

An Investigation of Academic Procrastination, Locus of Control, and Emotional Intelligence*

*M. Engin DENİZ** , Zeliha TRAŞ*** , Didem AYDOĞAN†*****

Abstract

In this research, the effects of emotional intelligence on the academic procrastination and locus of control tendencies of a group of university students are investigated. The sample of this study consists of 435 university students including 273 female students and 162 male students who were randomly selected from the population of Selçuk University students. The age range of the students varies in between 17-21 years old and the mean age is 20.19 years old. A personal information form, the Emotional Intelligence Scale, the Academic Procrastination Scale and the Locus of Control Scale were administered to the sample. Research findings show that the sub-scales of the Emotional Intelligence Scale, adaptability and coping with stress, are highly correlated with the students' academic procrastination tendency scores ($p < .05$). Secondly, it was found that the two sub-scales of the Emotional Intelligence Scale, adaptability and general mood, could significantly predict the students' locus of control scores ($p < .05$). Lastly, a negative correlation was found between emotional intelligence skills and both academic procrastination ($p < .05$) and locus of control ($p < .01$). The results were discussed in the light of the related literature.

Key Words

Academic Procrastination Behavior, Emotional Intelligence, Locus of Control.

* This research was presented orally at 9th National Congress of Psychological Counseling and Guidance.

** Correspondence: Assoc. Prof. Dr., Selçuk University, Faculty of Technical Education, Department of Education, Konya / Turkey. E-mail: engindeniz@selcuk.edu.tr

*** Assist. Prof. Dr., Selçuk University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences.

**** Research Assistant, Adnan Menderes University, Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Sciences.

They may say “I will certainly begin next Monday.” The term procrastinating used for this and similar expressions are defined as procrastinating or postponing responsibilities and decisions as a typical situation or behavioral characteristic (Milgram, Mey-Tal, & Levison, 1998). Procrastination is the instance of postponement of the works and tasks that are better to be done today until the following day. Individuals’ postponing their duties and responsibilities, and not being able to begin a work with the aim of completing, can be regarded among the most typical and frequent incidents of procrastination (Dryden, 2000).

An individual who says “I never procrastinate” is answering at social approval level and certainly there are things he/she procrastinates in his/her life. Procrastination is the universal weakness of people and a problem of arranging oneself in this way (Senecal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995). It is stated in the literature that 70% of university students have procrastinating behaviors (Ellis & Knaus, 1977), %50 of those procrastinates their academic responsibilities at least in a half of their times and %38 of those rarely procrastinates (Solomon & Rothblum, 1984).

Academic procrastination which can be named as reflection of daily postponement to school life is defined as to delay duties and responsibilities related to school, or to save them to the last minute (Haycock, McCarthy, & Skay, 1998). Procrastination behavior occurs as not completing the given assignments or delaying preparation for examinations (Beck, Koons, & Milgrim, 2000). Generally, such behaviors are much more common among the students who were graduated from high school and have just entered university (Kachgal, Hansen, & Nutter, 2001; Lee, 2005).

The behavior of students who procrastinates their academic responsibilities is a phenomenon related to learning. During a newly learned subject or lesson, if the internal motivation and profound learning integrate, the subject will be completely learned and the student will master the subject. Thus interest, pleasure, enjoyment, and desire to learn more in terms of the material learned/studied profoundly will increase. However, subjects studied or learned superficially are procrastinated more. They do not enjoy learning the simple and easily perceived subjects. Therefore, students procrastinate due to restless and unpleasant emotions experienced during superficial learning (Orpen, 1998).

Academic procrastination is thought to be related with emotional intelligence (EQ), an individual’s ability to understand, feel, administer, and guide his/her own or others’ emotions (Goleman, 1999). Bar-On expla-

ins EQ in five main branches: Intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptation, coping with stress and general mood (Stein, & Book, 2003).

In the literature, there are some differences between intrapersonal individuals and interpersonal individuals in terms of academic success, self-motivation, time management, and personality (Beck et al., 2000; Dağ, 1991; Shapiro, 2002; Yeşilyaprak, 1993). The starting point of the idea was the thought that there may have been a relationship between the compounds of EQ and internal locus of control.

