

A comparison of academic procrastination and personality traits of male and female students

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Abstract

The aim of the present study was to compare the academic procrastination and personality traits of male and female students. For this purpose, 197 male and female students (100 girls and 97 boys) were selected through cluster sampling. Then they were asked to complete Solomon and Rothblum academic procrastination scale, and the short form of NEO five-factor personality questionnaire. Multivariate analysis of variance test was used to analyze the results. The results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in various components of procrastination such as procrastination in exam, procrastination in class assignments, or procrastination in homework. But there is a significant difference between male and female students in the discomfort of procrastination and the desire to change the habit of procrastination, so that the average of the discomfort of procrastination and desire to change procrastination habits, in male students is more than females and they are more interested to obviate their own negligence. Also, comparing male and female students in the five major factors of personality showed that there is a significant difference between male and female students in the factors of task-orienting, agreeableness, and extroversion; as the average of the so called variables in boys is more than girls. However, there is no significant difference between boys and girls in the factors of neuroticism and openness to experience.

Key words: procrastination, academic procrastination, personality, students.

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Introduction

Procrastination or postponing works to the future is so widespread that it may be considered as one of the inherent tendencies of human being. Although procrastination is not always a problem, but in most cases, through inhibition of progression and not achieving goals, can have undesirable and irreparable consequences. In defining this structure, researchers refer to sloth and postponement in doing important works (at expected time), along with mental uncomfortable experiences (Jokar and Delavarpoor, 2007). Procrastination due to the complexity and its cognitive, emotional and behavioral components, has various kinds, including academic procrastination (Zimmerman, 2000), decisional procrastination (Effort and Ferrari, 1989), neurotic procrastination (Ellis and Knaus, 1979), and compulsive procrastination (Ferrari, 1991). Rothblum, Solomon and Mutakami (1986) have defined this type of procrastination as the dominant and continual tendency of learners to postpone educational activities, which is almost always associated with anxiety. One of the familiar examples is to postpone studying the lessons until the exam night and the hurry and anxiety resulting from that, which gripes student or students. Wiehe (2003) believes that regardless of etiology, procrastination, because of its negative cognitive and emotional consequences, is a maladaptive behavior. Personality traits are enduring patterns of perceiving, communication style, and the thought way of each person about himself and his environment, which are represented in a wide range of individual and social contexts. Personality psychologists have tried over the years to fully study the personality structure and define and classify the range of individual differences, including normal and abnormal personality traits. Progression in normal and abnormal areas has had a relatively separate process and these two areas have often been considered as two qualitatively distinct systems (Ball, 2001; quoted from De Clercq and Defruyt, 2003). The normal area of personality has mainly been described by dimension system which the most known of them in the present time, is the five-factor model of personality. None of alternative models, has such consistent empirical evidences as this pattern (Widiger, 2000; Cho and Springer, 2005). This model distinguishes between five main aspects of personality including neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, and agreeableness, and at a lower level, each factor consists of six facets or components. For example, components of neuroticism include anxiety, anger, depression, self-consciousness, impulsiveness and vulnerability (Costa and Mc Crae, 1992, as quoted by Goldberg, 1992). The relationship between procrastination and personality traits has always been of interest to researchers. Solomon and Rothblum (1984), Watson (2001), Steele and others (2001) believe that there is a relationship between procrastination and some personality traits. Despite the emphasize of researchers, there has not been a coherent research about the relation between two variables of procrastination and personality traits, up to today in our country, and so the aim of this research is to study procrastination and personality traits among the undergraduate students. Procrastination is associated with two major models for personality: three-factor model including extroversion, Neuroticism and psychosis (Eysenck and Eysenck, 1985), and the five-factor model including neuroticism, extroversion, openness, conscientiousness, and agreeableness (Costa and Mc Crae, 1992). Based on the three-factor model of McCown, Petzel and Rupert (1987), procrastination has linear relation with extroversion and nonlinear relation with neuroticism. According to this research, people with high and low neuroticism showed high scores of procrastination. According to the five factor model, procrastination is associated with low conscientiousness and with neuroticism (Watson, 2001). Research by Costa and McCrae (1992) showed that there is a relationship between procrastination and dimensions of the five-

