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# Relationship between Perfectionism, Fear of Failure and Procrastination among University Students

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***Abstract:*** University students frequently experience academic demands, performance expectations, and concerns about failure, which may influence how they approach academic tasks. The present study examined the relationship between perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination among university students. A quantitative correlational research design was used with a sample of 25 university students. Perfectionism was assessed using the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), fear of failure was measured using the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI), and procrastination was assessed using the General Procrastination Scale (GPS). Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationships among the three variables. The findings revealed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure ($r = .824$, $p < .001$). In contrast, the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination was positive but not statistically significant ($r = .352$), while fear of failure showed a very weak and non-significant relationship with procrastination ($r = .082$). Overall, the findings indicate that perfectionism was more strongly associated with fear of failure than with procrastination in the present sample. These results suggest that although perfectionistic tendencies may be closely linked with concerns about failure, their relationship with procrastination may be more complex. The findings should be interpreted cautiously given the small sample size and should not be generalized beyond the present sample without further evidence.

**Keywords:** *Perfectionism, Fear of Failure, Procrastination, University Students*

## 1. Introduction

University life includes academic requirements, deadlines, expectations, and pressure to do well. For many students, the desire to achieve high standards becomes closely linked with concerns about making mistakes or failing. Perfectionism is the tendency to set very high standards for oneself and to judge one's performance critically when those standards are not achieved. Fear of failure refers to the tendency to feel concerned or anxious about the possible negative outcomes of failure, whereas procrastination involves delaying or putting off a task even though one knows it needs to be completed. All three of these factors are especially relevant to university students, who regularly have to cope with academic assessments, competition, deadlines, and expectations regarding their future achievements.

Perfectionism is not necessarily negative, but when students have perfectionistic concerns, they may find academic tasks more demanding because they feel that their performance has to meet very high standards. In these cases, fear of failure may become more noticeable, particularly if mistakes are viewed negatively. This may be related to procrastination, since putting off a task can temporarily lessen the discomfort caused by difficult academic work or the possibility of not doing well. Hence, perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination may be connected to one another, although the nature and strength of these relationships may vary from person to person.

Earlier research supports these connections. In a study involving 156 undergraduate medical students, Cho and Lee (2022) examined self-oriented perfectionism, fear of failure, and academic procrastination. Their results showed that fear of failure mediated the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination. Likewise, Yosopov et al. (2024), who studied 327 undergraduate students, found that perfectionism, procrastination, and fear of failure were significantly related. Their findings also indicated that fear of failure mediated the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination. In another study, Balkis et al. (2024) investigated 354 undergraduate students and found that fear of failure mediated the relationship between irrational academic beliefs and academic procrastination, suggesting that concerns about failure may be relevant to students' tendency to delay academic tasks.

These concerns are also reflected in recent student data. According to the American College Health Association's Spring 2024 National College Health Assessment, 76.4% of the college students surveyed reported experiencing moderate or high levels of stress during the previous 30 days (American College Health Association, 2024). Since academic demands form

part of the broader stress experienced by university students, it is useful to examine the psychological factors that may be related to how students approach academic tasks.

Although earlier studies have examined perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination, more research can help us understand how these factors are related among university students. Looking at them together may provide a clearer view of the psychological factors associated with delaying academic tasks. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate the relationship between perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination among university students.

**2.1** ***Perfectionism***

***Operational Definitions***

Perfectionism is operationally defined as the setting of excessively high standards for performance accompanied by overly critical self-evaluation. The FMPS conceptualizes perfectionism through concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about actions, and organization.

In the present study, perfectionism is operationally defined as the level of perfectionistic tendencies indicated by participants' scores on the 35-item Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), with higher scores reflecting greater endorsement of perfectionistic characteristics.

Flett et al. (1992) examined different components of perfectionism and their relationship with procrastination among college students. The study found that socially prescribed perfectionism was particularly associated with procrastination, suggesting that pressure to meet others' expectations may influence students' tendency to delay tasks. The study also considered fear of failure as a factor related to these behaviours. These findings suggest that perfectionism may sometimes create pressure rather than simply encouraging better performance.

