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A COMPARISON OF ACTIVE AND PASSIVE PROCRASTINATION IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC MOTIVATION

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In this study I examined whether or not the relationship between active procrastination and academic motivation is distinct from the relationship between passive procrastination and academic motivation in order to distinguish between 2 types of procrastination within a self-determination theoretical framework. Data were collected from 278 Korean undergraduates. The findings indicated that high identification and low external regulation increased active procrastination and high external regulation and low intrinsic motivation increased passive procrastination. The findings also showed that active procrastination was inversely proportional to passive procrastination. These findings support the idea that, compared to passive procrastination, active procrastination might be related to relatively autonomous forms of motivation, and might be a form of delay distinct from passive procrastination.

Keywords: active procrastination, passive procrastination, academic motivation, external regulation, identification, intrinsic motivation, self-determination theory.

Perspectives on procrastination vary from author to author. Some researchers maintain that not only behavioral delay but also psychological distress should be involved in the definition of procrastination (e.g., Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). However, others focus only on behavioral delay (e.g., Burka & Yuen, 1983; Ellis & Knaus, 1977). Schouwenburg (2004) suggested that not all postponement should be considered dilatory behavior because deferment can be purposely planned and it can be beneficial to postpone

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doing something. Other researchers have agreed with his idea (Alexander & Onwuegbuzie, 2007; Howell & Watson, 2007; Schraw, Wadkins, & Olafson, 2007).

Chu and Choi (2005) introduced the term *active procrastination* in this perspective. They suggested that there are two distinct types of procrastination: active and passive. *Active procrastinators make intentional decisions to procrastinate, thus applying strong motivation under time pressure, they are able to complete tasks before deadlines, and achieve satisfactory outcomes* (Choi & Moran, 2009). In contrast, *passive procrastinators* are traditional procrastinators who *postpone their tasks until the last minute with feelings of guilt and depression and are more likely to fail to complete tasks*. Chu and Choi (2005) suggested that active procrastinators differ from passive procrastinators in cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions. The suggestion of differences between them has been supported by findings in several studies. Passive and active procrastinators have been found to differ from each other in their relationship with avoidance goals (Chu & Choi, 2005; Corkin, Yu, & Lindt, 2011), in their degree of purposive use of time, perceived time control (Chu & Choi, 2005), self-efficacy (Chu & Choi, 2005; Corkin et al., 2011; Shin & Goh, 2011), grade point average (GPA), stress, and depression (Chu & Choi, 2005) and in level of self-regulation skills, including elaboration, organization, critical thinking, task value, test anxiety, time management, and the control of effort (Shin & Goh, 2011). Therefore, I hypothesized that the motivation of active procrastinators for academic achievement might also be different from that of passive procrastinators.

Researchers have stated that procrastination emanates from motivation (see e.g., Senécal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995; Wolters, 2003). In studies on the relationship between procrastination and academic motivation researchers have traditionally regarded motivation as a dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Some of them have proposed that low intrinsic motivation is one of the major reasons for procrastination (Milgram, Marshevsky, & Sadeh, 1995; Pychyl, Lee, Thibodeau, & Blunt, 2000; Shin & Goh, 2011; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984); whereas others have found that extrinsic motivation predicted students' procrastination (Brownlow & Reasinger, 2000; Saddler & Buley, 1999).

Recently, grounded in self-determination theory, researchers have proposed that types of academic motivation can be ordered along a continuum of increasing self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 1985). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), *external regulation*, the least autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, refers to *performing target activities in order to satisfy an external demand or obtain an externally imposed reward contingency*. *Introjection*, a more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, is described as *a type of internal regulation that is quite controlling because people perform target actions with the feeling of pressure in order to avoid guilt or anxiety or to attain ego enhancements or pride*.

Identification, the form of extrinsic motivation representing the highest level of self-determination, *occurs when a behavior is valued by the individual and is perceived as being chosen by that individual him- or herself. It is considered as extrinsic motivation because the activity is performed as a means to an end and not for its own sake* (Hayamizu, 1997). In contrast, intrinsic motivation requires an activity to be performed for fun or for inherent enjoyment in a self-determined way (Ryan & Connell, 1989). According to the findings of Ryan and Connell, differences in attitudes and adjustment of studying were associated with the different types of academic motivation and the more externally regulated students were, the less they showed their own values or made an effort and the more they tended to blame others for negative outcomes. Introjection was positively related to expending effort, but was also related to more anxiety and to poorer coping with failures. Identification was associated with greater enjoyment of school and more positive coping styles. Intrinsic motivation was correlated with interest, enjoyment, self-competence, and positive coping.

