

The Relationship between Perfectionism and Students' Academic burnout

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Article Info

History Articles

Received:

9 July 2022

Accepted:

15 August 2022

Published:

30 October 2022

Keywords:

Perfectionism,
academic burnout

Abstract

Academic burnout is a common problem experienced by students. Thus, this study attempted to identify and analyze the relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout by involving public senior high school students throughout Sungai Lilin sub-district amounted to 300 people chosen using cluster random sampling. Their data were collected using the instruments of Maslach Burnout Inventory-Students Survey (MBI-SS) and Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) modified into Indonesian which gained alpha coefficient of 0.84 and 0.97 respectively. Findings indicated that four of six aspects of maladaptive perfectionism, concern over mistakes, parental expectation, and parental criticism positively correlated with academic burnout, while the aspect of doubt about actions had a negatively correlation. In addition, two adaptive perfectionism aspects, namely personal standards and organizations had no correlation with academic burnout. These imply that students need to be enlightened about awareness of the impact of maladaptive perfectionism and adjusted to the adaptive ones so that their burnout can be solved.

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p-ISSN 2252-6889

e-ISSN 2502-4450

INTRODUCTION

In the learning process, students must face some constraints to gain optimal results. One of the most common problems is burnout (Prilianinda et al., 2020). It is a psychological syndrome caused by long-term stress experienced by school students (Kalsum et al., 2022). Academic burnout can be divided into three, namely physical, emotional, and cognitive fatigue indicated by easily giving up, tired, and depressed (Susanti et al., 2020).

Academic burnout occurs when students have particular range of time to learn, but gain no achievement from it (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Students with this syndrome will counter some symptoms, such as feeling tired in all parts of senses, less enthusiastic, burnout, skipping classes, inefficient in learning, reluctance to attend class, and gaining no achievement (Khusumawati & Christiana, 2014); (Rahman, 2020).

Academic burnout surely has negative impact on students' academic achievement because they are in a self-defeating state of mind which later cause bad school performance, lose interests in finishing school tasks, and poor health (Hikmah et al., 2020); (Popa-Velea et al., 2017). Therefore, students lose responsibility and responsiveness on their poor performance. When this happens continuously, students will difficult to follow the learning process (Hasan et al., 2019).

(Maslach, 2003) mentions several factors influencing burnout, namely gender, age, marital status, and personality. Here, one of personality traits is perfectionism (Enns et al., 2002). It is supported by a study by (Yu et al., 2016) and (Garratt-Reed et al., 2018) which recognized the influence of perfectionism in academic burnout. (Elsadik & Abady, 2019) further found the significant relationship between academic burnout and perfectionism in an academic context.

A perfectionist student often comes up with achievement difficulties because perfectionism is vulnerable to productivity reduction (Santrock, 2014). Thus, perfectionism

can worsen students' burnout (Hill & Curran, 2015). In a normal level, perfectionism can provide fruitful impact; for example, encouraging students to be outstanding and diligent when facing challenges or difficulties. However, when it demands students to do something truly perfect, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorder, anxiety, body dysmorphic disorder, workaholism, depression, and even suicide can happen. Those conditions are called as maladaptive perfectionism (Muliasari et al., 2020).

(Frost et al., 1990) divide perfectionism into normal/ adaptive and neurotic/ maladaptive. In general, perfectionism is defined as high self-standards as a necessity to achieve a perfect result, and it will be a problem when followed by critical self-evaluation (Frost et al., 1990). Moreover, adaptive perfectionism is any behavior made for high self-standards, while maladaptive perfectionism is behavior made for high self-standard with the basis of being feared of making mistakes, reluctance to act, demand, parental critics, and complex self-standards to achieve (Frost et al., 1990).

(Frost et al., 1997) mentions six dimensions of perfectionism which later be grouped into healthy and unhealthy perfectionism by (Mofield, 2012). Health perfectionisms includes personal standards (PS) and organization (O), while unhealthy perfectionisms cover concern over mistakes (CM), parental expectation (PE), parental criticism (PC), and doubt about actions (DA).

Those previous maladaptive perfectionism become an indicator of academic burnout. It is in line with the findings of a previous study by (Chang et al., 2015) that students with perfectionism orienting towards social (maladaptive perfectionism) will tend to experience academic burnout, while those who orient towards themselves (adaptive perfectionism) will not. Then, a study by (Yu et al., 2016) concludes a significant correlation between social perfectionism and academic burnout.

It is known that concern over mistakes is a dimension which reflects individual negative

reactions to mistakes they made, tendency of interpreting faults as failures, and belief that one's appreciation will be gone when they make mistakes. Parental expectations is a dimension related to parental evaluative attitudes and the level of expectations to their children. It also deals with individuals' beliefs that their parents set high standards for them.

Parental criticism is a dimension related to how critical parents towards their children. The last, doubts about actions is a dimension that reflects tendency to hesitate about self-performance quality in accomplishing tasks well (Frost et al., 1997).