Ghosh and Roy (2017) investigated multidimensional perfectionism and procrastination among Indian university students. The study examined different dimensions of perfectionism rather than treating it as a single characteristic and found associations between perfectionistic tendencies and procrastination. The Indian university-student sample makes the study relevant when considering perfectionism within higher education. The findings indicate that the way students experience and respond to high personal or external standards may influence their behaviour.

A 2010 study examined perfectionism, procrastination, and life satisfaction among university students. The research explored how perfectionistic tendencies were related to students'

behaviour and broader personal experiences. The findings indicated a relationship between perfectionism and procrastination, suggesting that high standards and related concerns may sometimes interfere with timely completion of tasks. This study provides further support for examining perfectionism as a psychological factor among university students.

Yosopov et al. (2024) examined perfectionism and procrastination through failure-related processes among undergraduate students. The study focused on fear of failure and the tendency to generalize failure experiences as possible explanations for the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination. The findings suggest that perfectionistic students may be more vulnerable to procrastination when failure is perceived as particularly threatening. This study is relevant because it connects perfectionism with both failure-related concerns and procrastination.

### 2.2 *Fear of Failure*

#### *Operational Definitions*

Fear of failure is operationally defined as a set of cognitive, motivational, and relational appraisals concerning the anticipated consequences of failure. The PFAI assesses five such consequences: experiencing shame and embarrassment, devaluing one's self-estimate, having an uncertain future, important others losing interest, and upsetting important others.

In the present study, fear of failure is operationally defined as the level of failure-related apprehension indicated by participants' scores on the 25-item Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI), with higher scores reflecting greater fear of the anticipated consequences of failure.

Karim, Minarni, and Alim (2021) examined whether fear of failure could predict procrastination among university students. The study found a significant relationship between fear of failure and procrastination, indicating that students who are more concerned about failing may be more likely to postpone tasks. The findings suggest that avoiding uncomfortable feelings associated with failure may contribute to delaying behaviour. This study supports the importance of fear of failure when studying procrastination among university students.

Tan and Prihadi (2022) studied fear of failure and procrastination among undergraduate psychology students. Their findings indicated a positive relationship between fear of failure and procrastination. This suggests that students who are highly concerned about unsuccessful outcomes may delay tasks when they experience pressure surrounding performance. The study is

relevant because it directly examines fear of failure and procrastination within an undergraduate population.

Parlade (2022) examined fear of failure, mindfulness, and procrastination among university students. The study found that fear of failure was positively associated with procrastination, suggesting that students who experience greater concerns about failure may be more likely to delay tasks. The study also considered mindfulness as a psychological factor related to this pattern. Overall, the findings support the importance of emotional responses to failure when understanding procrastination.

Aldhi et al. (2026) examined fear of failure, procrastination, and academic performance among students in higher education. The study explored how fear of failure and procrastination were connected with academic outcomes. The findings highlight the importance of understanding procrastination alongside students' emotional responses to performance and provide recent evidence for examining fear of failure and procrastination within a higher-education setting.

**2.3 *Procrastination***

***Operational Definitions***

Procrastination is operationally defined as a tendency to delay or postpone intended activities or tasks, particularly when they could have been completed earlier. Lay's General Procrastination Scale was developed to assess general procrastinatory behaviour.

In the present study, procrastination is operationally defined as the tendency to delay the initiation or completion of intended tasks, as indicated by participants' scores on the 20-item General Procrastination Scale (GPS). Higher scores indicate greater procrastination tendencies.

Flett et al. (1992) examined procrastination among college students in relation to different aspects of perfectionism. The findings showed that socially prescribed perfectionism was associated with greater procrastination, indicating that perceived pressure to meet expectations may contribute to delaying academic tasks. The study therefore presents procrastination as a behaviour that can be influenced by psychological factors rather than simply by poor time management.

Ghosh and Roy (2017) examined procrastination in relation to multidimensional perfectionism among Indian university students. The findings showed that different forms of perfectionism were associated with students' tendency to delay tasks. This suggests that procrastination is not simply a matter of poor time management but may also be connected to how

students respond to high standards. The Indian university sample makes the study relevant to research on student procrastination.