Internal locus of control is “the tendency of the individual to perceive events, good or bad, that affect him/her as the results of his/her own abilities, features, and behaviors, or the results of outer powers like fortune, fate, and the others” (Dönmez, 1986). The locus of control was first introduced by Rotter. According to Rotter, the individual acts in a certain way with an expectation from that behavior. There is a value of the result expected from this behavior (Cüceloğlu, 1996). There is a positive relationship between academic success and internal locus of control (Dağ, 1991). Students who show internal locus of control tendencies know that their academic success depends on themselves and pay more attention to every information in order to reach their target (Burger, 2006). Therefore, these students use time better and exhibit more constructive reactions against preventions (Yeşilyaprak, 2004).

Emotional intelligence is one of the common study areas in academic literature in terms of human relations (Brackett, Mayer, & Warner, 2004; Deniz, Öztürk, & Hamarta, 2007; Deniz & Yılmaz, 2006; Fernandez-Berrocal, Alcaide, Extremera, & Pizarro, 2006; Göçet, 2006; Lopes, Salovey, & Straus, 2003; Palmer, Donaldson, & Stough, 2002; Salovey & Mayer, 1990; Wing, Schutte, & Byrne, 2006; Yeşilyaprak & Durmuş, 2007). Emotional intelligence can be defined as “the wise, sensitive and useful utilization of emotions by an individual” (Yeşilyaprak & Durmuş, 2007). It is an inconstant factor that explains the dominance of individual over his/her emotions and that explains how an individual may utilize his/her emotions in a more productive way (Konrad & Hendl, 1997). Experts report that emotional intelligence is an inconstant ability that can be gained and that can increase in time (Bradberry & Greaves, 2005). Emotional intelligence research demonstrates that emotional intelligence is taken into account in two approaches. These are the ability model and the mixed model. The ability model defines emotional intelligence as an ability group and emphasizes the importance of emo-

tional intelligence and the potential utilization of reasoning through emotions. The mixed model mixes emotional intelligence ability with social skills, characteristics, and behaviors and expresses bright hopes in regard to success that emotional intelligence can make us reach (Çakar & Arbak, 2004).

We learn and assess our and other people's emotions and react properly by reflecting the knowledge and energy of emotions towards our daily life and work. Therefore, individuals who can utilize their emotions wisely towards the aims that they want to achieve in their work, education, or private life and who can achieve these aims may be defined as "intelligent in regard to emotions" (Yeşilyaprak, 2001). Researchers examine emotional intelligence through several variables. Some of those are emotional intelligence and overcoming the stress (Deniz & Yılmaz, 2006; Gocet, 2006), life satisfaction (Deniz & Yılmaz, 2004; Palmer et al, 2002; Wing et al, 2006), anxiety and depression (Fernandez-Berrocal et al, 2006) and personality (Lopes et al, 2003).

As a result, it is understood that intrapersonal students are better at time management and they react more positively towards hindrances. This study aimed to examine how university students' EQs influence their academic procrastination and locus of internal control.

Method

Sample

435 university students (273 females, 162 males) participated in the research. The ages of the participants ranged from 17 to 29 years old. The population of this study was all the students currently attending programs at Selcuk University in Konya.

Measures

The Emotional Intelligence Scale, developed by Bar-On (1997, cited in Acar, 2001), was used to measure emotional intelligence levels. The Academic Procrastination Behavior Scale (Çakıcı, 2003) was used to gather information about academic procrastination behaviors. The Rotter Locus of Control Scale (1966, cited in Dağ, 1991) was used to assess students' levels of locus of control. All of these scales were psychometrically reliable and valid. A demographic information form was developed to collect information on the subjects' ages, faculty and class.

Procedures

The scales were administered by the second and third authors in a single session and administration was carried out in groups.

Results

Regression coefficient was calculated as .24 as a result of equation of five sub-scales of EQ as independent variable. It was discovered that the variability in academic procrastination scores stems from five factors that have been mentioned, and the degree of their influence is 6.2%. The 5.674 F value came out shows that subscales of EQ affect academic procrastination considerably, as a whole ($p < .001$).

It seems that two subscales of EQ; adaptation ($t = -2,29; p < .05$) and coping with stress ($t = -2,47; p < .05$) are significantly predictive factors for academic procrastination, while intrapersonal, interpersonal, and general mood subscales are not ($p > .05$).

Regression coefficient was calculated as .31 as a result of equation of five subscales of EQ as independent variable. It was discovered that 9.9% degree of variability in the locus of internal control stems from the five factors that have been mentioned, as a whole. The outcome value of 9,471 F shows that EQ abilities, as a whole, affect the locus of internal control significantly ($p < .001$). It seems that of those five abilities, adaptation ($t = -4,02; p < .001$) and mood ($t = -1,97; p < .05$) are significantly predictive factors in the locus of internal control, whereas intrapersonal, interpersonal, and coping with stress are not ($p > .05$).

