

Research Paper

A Study on Perfectionism, Core Self-Evaluation, and Academic Procrastination: Gender Differences and Correlational Insights

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationships among perfectionism, core self-evaluation (CSE), and academic procrastination among college students. Using a cross-sectional correlational design, data were collected from 284 participants through self-report questionnaires. The results revealed that students with higher levels of perfectionism were more likely to engage in academic procrastination, suggesting that perfectionistic tendencies may lead to task avoidance. Additionally, perfectionism was negatively associated with core self-evaluation, indicating that students with more self-critical attitudes tend to have lower self-worth and confidence. Core self-evaluation was also negatively related to procrastination, showing that students with more positive self-perceptions are less likely to delay academic tasks. Gender comparisons revealed that female students reported significantly higher levels of perfectionism than male students, while no significant gender differences were found in CSE or procrastination. These findings highlight the complex interplay between personality traits and academic behavior and suggest the need for interventions that target maladaptive perfectionism and promote healthier self-evaluations to reduce procrastination in students.

Keywords: *Perfectionism, Core Self-Evaluation, Academic Procrastination, Gender Differences, College Students*

Academic procrastination is a common behavioral pattern among university students, defined as the voluntary delay of intended academic tasks despite expecting negative consequences (Solomon, L. J., & Rothblum, 1984). It is considered a dysfunctional self-regulatory behavior that contributes to suboptimal academic performance, emotional distress, and reduced life satisfaction (Day et al., 2000). Recent studies have reported that between 13.8% and 49.9% of students engage in procrastination frequently, indicating its widespread presence in higher education (Putri Daryani et al., 2021). While academic procrastination has often been discussed in terms of poor time management, emerging literature suggests that underlying personality traits, such as perfectionism, and self-evaluative beliefs such as core self-evaluation (CSE), may play crucial roles in shaping procrastinatory behavior (Chen et al., 2022; Yang et al., 2023). Perfectionism, in particular, has received considerable attention due to its paradoxical relationship with procrastination: while some perfectionist traits may foster achievement, others may lead to avoidance and

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performance anxiety. In the present study, perfectionism was conceptualized using the Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS) developed by Rice et al. (2014). The SAPS distinguishes between two dimensions: High Standards, representing adaptive perfectionism characterized by striving for excellence, and Discrepancy, reflecting maladaptive perfectionism characterized by chronic dissatisfaction with performance. Research has shown that while high standards may be associated with greater motivation and task engagement, high levels of discrepancy are often linked to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination, due to fear of failure or feelings of inadequacy.

In addition to perfectionism, core self-evaluation (CSE) — a higher-order personality construct encompassing self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability — is considered a key factor in academic functioning (Judge et al., 2003). Students with high CSE tend to view themselves as competent and in control of their academic outcomes, which promotes resilience and timely task completion. In contrast, those with low CSE may experience self-doubt, emotional instability, and externalized control beliefs, all of which can increase the likelihood of procrastinatory behavior. Although several studies have examined the individual relationships between perfectionism and procrastination or CSE and procrastination, limited research has investigated the interplay among all three constructs. Understanding how CSE mediates the relationship between perfectionistic traits (both adaptive and maladaptive) and academic procrastination may provide deeper insights into the cognitive and emotional mechanisms underlying students' avoidance behaviors.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationships among adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism (as measured by SAPS), core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination among university students, and to explore the mediating role of core self-evaluation in these associations.

Perfectionism and Academic Procrastination

Perfectionism is a personality disposition involving the tendency to set excessively high standards and to evaluate oneself critically (Frost et al., 1990). While traditionally seen as a unidimensional trait, more recent conceptualizations distinguish between adaptive and maladaptive forms of perfectionism (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Adaptive perfectionism is characterized by striving for excellence and setting high personal standards, which may be associated with goal attainment and academic success. In contrast, maladaptive perfectionism involves chronic dissatisfaction with one's performance and heightened concerns over mistakes and self-worth, which may lead to distress and avoidance behaviors (Flett & Hewitt, 2002).

The Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS) developed by Rice et al. (2014) provides a brief yet reliable assessment of these dimensions. The High Standards subscale reflects adaptive perfectionism, while the Discrepancy subscale represents maladaptive aspects. Students with high scores on Discrepancy often experience internal conflict between their standards and actual performance, which has been linked to academic procrastination (Suh et al., 2019). In contrast, students high in High Standards may be more organized and motivated, and therefore less prone to delay academic tasks. Despite this conceptual distinction, research has shown that the relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination is nuanced. For example, while striving for excellence may enhance motivation, elevated concerns over not meeting one's own standards can contribute to task avoidance,

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particularly when fear of failure or evaluation is present (Saddler & Sacks, 1993). As such, further investigation into the dual nature of perfectionism and its impact on procrastination is warranted.

The Role of Core Self-Evaluation in Academic Procrastination

Core self-evaluation (CSE) is a broad, higher-order personality construct that captures an individual's fundamental beliefs about their own self-worth and capabilities (Judge et al., 1997). It comprises four dimensions: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Together, these components shape how individuals perceive and respond to personal challenges, including academic demands (Chang et al., 2012).

Students with high CSE tend to view themselves as competent, in control of outcomes, and emotionally stable — characteristics that are positively associated with academic persistence and task engagement. Conversely, low CSE is associated with feelings of helplessness, low confidence, and external attributions for failure, which may contribute to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination (Ma et al., 2023). In academic settings, these students may delay task initiation or completion due to low self-belief or fear of negative evaluation.

Furthermore, CSE may play a mediating role in the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination. Adaptive perfectionism (i.e., High Standards) is often linked with positive self-beliefs and internal motivation, which may enhance CSE and, in turn, reduce procrastination. Conversely, maladaptive perfectionism (i.e., Discrepancy) is associated with self-doubt and dissatisfaction, which may undermine core self-evaluation and increase vulnerability to procrastinatory behavior (Seo, 2008). Therefore, investigating the mediating role of CSE could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how personality and self-appraisal interact to influence procrastination.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Perfectionism has been widely recognized as a multidimensional trait that can manifest adaptively or maladaptively. Recent studies highlight that maladaptive perfectionism—characterized by excessive concern over mistakes and doubts about actions—is positively related to academic procrastination. For instance, Huang et al., (2023) found that maladaptive perfectionism among undergraduate nursing students significantly increased academic procrastination, especially when resilience and self-efficacy were low. This finding underscores the idea that students who set unrealistically high standards and remain overly self-critical are more prone to delay tasks—not merely because of perfectionism itself, but because perfectionism erodes their confidence and adaptability. When resilience and self-efficacy are weak, these students may feel less capable of overcoming academic challenges, leading them to postpone work as a defensive coping mechanism.

Similarly, Cho & Lee, (2022) reported that among medical students, self-oriented perfectionism indirectly predicted academic procrastination through heightened fear of failure. This suggests that even perfectionistic traits focused on striving for personal excellence can become counterproductive if coupled with excessive fear of making mistakes. The fear of not meeting self-imposed standards can paralyze students, prompting them to delay starting or completing academic tasks in order to avoid anticipated disappointment or perceived inadequacy. In contrast, recent research increasingly highlights anxiety as a more pervasive and consistent predictor of procrastination than perfectionism alone. Ma et al. (2023) found that stressful life events led to greater procrastination among

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Chinese college students, with this relationship partly mediated by anxiety-related stress beliefs and lower core self-evaluations. This implies that it is not merely the occurrence of stressful events that drives procrastination, but students' anxious interpretations and self-doubt that make them more likely to avoid tasks.