The present study urged to be carried out due to few previous studies discussing the relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout, so in (Hill & Curran, 2015) further investigations of this topic are recommended. It is known that schools and universities are places full of challenges and stress, so academic burnout may happen there (Walburg, 2014)

Furthermore, this study measured perfectionism using Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) with the aim of obtaining more significant results regarding the relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout. Significant results were expected because perfectionism has two parts, namely adaptive and maladaptive (Frost et al., 1990).

An assumption underlying this study was students with adaptive perfectionism will be able to solve a academic burnout issue. Conversely, those with maladaptive perfectionism will not or even get worse. In addition, this study can give some contributions to institutions, particularly guidance and counseling teacher to get insights the extent to which perfectionism relates to students' academic burnout.

By knowing the relationship discussed in this study, school counselors are expected to assist students to develop optimally so that they can accomplish all academic demands and graduate properly. It is inspired by the fact that guidance and counseling is an integrated

component in school educational systems (Hadi, 2017).

This study attempted to analyze the relationship between perfectionism and students' academic burnout. Its novelty would present the relationship between two kinds of perfectionism, adaptive and maladaptive and academic burnout. Also, it is widely known that academic burnout mostly occurs at senior high school level, so this study is expected to enrich students' academic burnout literature, previous studies, and be a reference or basis for the future investigations.

METHODS

The population of this study was all public senior high school students in Sungai Lilin sub-district amounted to 1423. They were chosen to be respondents by using cluster random sampling, totaling 300 students in grades X, XI and XII from three public high schools in Sungai Lilin District.

The data collection was carried out using instruments measured by a likert scale adapted from back translation. This translation aims to compare and decide items based on the results of two translation versions. After the translation as done, it went through instrument reviews by research methodology experts. Then, the researchers conducted small and large trials to check the instruments readability for then being measured in terms of validity and reliability.

The first scale to measure academic burnout was Maslach Burnout Inventory-Students Survey (MBI-SS) developed by (Salmela-aro et al., 2009) which has three indicators, namely exhaustion at school work, cynicism toward the meaning of school, and sense of inadequacy at school. It has 9 total items and 5 likert scale options. In terms of validity all items in this instrument fulfilled the criterion with R_{xy} was 0.395 to 0.793, while its reliability gained cornbach alpha value of 0.847.

Students' perfectionism was determined using Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) invented by (Frost et al., 1990). It

has 6 indicators, including concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about actions, and organization. In total this instrument has 35 items measured by likert scale with 5 options. Regarding validity, this instrument fulfilled the criterion of $R_{xy^{-1}}$ of 0.280 to 0.609 and the reliability of 0.880.

The present study was quantitative, so it used hierarchical regression analysis with the help of SPSS for windows 21. It was chosen due to its simplicity and suitability for the expected data. Also, it emphasized gender as a control variable in the relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the descriptive analysis, the level of students' perfectionism was in the medium category with the value of concern over mistakes aspect of (M = 38.67, SD = 2.189), personal standards of (M = 28.24, SD = 2.823), parental expectations of (M = 23.00, SD= 1,225), parental criticism of (M= 18.28, SD= 1,310), doubts about actions of (M= 16.95, SD= 1.163), and organization of (M= 26.53, SD= 2,019). Moreover, the level of student academic burnout was in the medium category (M = 35.86, SD = 4.283). The overall results can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. The Results of Descriptive Analysis

Variable	Aspect	M	SD
Perfectionism	concern over mistakes	38.67	2.189
	personal standards	28.24	2.823
	parental expectations	23.00	1.225
	parental criticism	18.28	1.310
	doubts about actions	16.95	1.163
	organization	26.53	2.019
Academic burnout		35.86	4.283

Table 2. The Results of Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Predictor	Model 1		Model 2	
	β	t	β	t
Gender	-.046	-.803	-.126	-.2401**
Concern over mistakes			.490	8.775*
Personal standards			-.112	-1.912
Parental expectation			.260	5.155*
Parental criticism			.245	4.929*
Doubt of action			-.161	-2.905*
Organization			-.009	-.170
ΔR			.514	
ΔR^2			.311	
ΔF			22.050*	
R	.046		.560	
R^2	.002		.313	
F	.645		19.032*	

Note: * = $p < .01$, ** = $p < .05$

Based on table 2, it was found that there was a relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout ($R = .560$ $p < .01$). Aspects of

perfectionism in the form of concern over mistakes gained ($\beta = .490$, $p < .01$), parental expectations gained ($\beta = .260$, $p < .01$), and

parental criticism with ($\beta = .245, p < .01$) positively predicted academic burnout. On the other hand, the aspect of doubts about actions ($\beta = -.091, p < .05$) negatively predicts academic burnout. The other aspects, namely personal standards ($\beta = -.112, p > .05$) and organization ($\beta = .009, p > .05$) were not correlated and did not predict academic burnout. Above all, perfectionism explained the variance of academic burnout by 31% ($R^2 = .313$). Therefore, there was a relationship between perfectionism and academic burnout.

