

## **Gender Orientation and Academic Procrastination: Exploring Turkish High School Students**

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**ABSTRACT** - The present study investigated gender-role differences in academic procrastination by Turkish adolescents. Early adolescents (115 females, 99 males;  $M_{age} = 15.4$  years,  $SD = 0.57$ ) completed self-report measures of academic procrastination and sex roles. Factor analysis yielded four excuses for procrastination reported by students, namely; perfectionism, aversiveness of task, rebellion against control and risk taking. Further analysis revealed significant main effect for gender roles on academic procrastination excuses. Specifically, Turkish adolescents with undifferentiated gender roles explained their reasons for academic procrastination more than adolescents with masculine gender-role because of the task aversiveness. Also, Turkish adolescents with undifferentiated gender-role orientation claimed the excuse of risk-taking for their academic procrastination, more than adolescents with femininity and androgynous gender-role.

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*Procrastination* is a tendency to postpone what is necessary to reach goal (Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995; Lay, 1986). It is a personality characteristic far more complex than ineffective time management (Ferrari, 2010; Ferrari & Diaz-Morales, 2007) and a complex phenomenon with affective, cognitive, and behavioral components (Rothblum, Solomon & Murakami, 1986). Previous studies reported that 70% of college students, with some estimates as high as 95%, claim to engage in academic procrastination (Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Steel, 2007). There seem to be many reasons for the occurrence of procrastination in students; some researchers suggested fear of failure and task aversiveness for English speaking university students (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Uzun Özer, Demir and Ferrari (2009) found that fear of failure, risk taking, laziness, and rebellion against control were the reasons of academic procrastination for the Turkish university undergraduates. We know of no study that examined academic procrastination among international samples of high schools, especially related to gender roles.

It is possible that academic procrastination starts earlier than in university, beginning as early as in early adolescents such as in high school (Palmer, 1998). Ferrari and colleagues found that parental styles influence the development of procrastinators as children (e.g., Ferrari & Olivette, 1993; 1994; Ferrari, Harriott, & Zimmerman, 1999). Another study explored procrastination among young adolescents finding that academic task delays were associated with low self-esteem, self-regulation, and self efficacy, although the relationships may vary according to gender difference (e.g., Pychyl, Coplan & Reid, 2002). We believe additional research is needed to examine academic procrastination in young, early adolescent high school students.

In terms of gender differences in academic procrastination, studies report no significant sex difference in the incidence of academic procrastination contrary to popular belief (Ferrari, 1991; Haycock, McCarty, & Skay, 1998; Hess, Sherman, & Goodman, 2000; Johnson & Bloom, 1995; Rothblum, et. al., 1986; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Watson, 2001). In contrast, Steel's (2007) meta-analysis research reported that men procrastinate in everyday life more than women. Such inconsistencies suggest the need for further research.

Lamba (1999) explored gender role orientation related to procrastination but found no significant differences in self-reported rates of procrastination. We proposed that the relationship between procrastination and gender variables may be unique to collectivistic cultures. We also think that such a relationship would emerge and be apparent in the domain of academic tasks where gender differences between girls and boys have a long history of being reported. Gender role orientation develops through middle childhood, but becomes much significant in adolescents (Doyle & Paludi, 1998). Gender roles are socially constructed standards and expectations of gender roles differ from culture to culture (Ferdman, 1999). One's society assigns the persons different duties, responsibilities, behaviors and personality characteristics according to their sexes. The division of labor assigned in family gives the girls the traditional feminine role to be nurturant, passive, affectionate and dependent. In contrast, boys are expected to be more dominant, active, assertive and independent (Bem, 1975). Being female or male brings about some differences in behaviors, attitudes, rights, tasks and responsibilities.

These differences manifest in the academic setting (Basow, 1992). During early adolescents, such as during the high school period in which the roles and values are more powerful, students may classify some tasks as "feminine" and other tasks as "masculine." Some tasks such as completing homework assignments and studying for the exams are seen as feminine role, and boys may avoid performing such tasks (Uzun Özer, 2005). We propose, therefore, that avoiding studying and reading are reflected in academic procrastination and in turn expect significant differences in academic task delays based on a person's gender role orientation.

Thus, the goal of the present study was to investigate the role of gender-role orientation on academic procrastination in a group of Turkish early adolescents. Gaining understanding of the academic procrastination and gender role orientation of Turkish adolescents may assist behavioral researchers and educational specialists in understanding and expanding gender differences in a uniquely situated European/middle-Eastern country (i.e., Turkey) that blends collectivism, modernism/traditionalism, and secular/religious influences (Klassen & Kuzucu, 2009).

## Method

### *Participants*

Participants were 214 early adolescents (115 males, 99 females:  $M$  age = 15.4 years old,  $SD = 0.57$ , range = 14 to 17) from a general public high school (i.e., three-year, co-educational secondary school) in the capital of Turkey. The school was middle SES, with moderate levels of achievement in comparison to other schools in the city. Regarding the education level of the participants' parents, they reported that their fathers had higher education levels than their mothers as expected in marriages in Turkey. On average, participants reported one sibling ( $M$  number of siblings = 1.24;  $SD = 0.83$ ).