Yosopov et al. (2024) investigated procrastination alongside perfectionism and failure-related experiences. The study found that fear of failure and negative interpretations of failure helped explain the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination. These findings suggest that students may postpone tasks when they anticipate failure or feel unable to meet their own standards. The study therefore provides support for examining all three variables together.

A 2022 study involving undergraduate medical students examined academic procrastination in relation to self-oriented perfectionism and fear of failure. The findings suggested that fear of failure played an important role in the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination. Students who set very high standards for themselves may experience greater concern about failing to meet those standards, which can contribute to delaying academic tasks. The study is relevant because it demonstrates how procrastination may be associated with the interaction of multiple psychological factors.

## 3. Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to examine the relationship between perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination among university students. The study aims to understand how perfectionistic tendencies and fear of failure are associated with students' tendency to delay or postpone tasks.

## 4. Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that perfectionism and fear of failure will be significantly associated with academic procrastination among university students.

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1 *Sample*

University students constituted the sample for the present study. Final sample size: 25 participants.

### 5.2 *Measures*

***Perfectionism Scale:*** The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

developed by Frost et al. (1990) was used to measure perfectionism among university students. The scale consists of 35 items with responses ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The subdimensions are Concern over Mistakes, Personal Standards, Parental Expectations, Parental Criticism, Doubts about Actions, and Organization.

***Fear of Failure Scale:*** The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) developed by Conroy et al. (2002) was used to measure fear of failure among university students. The scale consists of 25 items with responses ranging from 1 (Do Not Believe at All) to 5 (Believe 100%). The subdimensions are Fear of Experiencing Shame and Embarrassment, Fear of an Uncertain Future, Fear of Important Others Losing Interest, Fear of Upsetting Important Others, and Fear of Devaluing One's Self-Esteem.

***Procrastination Scale:*** The General Procrastination Scale (GPS) developed by Lay (1986) was used to measure procrastination among university students. The scale consists of 20 items with responses ranging from 1 (Extremely Uncharacteristic) to 5 (Extremely Characteristic).

### 5.3 *Procedure*

Data were collected from university students after obtaining informed consent. Participants completed the selected measures, and the collected responses were analysed statistically.

## 6. Analysis of Data

Appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to examine the relationships among perfectionism, fear of failure, and academic procrastination.

Descriptive statistics were computed for perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination among the 25 participants. The mean and standard deviation were calculated for each study variable.

Pearson correlation coefficients were examined to assess the associations among perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination.

## 7. Results

### 7.1 *Descriptive Statistics*

**Table 1.** *Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables*

| Variable | N | M | SD |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perfectionism** | 25 | 3.27 | 0.988 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Fear of Failure** | 25 | 1.92 | 1.24 |
| **Procrastination** | 25 | 2.87 | 0.409 |

As shown in Table 1, the mean score for perfectionism was 3.27 (SD = 0.988), whereas fear of failure had a mean score of 1.92 (SD = 1.24). Procrastination had a mean score of 2.87 (SD = 0.409). Fear of failure showed the greatest variability among the three variables, while procrastination scores were relatively consistent across participants.

### 7.2 *Correlation Analysis*

A strong positive correlation was observed between perfectionism and fear of failure, $r = .824$, $p < .001$. This indicates that higher levels of perfectionism were associated with higher levels of fear of failure in the present sample. The magnitude of this association was substantial and statistically significant.

The association between perfectionism and procrastination was positive but comparatively weaker ($r = .352$). The correlation between fear of failure and procrastination was very small ($r = .082$). Neither of these two correlations was marked as statistically significant in the provided analysis. Therefore, the available results do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that perfectionism or fear of failure was significantly associated with procrastination in this sample.

**Table 2**. *Correlation Matrix for Study Variables*

| Variable | Perfectionism | Fear of failure | Procrastination |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Perfectionism** | — | .824*** | .352 |
| **Fear of failure** | .824*** | — | .082 |
| **Procrastination** | .352 | .082 | — |

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

### 7.3 *Summary of Findings*

Overall, the results demonstrate a pronounced positive relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure. In contrast, the relationships involving procrastination were considerably weaker. The findings therefore suggest that, within this sample, perfectionism is more closely related to fear of failure than to procrastination. Given the sample size of 25 participants, these findings should be interpreted within the context of the present sample and should not be generalized beyond the study population without further evidence.