Most researchers on this topic have agreed that procrastination is negatively related to intrinsic motivation (see e.g., Lee, 2005; Senécal et al., 1995; Shin & Goh, 2011; Vansteenkiste, Sierens, Soenens, Luyckx, & Lens, 2009). In some studies procrastination was found to be positively related to external regulation (Senécal et al., 1995; Vansteenkiste et al., 2009), whereas in other studies researchers have reported that procrastination was not significantly related to extrinsic motivation (Chu & Choi, 2005; Shin & Goh, 2011), to external regulation, or to introjection (Lee, 2005). With respect to the relationship between procrastination and identification, Lee and Vansteenkiste et al. found that procrastination was significantly negatively related to identification. Senécal et al. (1995) found that the relationship between identification and procrastination was quite different in the result of a simple correlation analysis from that of a regression analysis. In their study, whereas identification was very slightly negatively related to procrastination in the correlation analysis, it was significantly positively related in the regression analysis. With respect to the relationship between active procrastination and academic motivation, Chu and Choi found that active procrastination was negatively related to extrinsic motivation, whereas Shin and Goh reported that there was no relationship between the two. Shin and Goh reported that there was no significant difference in extrinsic motivation among active, passive, and nonprocrastinators and, according to their findings and the findings in the study by Chu and Choi, there was no relationship between active procrastination and intrinsic motivation.

The Current Study

Few researchers have fully examined the relationship between the alternative

views of procrastination and motivation that have been described here. Significantly, the relationship between active procrastination and academic motivation had not been examined based on self-determination theory. A study was needed in which the aim would be to identify the difference between active and passive procrastination within the framework of self-determination theory. Therefore, in this study I examined whether or not the relationship between active procrastination and academic motivation was distinct from the relationship between passive procrastination and academic motivation, based on self-determination theory. I hypothesized that there would be a more significant relationship between active procrastination and autonomous motivation than there would be between autonomous motivation and passive procrastination. I expected that my findings would serve to identify unique characteristics of active procrastination that are distinct from those of passive procrastination.

Method

Participants

The participants were 278 college students at three universities in South Korea. The sample comprised 198 women (71.2%) and 80 men (28.8%) with ages ranging from 20 to 26 years ($M = 21.60$, $SD = 1.32$). The participants represented a wide range of academic majors and consisted of 27 freshmen (9.71%), 150 sophomores (53.96%), 58 juniors (20.86%), and 43 seniors (15.47%).

Measures

Active procrastination. This was assessed using Choi and Moran's (2009) Active Procrastination Scale. The scale consists of four dimensions: outcome satisfaction (four reverse-coded items, $\alpha = .66$, e.g., "I don't do well if I have to rush through a task"), preference for pressure (four reverse-coded items, $\alpha = .81$, e.g., "It's really a pain for me to work under upcoming deadlines"), intentional decision (four items, $\alpha = .66$, e.g., "I intentionally put off my work to maximize my motivation") and ability to meet deadlines (four reverse-coded items, $\alpha = .72$, e.g., "I'm often running late when getting things done"). A 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true* to 5 = *very true*) was used as the response format for all items. The scale was validated by Choi and Moran (2009).The Cronbach's alpha reliability was .77 in this study.

Passive procrastination. I adopted five items from the Aitken Procrastination Inventory (API; Aitken, 1982) that corresponded to Choi and Moran's (2009) definition of passive procrastination ($\alpha = .74$, e.g., "I often don't finish tasks on time"). Each statement is rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true* to 5 = *very true*). Two experts qualified at doctoral level in educational psychology performed content validation of this scale.

