



A Study on Perfectionism, Procrastination and Burnout among University Students

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Abstract: In today's educational system, three main psychological constructs that are Perfectionism, Procrastination and Burnout have become major concerns among university students and can significantly influence their academic performance as well as their mental health. Students often experience pressure to meet high expectations, which may lead to delays in task completion and feelings of exhaustion or apathy. Therefore, it's important to understand the relationship among these variables in the scholastic world. The present study aimed to understand the relationship between Perfectionism, Procrastination and Burnout among University students. For this purpose, a sample of 60 young adults in the age range of 18-25 was taken. Standardized measures were administered to measure Perfectionism, Procrastination and Burnout. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship between Procrastination and Burnout as well as a significant positive relationship between Socially-prescribed perfectionism with both Procrastination and Burnout. However, findings revealed no significant relationship of perfectionism with procrastination as well as with burnout. The findings highlighted that in order to reduce procrastination and burnout among university students it is important to acknowledge socially prescribed perfectionism.

Keywords: *Perfectionism, Procrastination, Burnout, University Students.*

1. Introduction

In the modern pedagogical environment, students have substantial pressure from their teachers, family and other to achieve higher standards of performance. While, other individuals can be motivated if one strives for excellence but excessive burden to be perfect in all aspects may lead to maladaptive psychological outcomes. One trait which emerged considerably is

perfectionism, which is most closely associated with procrastination, a kind of uninterested behaviour along with burnout, a psychological state. These factors play a dominant role in influencing student's academic performance, and overall well-being. However, the question arises whether these three variables have any significant relationship with one another or not.

Perfectionism is a psychological trait characterized by having negative self-doubt about oneself, even always trying to raise the bar higher and not wanting to commit any kind of mistake. In other words perfectionism is establishing a commitment for achievement, having low self-esteem or a need for control on everything. Researches often conceptualize perfectionism as multidimensional construct comprising of sub-dimensions such as socially prescribed perfectionism, self-oriented perfectionism, and other-oriented perfectionism.

Another important behaviour which can be observed is of procrastination, which can be referred as delaying the tasks that need to be completed, even though it will lead to negative outcomes. Academic procrastination occurs when students willingly put off their academic work despite knowing the consequences that they have to face. While procrastination is often viewed as a time management issue, researchers suggested it as strongly associated with emotional regulation, high perceived stress, being perfectionist and fear of failure.

Burnout, a closely related construct with these other two constructs. Burnout is a psychological state characterised by mental fatigue, depersonalization, and having a decreased sense of personal achievement in whatever we do. In other words, burnout can be described as getting tired and worn out. Burnout can be associated with unmanageable stress, exhaustion which can further lead to various problems like anxiety, insomnia, weakened immune system and other mental and health related problems. Academic burnout can be defined as a feeling of unwillingness, mental weariness and a sense of inefficacy as a student in their conceptual work. Due to student's competitive environment, high end expectations for accomplishment and massive workloads, Academic burnout has been progressively reported among university students.

Thus, all three constructs significantly influence and are linked to one another, which can also be seen in the studies discussed below.

Hill and Curran (2016) examined the relationship between multidimensional perfectionism and burnout across different domains such as work, sport and education. The study included 43 studies with the effect size of 663. Using meta-analysis, findings revealed that perfectionistic strivings had non-significant relationship with burnout and symptoms of burnout. Whereas perfectionistic concerns were positively correlated with burnout and its symptoms. Another study was conducted by Xie et al. (2018) to examine the relationship

between multidimensional perfectionism and procrastination. The findings revealed that perfectionistic strivings were negatively correlated with procrastination. While perfectionistic concerns were positively correlated with procrastination. Additionally, self-efficacy was found to mediate the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and procrastination.

A cross-sectional study was conducted by Enayati and Tabar (2017) among students of Mazandaran University of Medical Sciences and Islamic Azad University to examine the relationship between student's attitudes towards the university, academic procrastination and academic burnout. The results revealed a significant positive correlation of student's attitudes with both academic procrastination and academic burnout. Further, findings revealed that procrastination, particularly intentional procrastination and mental and physical, mediated the relationship between student's attitudes toward the university and academic burnout.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Perfectionism

According to Flett and Hewitt (2002), perfectionism is defined as "characterized by striving for flawlessness and setting of excessively high standards for performance accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluations of one's behaviour." Hollender (1965) identified perfectionism as "a maladaptive personality trait, driven by persistent and unrealistic expectations for impeccable performance from oneself or those around them in every context" (Fang & Liu, 2022).

A study was conducted by Bisht and Sethi (2025) to examine the impact of perfectionism and self-compassion on academic burnout among higher education students. Findings revealed no significant gender differences in levels of perfectionism, self-compassion, or academic burnout. Additionally, perfectionism showed no notable correlation with self-compassion, even showed weak negative relation with academic burnout. In contrast, there was a significant negative relationship between self-compassion and academic burnout. Further, analysis using regression technique indicates self-compassion as negative predictor of academic burnout whereas, perfectionism didn't emerge as negative predictor.

