 25 to 125. Item number 1, 8, 12, 14, 25 on the scale were reversed scored.

### Ethical consideration

Keeping in regard the ethics of research and in order to maintain the quality of study, few things were highly considered. Before starting the study, consent of the participants was gained. No single individual was enforced for filling the questionnaires. Moreover, they were given the right to withdraw from at any time. Deception was not used at all throughout the research. All participants were briefed before the study. The confidentiality and privacy of the participants' information was maintained. No harm was caused to any animal or human throughout the study.

### Procedure

All the participants were approached personally, some in the form of groups and were briefed about the research purpose. Some students were taken from different departments of university after taking permission from administration. Participants were given briefing about the nature of the study. They were told that they have the right to withdraw from the research anytime. All the participants were assured that data collection will be just used for research purpose. They were clarified about the maintenance of their confidentiality. Afterwards, informed consent was taken from all the participants and a testing booklet consisting of demographic form and scales was handed over to the participants. Detailed instructions were given in order to fill out each questionnaire in the testing booklet. The questionnaire took about 15-20 minutes to complete. All the participants were thanked for their precious time and full cooperation.

## Results

**Table 2**

*Pearson correlation among all study variables (N = 240)*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1 Self-efficacy	-	.51***	-.44***	-.51***	-.82***
2 Self-oriented perfectionism	-	-	-.93***	-.91***	-.82***
3 Other-oriented perfectionism	-	-	-	.83***	.79***
4 Socially-prescribed perfectionism	-	-	-	-	.83***
5 Academic procrastination	-	-	-	-	-

*Note.* \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 2 shows Pearson correlation among study variables, the findings indicate that Self efficacy has significant negative association with academic procrastination ( $r = -.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Self-oriented perfectionism has significant negative correlation with academic procrastination ( $r = -.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Others-oriented perfectionism has significant positive

association with academic procrastination ( $r = .79, p < .001$ ), and socially prescribed perfectionism has significant positive association with academic procrastination ( $r = .83, p < .001$ ).

**Table 3**

*Multiple regression analysis showing the effect of self-efficacy, self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism, and socially-prescribed perfectionism on academic procrastination (N = 240)*

Variables	Academic Procrastination		
	$\beta$	$R^2$	$F$
Self-efficacy	-.53***	.931	793.00***
Self-oriented perfectionism	-.15*		
Other-oriented perfectionism	.35***		
Social-prescribed perfectionism	.37***		

Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .05$

Regression analysis is computed with self-efficacy, self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism, and socially-prescribed perfectionism predictor variables and academic procrastination as outcome variable. The  $R^2$  value of .931 indicates that 93.1% variance in the dependent variable can be accounted for by the predictors with  $F(4, 235) = 793.00, p < .001$ . The findings indicate that self-efficacy ( $\beta = -.53, p < .001$ ) and self-oriented perfectionism ( $\beta = -.15, p < .05$ ) have significant negative effect on academic procrastination. While other-oriented perfectionism ( $\beta = .35, p < .001$ ), and socially-prescribed perfectionism ( $\beta = .37, p < .001$ ) have significant positive effect on academic procrastination.

**Table 4**

*Mean, standard deviation and t-values of male and female on all variables (N = 240)*

Variables	Male (n = 139)		Female (n = 61)		t (238)	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
Self-efficacy	25.44	4.76	26.34	4.74	-1.46	.14	2.12	.31	.18
Self-oriented perfectionism	57.58	10.25	64.45	13.67	4.44***	.00	9.90	-3.82	.56
Other-oriented perfectionism	59.80	11.33	53.47	12.32	4.13***	.00	3.31	9.35	.53
Social prescribed perfectionism	67.91	9.41	56.55	13.62	7.62***	.00	8.42	14.28	.97
Academic procrastination	76.61	11.17	68.25	14.32	5.07***	.00	5.11	11.60	.65

Note. \*\*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .05$

Table 4 shows the mean differences of male and female on the study variables. Mean difference in self-efficacy were non-significant. Self-oriented perfectionism had significant gender differences with females scoring greater than males. Other-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and academic procrastination had significant gender differences in a way that shows males have higher levels of these variables than females.