Limone et al. (2020) further demonstrated that anxiety positively correlated with procrastination among university students. Importantly, their study showed that interventions targeting emotional regulation—such as mindfulness or stress management training—helped reduce procrastinatory behaviors. This suggests that while perfectionistic standards might initiate academic pressure, it is the anxiety stemming from these pressures that more directly fuels task avoidance. Taken together, these studies suggest a nuanced relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination. While maladaptive perfectionism can certainly increase procrastination—particularly when students lack psychological resources like resilience and self-efficacy—anxiety appears to play a stronger and more consistent role in explaining why students ultimately delay academic tasks. This pattern holds especially true in high-pressure contexts such as medical and dental education, where the stakes of perceived failure are significant. These findings emphasize the need for universities to develop interventions that not only address perfectionistic thinking but also help students manage anxiety and strengthen adaptive coping strategies, ultimately reducing academic procrastination and its negative impact on performance and well-being.

In addition to perfectionism and anxiety, research increasingly points to several cognitive and affective factors that shape academic procrastination among university. Core self-evaluation (CSE) is a broad, higher-order personality trait reflecting an individual's fundamental self-appraisals of worthiness, competence, emotional stability, and control over life outcomes (Judge et al., 2003). Students with high CSE typically perceive themselves as capable, emotionally resilient, and in control, which can buffer against academic procrastination. Ma et al. (2023) examined Chinese college students and found that lower CSE significantly mediated the relationship between stressful life events and increased procrastination, suggesting that students who doubt their competence or feel emotionally unstable are more likely to avoid academic tasks. Similarly, (Rajapakshe, 2018) found that CSE negatively predicted procrastination among students with stronger positive self-views reported higher motivation and engagement, which reduced their tendency to delay work. These findings align with self-regulation theories, which emphasize that global self-beliefs shape students' capacity to initiate and sustain effortful tasks (Steel, 2007). In sum, while anxiety and perfectionism can foster avoidance, a strong and stable self-evaluation acts as a protective factor, enabling students to face challenges rather than defer them.

Objectives

The present study aims to:

1. Examine the relationships among perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination among university students.
2. Explore gender differences in perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination.
3. Study the levels of perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination among university students.

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Aims and Hypotheses

The present study aims to explore the associations among perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination among university students. In particular, it investigates whether core self-evaluation mediates the relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination. Drawing upon previous research, the following hypotheses were proposed:

- **H1:** Perfectionism will be positively associated with academic procrastination
- **H2:** Perfectionism will be negatively associated with core self-evaluation.
- **H3:** Core self-evaluation will be negatively associated with academic procrastination.
- **H4:** There will be a significant difference between male and female students in levels of perfectionism.
- **H5:** There will be a significant difference between male and female students in levels of core self-evaluation.
- **H6:** There will be a significant difference between male and female students in levels of academic procrastination.

METHODOLOGY

Design

This study employed a cross-sectional, correlational design to examine the relationships among perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination. Additionally, the study explored gender differences across these psychological variables.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of undergraduate students enrolled in colleges across the Kashmir valley. The sample comprised 284 students (male = 92, female = 192) recruited through convenience sampling. Inclusion criteria were: (a) currently enrolled as full-time undergraduates, (b) aged 18 years or older, and (c) provided informed consent. Students with self-reported psychological disorders or incomplete questionnaires were excluded.

Measures

Academic Procrastination

Academic procrastination was assessed using the Procrastination Assessment Scale–Students (PASS) developed by Solomon and Rothblum (1984). This instrument measures the frequency of procrastination on academic tasks and the extent to which procrastination is perceived as problematic. Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating greater procrastination. The scale has demonstrated good reliability in previous studies ($\alpha > .80$).

Perfectionism was measured using the Short Almost Perfect Scale (SAPS) developed by Rice et al. (2014)

The SAPS is an 8-item self-report scale that assesses global perfectionism, including both adaptive (high standards) and maladaptive (discrepancy) components. Each item is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Example items include “I set very high standards for myself” and “My best just never seems to be good enough for me.” Higher total scores indicate greater levels of perfectionism.