factor personality model. According to Costa and McCrae, consciousness consists of the following dimensions: competence, discipline, duty, trying to improve, self-regulation and thinking. The neuroticism factor consists of anxiety, anger and hostility, depression, shyness, impulsiveness and vulnerability. Lay, Kovacs and Danto (1998), found a relationship between low consciousness and procrastination in children of 7-11 years old in elementary school. They also showed that procrastination may be due to preliminary paradigms given from personality traits of teachers or coaches. Johnson and Bloom (1995), in a research on young adults indicated that there is a relation between neuroticism, consciousness and procrastination. All aspects of consciousness had an inverse relation with procrastination and self-regulation was a stronger predictive compared to other factors; and the relation between procrastination and neuroticism was the weakest; and among these aspects, impulsiveness and vulnerability were stronger predictive for procrastination. Schouwenberg and Lay (1995) also considered the relationship between the five-factor model dimensions and characteristics of procrastination which found similar results, but their results showed that there is a negative correlation between the activity dimension of extroversion with procrastination, and a positive correlation between the fantasy dimension of openness with procrastination. Also in another research McCown and Johnson (1991) showed that neuroticism had a relationship with the total score of procrastination, and lack of confidence in readiness and anxiety had a negative relationship with the total number of studying hours. Negligence or procrastination is one of the most common problems among students. In recent years, attention to procrastination has found a special place in contemporary psychology. Thus, this study and other similar ones, are important and necessary from both basic and applied aspects. Therefore, according to the above statements, the hypothesis of this study include:

1. There is a difference between male and female students in different components of procrastination.
2. There is a difference between male and female students in the five major personality factors.

Methodology

This study deals with the relation between procrastination and personality traits, so it is a correlation research (Delavar, 2008). In fact the researcher in this research, studies the amount of procrastination and its relationship with personality traits of male and female students. The study population consisted of all male and female students of the seventh and eighth areas of Tehran. From this population of male and female students, 197 male and female students (100 girls and 97 boys) were selected through cluster sampling. *Academic procrastination scale*: this scale was introduced for the first time by Solomon and Rothblum (1984), and was called academic procrastination scale. This scale has 27 items which examine three components. The first component, preparing for exams, consists of 8 questions and items such as "when studying for the exam I dream continually and it is difficult for me to focus" are located in this component; the second component is preparing for assignments which contains 11 items, and includes items such as "I postpone the assignments from one session to another session"; and the third component is preparing for the articles of the end of the course, which consists of 8 items and have items such as "when I have to prepare an article, I continually postpone it". In this scale, the items 21-23-25-15-16-2-3-5-9-11-13 are graded as reverse. In this scale, the items 7-8-18-19-26-27 which are not representatives of academic procrastination, have not been used in evaluation and interviews of academic procrastination. *The validity and reliability of the scale of academic procrastination*: the reliability of the academic procrastination scale, through Cronbach's alpha, in a study by Solomon (1998), was 0.64; the validity of the scale was also examined by Solomon (1998), using internal consistency validity which it was 0.84. The short form of five-factor personality questionnaire, is consisting of a 60-questions questionnaire which is designed to evaluate the five major personality traits quickly and concisely. The results of the studies by McCrae and Costa (1992) showed that correlation under the short form and long form scales is from 0.77 to 0.92. Also internal consistency under its scales are from 0.68 to 0.86. Scoring is based on five-point Likert, from completely disagree (score 1) to completely agree (score 5), and some of the questions are scored as reverse. This questionnaire has been normalized in Iran by Garoosi Farshi (1998) and the alpha coefficient obtained for the factor of neuroticism was 0.83, for extroversion was 0.75, for pleasantness was 0.80, for flexibility was 0.79 and for conscientiousness was 0.79. In addition, in a research by Rezaee and others (2012), alpha coefficients for the main factors of neuroticism, extroversion, flexibility, pleasantness, and conscientiousness, were 0.86, 0.73, 0.56, 0.68, 0.87 respectively. This questionnaire in the statistical society of students of humanities in Iran has an acceptable validity and reliability, and with a slight difference, has the same factorial structure which has been achieved in European and American countries (Kiamehr, 2002). The validity coefficient through internal consistency method for the factors of neuroticism, extroversion, conscientiousness, pleasantness, and flexibility had been 0.79, 0.76, 0.78, 0.54, 0.61 respectively. Zare'ee and Asadi (2011) have reported the validity coefficient of this questionnaire through alpha method for the factors of neuroticism, extroversion, flexibility, pleasantness, and conscientiousness, as 0.83, 0.75, 0.80, 0.79, and 0.79, respectively.

Results

To respond to the research hypotheses the variance analysis test was used. The results of the test are presented in the following tables.

Hypothesis 1. There is a difference between male and female students in different components of procrastination?

Table 1: Multivariate tests to investigate the effects of group of testees in the dependent variables

Index	The resource of change	Multivariate tests	The value of observation	F	The degree of freedom of hypothesis	The error of degree of freedom	The level of meaningfulness
Groups		Wilks Lambda	0.964	1.409	5	190	0.223

To answer this question, multivariate analysis of variance test was used. Results showed that there is no significant statistical difference between the dimensions of procrastination in male and female students.