A significant negative relationship was found between the academic procrastination and the intrapersonal, adaptation, coping with stress, and general mood subscales of EQ. On the other hand, it was discovered that there is not a significant positive relationship between academic procrastination and interpersonal style.

Discussion

According the results obtained in the current study, there is a relationship between the subscales of EQ, intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptation, coping with stress, and mood and procrastination and internal locus of control. According to Flett, Blankstein, and Martin (1995), there is a positive correlation between procrastination and coping with stress in

that procrastination serves as a tool for coping with stress (cited in Alexander, & Onwuegbuzie, 2007). This finding seems to support Freud's psychoanalytic theory which explained procrastination for the first time. According to the theory, because of incomplete duties and avoidance from duties individuals' ego is threatened and as a result, procrastination emerges (Ferrari, Johnson, & McCown, 1995).

The problems of students in regard to school (Ferrari et al, 1995), health (Fuschia, 2004), and family (Ferrari, Harriott, & Zimmerman, 1999) may cause procrastinating behavior. Individuals who have the ability to overcome stress may take measurements to prevent occurrence of similar situations during solving their problems and find the power to overcome their problems (Türküm, 2002). When these characteristics of overcoming stress are taken into consideration, it is expected that students overcome their problems without procrastinating. These findings support those of the research.

General mood state is important in regard to life satisfaction, self-acceptance and accepting other people and participation into life activities. This aspect is particularly relevant to optimism. Optimistic individuals are happy, moderate, and extravert (Vara, 1999).

Researchers found that there is a positive correlation between procrastination and anxiety in that as anxiety increases the tendency of procrastination increases as well. That is, anxiety is a predictive factor in procrastination (Haycock, et al., 1998; Owens, & Newbegin, 1997; Yorulmaz, 2003). According to the study carried out by Brackett, Mayer, and Warner (2004), intrapersonal and academic successes are related with each other considerably.

Interpersonal; empathy, consists of relationships between individuals and social responsibilities. According to Knaus (2000), especially in cultures where performance in social environment is significant, how a person uses his/her time is important. Procrastinators always find excuses that prove them right. Individuals who tend to procrastinate experience problems during establishing meaningful relations with other people and during decision making (Balkıs, 2006).

Significant negative relationships have been found between locus of control and intrapersonal abilities, interpersonal abilities, adaptability, coping with stress, and general mood among university students. Moreover, adaptability and general mood scores among university students

significantly predict locus of control. Disharmonic behaviors are more common among individuals who have external locus of control compared to those individuals who have internal locus of control. Phares (cited by Senguder, 2006 from 1976) states that external factors cause more anxiety (depression, worry). Moreover Baltas (2000) emphasizes that internal locus of control is one of the most important characteristics of individuals who have developed emotional intelligence.

The finding of Beck et al (2000) that students who have internal control procrastinate less, supports the research findings of Jansenn and Carton (1999) that found that students who have internal locus of control complete their homework earlier (fulfill their responsibilities) than students who have external locus of control and do not procrastinate. The study of Nilson-Whitten, Morder, and Kapakla (2007) examined the relations among locus of control, optimism, and academic success of students and found significant relations between academic success, locus of control, and optimism. The results of the current study are also similar to those of the previous research.

As self-respect decreases the tendency to procrastinate increases; there is consensus that self-respect is a predictive factor in procrastination (Çakıcı, 2003; Solomon, & Rothblum, 1984; Yorulmaz, 2003). Also, Baltas (2000) remarked that having internal control is one of the most important features of individuals who have high EQ.

