The Relationship Between Perfectionism and Academic Procrastination in College Students Learning Online Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Procrastination is a phenomenon that is often found among students. In the field of education, procrastination behavior is known as academic procrastination. The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination in college students learning online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This study is a quantitative correlational study involving 366 participants using convenience sampling technique. The instruments used to measure variables are the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale by Hewitt and Flett, and the Tuckman Procrastination Scale by Tuckman. Data analysis was performed using the Spearman correlation test. The results showed a significant negative relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination, a significant positive relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic procrastination, and no significant relationship between other-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination.

Keywords: Perfectionism, academic procrastination, college students, online learning, COVID-19 pandemic

1. INTRODUCTION

Procrastination is a phenomenon that is often found among students. Tuckman [1] defines procrastination as a habit of wasting time, delaying, and not completing something, that should be done, deliberately. Procrastination behaviour in the field of education is known as academic procrastination. The academic procrastination has many negative effects such as the decrease of academic grades (Beswick et al., [2]), anxiety, anger, shame, dissatisfaction, sadness, feelings of pressure, feelings of guilt, or feelings of discomfort (Grunschel et al., Patrzek et al., Pychyl et al., Rothblum et al., Tice & Baumeister in Steel & Klingsieck, [3]).

Although procrastination has many negative effects, many students still procrastinate. The results of research by Haryanti and Santoso [4] show the percentage of procrastination among 127 students. The research shows that 74% of students are in the medium category to procrastinate, 13.4% of students are in the high category to procrastinate, and 12.6% of students are in the low category to procrastinate. The results of research by Saman [5] show the causes of procrastination among 230 students, namely delays in doing assignments (41.3%) and doing more fun activities (53.47%). The results of research by Ramadhatni [6] showed that 92% of 30 students had procrastinated. Academic procrastination occurs due to internal and external factors. External factors of procrastination are factors that come from outside of individuals such as parenting styles, environmental conditions (Ilfiandra [7]), and teaching strategies or models used by teachers. (Babadoğan, [8]). While the internal factors are factors that cause procrastination in individuals (Ilfiandra [7]), such as self-efficacy (Damri et al. [9]; Sandra & Djalali [10]), self-regulation (Sirois & Pychyl [11]), fear of failure, and perfectionism (Burka & Yuen [12]).

Frost et al. [13] defines perfectionism as a trait that involves personal standards that are too high and over concerns with the quality of performance. Sraintih [14] explains that perfectionist individuals require that everything should be perfect, and they often have intangible desires, so that these individuals postpone their tasks because they are unable to achieve high standards. According to Hewitt and Flett [15], perfectionism is divided into three dimensions, namely: (a) Self-oriented perfectionism refers to individuals having a desire to achieve perfection based on their own desires; (b) Other-oriented perfectionism refers to individuals having high expectations and wanting others around them to be perfect too; and (c) Socially prescribed perfectionism refers to individuals having a desire to achieve perfection based on the others’ expectations.

Several studies have revealed a relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination. The results of the studies prove that there is a positive relationship between other-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism with academic procrastination, and there is no relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination (Setiawan &
Faradina [16]). Previous research conducted by Flett et al. [17] also showed a significant relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic procrastination. Meanwhile, different results were revealed by Anisahwati [18] who found a positive relationship between other-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination and no relationship among self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and academic procrastination. Closson and Boutilier [19] argue that there is a negative relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination. The same results were also revealed by Çapan [20] who indicated a negative relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination, and that there was no relationship among other-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism and academic procrastination.

2.2 Online learning methods have been tended to be carried out since the Coronavirus Disease-19 (COVID-19) is stipulated as a pandemic. This online learning is carried out in order to encourage students and lecturers to follow physical and social distancing protocols (Khasanah et al. [21]). Some studies have found some positive impacts of online learning, such as flexibility in lecture schedules (Firman & Rahman [22]), increasing sense of responsibility (Kuo et al. [23]), and increasing creativity (Darmalaksana et al. [24]). Although there are many positive impacts felt by students related to online learning, there are also negative impacts raised due to online learning that were imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results of research by Kusmayat et al. [25] showed that 59.5% of students objected to assignments given by lecturers during the COVID-19 pandemic and 60% of students experienced psychological pressure. According to Aziz and Rahardjo [26], the psychological pressure experienced by students can encourage them to procrastinate.