### *Psychometric Scales*

*Procrastination Assessment Scale-Students (PASS; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984)*. All participants completed the *PASS*, a 5-point Likert type, self-report measure including 44 items divided in two parts. The first part consisting of 18 items assesses the *prevalence of procrastination* in six areas of academic functioning. However, the procrastination researchers (e.g., Owens & Newbegin, 1997; 2000; Wesley, 1994) suggested that the scale might be appropriate for the high school sample when some of the items related to university students are deleted. The second part of the *PASS*, *the reasons of procrastination*, provides a scenario about delaying the writing of a term paper and then lists a variety of possible reasons for the procrastination on the tasks. A number of studies indicate that *PASS* possesses adequate reliability and validity. Onwuegbuzie (2004) found internal consistency of 0.82 for the first and 0.89 for the second part of the scale, and Ferrari (1989) established retest reliability for both parts of greater than 0.70. For the present sample, Cronbach alpha coefficients were 0.69 and 0.87 for the first and the second part of the scale, respectively.

*The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI; Bem, 1975)*. Participants also completed one of the most frequently used instruments for measuring gender stereotypes, the *BSRI*, a 60-item scale on a 7 point (1 = *never or almost never true*; 7 = *always or almost always true*). This scale consists of a set of personality characteristics, 20 representing stereotypically feminine attributes, 20 representing stereotypically masculine attributes, and 20 filler items representing negative and positive personality characteristics socially desirable and socially undesirable for both males and females.

Turkish adaptation of the *BSRI* was conducted by Kavuncu (1987). Kavuncu found test-retest reliability to be 0.75, 0.89, and 0.87 for the femininity, masculinity and social desirability subscales, respectively. In terms of validity, Kavuncu found the *BSRI* Masculinity and Femininity subscale scores were correlated with Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory masculinity to be 0.47 and 0.39, respectively. Özkan and Ljunen (2005) examined those stereotypes in Turkish cultural context and replicated the original *BSRI* masculinity-femininity structure. Their reliability analysis showed that the internal consistencies were acceptable (0.80 and 0.73), although lower than coefficients reported in the original studies conducted in the USA (Bem, 1975). With the present sample of Turkish early adolescents, coefficient alpha for the masculine subscale was 0.79, for the feminine subscale was 0.78, and for the androgynous subscale was 0.50.

### **Procedure**

Participants were recruited from middle-class SES adolescents enrolled in a public high school in the capital of Turkey. After obtaining necessary permissions from the school officials and parents, students were invited to participate in the study in their classroom setting. The first author solicited convenient samples and briefly explained the purpose of the study. It took participants approximately 20 minutes to complete the data collection instruments with the demographic sheet.

### **Results**

The overall academic procrastination mean score was 17.7 ( $SD = 4.2$ ), with a range between 6 and 30. We used a median-split from scores of the first part of the *PASS* (median = 18.0) to determine academic procrastinators ( $\geq 18$ ;  $n = 117$ ) from non-procrastinators ( $\leq 17$ ;  $n = 95$ ), consistent to the process used in most other studies (e.g., Beck Koons & Milgrim, 2001; König & Kleninmann, 2004; Van Eerde, 2003).

Next, we assessed the reasons for academic procrastination by examining the factor structure of the second part of the *PASS* with all 214 participants. The rotated solution yielded four interpretable excuses with eigen values of 5.7, 1.9, 1.8, and 1.6, which we labeled *perfectionism*, *aversiveness of the tasks*, *rebellion against control*, and *risk taking*, respectively (see also Milgram, Marshevsky, & Sadeh, 1994, for similar factor labels). The *perfectionism* factor accounted for 23.7% of the item variance and included fear of failure, difficulty in making decision, lack of self confidence, and dependency and help seeking; *aversiveness of the tasks* factor accounted for 8.2% of the item variance and included laziness, peer influence, and tendency to feel overwhelmed and poorly managed time; the *rebellion against control* factor accounted for 7.4% of the item variance and included tendency to feel overwhelmed and poorly managed time; and the *risk taking* factor accounted for 6.8% of the variance and included in evaluation anxiety.

Pearson product correlation was conducted to assess the relationships among the gender roles, academic procrastination scores and excuses for academic procrastination. We found significant (all  $p < .010$ ) negative correlations between academic procrastination levels of the participants' femininity scores ( $r = -.16$ ) and masculinity scores ( $r = -.18$ ). Moreover, regarding the reasons of academic procrastination, femininity scores was found negatively correlated with the rebellion against control ( $r = -.15$ ) and risk taking ( $r = -.15$ ). Similarly, masculinity score was found negatively correlated with the reason of aversiveness of the task ( $r = -.25$ ).