Academic motivation. This was measured using 14 items from the Korean version of Kim's Self-Regulation Questionnaire – Academic (K-SRQ-A; Kim, 2002) based on the self-regulation questionnaire developed by Ryan and Connell (1989). The four motivational concepts for academic achievement are examined in the questionnaire: external regulation (four items, $\alpha = .89$, e.g., "I study because I don't want to be punished by my parents"), introjection (four items, $\alpha = .80$, e.g., "I study because I want to win the approval of my teacher"), identification (three items, $\alpha = .84$, e.g., "I study because I think it is useful information for my life") and intrinsic motivation (three items, $\alpha = .88$, e.g., "I study because I experience pleasure and satisfaction while learning new things"). The questionnaire was validated by Kim (2002). A 6-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all true* to 6 = *very true*) is used as the response format for all items.

Procedure and Data Analysis

Students who were enrolled in educational psychology and introduction to psychology courses voluntarily completed a questionnaire that was used to measure active and passive procrastination and four types of academic motivation. Intercorrelations and 2-step hierarchical regression analyses were conducted on these variables. The cut-off value for significance was $p < .05$.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among active and passive procrastination and four types of academic motivation are presented in Table 1.

I conducted 2-step hierarchical regression analyses to predict active and passive procrastination. Intrinsic motivation was entered after several types of extrinsic motivation in order to identify whether the influence of intrinsic motivation would be continued when the effect of extrinsic motivation was taken into account.

In the first step of the analysis predicting passive procrastination, three extrinsic motivation variables accounted for approximately 6% of the variance in passive procrastination, $F(3, 274) = 5.95$, $p < .01$. External regulation was the only significant and positive predictor of passive procrastination ($\beta = .20$, $p < .01$). In the second step of the analysis, four motivation variables accounted for approximately 11% of the variance in passive procrastination, $F(5, 272) = 9.77$, $\beta < .01$. Intrinsic motivation was a significant and negative predictor of passive procrastination ($\beta = -.27$, $p < .001$) and external regulation was a significant and positive predictor of passive procrastination ($\beta = .22$, $p < .01$).

In the first step of the analysis predicting active procrastination, three extrinsic motivation variables accounted for approximately 6% of the variance in active procrastination, $F(3, 274) = 5.77$, $p < .01$. Identification was the only significant

Table 1. *Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson Correlations Among Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
TP	-									
AP	-.24**	-								
OS	-.02	.72**	-							
PP	-.08	.79**	.52**	-						
ID	.13*	.45**	.08	.12	-					
AMD	-.63**	.59**	.25**	.28**	-.03	-				
ER	.23**	-.20**	-.06	-.14*	-.06	-.24**	-			
IJ	.11	-.15*	-.10	-.13*	-.08	-.07	.42**	-		
IF	-.13*	.15*	-.02	.06	.16**	.19**	-.22**	.01	-	
IM	-.25**	.18**	.08	.05	.12	.22**	-.12*	-.09	.60**	-
M	2.74	3.06	2.79	2.90	3.01	3.55	1.66	2.79	3.57	2.84
SD	.72	.51	.73	.91	.76	.78	.79	.90	.83	.91

Note. TP = Traditional procrastination; AP = Active procrastination; OS = Outcome satisfaction; PP = Preference for pressure; ID = Intentional decision; AMD = Ability to meet deadlines; ER = External regulation; IJ = Introjection; IF = Identification; IM = Intrinsic motivation.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

and positive predictor of active procrastination ($\beta = .12$, $p < .05$). In the second step of the analysis, four motivation variables accounted for approximately 7% of the variance in active procrastination, $F(5, 272) = 5.03$, $p < .01$. External regulation was the only significant and negative predictor of active procrastination ($\beta = -.14$, $p < .05$).

Discussion

My purpose in this study was to examine whether or not the relationship between active procrastination and academic motivation was distinct from the relationship between passive procrastination and academic motivation. Three major findings emerged from this study.

First, students with extrinsic and nonautonomous motivation might not defer their study actively but procrastinate passively. The findings indicated that external regulation increased passive procrastination but decreased active procrastination. Students who study for an examination only because they fear parental sanctions are more likely to delay their studies passively than they are to delay studying actively. This implies that the relationship between active procrastination and academic motivation might be distinct from the relationship between passive procrastination and academic motivation. This result supports previous findings regarding the relationship between procrastination and external regulation (Senécal et al., 1995; Vansteenkiste et al., 2009) and the finding by Chu and Choi (2005) that extrinsic motivation was negatively related to active procrastination.

