Effects of academic self-efficacy and future orientation on procrastinating behavior in Italian university students

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INTRODUCTION & AIM

Promoting academic self-efficacy is crucial for improving resilience and future orientation (Cassidy, 2015; Bozzato, 2024), as well as for reducing procrastinating behavior (Liu et alii, 2020), even if the relationship between these three phenomena isn't yet investigated in university context.

Academic self-efficacy is defined as a set of "beliefs in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required producing given attainments" (Bandura, 1997, p. 3), and it is action-guiding aspect of self-conception (Bandura 1986; Pajares, 1996).

Future orientation refers to the ideas, thoughts, and feelings that individuals direct towards their own future, including the ability to imagine different possible scenarios of life (Karali et al., 2023; Stoddard et al., 2011). Procrastination is the irrational propensity to put off tasks that ought to be done (Lay, 1986) or "the unnecessary delaying of activities that one ultimately intends to complete, especially when done to the point of creating emotional discomfort" (Lay & Schouwenburg, 1993).

This study explored the effects of academic self-efficacy and future orientation on procrastination in **230 Italian university students** randomly recruited at Department of Educational Sciences, University of Catania, Sicily. We hypothesized that:

1. the more the students scored higher in academic self-efficacy, the more they were highly resilient and oriented to the future;

2. the more the students scored higher in academic self-efficacy, the less they tended to procrastinate.

METHOD

We used three measures: Design my Future (Santilli et alii, 2015), Academic Self-Efficacy Scale (Sagone & De Caroli, 2014), and General Procrastination Scale (Mariani, 2009).

Design my future → It is a 5 point Likert scale consisting of 21 items used to evaluate future orientation and resilience of the individuals (e.g. "About my future I have many ideas and hopes", "I think I am a strong person").

Academic self-efficacy scale → It is a measure to explore the perceived self-efficacy in academic context according four dimensions (self-engagement, self-oriented decision making, others-oriented problem solving, and "interpersonal climate) with 30 items each valuable on 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (not at all efficient) to 7 intervals (completely efficient).

General Procrastination scale → It is a self-report measure of global, trait-like tendencies towards procrastination across a variety of tasks (e.g., "In preparing for some deadlines, I often waste time by doing other things") composed by 20 items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results showed that all dimensions of academic self-efficacy were positively correlated (all for p<.001) with future orientation (self-engagement: r=.56; self-oriented decision making: r=.58; others-oriented problem solving: r=.46; interpersonal climate: r=.45) and resilience (self-engagement: r=.61; self-oriented decision making: r=.67; others-oriented problem: r=.56; interpersonal climate: r=.38)(Tab.1).

Tab.1 – Correlations between academic self-efficacy and future orientation/resilience

		Self-engagement	Self-oriented decision making	Others-oriented problem solving	Interpersonal climate
Future orientation	r	,56**	,58**	,46**	,45**
	Sign.	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001
Resilience	r	,61**	,67**	,56**	,38**
	Sign.	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Results showed that procrastinating behaviors were negatively correlated (all for p<.001) with future orientation (r=-.39), resilience (r=-.46), and all dimensions of academic self-efficacy (self-engagement: r=-.49; self-oriented decision making: r=-.47; others-oriented problem: r=-.35; interpersonal climate: r=-.26)(Tab.2).

Tab.2 – Correlations between academic self-efficacy, future orientation/resilience and procrastination

		Self-engagement	Self-oriented decision making	Others-oriented problem solving	Interpersonal climate	Future orientation	Resilience
Procrastination	r	-,49**	-,47**	-,35**	-,26**	-,39	-,46
	Sign.	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001	<,001

Linear regression analyses indicated that: higher academic self-efficacy (self-engagement: β=-.320, t=-3.89 and self-oriented decision making: β=-.237, t=-2.87) had positive effects on the reduction of procrastinating behavior (R^2=.269, adj R^2=.263, SE=11.29, F=41.76, p<.001); higher academic self-efficacy (self-engagement: β=.336, t=-4.50, interpersonal climate: β=-.202, t=3.43, and self-oriented decision making: β=-.220, t=2.85) had positive effects on the future orientation (R^2=.411, adj R^2=.403, SE=6.42, F=52.50, p<.001); finally, higher academic self-efficacy (self-engagement: β=.386, t=5.35, others-oriented problem solving: β=-.220, t=3.72 and self-oriented decision making: β=.207, t=2.98) had positive effects on resilience (R^2=.505, adj R^2=.498, SE=3.77, F=76.71, p<.001).

CONCLUSION

Results showed a strong impact of self-efficacy in academic context on resilience, procrastination, and orientation to the future in university students and suggested to test mediation models. Interventions about academic self-efficacy could be useful to improve ability to resist toward stressful events in academic context in a life span orientation.

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