Another study was conducted by Zhang et al. (2007) to identify the association between perfectionism, academic burnout and engagement among college students using a dual-process model. Findings revealed that the burnout and engagement were moderately and negatively correlated with efficacy, loaded better as an extended engagement dimension. Additionally, maladaptive perfectionism was correlated with burnout, while positive perfectionism with engagement.

Jadidi et al. (2011) conducted a study to explore the relation between perfectionism and academic procrastination among university students of Tehran city. Findings revealed that the three dimensions of perfectionism- concern over mistakes, parental criticism, and doubts about actions were positively and significantly correlated with academic procrastination, whereas the organization dimension was negatively and significantly correlated with it.

2.2 Academic Burnout

According to Pines (1980) and Meier (1985), academic burnout is defined as “the exhaustion of students’ energy due to long-term, academic pressure and burden, the gradual loss of enthusiasm for schoolwork and activities, indifferences and alienation from classmates, and lack of enthusiasm for schoolwork.” Soffeli (2002) proposed that academic burnout “combines emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and academic inefficiency due to the persistent failure to effectively manage learning stress.”

Fathi et al. (2025) examined the relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout, considering the mediating role of academic procrastination and academic engagement among undergraduate students at Payame Noor University of Shiraz. The findings revealed that academic burnout was positively associated with academic procrastination and maladaptive perfectionism. However, was negatively associated with adaptive perfectionism and academic engagement. Additionally, perfectionism indirectly influence academic burnout through academic procrastination and academic engagement.

Govicar et al. (2024) conducted a study to examine the influence of academic burnout on academic procrastination among university students at the Faculty of Psychology, Samarinda. Findings revealed that academic burnout significantly influenced the academic procrastination, with a p value of $0.000(<0.05)$.

Faiman et al. (2025) examined the relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout among honours, high-achieving non-honours and typical undergraduate students at a mid-sized university, United States. Findings revealed that honours students were predominantly identified as maladaptive perfectionists, high-achieving non-honours as maladaptive or non-perfectionists, while typical students were classified as non-perfectionists. Further analysis revealed significant differences in academic burnout based on perfectionism type. Thus, the adaptive perfectionists showed higher levels of academic burnout than others.

2.3 Academic Procrastination

According to Johnson and Bloom (1995) procrastination is defined “as the postponement of completion of task or failure to meet deadlines, even though the individual

would meet adverse outcomes and feel uncomfortable as a result.” Solomon and Rothblum (1984), defined procrastination “as delay in conjunction with subjective discomfort.”

A study was conducted by Demir et al. (2017) to examine the relationship between the academic procrastination and the burnout levels among university students at Gazi University. Findings revealed no significant gender differences in variables. However, a significant difference was observed in burnout subscales based on department and grade level. While, no significant differences were found in the total scores of academic procrastination. Further analysis revealed a statistically negative relationship between the academic procrastination and burnout levels.

Another study was conducted by Ashraf et al. (1992) in Pakistan, to investigate the impact of self-efficacy and perfectionism on academic procrastination among university students. The findings revealed that perfectionism showed significant relationship with academic procrastination, whereas self-efficacy showed no significant impact. Additionally, findings revealed no significant gender differences.

Capan (2010) conducted a study to investigate whether perfectionist personality trait predict academic procrastination and life satisfaction among university students at Anadolu University. Findings revealed that self-oriented perfectionist personality trait significantly predicted both academic procrastination and life satisfaction.

3. Purpose

The purpose is to study the relationship of perfectionism, procrastination and burnout among university students.

4. Hypothesis

H1: There will be a significant positive relationship between Procrastination and Burnout.

H2: Perfectionism will have a significant positive relationship with Burnout.

H3: There will be a significant positive relationship between Perfectionism and Procrastination.

5. Method

5.1 Sample

A total sample of N=60, was collected via convenience sampling form the city of Jalandhar.

5.2 Measures

Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale-Short Form (MPS-SF): The Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale was used to measure personal characteristics and traits among University students for the study. The scale was developed by (Hewitt et al., 2008). The scale consisted 15 items and the 7 point rating scale which included, Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (7). The scale included further sub-dimensions that are Self-Oriented, Other Oriented, Socially Prescribed.

The General Procrastination Scale (GPS): The General Procrastination Scale was used to measure procrastination among University students in 4 domains- Academic, Workplace, Medical and Civic responsibilities related procrastination for the study. The scale was developed by (Lodha et al., 2016). The scale consisted of 23 items, which are rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Never (1) to Always (5). The scale also consisted reverse scoring of the items 5, 8, 12, 16, 18, 21 and 23.