Second, I found that, compared to passive procrastination, active procrastination might be related to motivation that is more autonomous. In the correlation analysis, passive procrastination was positively related to external regulation and introjection but negatively related to identification and intrinsic motivation, whereas active procrastination was negatively related to external regulation and introjection but positively related to identification and intrinsic motivation. In the regression analysis, high external regulation and low intrinsic motivation increased passive procrastination whereas high identification and low external regulation increased active procrastination. Intrinsic motivation and identification are the forms of motivation identified in self-determination theory as representing the highest levels of self-determination, and external regulation and introjection are the least autonomous forms of extrinsic motivation. Therefore, it can be said that active procrastination is related to more autonomous forms of motivation and passive procrastination is related to more controlled forms of motivation. These findings support the assertion that active procrastinators differ from passive procrastinators in cognitive, affective and behavioral dimensions (Chu & Choi, 2005; Corkin et al., 2011; Shin & Goh, 2011).

My findings in this study also imply that the relationship between extrinsic motivation and active procrastination might depend on the individual's degree of autonomy. The influences of identification and external regulation on active procrastination were inversely proportional to each other in the results I obtained in my study. Although both identification and external regulation are extrinsic forms of motivation, they differ from each other in the degree of autonomy. Therefore, even if students are extrinsically motivated, the more autonomy they have, the more likely they may be to delay studying intentionally, to complete study projects in time, and to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Although intrinsic motivation was positively related to active procrastination, according to the results in my study, it did not predict active procrastination. Similarly, previous researchers have reported that intrinsic motivation was not significantly related to active procrastination (Chu & Choi, 2005; Shin & Goh, 2011). Even though active procrastinators can complete their task before deadline and are satisfied with their outcomes, they may not engage in an academic task simply for the sake of that task. So it could be questioned whether or not active procrastination could be considered either an ideal or an adaptive strategy for studying, as Corkin et al. (2011) mentioned.

I found it interesting that, according to the results in my study, when the effect of intrinsic motivation was taken into account, the influence of identification on active procrastination diminished. This might have been because of the participants' association of the idea of identification with intrinsic motivation. This suggestion is supported by the high correlation between identification and intrinsic motivation in my study. Perhaps the influence of identification was conjoined with intrinsic motivation because intrinsic motivation is similar to identification with respect to autonomy.

Third, active procrastination was significantly inversely related to passive procrastination. This finding is consistent with that of Corkin et al. (2011). In particular, the ability to meet deadlines, which is a dimension of active procrastination, had a strongly negative correlation with passive procrastination in the study. This implies that the greatest difference between the two types of procrastinators is their ability to meet deadlines. It could be questioned whether or not active procrastination should be considered a type of procrastination at all in that many researchers assume procrastination to include the failure to complete a task (e.g., Ellis & Knaus, 1977; Senécal et al., 1995; Solomon & Rothblum, 1984). Corkin and her colleagues (2011) insisted that active procrastination is not procrastination but rather a form of purposeful delay, so they used the term active delay rather than active procrastination.

One limitation in this study was that I measured procrastination and academic motivation using a self-report method. Future researchers need to create and validate a greater number of methods and instruments to complement the

self-reporting questionnaires that I used in my study to measure procrastination and academic motivation. Second, though the results indicated that several types of academic motivation were significant predictors of active and passive procrastination, the amount of variance accounted for was modest. The third limitation in this study was that it is difficult to generalize these findings to other student populations or to procrastination in nonacademic settings, because the participants in this study comprised only undergraduate college students. It would be worthwhile for future researchers to investigate whether or not the findings I obtained in this study can be generalized to other student populations and individuals in other settings.

Despite these limitations, in this study I have offered the finding that active procrastination is distinct from passive procrastination within a self-determination theoretical framework. I found that the motivation of active procrastinators was more autonomous than that of passive procrastinators. Motivation may create the difference in academic and emotional outcome between the two types of procrastinators. I suggest that it is necessary to acknowledge active procrastination as being different from traditional, that is, passive, procrastination, and it would be meaningful in the future to examine whether or not active procrastination is, in fact, procrastination.

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