Perfectionism and Procrastination Rizal Technological University Athletes

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ABSTRACT
The Rizal Technological University is a perennial champion in different athletic competitions in the past decade. Behind this success are the student athletes who undergo rigid training and preparation. This study examined the Perfectionism and Procrastination of the students in sports, both of which are seen to have an impact on performance and winning attitude of the student athletes. Two standardized measures, the Competitive Orientations Scale and the Procrastination Scale, were used to survey 177 undergraduate student athletes currently enrolled in the University and have previously participated in an athletic event against athletes of other educational institutions. Results led the researchers to conclude that the respondents’ level of Procrastination is Neutral as they sometimes procrastinate but also show diligence, conscientiousness and perseverance with equal measure, with a Moderate Perfectionist tendency. There is no significant difference in the respondents’ perfectionist tendencies and their gender, age and years of playing experience while a significant difference is present when the sport discipline is concerned. There is a significant relationship between levels of Procrastination and the respondents’ age and years of experience, while there is no significant difference when tested with gender and sports. Results also show substantial relationship between perfectionism and procrastination. As there is a link between perfectionism and procrastination, the researchers therefore recommend that programs that will make athletes strive for excellence should always be provided since it results to strong desire for athletes to complete and master a task.

Keywords: Perfectionism, Procrastination and Athletes

INTRODUCTION
The Rizal Technological University (RTU) prides itself for having one of the most effective sports programs among the State Colleges and Universities (SUCs) in the National Capital Region. In fact the university is the perennial over-all champion, dominating all sports events in the annual State Colleges and Universities Athletic Association (SCUAA), a sports event being competed by SUCs in the National Capital Region. The University’s participation in other sports league also results in the same form of dominance. Also this year, the University emerged on top of other Public and Private Tertiary Educational Institutions in the NCR. Suffice it to say that the RTU Sports program and its athletes must be doing something really effective in their recruitment, training and conditioning of student athletes.

In the light of the University’s success, the researchers examined the psychological factors that contribute to the winning attitude and excellent performance of the athletes. In particular, the researchers investigated the Perfectionism and Procrastination of the students in sports, both of which may have a contribution as to the performance and winning attitude of the student athletes.

Contemporary perfectionism theorists and researchers generally agree that perfectionism is a multidimensional achievement-oriented personality disposition that is characterized by an individual’s tendency to set and strive for the flawless attainment of high performance standards. Stoeber and Otto
(2006) proposed that perfectionist orientations can be classified along two major dimensions: perfectionist strivings and perfectionist concerns. Perfectionist strivings reflect an individual’s tendency to strive for extremely high levels of performance, whereas perfectionist concerns reflect an individual’s tendency to react negatively and/or to be concerned over failing to reach those high achievement standards. Stoeber and Otto (2006) further proposed that the combined levels of perfectionist strivings and perfectionist concerns dictate whether an individual can be classified as a healthy/adaptive or unhealthy/maladaptive perfectionist.

Adaptive perfectionists are people who have high perfectionist strivings (i.e., pursue the attainment of extremely high performance standards) combined with low perfectionist concerns (i.e., low concerns about failing to reach these high performance standards). In contrast, maladaptive perfectionists are those who have high perfectionist strivings combined with high perfectionist concerns. In the extant literature, adaptive perfectionism has been associated with a number of positive/healthy characteristics including heightened conscientiousness, increased self-esteem, and decreased depression. In contrast, maladaptive perfectionism has been associated with a number of negative/unhealthy characteristics including heightened neuroticism, decreased self-esteem, and increased depression.

Evidence supporting the distinction between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionist orientations has been well documented in both the sport psychology literature and general psychology literature. In studies with athletes, for example, maladaptive perfectionist tendencies have been linked to debilitating achievement goal orientations, negative attitudinal body image, reduced self-esteem, increased levels of burnout, increased pre-competitive anxiety, and lowered self-confidence. In contrast, adaptive perfectionist tendencies among athletes have been linked to healthy achievement goal orientations, positive attitudinal body image, performance excellence and increased self-confidence.