To determine whether gender and/or gender roles were significantly different in reporting reasons for academic procrastination, we conducted a 2 (female vs male) x 4 (feminine, masculine, androgynous, vs undifferentiated) *Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)* with the four categories of excuses as the dependent variables. Results yielded no significant main or interaction effects for gender. These results are consistent with other studies (see Ferrari et al., 1995). However, there was a significant influence of gender roles,  $F(12, 495) = 1.857, p < .05$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .038$ ; Wilks' Lambda = .89, on excuses for academic procrastination. Follow-up univariate analysis indicated differences in excuses for academic procrastination in terms of *aversiveness of the tasks*,  $F(3, 198) = 3.80, p < .05$  partial  $\eta^2 = .057$ , and *risk taking*,  $F(3, 198) = 4.69, p < .05$  partial  $\eta^2 = .069$ . Specifically, participants with undifferentiated gender role ( $M = 18.80$ ;

$SD = 4.41$ ) reported higher academic procrastination scores for *aversiveness of the tasks* than participants with a masculine gender role ( $M = 15.31$ ;  $SD = 5.41$ ). Regarding *risk taking* as an excuse, participants with undifferentiated gender role ( $M = 13.36$ ;  $SD = 4.87$ ) reporting higher academic procrastination scores than students with feminine ( $M = 10.63$ ;  $SD = 2.53$ ) or androgynous ( $M = 11.40$ ;  $SD = 3.57$ ) gender roles. No significant main or interaction effects of gender role in the excuse of perfectionism and rebellion against control were found.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to extend our understanding of academic procrastination and gender roles in a group of Turkish high school students. Regarding the academic procrastination level of adolescents, results of the descriptive statistics revealed that a total of 117 out of 214 participants (55%) endorsed that they were frequent academic procrastinators. When compared to university student populations (e.g., Solomon & Rothblum, 1984; Uzun Özer, et. al., 2009), the present study supported the claim that high school students believe they procrastinate more often since they discover that they could do things quite well even at the last minute (Palmer, 1998).

Although the present study found no significant difference between female and male students' academic procrastination rates, results from multivariate analysis on the excuses showed significant differences in terms of the gender role orientation. To date, studies explored gender as a demographic variable with varied samples and each has showed various findings. Our findings on gender difference was consistent with research reporting no significant gender difference in the incidence of procrastination (e.g., Ferrari, 1991; Haycock, et. al., 1998; Hess, et. al., 2000; Johnson & Bloom, 1995; Rothblum, et. al., 1986; Watson, 2001). Unfortunately, the lack of literature examining the relationship between gender-role and academic procrastination in non-adult samples makes it difficult to compare the findings with Turkish high school students. In contrast to Lamba (1999) with college students, our high school students who claimed a traditional feminine sex role reported they procrastinate less because of the excuse of risk taking, whereas high school students with a traditional masculine sex role orientation claimed to procrastinate less for the excuse of task aversiveness.

In this regard, we believe that the difference between college and high school students reflected adolescent tendencies raised in the Turkish family cultural context. Turkey is influenced greatly by both Eastern and Western culture characterized by collectivistic society (Mocan-Aydın, 2000). It is believed that the socialization of gender roles begins in the Turkish family before the child is born (Kağıtçıbaşı & Sunar, 1992). In the rural traditional context parents might prefer particularly a son in order that he would carry the family name to next generation, contribute to the family's welfare through financial and practical help, and to take care of aging parents. However, a daughter is perceived as 'the property of strangers' (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1982). These expectations are likely to be driving forces to make a child to fit his or her gender role orientations. For instance, Turkish parents let their sons behave more independently and aggressively whereas daughters are expected to be more dependent and obedient (Kağıtçıbaşı, 1996). These differences are manifested through the work roles for adults and academic setting for the students (Ferdman, 1999).

In a collectivistic culture females in academic setting might be expected to be more successful on their academic tasks. Because they are dependent in the traditional segment of the Turkish society, it might be difficult for them to express their individualistic concerns (Karakitapoğlu & İmamoğlu, 2002). In terms of the behaviors and the role, females are subject to stricter control (Yıldırım, 1997) which may bring to have more responsibility in the school. Their motivation to achievement is strongly determined by feelings of loyalty and obligation toward her parents and family (Verkuyten, Thijs, & Canatan, 2001). Therefore, a Turkish male adolescent might choose to engage in procrastination in academic tasks because of the aversiveness of the task and to risk taking.

Some limitations of the present study should be considered when interpreting the results and in planning future research. The main limitation is the convenient sampling of this study. Our results were based on a convenient sample of adolescents enrolled in a public high school in the capital of Turkey, limiting perhaps the ability to generalize to all adolescents. Further studies with larger and more demographically diverse populations would no doubt strengthen the findings of the study. Also, our research is based on the data obtained from self-reports. Hence the results are within the limits of the instrument used. Last, because findings in the present study revealed cultural differences, future studies may consider investigating cross-cultural issues regarding academic procrastination, procrastination, and procrastination in general.

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