Table 2: Results of univariate analysis of variance to assess various aspects of procrastination in male and female students

The resources of change	Dependent variable	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	F	Level of meaningfulness
Groups	Procrastination in exam	1.468	1	1.468	0.153	0.696
	Procrastination in class assignments	0.035	1	0.035	0.001	0.969
	Procrastination in homework	8.883	1	8.883	0.310	0.578
	Discomfort of procrastination	72.358	1	72.358	4.259	0.045
	Desire to change the habit of procrastination	76.698	1	76.698	6.887	0.009

As can be seen from the table, there is no significant difference between male and female students in various components of procrastination such as procrastination in exam, procrastination in class assignments, and procrastination in homework. But between male and female students in the discomfort of procrastination and desire to change the habit of procrastination, there is a meaningful difference at 0.05; so that the average of the discomfort of procrastination and desire to change procrastination habits, in male students is more than females and they are more interested to obviate their own negligence.

Hypothesis 2: There is a difference between male and female students in the five major personality factors?

Table 3: Multivariate tests to investigate effects of group of testees in the dependent variables

Index	The resource of change	Multivariate tests	The value of observation	F	The degree of freedom of hypothesis	The error of degree of freedom	The level of meaningfulness
Groups		Wilks Lambda	0.933	2.131	5	149	0.065

The results of multivariate variance analysis test showed that there is no significant relationship between male and female students in five major factors of personality.

Table 4: Results of univariate analysis of variance test to assess various aspects of procrastination in male and female students

The resources of change	Dependent variable	Sum of squares	Degree of freedom	Mean of squares	F	Level of meaningfulness
Groups	Neuroticism	6.561	1	6.561	0.173	0.678
	Openness in experience	0.550	1	0.550	0.034	0.854
	Task-orienting	292.092	1	292.092	10.087	0.002
	Agreeableness	52.893	1	52.893	3.128	0.032
	extroversion	26.479	1	26.479	2.479	0.040

As can be seen from the above table, there is a significant difference between male and female students in the factors of task-orienting, agreeableness and extroversion, while there is no significant relationship between male and female students in the factors of neuroticism and openness in experience.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of the present study was to compare the academic procrastination and personality traits of male and female students. For this purpose, 100 girls and 97 boys were selected through cluster sampling from the seventh and eighth areas of Tehran. After completing the survey questionnaires, the multivariate analysis of variance test was used to analyze the results. The results showed that there is no significant difference between male and female students in various components of procrastination such as procrastination in exam, procrastination in class assignments, or procrastination in homework. But there is a significant difference between male and female students in the discomfort of procrastination and the desire to change the habit of procrastination. The findings of this study is in line with the findings of the researchers such as McCown, Petzel and Rupert (1987), Watson (2001), Costa and Mc Crae (1992) and Johnson and Blum (1995). Regarding these findings we can say that there is a complex relationship between procrastination and features such as neuroticism. Whether some specific personality traits such as neuroticism or extroversion leads to procrastination, is not yet well understood. But it can be said that disagreeable or neurotic people, due to having features such as the general tendency towards experiencing negative emotions such as fear, sadness, hurry, anger and ..., are usually more susceptible to

behaviors such as postponing homework or chores. Moreover, this finding is consistent with the results achieved by Hashemi (2009). The results of the research by Hashemi shows that girls and boys are different in terms of the desire to change the habit of procrastination, so that the average desire of boys is more than girls and they are more interested to obviate their procrastination. Regarding this finding it could be said that due to cultural and social expectations from boys in the society, they do more efforts to meet these expectations and therefore one of the solutions to this problem is to reduce procrastination and procrastination to perform tasks and assignments on time. Also comparison of male and female students in the five major personality factors showed that there is a significant difference between male and female students in the factors of task-orienting, agreeableness, and extroversion; while there is no significant difference between male and female students in the factors of neuroticism and openness to experience. This finding is consistent with the results achieved by Hashemi (2009). The results by Hashemi showed that there is no significant difference between girls and boys in major factors of personality, meaning neuroticism, openness to experience, agreeableness and extroversion, but there is a significant difference between male and female students in the factor of task-orienting. Task-orienting is to control impulses, under prescribed exemplars by the society, which facilitates goal-directed behaviors and tasks, which includes features such as hard work, discipline, accuracy, reliability and compliance to rules and norms. Male and female students due to the inherent nature and different personality dimensions are different in their task-orienting. Now with regard to the above results, it is recommended that centers be established in schools to recognize the level of procrastination in students and train them to overcome this problem. Through implementation of programs to reduce procrastination on a large scale in the country, we should try to eliminate this problem among students. Regarding informing parents, teachers, and students about this field, comprehensive and effective activities should be done.

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