Procrastination, on the other hand, is typically defined as an irrational tendency to delay tasks that should be completed. Recently, several authors have sought to examine the nature of individual differences in procrastination from a variety of perspectives. One common belief about the nature of procrastinatory behavior is that it stems from excessively high standards. Several authors have suggested that there is a link between procrastination and perfectionism. For instance, Burka and Yuen claimed that procrastinators place unrealistic demands on themselves. They observed that procrastinators demonstrate many of the cognitive characteristics associated with perfectionism, including the tendency to endorse the importance of continual success.

Many other factors suggest a possible link between perfectionism and procrastination. For instance, both perfectionism and procrastination are related to increased endorsement of irrational beliefs. Similarly, a link would be expected based on the fact that both procrastination and perfectionism are associated with excessive fear of failure.

This study aims to determine if the student athletes of the Rizal Technological University’s perfectionist orientations were related to their perceptions of procrastination in sports events and the effect of such attitude in performance. Another goal of the present study was to re-examine possible factors that may contribute to the relation between perfectionism and procrastination. Fear of failure and task aversiveness is two important components of procrastination.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The respondents were 177 undergraduate student athletes currently enrolled in the University and have previously participated in an athletic event against athletes of other educational institutions. Forty eight percent (48%) of the respondents, or a total of 68 individuals were male, while 74 or 52% were female. The respondents’ age range from 16 years old up to above 20 years old. The student athletes competes in different team sports events which includes basketball, volleyball, swimming, and individual sports such as tennis, boxing, armis and non-physical sports such as chess. The respondents
were given a set of three questionnaires, two of which were standardized measures, and a demographic questionnaire.

The researchers used three self-report inventories: (1) a demographic questionnaire, (2) the Sport Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale-2 (Sport-MPS-2; Gotwals & Dunn, 2009), (3) Procrastination Scale (Lay, 1986). The demographic questionnaire gathered the data on basic demographic information about the respondents age, gender, sports, playing position and years of playing experience. The instrument also contained a general set of anti social-desirability instructions.

The Sport-MPS-2 (Gotwals & Dunn, 2009) is a 42-item measure of perfectionism in sport. The Sport-MPS-2 is an updated version of the original Sport-MPS that was developed by Dunn and his colleagues (see Dunn, Causgrove Dunn et al., 2006; Dunn et al., 2002). The Sport-MPS-2 measures six different facets of perfectionism in sport that were largely modelled around six facets of perfectionism originally proposed by Frost and colleagues (1990): Personal Standards (PS: 7 items, e.g., “If I do not set the highest standards for myself in my sport, I am likely to end up a second-rate player”), Concern Over Mistakes (COM: 8 items, e.g., “If I play well but only make one obvious mistake in the entire game, I still feel disappointed with my performance”), Perceived Parental Pressure (PPP: 9 items, e.g., “My parents set very high standards for me in my sport”), Perceived Coach Pressure (PCP: 6 items, e.g., “I feel like my coach never tries to fully understand the mistakes I sometimes make”), Doubts About Actions (DAA: 6 items, e.g., “I usually feel uncertain as to whether or not my training effectively prepares me for competition”) and Organization (ORG: 6 items, e.g., “On the day of competition I have a routine that I try to follow”). Respondents rate the extent to which they agree with each of the items using a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Scores on items are summed for each subscale, with higher composite subscale scores reflecting higher levels of perfectionism in sport. To identify the level of Perfectionism, the following scale was used:

- 1.00 - 1.49  Low Perfectionist Tendency
- 1.50 - 2.49  Moderately Low Perfectionist Tendency
- 2.50 – 3.49  Neutral
- 3.50 – 4.49  Moderately High Perfectionist Tendency
- 4.50 – 5.00  High Perfectionist Tendency

The Lay (1986) procrastination scale is a 20-item true-false measure of dispositional levels of procrastination. Subjects are asked to respond to items such as "I am continually saying I'll do it tomorrow". Its validity and reliability have been demonstrated in a variety of contexts (Lay, 1987, 1988; Kusyszyn, 1990). Higher scores reflect greater procrastination. The version for students was used in this study.