The SAPS comprises two subscales:

- High Standards (3 items) – representing adaptive perfectionism

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- Discrepancy (5 items) – representing maladaptive perfectionism

Researchers may compute either subscale scores or a total score. The scale has demonstrated strong psychometric properties, with internal consistency coefficients typically exceeding $\alpha = .85$.

Core Self-Evaluation

Core self-evaluation was assessed using the Core Self-Evaluation Scale (CSES) developed by Judge et al. (2003) instrument contains 12 items that measure four interrelated traits: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, emotional stability, and locus of control. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, where higher scores reflect more positive self-appraisals. The CSES has shown robust internal consistency and construct validity in university student populations (Cronbach's $\alpha \approx .85$).

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected using an online survey method. Participants were invited via email, and the questionnaire was administered through a secure online platform (Google Forms). Prior to participation, individuals were informed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and the confidentiality of their responses. On average, the survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 24). Descriptive statistics were computed to summarise the sample characteristics and scale variables. Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to examine the relationships among perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination. Additionally, independent samples *t*-tests were performed to assess gender differences across the key variables. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$ for all analyses.

Findings

Table 1: Categorization and Mean Scores of Study Variables by Gender (N = 284)

| Variable | Male Mean (SD) | Female Mean (SD) | Low (%) | Moderate (%) | High (%) |
|--------------------------|----------------|------------------|---------|--------------|----------|
| Perfectionism | 24.71 (9.85) | 27.61 (9.99) | 28.0% | 44.0% | 28.0% |
| Core Self-Evaluation | 38.81 (12.29) | 34.99 (11.79) | 26.6% | 47.8% | 25.6% |
| Academic Procrastination | 145.09 (16.09) | 144.02 (13.07) | 26.1% | 48.3% | 25.6% |

Note. Mean and standard deviation (SD) values are reported by gender. Low, Moderate, and High levels are based on percentile cutoffs from the overall sample distribution.

The results presented in Table 1 provide a descriptive overview of perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination across gender, along with their distribution across low, moderate, and high levels based on percentile cutoffs. Female students reported higher mean levels of perfectionism ($M = 27.61$, $SD = 9.99$) than male students ($M = 24.71$, $SD = 9.85$), while the distribution shows that 28% of students fell into the high and low categories, respectively, and 44% were in the moderate range. In terms of core self-evaluation, male students reported higher mean scores ($M = 38.81$, $SD = 12.29$) than females ($M = 34.99$, $SD = 11.79$), with 26.6% of students classified as low, 47.8% as

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moderate, and 25.6% as high in this trait. Academic procrastination means were relatively similar for males ($M = 145.09$, $SD = 16.09$) and females ($M = 144.02$, $SD = 13.07$), and the distribution across levels also remained balanced, with approximately one-quarter each in the low and high ranges and nearly half of the students falling in the moderate range. These findings suggest that while gender-based differences in perfectionism and core self-evaluation are evident, the overall distribution of students across low, moderate, and high levels remains fairly even for all three psychological constructs.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Alphas, and Correlations for all Measures (n=284).

| Variable | α | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|-----------------------------|----------|--------|-------|---------|---------|---|
| 1. Perfectionism | .89 | 26.16 | 9.99 | — | | |
| 2. Core Self-Evaluation | .78 | 36.90 | 12.04 | -.411** | — | |
| 3. Academic Procrastination | .84 | 144.50 | 14.58 | .488** | -.271** | — |

Note. $p < .01$ (2-tailed); $SD =$ standard deviation.

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), and Pearson correlations for the study variables. All scales demonstrated good internal reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from .78 to .89. Perfectionism had a mean score of 26.16 ($SD = 9.99$), core self-evaluation had a mean of 36.90 ($SD = 12.04$), and academic procrastination had a mean of 144.50 ($SD = 14.58$). Correlational analysis revealed a significant negative relationship between perfectionism and core self-evaluation ($r = -.411$, $p < .01$), indicating that students with higher perfectionistic tendencies tend to have lower self-regard. A significant positive correlation was found between perfectionism and academic procrastination ($r = .488$, $p < .01$), suggesting that greater perfectionism is associated with increased delay in academic tasks. Additionally, core self-evaluation was negatively correlated with academic procrastination ($r = -.271$, $p < .01$), implying that students with more positive self-perceptions are less likely to procrastinate. These findings support the theoretical expectation that maladaptive perfectionism and low self-evaluation contribute to academic avoidance behaviors. Therefore H1: Perfectionism will be positively associated with academic procrastination, H2: Perfectionism will be negatively associated with core self-evaluation and H3: Core self-evaluation will be negatively associated with academic procrastination stands accepted.