To support the phenomenon of perfectionism in academic procrastination during the COVID-19 pandemic, the researchers have conducted a field study by interviewing five private university students with active status. Based on the results of the interview, the researchers found out that two out of five students had done procrastination due to the implementation of online learning. The researchers also found out some other reasons for the two students doing procrastination, namely the feedback that was difficult to understand which caused anxiety, a lot of material that was poorly understood, and frequent miscommunication which caused anxiety and stress.

Meanwhile, different results from the three other students who felt motivated to do assignments during online learning were found out too. Several reasons why the three students did not procrastinate during the implementation of online learning are the desire to understand the material from the assignment so that they took the initiative to start assignments as soon as possible, the desire to relieve anxiety and stress caused by the number of tasks and the fear for a lot of assignment and getting bad results. Thus, based on the results of the interview, it can be concluded that during the implementation of online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, not all students procrastinate.

Refferring to the results of previous studies and current phenomena, the researchers found out that there were various results regarding the relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The researchers are also interested in conducting a research related to the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination in students studying online due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

1.1. Paper Structure

The structure of this writing is divided into five parts. The first part is an introduction that contains background of the problem and the structure of the writing. The second part is the literature review consisting of theories related to academic procrastination and perfectionism. The third section discusses research methods regarding research participants and research instruments. The fourth section discusses the research findings. The fifth part is the last part which contains conclusions, discussions and suggestions.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Academic Procrastination

Etymologically, procrastination comes from Latin words, namely “pro” which means moving forward, and “crastinus” which means tomorrow. Thus, procrastination can be said as delaying something until tomorrow (Burka & Yuen [12]). Tuckman [1] defines procrastination as a tendency to waste time, delay, and not finish the work that should be done, deliberately. Meanwhile, Steel and Klingsieck [3] define academic procrastination as the behaviour of delaying learning related activities that individuals deliberately carry out, and those individuals realize that that behaviour has a negative effect.

Tuckman [1] states three aspects of procrastination, namely (a) the tendency to waste time, (b) the tendency to avoid tasks (task avoidance), and (c) the tendency to pass the blame on others (blaming others). First, the tendency to waste time refers to Individuals who tend to spend time until they finally procrastinate. Second, the tendency to avoid the assignments given to them refers to Individuals who have a tendency to avoid tasks because those individuals experience obstacles in doing things that are considered unattractive for them. Individuals have a habit of giving up when they are given a difficult task. Instead of doing the task, they tend to engage in other pleasant activities that are easily obtained. Third, the tendency to pass the blame on other individuals refers to those who have a tendency to blame other individuals or external events that make them failed as a consequence of procrastination.

2.2. Perfectionism

It is stated in Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI [27]) that perfectionism refers to the character or trait of an
individual who assumes that an imperfect thing is unacceptable, whereas a perfectionist is an individual who wants everything to be perfect. Hewitt and Flett [15] define perfectionism as a behaviour or attitude of avoiding mistakes and getting perfection in all aspects of individual activities.

Hewitt and Flett [15] suggest three dimensions of perfectionism that can be distinguished not only from the behaviour pattern, but also from the object of the perfectionism behaviour. The three dimensions of perfectionism are (a) Self-oriented perfectionism, (b) Other-oriented perfectionism, and (c) Socially prescribed perfectionism.

The first dimension is self-oriented perfectionism. In this case, individuals have a desire to achieve perfection based on their own desires. Individuals with self-oriented perfectionism set the right standards for themselves, and they evaluate themselves assertively. The second dimension is other-oriented perfectionism. In this case, an individual has a high expectation and wants perfection from other individuals around him/her. Individuals with other-oriented perfectionism have intangible standards for other individuals around them. They want other individuals to do their job perfectly and evaluate the performance of other individuals firmly. The third dimension is the socially prescribed perfectionism. In this case, an individual has a desire to achieve perfection based on other individuals' expectation for themselves. Individuals with the socially prescribed perfectionism feel that the individuals around them have an intangible standard for them. They evaluate themselves assertively and pressure themselves to be perfect. Because the standards given by other individuals are considered excessive and uncontrollable, individuals with socially prescribed perfectionism experience failure and negative emotional state, such as anger, anxiety, and depression. (Hewitt & Flett [15]).