## 8. Discussion of Results

The present study examined the relationship between perfectionism, fear of failure, and

procrastination among university students. The results showed a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure, with a correlation of $r = .824$, $p < .001$. This indicated that participants who reported higher levels of perfectionism also tended to report higher levels of fear of failure. The strength of this relationship was substantial and statistically significant. This finding was consistent with the literature reviewed in the present study. Cho and Lee (2022) found that fear of failure mediated the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and academic procrastination among undergraduate medical students. Similarly, Yosopov et al. (2024) reported significant relationships among perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination among undergraduate students. These findings provided support for the present finding that perfectionism was closely associated with fear of failure.

The relationship between perfectionism and procrastination was positive but comparatively weaker ($r = .352$) and was not statistically significant in the present sample. Therefore, the findings did not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that perfectionism was significantly associated with procrastination among the participants. This finding differed from previous research. Flett et al. (1992) reported an association between socially prescribed perfectionism and procrastination among college students. Similarly, Ghosh and Roy (2017) found associations between multidimensional perfectionism and procrastination among Indian university students. Yosopov et al. (2024) also reported relationships involving perfectionism and procrastination through failure-related processes. Thus, while previous studies reported associations, the present study did not find a statistically significant relationship.

Similarly, the correlation between fear of failure and procrastination was very small and non-significant ($r = .082$). Thus, the present findings did not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that fear of failure was significantly associated with procrastination among the participants. This finding differed from several previous studies. Karim et al. (2021) found a significant relationship between fear of failure and academic procrastination among university students. Tan and Prihadi (2022) also reported a positive relationship between fear of failure and procrastination among undergraduate psychology students. Likewise, Parlade (2022) found that fear of failure was positively associated with procrastination among university students. Therefore, while previous studies reported positive relationships between fear of failure and procrastination, the present study found only a very weak association.

Overall, the findings demonstrated a pronounced positive relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure, whereas the relationships involving procrastination were considerably weaker. The present results therefore suggested that, within this sample, perfectionism was more closely associated with fear of failure than with procrastination. Given the sample size of 25 participants, these findings should be interpreted within the context of the present sample and should not be generalized beyond the study population without further evidence.

## 9. Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination among university students. The findings showed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure, indicating that students with higher levels of perfectionism also tended to report greater fear of failure. However, the relationships between perfectionism and procrastination, and between fear of failure and procrastination, were not statistically significant in the present sample. Thus, the findings suggested that perfectionism was more strongly associated with fear of failure than with procrastination among the participants. These results highlighted the importance of understanding failure-related concerns when examining perfectionistic tendencies in university students.

Future research should examine these variables using larger and more diverse samples to improve the generalizability of findings. Further studies could also consider additional psychological factors, such as academic stress, self-regulation, motivation, or anxiety, that may contribute to procrastination. Universities may also consider interventions that help students develop healthier approaches to high standards, manage concerns about failure, and strengthen effective academic coping strategies. Such approaches may provide a broader understanding of the factors associated with procrastination among university students.

## 10. Limitations

The present study had several limitations. First, the sample consisted of only 25 university students, which limited the generalizability of the findings to the broader university-student population. Second, the study used a correlational research design; therefore, the findings indicated associations among the variables but could not establish causal relationships. Finally, the study

relied on self-report measures, which may have been influenced by participants' individual perceptions and responses.

## 11. Recommendations/Future Research

Future research should examine perfectionism, fear of failure, and procrastination using larger and more diverse samples to improve the generalizability of findings. Further studies could also investigate additional psychological factors, such as academic stress, self-regulation, motivation, and anxiety, that may be related to procrastination among university students. Future research may also examine why perfectionism was strongly associated with fear of failure but was not significantly associated with procrastination in the present sample. Longitudinal or other research designs may further help researchers understand how these variables are related over time while addressing the limitations of correlational research.

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