Several Statistical methods were employed by the researches to analyze the data gathered. Initially, frequency, mean and percentages were used to analyze the profile and the levels of perfectionism and procrastination of the respondents. To examine possible gender differences in mean scores, the data was tested using the z-test formula. Also, ANOVA was used to further analyze the difference in procrastination and perfectionism among the respondents, specifically with respect to their age and years of experience. In testing the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination, the researchers utilized the Pearson Product moment coefficient.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Profile of the Respondents
The majority of the respondents are female, aged 20 and above and were engaged in team events with one year experience in collegiate sports. The sports program in Rizal Technological University is comprised of sporting events which caters to both male and female athletes. As the population of respondents suggest, the number of athletes when grouped according to gender do not have a high
degree of difference, which is brought about by the existence of male and female divisions in every sports events. The preponderance of student athletes belonging to the highest age group also suggests a maturing pool of athletes in the university, as the age group is a typical among graduating students. The population of respondents suggests a majority of the athletes surveyed belong to team events. Team events would be a good starting point to observe procrastination. In teams, the procrastinator often presents as the person unwilling to make decisions, late to complete tasks or slow to respond to questions. This is to avoid future situations where they would have to take responsibility. This is damaging for their personal reputation and also for friction in the team.

Level of Perfectionism

Level of perfectionism of respondents is characterized as Moderately High in the domains of “Personal Standards (M = 3.84) and Perceived Coach Pressure (M=3.58) and Neutral in other dimensions such as Concern over Mistakes (M=3.48), Perceive Parental Pressure (M = 3.58), Doubts about Actions (M = 3.62) and Organization (M = 4.02). In examining the data closely, the athletes are seen to set the highest standards for themselves in fear of becoming second-rate players. This observation is consistent with the assertion of researchers that perfectionists like high achievers, tend to set high goals and work hard toward them. However, a high achiever can be satisfied with doing a great job and achieving excellence (or something close), even if their very high goals aren’t completely met. Perfectionists will accept nothing less than, well, perfection. ‘Almost perfect’ is seen as failure. Also the athletes are seen to have a very low tolerance for failure, as even if they fail slightly in competitions, they would see it as being as bad as a complete failure. This observation agrees with current characterization of perfectionists as being high achievers who can enjoy the process of chasing a goal as much or more than the actual reaching of the goal itself. Conversely, perfectionists see the goal and nothing else. They’re so concerned about meeting the goal and avoiding the dreaded failure that they can’t enjoy the process of growing and striving. Also, the results suggest the setting of high standards coming from significant people outside of the individual student athletes such as their parents, and more importantly, their respective coaches. In the midst of competition, the data suggests that the student athletes may perceive that their coaches criticize them for doing things less perfectly in a competition. Also, the perception that their respective coaches expects excellent performance from the student-athletes, both in competition and training, pushes the athletes to become perfectionists in their respective sport discipline.

Generally, respondents’ “Moderately High Level of Perfectionism” reflects a healthy adaptive perfectionist strivings. Stoeber and Otto (2006) added that adaptive perfectionism has been associated with a number of positive / healthy characteristics including heightened conscientiousness, increased self-esteem and decreased depression which probably explains RTU athlete’s dominance in the previous sporting events.

Level of Procrastination

Respondents’ procrastination (M =2.89) leans on the neutral side. The respondents may exhibit procrastination at certain times but also may show a certain amount of diligence and perseverance with equal measure. The procrastinator is often remarkably optimistic about his ability to complete a task on a tight deadline; this is usually accompanied by expressions of reassurance that everything is under control. (Therefore, there is no need to start.) For example, he may estimate that a paper will take only five days to write; he has fifteen days; there is plenty of time; no need to start now. Lulled by a false sense of security, time passes. At some point, he crosses over an imaginary starting time and suddenly realizes that he may not be in control and feel pressured by the perceived limited time in completing the task. Procrastinators may struggle with feelings of low self-confidence and low self-esteem. He may insist upon a high level of performance even though he may feel inadequate or incapable of actually achieving that level.
Difference in Perfectionism According to Profile