Burnout Assessment Tool for Students (BAT-S): The Burnout Assessment Tool for Students was used to measure academic burnout among University students for the study. The scale was developed by (Carmona-Halty et al., 2024). The scale consisted of 12 items which are assessed using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Never (1) to Always (5). The scale includes the four dimensions of academic burnout that are Exhaustion, Mental Distance, Cognitive Impairment, and Emotional Impairment.

5.3 Procedure

The study was conducted by collecting responses from participants using Google Forms. Informed consent was obtained from all the participants before they began the survey. Each participant was informed about the purpose of the study and thanked for their cooperation. Standardised measures were administered to the participants.

6. Results

Table 1: N, Mean and Standard Deviation

	Procrastination	Burnout	Perfectionism	Self-Oriented	Other Oriented	Socially Prescribed
N	60	60	60	60	60	60
Mean	65.0	38.0	64.9	25.0	20.8	24.0
Standard deviation	10.3	9.77	10.7	3.97	4.81	5.43

Table 2: *Correlation between Perfectionism, Academic Procrastination and Academic Burnout*

	Perfectionism	Self-Oriented	Other Oriented	Socially Prescribed	Procrastination	Burnout
Perfectionism	—					
Self-Oriented	0.779***	—				
Other Oriented	0.843***	0.475***	—			
Socially Prescribed	0.834***	0.564***	0.522***	—		
Procrastination	0.247	0.197	0.024	0.453***	—	
Burnout	0.215	0.049	0.128	0.328*	0.348**	—

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

7. Discussion of Results

The objective of the study was to analyse the relationship among perfectionism, procrastination and burnout among university students. The results found that there is significant positive relationship between Burnout and Socially Prescribed perfectionism ($r=0.32$, $p<.05$); as well with Procrastination ($r=0.34$, $p<.01$). Further, results found that there is significant positive relationship between Procrastination and Socially Prescribed perfectionism ($r=0.45$, $p<.001$). Even, there is significant positive relationship of Socially Prescribed perfectionism with Perfectionism ($r=0.83$, $p<.001$); Self-oriented perfectionism ($r=0.56$, $p<.001$) and also with Other Oriented perfectionism ($r=0.52$, $p<.001$).

Additionally, Other Oriented perfectionism have significant positive relationship with both Perfectionism ($r=0.84$, $p<.001$) and Self-oriented perfectionism ($r=0.47$, $p<.001$). Also, there is significant positive relationship between Self-oriented perfectionism and Perfectionism ($r=0.77$, $p<.001$). However, results revealed no significant correlation between Perfectionism and Procrastination. Even, findings showed no significant relationship between Burnout and Perfectionism.

The results of the present study supports the hypothesis that there will be a significant positive relationship between Procrastination and Burnout and there will be a significant positive relationship between Socially Prescribed Perfectionism and Burnout. The findings also confirm that Socially Prescribed Perfectionism will have a significant positive relationship with Academic Procrastination. However, results indicated that Perfectionism was not significantly associated with either Burnout or Procrastination.

The present results are consistent with Yu et al. (2016) works which was to examine the relationship among academic self-efficacy, socially prescribed perfectionism, and academic burnout in medical students. The findings found socially prescribed perfectionism correlated significantly with burnout. Similarly, these results are consistent with Flett et al. (1992) study which was to examine the relationship between different dimensions of perfectionism and procrastinatory behaviour among college students. Findings reported that socially prescribed perfectionism was strongly correlated with procrastination. In contrast, self-oriented and other-oriented perfectionism showed weak correlation.

8. Conclusion

The present study aimed to understand the relationship of perfectionism, procrastination and burnout among university students. For this purpose, a sample of 60 young adults in the range of 18-25 was taken. Standardized measures were administered to measure the Perfectionism, Procrastination and Burnout. The results revealed a significant positive relationship between burnout and procrastination as well as significant positive relationship between Socially Prescribed perfectionism with both Procrastination and Burnout. However, findings revealed no significant relationship of perfectionism with procrastination as well as with burnout.

Certain limitations of this study could be addressed in future research. For example, the study used a cross-sectional method, which does not demonstrate cause-and-effect relationship between perfectionism, burnout and procrastination, but only shows the correlation among them. Moreover, future research should use longitudinal design to examine how procrastination and burnout can be influenced by procrastination over time. Future researches can potentially explore various mediators such as perceived stress, self-efficacy, mental well-being, or psychological distress between socially prescribed perfectionism or in general perfectionism and burnout.

The findings suggested that universities should conduct workshops to help students differentiate between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism. Even, should provide learning methods to prioritize your work, structured learning sessions on time management, and how to set their goals to reduce procrastination. Students should introduce themselves with stress reduction techniques. Furthermore, teachers should promote a supportive and pleasant environment and should give the worldly knowledge instead of creating excessive performance pressure within a time limit.

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