3. METHODS

3.1. Participants and Research Design

The participants in this study were students registered as active status by the university administration. The students took part in online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation. The participants consisted of male and female students in the age range of 18 to 25 years. The sampling technique used was convenience sampling. The total number of participants was 366 students.

3.2. Research Instrument

3.2.1. Academic Procrastination

This study used the Tuckman Procrastination Scale proposed by Tuckman in 1991 as the academic procrastination scale. This scale measures three dimensions of procrastination. There are 35 items consisting of 24 positive items and 11 negative items. The type of scale used is a Likert scale with four alternative answers: (1) SD (strongly disagree), (2) D (disagree), (3) A (agree), and (4) SA (strongly agree). The results of Reliability test can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1 Reliability Test of Academic Procrastination Scale

| Dimension          | α Cronbach Before Reliability Test | α Cronbach After Reliability Test |
|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Wasting time       | .695                               | .825                             |
| Task avoidance     | .762                               | .774                             |
| Blaming others     | .360                               | .447                             |

3.2.2. Perfectionism

This study used the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale compiled by Hewitt and Flett in 1990 as the perfectionism scale. This scale measures three dimensions of perfectionism. There are 45 items consisting of 27 positive items and 18 negative items. The type of scale used is a Likert scale with four alternative answers: (1) SD (strongly disagree), (2) D (disagree), (3) A (agree), and (4) SA (strongly agree). The result of Reliability test can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Reliability Test of Perfectionism Scale

| Dimension                        | α Cronbach Before Reliability Test | α Cronbach After Reliability Test |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Self-oriented perfectionism      | .876                              | .876                             |
| Other-oriented perfectionism     | .691                              | .735                             |
| Socially Prescribed Perfectionism| .718                              | .756                             |
4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Normality Test

The normality test was carried out using One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov. The results of the normality test showed that the value of academic procrastination was $p < 0.05$, while the value of perfectionism variable was $p > 0.05$. Thus, it can be concluded that the distribution of data on the academic procrastination variable is not normal, and the distribution of data on the perfectionism variable is a normal distribution. The results of the normality test can be seen in Table 3.

| Variable              | Kolmogorov-Smirnov | p    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|------|
| Academic Procrastination | .048              | .040 |
| Perfectionism         | .032              | .200 |

4.2. Hypothesis Testing

The correlation test between perfectionism and academic procrastination was carried out using Spearman. The analysis revealed that there was no significant relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination with a value of $r = -0.071$, $p = 0.178 (> 0.05)$.

| Perfectionism | Academic Procrastination | Explanation |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| r             | -.071                    |             |
| p             | .178                     | Not Significant |

The correlation test between the dimensions of perfectionism and academic procrastination was carried out using Spearman. The correlation test results showed a significant negative relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination with a value of $r = -0.191$, $p = 0.000 (< 0.05)$. The results of the correlation test also showed a significant positive relationship between the socially prescribed perfectionism and academic procrastination with a value of $r = 0.120$, $p = 0.022 (> 0.05)$. Meanwhile, the results of the correlation test showed that there was no significant relationship between other-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination with a value of $r = -0.005$, $p = 0.921 (> 0.05)$.

| Dimension of Perfectionism | Correlation Coefficient | $P_{value}$ | Explanation |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Self-oriented perfectionism | -.191**                  | .000        | Significant |
| Other-oriented perfectionism | -.005                   | .921        | Not Significant |
| Socially prescribed perfectionism | .120*                   | .022        | Significant |