## Discussion

The proposed study was conducted with the objective to find out the impact of self-efficacy and perfectionism on academic procrastination. Alpha reliabilities of all the scales

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were computed; all the reliabilities were good, proving that the scales are having good internal consistency. Results of the current study proved the main hypothesis, i.e. there was significant relationship between all the variables (see Table 2). Self-efficacy was negatively correlated with academic procrastination. It can be supported by the fact that self-efficacy refers to belief on one's own abilities. Hence, more the belief on one's ability, the person will be less likely to procrastinate anything or any task. As he feels himself competent for the task, he will try to complete it within the time frame without procrastinating it. This can also be supported from previous research. Seo (2008) conducted a research and the results of his study shown that the self-efficacy has a negative impact on academic procrastination.

Self-oriented perfectionism was proved to be negatively correlated with academic procrastination (see Table 2). It can be supported from logical sense that self-oriented perfectionism refers to the motivational force of setting high standards for one own self. Hence, when a person is motivated to become perfect, he/she will try to do all the tasks on required time without procrastinating it. Hence, these are negatively correlated. Other-oriented perfectionism was positively correlated with academic procrastination in the present study (see Table 2). It can be clearly supported from the fact that other-oriented perfectionism refers to setting idealistic standards for others; in other words, the person does not motivate him himself for achieving perfectionism and expect others to do so. Hence, as he does not motivate himself for doing tasks, he will surely delay academic tasks beyond timelines. So, other oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination are positively correlated. These results can also be supported in the light of research studies. Cakici (2003) found a negative relationship between academic procrastination and self-oriented perfectionism, while positive relationship was found between procrastination and others-oriented perfectionism. Similarly, socially prescribed perfectionism has significant positive correlation with academic procrastination (see table 2). It can be seen in real world as the high standards are imposed from the society on a person, it is difficult for some people to manage it and they usually try to get rid of it. Hence, they may procrastinate academic tasks. In previous research studies, a significant correlation was present between academic procrastination and socially-prescribed perfectionism (Wernicke, 1999).

Regression analysis was carried out to test the hypothesis proposed with respect to prediction of academic procrastination by other study variables. Results of the study supported and accepted these hypotheses. Self-efficacy and self-oriented perfectionism negatively predicted academic procrastination; while other-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism positively predicted academic procrastination (see Table 3). The logical and research-based explanation has already been given above in the discussion of correlation results.

Independent samples t-test was carried out to check gender differences on the study variables. Results revealed that there were no significant gender differences on self-efficacy; however, there were significant gender differences on all other variables (see Table 4). Self-oriented perfectionism has significant gender differences with females scoring greater than males. Hence, it is seen that in the sample of the present study, male university students have lower levels of self-oriented perfectionism as compared to that of female students. On the other hand, boys scored significantly higher than girls on other-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and academic procrastination. In previous research studies, Balkis and Duru (2009) conducted research on a sample comprising of 580 students (329 girls, 251 boys) of Pamukkale University. Results showed that males are more deliberate to procrastinate than females.

### Implications

The study has several implications for research and practice. The results of the proposed study will be constructive for individual's perception of their own self beliefs. It

can affect individual's whole personality and play effective role in shape-up an individual to achieve his goals. This will be useful for awareness of our own control over happenings whether it's external or internal and can also interpret our perfectionism. Once the idea of being perfectionist is considered, people can be more conscious about their own actions. Moreover, this study will provide authentic ways for psychologists to give fruitful information and awareness among their certain problems related to individual's beliefs upon his own capacities and potentials to perform anything well. Further, the study will help counsellors in dealing with problems related to studies of students, for example, counsellors can enhance students' self-efficacy and self-oriented perfectionism in order to lessen procrastination among them.

### Limitations and Suggestions

Limitation would be regarding the generalizability of the study. As the data was collected only from the students at Sargodha university because of the availability of limited resources and time constraints. Therefore, the results have limited generalizability. For further studies it is suggested that data should also be collected from other populations in order to increase the generalizability of the study.

The sampling technique used in this study was convenient purposive sampling. Therefore, it can raise doubts regarding the representativeness of the sample. It is suggested that data must be collected from participants by using random sampling technique.

Present study was quantitative in nature, which does not produce in depth information like qualitative research. So, the information gathered was not enriched and extensive. It is suggested for future researchers that qualitative data must also be collected in addition to quantitative data.

Social desirability can be a potential threat for the internal validity of the research because it was a self-reported measure. It is suggested that further studies should use a multi-method approach rather than relying only on survey research.

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