Table 3: Mean differences in Academic procrastination, Perfectionism, and Core self-evaluation with respect to gender.

| Variable | Gender | N | M | SD | t | df | P |
|--------------------------|--------|-----|--------|-------|-------|-----|------|
| Perfectionism | Male | 92 | 24.71 | 9.85 | -2.68 | 282 | .008 |
| | Female | 192 | 27.61 | 9.99 | | | |
| Core Self-Evaluation | Male | 92 | 38.81 | 12.29 | -1.09 | 282 | .277 |
| | Female | 192 | 34.99 | 11.79 | | | |
| Academic Procrastination | Male | 92 | 145.09 | 16.09 | -1.46 | 282 | .145 |
| | Female | 192 | 144.02 | 13.07 | | | |

Table 3 displays the results of independent samples t-tests conducted to assess gender differences in perfectionism, core self-evaluation, and academic procrastination among university students. A statistically significant gender difference was observed in perfectionism, with female students ($M = 27.61$, $SD = 9.99$) reporting higher levels than male students ($M = 24.71$, $SD = 9.85$), $t(282) = -2.68$, $p = .008$, indicating that females tend

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to set higher personal standards or engage more in self-critical evaluation. However, no significant gender differences were found for core self-evaluation, $t(282) = -1.09, p = .277$, where males ($M = 38.81, SD = 12.29$) and females ($M = 34.99, SD = 11.79$) reported similar levels of self-appraisal. Similarly, the difference in academic procrastination between males ($M = 145.09, SD = 16.09$) and females ($M = 144.02, SD = 13.07$) was not statistically significant, $t(282) = -1.46, p = .145$. These results suggest that while gender may influence perfectionistic tendencies, it does not significantly impact students' levels of procrastination or their overall self-evaluations. On the basis of the above results, H4: There will be a significant difference between male and female students in levels of perfectionism stands accepted while H5: There will be a significant difference between male and female students in levels of core self-evaluation. H6: There will be a significant difference between male and female students in levels of academic procrastination stands rejected

DISCUSSION

This study explored the interrelationships among perfectionism, core self-evaluation (CSE), and academic procrastination among college students, with an added focus on gender differences. The findings contribute meaningfully to our understanding of how personality traits and self-beliefs interact to influence students' academic behavior and avoidance tendencies. Consistent with prior literature, the study revealed that perfectionism is associated with higher levels of academic procrastination (Jadidi et al., 2011). While perfectionism is often viewed as a drive for excellence, research suggests that its maladaptive aspects—such as fear of failure, excessive self-criticism, and concern over mistakes—can lead to academic delay behaviors. Students driven by unrealistic standards may postpone tasks out of fear they will not meet their own expectations, aligning with the notion that procrastination often functions as a self-protective mechanism (Çapan, 2010). This delay, while offering short-term emotional relief, can ultimately hinder performance and well-being.

Interestingly, the study also found that perfectionism is negatively related to core self-evaluation. This supports existing research indicating that perfectionistic students often possess a fragile sense of self-worth, rooted in conditional self-acceptance and harsh self-judgment (Çapan, 2010). These students may appear outwardly competent yet internally doubt their value and abilities, suggesting that perfectionism and low CSE can form a psychologically taxing combination. When students internalize failure or imperfection as a reflection of their self-worth, their emotional resilience and motivation may suffer, making them more susceptible to avoidance behaviors such as procrastination.