4.3. Additional Testings

4.3.1. The Difference of Academic Procrastination Based on Gender

The results of the descriptive analysis of academic procrastination in terms of gender show that men have a greater mean, namely 200.48. Based on the results of the Mann Whitney U test, the U value was 11188, $p = 0.071 (> 0.05)$. Thus, it can be concluded that academic procrastination does not show a significant difference in terms of gender.
4.3.2. The Difference of Perfectionism Based on the Last GPA

The results of the descriptive analysis of perfectionism in terms of the last GPA show that participants who had the last GPA in the range 3.5 to 4 had higher mean self-oriented perfectionism and other-oriented perfectionism, namely 2.9872 for self-oriented perfectionism and 2.4220 for other-oriented perfectionism. Meanwhile, participants who had the last GPA in the range of 2.5 to 2.99 had a higher mean socially prescribed perfectionism value, namely 2.6667.

| Last GPA        | Mean Self-oriented Perfectionism | Mean Other-oriented Perfectionism | Mean Socially Prescribed Perfectionism |
|-----------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 3.5 – 4         | 2.9872                          | 2.4220                            | 2.4072                                 |
| 3 – 3.49        | 2.8392                          | 2.2885                            | 2.4627                                 |
| 2.5 – 2.99      | 2.8667                          | 2.2628                            | 2.6667                                 |
| Have no GPA yet | 2.8409                          | 2.2655                            | 2.3772                                 |

The test for differences in perfectionism in terms of the last GPA was carried out using the Kruskal Wallis H-Test. The test results showed that the self-oriented perfectionism dimension obtained an H-value of 8.692, $p = 0.013$ ($< 0.05$). The other-oriented perfectionism dimension obtained H-value of 9.785, $p = 0.008$ ($< 0.05$). Meanwhile, the socially prescribed perfectionism dimension obtained H-value of 5.445, $p = 0.066$ ($> 0.05$). Thus, it can be concluded that the dimensions of self-oriented perfectionism and other-oriented perfectionism show significant differences reviewed from the last GPA, while the dimension of the socially prescribed perfectionism does not show significant differences in terms of the last GPA.

| Perfectionism Dimension | H     | P     |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|
| Self-oriented perfectionism | 8.692 | .013  |
| Other-oriented perfectionism | 9.975 | .008  |
| Socially prescribed perfectionism | 5.445 | .066  |

Based on the results of the analysis, it is known that there is no significant relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination. The results of this study are consistent with research conducted by Wattimena [28] which states that there is no significant relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination. Steel [29] explains that academic procrastination can be caused by other things such as task aversiveness, self-control, and achievement motivation.

After the main data have been analyzed, the results show that there is a significant negative relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination. The results of this study are also consistent with a research conducted by Çapan [8], and Closson and Boutilier [19], stating that there is a negative relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination. Closson and Boutilier [19] explain that individuals with self-oriented perfectionism have a low level of academic procrastination because those individuals spend more time and effort on their studies. Çapan [8] explains that individuals who have self-oriented perfectionism follow rigid and unrealistic standards set by them, while they assess themselves in order to maintain or achieve perfection in their work. Individuals with self-oriented perfectionism get motivation that comes from them and tend to strive for their success.

The results of the analysis revealed that there was a significant positive relationship between the socially prescribed perfectionism and academic procrastination. The results of this study are consistent with a research conducted by Ferrari et al. [31] and Steel [29] in which there is no significant difference between men
and women. The result indicates that academic procrastination is not determined by gender. It was also found out from the results of the additional analysis that there are significant differences in the self-oriented perfectionism in terms of the last GPA. The results of this study support Closson and Boutilier [19] who explain that individuals with self-oriented perfectionism have a high academic engagement so that those individuals use more time and effort for their studies. In addition, the other-oriented perfectionism in terms of the last GPA shows a significant difference. This is because individuals with other-oriented perfectionism expect and get perfect help, input, and suggestions from other individuals (Anisahwati [18]).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of the analysis, it can be concluded that there is no significant relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination. In addition, the results of the analysis also revealed that there was a significant negative relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic procrastination, a significant positive relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic procrastination, and there was no significant relationship between other-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination.

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