This study found that maladaptive perfectionism aspects had a positive and significant correlation with academic burnout; among them were concern over mistake, parental expectation, and parental criticism. These three aspects became the indicators of students' academic burnout. Meanwhile, another aspect, namely doubts about actions had a negative correlation with academic burnout. Further, the rest two aspects, consisting of personal standards and organization had no correlation with academic burnout.

Concern over mistakes is anxiety focuses on mistakes. Its impact in students' burnout can be seen from their tendency to cover up their shortcomings or mistakes in the eyes of society, while this effort is actually not very meaningful. This aspect can be understood from the way students judge themselves for not being able to achieve goals in accordance with the demands and expectations of others (social). As commonly known, academic burnout is positively correlated with socially determined perfectionism (Chang et al., 2015). Students will react negatively to mistakes made, interpret mistakes as failures, and feel that others will no longer respect them after failing (Frost et al., 1990).

In terms of parental expectations, even though the expectations are for their children betterment, sometimes the expectations seem unrealistic (Aderanti et al., 2013) so that students tend to feel burdened of them and unconsciously set unrealistic standards for their ability. It is obviously because they are afraid of punishment or rejection from their parents for

failing to meet the demands and expectations of their parents.

The above results are in line with (Klibert et al., 2015) that the feeling of rejection triggers evaluation and critics attached to individuals. Thus, they are forced to seek for acceptance and love by applying high standards. Further, those who have applied these high standards and feel difficult to achieve will feel dissatisfied with things they have done in the process. As a result, the individuals will not attain the expected goals, never meet expectations and demands, and finally cause them feel depressed which leads to academic burnout.

Another aspect is parental criticism. This aspect deals with the previous aspect of parental expectations. Parents often criticize and punish their children when the children fail to meet parents' demands and expectations (Wang & Heppner, 2002). When this happens, and children keep getting negative judgments, the children will surely feel disappointed and pessimistic. It is because normally children depend on their self-esteem from the recognition and evaluation of others, especially their parents. When parents are unable to accept or appreciate positively the achievements of children or students because they are considered unable to achieve their expectations and demands, the students tend to feel like failures, low self-esteem, poor adjustment, and decreased confidence and confidence in themselves which results in academic burnout.

The next aspect is doubts about actions or students' hesitation or insecurity of their ability or performance quality in carrying out tasks well and effectively. Previous studies report that this aspect is closely related to fatigue and cynicism (Zhang et al., 2007). Interestingly, the present study found that this aspect gained a negative and significant correlation with academic burnout. It was due to the absence of students efforts to achieve learning outcomes, and this way made them even experience academic burnout. This hesitation apparently did not lead students to be careful and thorough, instead of withdrawal from the risks of failures.

The next aspect, namely personal standards and organization was found to have no correlation and not explain academic burnout. It might be because self-standards and organization do not always reflect academic perfectionism of the respondents, so the impact was unobservable.

Students with high maladaptive perfectionism prefer doing meaningless things in their learning activities, and those lead to academic burnout. They will tend to focus on judgments and social goals. On the other hand, the ones with adaptive perfectionism will be able to set their goals and focus on efforts to achieve.

The above ideas are in line with a study by (Chang et al., 2015) that students with maladaptive perfectionism often experience academic burnout, while the ones with adaptive perfectionism do not. Then, (Yu et al., 2016) confirm a significant correlation between academic burnout and maladaptive perfectionism.

Similar findings can be found in (Garratt-Reed et al., 2018) which has proved the indication of perfectionism in triggering academic burnout. In the same way, (Elsadik & Abady, 2019) found that academic burnout is significantly correlated with perfectionism in an academic context. Perfectionist students are students with achievement difficulties, where perfectionism is prone to negative things, one of which is a decrease in productivity (Santrock, 2014).

An implication that can be derived from this study is perfectionism is a multidimensional construction, so counselors need to differ their treatments to students with perfectionism based on its types. When the counselors meet maladaptive one, they can give individual or group counseling to help students aware of tendency of this maladaptive perfectionism and its impact on academic burnout. It is expected that students can avoid it by forming rational patterns of thought and behavior. Meanwhile, for adaptive perfectionism, counselors help strengthen and maintain students' perfectionism in a positive direction so that students are able to reduce the academic burnout experienced.

Future researchers are recommended to conduct deeper studies by adding mediator or moderator variables to answer problems related to academic burnout and perform experimental investigations using various intervention techniques to reduce the burnout.

CONCLUSION

Perfectionism has a significant relationship with academic burnout in students. Adaptive perfectionism can help students achieve optimal learning outcomes, but maladaptive perfectionism has been proved to cause students experience academic burnout.

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