Core self-evaluation itself emerged as a significant inverse correlate of academic procrastination, which is consistent with previous research linking higher self-esteem, emotional stability, and internal locus of control with lower procrastination tendencies (Brando-Garrido et al., 2020). Students with positive self-evaluations are more likely to engage with academic challenges confidently and persist through difficulties, whereas those with negative self-beliefs may experience self-doubt and demotivation that contribute to task avoidance. This connection highlights the foundational role of self-perception in shaping both achievement motivation and coping strategies.

In terms of gender, the findings suggest that female students tend to exhibit stronger perfectionistic tendencies compared to male students, which is in line with studies indicating that women are often more socially conditioned to strive for perfection and are more likely

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to internalize academic pressure (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Thorley, 2016). However, the absence of significant gender differences in CSE and procrastination challenges some prior assumptions and suggests that while perfectionistic ideals may be more prevalent among females, these do not necessarily translate into broader differences in self-evaluation or behavioral patterns of delay. This underscores the complexity of these constructs and the importance of examining them beyond surface-level gender comparisons.

Together, these findings reinforce the idea that academic procrastination is not merely a result of poor time management or laziness but is deeply intertwined with students' inner experiences—how they evaluate themselves, how much pressure they impose through perfectionistic standards, and how well they can tolerate perceived failure. The study echoes the call of Limone et al. (2020) and Ma et al. (2023) for educational institutions to move beyond surface-level solutions and instead develop psychologically informed interventions that foster emotional resilience, self-compassion, and realistic goal-setting among students. Interventions that help students distinguish between healthy striving and self-punishing perfectionism may also buffer against procrastination and improve both performance and well-being. In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of research on academic behavior by illuminating how perfectionism and core self-evaluation jointly predict students' tendencies to procrastinate. These insights provide a valuable foundation for developing support systems that not only address task management skills but also promote healthier self-perceptions and coping mechanisms among university students.

Implications

The findings of this study offer several important implications for educators, mental health professionals, and institutional policymakers working within academic settings. First and foremost, the positive relationship between perfectionism and academic procrastination highlights the need for early identification and support for students who exhibit maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies. While striving for excellence can be beneficial, when perfectionism becomes self-critical and fear-driven, it may contribute to avoidance behaviors that hinder academic progress. Educators and counselors should be trained to recognize signs of maladaptive perfectionism and offer structured support that encourages students to adopt more realistic standards and compassionate self-appraisal.

The negative association between core self-evaluation and academic procrastination underscores the protective role of self-perception in academic behavior. Students with higher self-worth, emotional stability, and confidence are less likely to delay academic tasks. Therefore, interventions aimed at strengthening students' core self-evaluation—such as resilience training, self-efficacy enhancement, and emotional regulation workshops—may serve as effective tools to reduce procrastination. These interventions can be integrated into university counseling programs or embedded within the curriculum through life skills or personal development courses. The gender differences observed in perfectionism further suggest that female students may be more vulnerable to internalizing academic pressure and adopting excessively high standards. While no significant gender differences were found in core self-evaluation or procrastination, the elevated perfectionism among female students signals a need for gender-sensitive psychological support. Mentorship programs and student wellness initiatives can be designed to specifically address the unique stressors faced by female students and promote a balanced approach to achievement.

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At a broader level, these results call for a shift in how academic success is defined and reinforced in higher education. Institutions often emphasize external performance metrics such as grades and rankings, which may unintentionally reinforce maladaptive perfectionism. By fostering a more holistic learning environment that values growth, effort, and well-being, educational systems can create conditions in which students feel empowered rather than pressured.

In summary, the implications of this study highlight the importance of addressing both cognitive and emotional factors in student development. By promoting healthier self-beliefs, reducing maladaptive perfectionism, and supporting emotional resilience, educational institutions can play a pivotal role in helping students manage procrastination and thrive academically and personally.

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A Study on Perfectionism, Core Self-Evaluation, and Academic Procrastination: Gender Differences and Correlational Insights

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Conflict of Interest

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