References / Kaynakça

- Acar, F. T. (2001). *Duygusal zeka yeteneklerinin göreve yönelik ve insana yönelik liderlik davranışları ile ilişkisi: Banka şube müdürleri üzerine bir alan araştırması*. Yayınlanmamış doktora tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, İstanbul.
- Alexander, S. E., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2007). Academic procrastination and the role of hope as a coping strategy. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 42 (7), 1301-1310.
- Balkıs, M. (2006). *Öğretmen adaylarının davranışlarındaki erteleme eğiliminin, düşünme ve karar verme tarzları ile ilişkisi*. Yayınlanmamış doktora tezi, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İzmir.
- Baltaş, A. (2000). *Ekip çalışması ve liderlik*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- Brackett, M. A., Mayer, J. D., & Warner, R. M. (2004). Emotional intelligence and its relation to everyday behaviour. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 36 (6), 1387-1402.
- Bradberry, T., & Greaves, J. (2005). *The emotional intelligence quick book*. New York: Fireside Publishing.
- Beck, B. L., Koons, S. R., & Milgrim, D. L. (2000). Correlates and consequences of behavioral procrastination: The effects of academic procrastination, self-consciousness, self-esteem and self-handicapping [Special issue]. *Journal of Social Behavior & Personality*, 15 (5), 3-13.
- Burger, M. J. (2006). *Kişilik* (çev. İ. D. Erguvan Sarıoğlu). İstanbul: Kaknüs Yayınları.
- Çakar, U. & Arbak, Y. (2004). Modern yaklaşımlar ışığında değişen duygu-zeka ilişkisi ve duygusal zeka. *Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 6 (3), 23-48.
- Çakıcı, D. Ç. (2003). *Lise ve üniversite öğrencilerinde genel erteleme ve akademik erteleme davranışının incelenmesi*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.
- Cüceloğlu, D. (1996). *İnsan ve davranışı*. İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi.
- Dağ, İ. (1991). Rotter'in İç-Dış Kontrol Odağı Ölçeği (RİDKOÖ)'nin üniversite öğrencileri için güvenilirliği ve geçerliği. *Psikoloji Dergisi*, 7 (26), 10-16.
- Deniz, M. E. & Yılmaz, E. (2004, Temmuz). *Üniversite öğrencilerinin duygusal zeka yetenekleri ve yaşam doyumları arasındaki ilişki*. XIII. Ulusal Eğitim Bilimleri Kurultayı, İnönü Üniversitesi, Malatya.
- Deniz, M. E. & Yılmaz, E. (2006). Üniversite öğrencilerinde duygusal zeka ve stresle başa çıkma arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 25, 17-26.
- Deniz, M. E., Öztürk, A. & Hamarta, E. (2007, Mayıs). Duygusal zekanın yaşam doyumunu yordama gücü. G. Özdemir Yayıncı (Baş Ed.) *Uluslararası Duygusal Zeka ve İletişim Sempozyumu kitabı* içinde (s. 593-601). İzmir: Ege Üniversitesi.
- Dönmez, A. (1986). Denetim odağı: Temel araştırma alanları. *Ankara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Fakültesi Dergisi*, 19, 1-2.
- Dryden, W. (2000). *Ertelenmek yaşamı kaçırma* (çev. G. Günay). İstanbul: Rota Yayıncılık.
- Ellis, A., & Knaus, W. J. (1977). *Overcoming procrastination*. New York: Signet Books.

- Fernandez-Berrocal, P., Alcaide, R., Extremera, N., & Pizarro, D. (2006). The role of emotional intelligence in anxiety and depression among adolescents. *Individual Differences Research*, 4 (1), 16-27.
- Ferrari, J. R., Harriott, J. S., & Zimmerman M. (1999). The social support networks of procrastinators: Friends or family in times of trouble? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 26, 321-331.
- Ferrari, J. R., Johnson, J. L., & McCown, W. G. (1995). *Procrastination and task avoidance: Theory, research, and treatment*. New York: Plenum Pres.
- Flett, G.L., Blankstein, K.R., & Martin, T.R. (1995). Procrastination, negative self-evaluation, and stress in depression and anxiety: A review and preliminary model. In J.R. Ferrari, J.L. Johnson, & W.G. McCown (Eds.), *Procrastination and task avoidance: Theory, research and treatment* (pp. 136-167). New York: Plenum Press.
- Fuschia, M. S. (2004). Procrastination and intentions to perform health behaviors: The role of self-efficacy and the consideration of future consequences. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37, 115-128.
- Goleman, D. (1999). *Duygusal zeka: Neden IQ'dan daha önemlidir* (çev. B. S. Yüksel; 12. basım). İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları.
- Göçet, E. (2006). *Üniversite öğrencilerinin duygusal zeka düzeyleri ile stresle başa çıkma tutumları arasındaki ilişki*. Yayınlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Sakarya Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Sakarya.
- Haycock, L. A., McCharty, P., & Skay, C. L. (1998). Procrastination in college students: The role self-efficacy and anxiety. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 76, 317-324.
- Jansenn, T. & Carton, J. S. (1999). The effect of locus of control and task difficulty on procrastination. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 160 (4), 436-442.
- Kachgal, M. M., Hansen, L. S., & Nutter, K. J. (2001). Academic procrastination prevention intervention: Strategies and recommendations. *Journal of Developmental Education*, 25 (1), 14-24.
- Konrad, S., & Hendl, C. (1997). *Duygularla güçlenmek* (çev. M. Taştan). İstanbul: Hayat Yayıncılık.
- Knaus, W. J. (2000). Procrastination, blame, and change. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 15, 153-166.
- Lee, E. (2005). The relationship of motivation and flow experience to academic procrastination in university students. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 166 (1), 5-14.
- Lopes, P. N., Salovey, P., & Straus, R. (2003). Emotional intelligence, personality, and the perceived quality of social relationships. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 35 (3), 641-658.
- Milgram, N., Mey-Tal, G., & Levison, Y. (1998). Procrastination, generalized or specific, in college students and their parents. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 25 (2), 297-316.
- Nilson-Whitten, M. K., Morder, B., & Kapakla, G. M. (2007). *Relationship between locus of control, optimism and academic performance*. Proceedings of the Annual Conference of the New Jersey Counseling Association Eatontown, New Jersey.
- Orpen, C. (1998). The causes and consequences of academic procrastination: A research note. *Westminster Studies in Education*, 21, 73-75.