No significant relationship in the perfectionist tendencies of the respondents according to their gender, \( z = 0.94 \), age \( F(1, 177) = 0.49, p = .05 \) and years of experience \( F(1, 177) = 0.54, p = .05 \) as collegiate athletes was noted. Conversely, the data shows significant relationship in the sports discipline \( F(1, 177) = 4.92, p = .05 \) where the respondents belong to. Thus, consistent with previous work (Slaney & Ashby, 1996) and to some degree dependent upon gender, perfectionists, thus, may experience perfectionism within only one or a few domains (e.g., high NP at work, yet high PP in relationships and physical activity) and the type of perfectionism present may differ based on domain relevance. The above results show that, while perfectionism may be observed with the same amount of frequency across gender, age and years of playing experience, the differences is more pronounced when the respective sport discipline is considered. As the population tested consisted of individual, team and a combination of team and individually played sport disciplines, it will be noted that those who are engaging in sports with more individualist tendencies are more perfectionist than the rest.

Difference in Procrastination According to Profile

Results show significant relationship in procrastination when respondents were grouped according to Age \( F(1, 177) = 2.56, p = .05 \) and Years of experience \( F(1, 177) = 4.43, p = .05 \). It also shows no significant relationship in terms of Gender \( z = 1.32 \) and Sports \( F(1, 177) = 0.5, p = .05 \). The data culled from the research suggests that the younger the student athlete, the less he tends to procrastinate. Such may be gleaned from the dynamics of the groups which tends to expects more work coming from the newbies or those who have less experience or are younger than the rest. When tested with gender, the data showed no significant difference as the students athletes are expected to be subjected to the same level of pressure and rigor of sports preparations as much as the rest.

Relationship between Perfectionism and Procrastination

The Pearson product moment correlation returned a result showing a substantial relationship between perfectionism and procrastination, \( r(175) = 0.7, p < .05 \). The computed data indicates that as the student athletes strive for perfectionism, their level of procrastination also increases. Researches indicate that while procrastination is not laziness, it is often a symptom of perfectionism. This phenomenon is due to the fact that perfectionists fear their inability to complete a task perfectly; they tend to put it off as long as possible. This stems from the fear that not meeting the goal means that there is something bad, wrong or unworthy inside of them. Further, perfectionists fear that failure will invoke criticism or ridicule either from internal voices or external authorities and peers. The higher the fear of failure and ridicule, the more perfectionists procrastinate (Jacobs, 2014).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Maintain the policy of recruiting a balance of male and female athletes. Younger students should be recruited also since a maturing pool of graduating students are dominant in the university.
2. Since a Moderately High level of Perfectionist tendency reflects a healthy and adaptive strivings, it is suggested that the administration continuously provide programs and interventions primarily focused on increasing perfectionist strivings while reducing or controlling perfectionistic concern. This can be done by setting a realistic goal for the athletes. Athletes should also develop a sense of flexibility so that they can adjust their goals in accordance with situational demands and current level of functioning.
3. A neutral level of procrastination shows a balance between delaying work till another time and showing diligence, discipline and motivation in doing a task, however, it is still suggested that student-athletes should improve their level of motivation to lessen the level of procrastination. Recognizing the fact that they are procrastinating is the first step, identifying the reason why they are doing it and taking appropriate action to overcome it should follow. Adopting an anti-procrastination strategies will help a lot like making up one’s own reward for a completed task,
asking someone like parents, coaches and other significant others to check up on them from time to time is suggested.

4. The Perfectionist tendency is significantly related to sports discipline where the athletes are engaged in. It is therefore suggested that coaches should be aware of the personality patterns specifically their level of perfectionism, and how they see perfection in sports. Setting a realistic goal, giving of a constructive feedback, and a regular assessment of athletes’ performance in their chosen sports should be done on a regular basis.

5. Age and Years of experience is significantly related to procrastination. It is therefore recommended that younger athletes be recruited since tend to procrastinate less. Provide necessary assistance to older athletes with procrastinating behavior. More intervention programs should focus on increasing the level of motivation, discipline, and goal setting.

6. There is a link between perfectionism and procrastination, therefore it is recommended that programs that will make athletes strive for excellence should always be provided since it results to strong desire for athletes to complete and master a task.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