- Owens, A. M. & Newbegin, I. (1997). Procrastination in high school achievement: A causal structural model. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 12 (4), 869-887.
- Palmer, B., Donaldson, C. & Stough, C. (2002). Emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 33, 1091-1100.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (1990). Emotional intelligence. *Imagination, Cognition and Personality*, 9 (3), 185-211.
- Shapiro, L. E. (2002). *Yüksek EQ'lu bir çocuk yetiştirmek* (çev. Ü. Kartal). İstanbul: Varlık Yayınları.
- Senecal, C., Koestner, R., & Vallerand, J. (1995). Self-regulation and academic procrastination. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 135 (1), 607-619.
- Stein, J. S. & Book, H. E. (2003). *EQ duygusal zeka ve başarının sırrı* (çev. M. Işık). İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları.
- Solomon, L. J., & Rothblum, E. D. (1984). Academic procrastination: Frequency and cognitive-behavioral correlates. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 31, 503-509.
- Şengüder, Ş. (2006). *Lise I-III. sınıf öğrencilerinde denetim odağı ile rubsal sorunlar arasındaki ilişkinin belirlenmesi ve akademik başarı ile kıyaslanması*. Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İzmir.
- Türküm, A. S. (2002). Stresle Başa Çıkma Ölçeğinin geliştirilmesi: Geçerlik ve güvenilirlik çalışmaları. *Türk Psikolojik Danışma ve Rehberlik Dergisi*, 2 (18), 25-34.
- Vara, Ş. (1999). *Yoğun bakım hemşirelerinde iş doyumunu ve genel yaşam doyumunu arasındaki ilişkilerin incelenmesi*. Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Ege Üniversitesi, Sağlık Bilimleri Enstitüsü, İzmir.
- Wing, F. J., Schutte, S. N., & Byrne, B. (2006). The effect of positive writing on emotional intelligence and life satisfaction. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 62 (10), 1291-1302.
- Yeşilyaprak, B. (1993). Kişilik gelişiminde ailesel faktörlerin etkisine ilişkin bir araştırma. *Aile ve Toplum Dergisi*, 3 (1), 5-18.
- Yeşilyaprak, B. (2001). Duygusal zeka ve eğitim açısından doğurguları. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Yönetimi Dergisi*, 7 (25), 139-146.
- Yeşilyaprak, B. (2004). Denetim odağı. Y. Kuzgun ve D. Deryakulu (Ed.), *Eğitimde bireysel farklılıklar* içinde (s. 239-258). Ankara: Nobel Yayıncılık.
- Yeşilyaprak, B. & Durmuş, E. (2007, Mayıs). Lisans düzeyinde eğitimde duygusal zeka dersinin kapsam ve işlenişi. *International Emotional Intelligence and Communication Symposium*, Ege Üniversitesi, İzmir, Türkiye.
- Yorulmaz, A. (2003). *Erteleme davranışının çeşitli psikolojik değişkenler açısından incelenmesi*. Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.