

Personal disposition to perfectionism and procrastination as a factor for motivation toward success: Adult students' case

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Lifelong learning nowadays is becoming more and more popular concept researched into in numerous studies as the demand for education among working adults, employers and society in general has grown dramatically. However, the investigations of the phenomena of procrastination and perfectionism in the context of motivation for learning among adult learners involved in professional development programs and/or postgraduate non-degree courses are far from being abundant. The presented study aimed to explore the motivation for success in the context of perfectionism and procrastination among adult learners attending professional development courses. The sample consisted of 105 individuals (adults with university degrees aged 21 to 53, average age — 38 years). The questionnaires A. A. Rean's "Motivation for Success and Fear of Failure", adaptation of Procrastination Scale by P. Steel (adaptation: N. M. Klepikova and I. N. Kormacheva), and Three-Factor Perfectionism Questionnaire (N. G. Garanyan and A. B. Kholmogorova) were employed to measure motivation for success and fear of failure, procrastination and perfectionism. To process the data obtained, statistical and mathematical methods were applied. The study revealed negative correlation between motivational orientations towards success and the level of procrastination and maladaptive manifestations of perfectionism (concern for others' evaluations; negative selection). Positive correlations were found between maladaptive parameters of perfectionism (concern for others' evaluations and negative selection) and procrastination. The study results also demonstrated the multi-motivational nature of educational motivation among adult learners. The results of the study are of great practical relevance for educationalists involved in designing studying programs.

Keywords: procrastination, perfectionism, adult learning motivation, success motivation.

Introduction

Career development is a key component of adult life. Almost all people are eager to achieve success in all domains of their activities. Studies on success in educational and professional areas that employed R. J. Sternberg's intelligence tests have proven that the

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level of motivation is a better predictor of success than intelligence. He argues that in almost any environment motivation plays no less a role in achieving success than mental abilities (Sternberg, 2009).

Achievement motivation is the type of motivation that influences self-regulation and activity success. Moreover, achievement motivation is determined by various variables, i. e. the desire for success or the desire to avoid failure (fear of failure). The difference between them is expressed in the definition of the goals that people set, the efforts they make to achieve them, and their attitude towards the results of their activities. As modern studies show, when the motive to avoid failure prevails, it often leads to lowered self-esteem, anxiety, low social activity, and unwillingness to take risks (Stepanova, 2004; Borovskaya, 2008; Kedyarova, Chernetskaya, 2019).

However, achieving success in any activity depends on both an individual's motivation and his/her personality traits. Procrastination — delaying intended actions — can become an obstacle to success. The negative consequences are the following: reduced productivity, failure, an individual's anxiety, dissatisfaction, and a sense of guilt. Moreover, perfectionism can also become an obstacle; the individual sets unattainably high standards along with unrealistic goals, which can affect the performance and result in dropping off the work or even triggering depression. Perfectionism, along with other factors including personality features, stands out among other hindrances because it is closely related to the risk of cognitive-behavioral and clinical manifestations (Garanyan, 2018; Ellis, 2002).

So due to its contradictory structure, perfectionism shows both maladaptive manifestations (worrying about evaluations by others and comparing yourself with them, negative self-selection and fixation on one's own imperfection), and adaptive ones (high standards and demands set on oneself) (Garanyan, 2018). Perfectionism can have both a negative impact, associated with increasing tension and anxiety, leading to disorganization of activities (Ellis, 2002), and a positive one, stimulating activity and increasing its effectiveness.

So far, probably the most studied areas in educational psychology are the educational motivational area and academic procrastination. In addition, procrastination related to educational activities, that is, procrastination in academia, is a common phenomenon for more than 75 % of schoolchildren and students (Zvereva, 2018). Nonetheless, some scholars point out that the literature on perfectionism and procrastination in relation to motivation in the academic setting is not as abundant as we might expect (Bong et al., 2014; Fletcher, Neumeister, 2017; Madigan, 2019; Gillet et al., 2020; Stricker et al., 2020). For example, as suggested by researchers who conducted a meta-analysis on the theme, there is a relatively small amount of perfectionism literature in achievement-oriented academic settings like schools; thus in five flagship educational psychology journals (i. e., *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, *Cognition and Instruction*, *The Educational Psychologist*, *Educational Psychology Review*, and *Journal of Educational Psychology*) they found only five articles that mentioned perfectionism (Jones et al., 2010).

We can refer to some works on educational pedagogical psychology where authors investigate perfectionism and procrastination features in university students and professors, links between academic procrastination and perfectionism, students' neuroticism and responsibility in students, interconnection between the urge to self-actualization and being prone to procrastination in future psychologists, and links between procrastination and study motivation in adolescents (Shchelina, Nagimyanova, 2021; Gusnova, Mustafina,

2023; Omarova, 2024; Boyarinov et al., 2022; Raspopova, Serdyukova, 2021). Yet, there are practically no studies investigating continuing/advanced professional education programs in the context of motivation/procrastination/perfectionism.

However, the number of adults involved in learning is constantly increasing today due to growing demand both from the labor market and social environment as well as the inner urge for self-development in professional and personal areas. As a result, there arises a research issue concerning the interconnections between motives to study and specific manifestations of them when the educational goals are successfully achieved, namely, leading educational motives: either motivation for achievement or avoidance/fear of failure.

Consequently, the aim of the study is to research the interconnection between motivation for success and fear of failure in adults with specific manifestations of procrastination and perfectionism.

We hypothesize that there is a connection between types of motivation and characteristic manifestations in adults during the process of postgraduate learning.

Methodology

The empirical study was conducted in three interconnected stages: review and analysis of the theoretical material and goals setting; collection of empirical data in Google-forms and processing the latter in SPSS Statistics 23.0; systematization of the obtained data, their interpretation, and formulation of the conclusions.

The total number of participants in the study was 105 people. Inclusion criteria were the following: University degree and experience of studying at the further professional programs (short-term nondegree courses or professional development programs in the area of psychology).

Table 1 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary. The data were collected in April 2023.

Table 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents from the extended sample (adults) (N = 105)

Parameter	Value
Age	Aged 21–53 (M = 38 years old)
Gender	Female — 85 %, male — 15 %
Family status	Married — 56 %, cohabiting — 7 %, single — 37 %
Kids	One — 22 %, two and more — 46 %, no — 32 %
City	Big city — 85 %, small city — 15 %
Education	Higher — 100 %

To achieve the set objectives, the following research methods were applied:

- A. A. Rean's "Motivation for Success and Fear of Failure" questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of 20 statements that allow diagnosing: motivation for failure (fear of failure), motivation for success (hope for success), and cases where both motivation types are not expressed clearly (Rean, 2013).

- Procrastination Scale by P. Steel (adaptation: N. M. Klepikova, I. N. Kormacheva). The adapted procrastination scales by P. Steel are aimed at identifying the level of procrastination in the sphere of education and work. The questionnaire consists of 29 statements and includes the following elements: a specific task; voluntary delay of task completion; obvious consequences of delay and non-delay; awareness of negative consequences of delay (Klepikova, 2019).

- Three-Factor Perfectionism Questionnaire (N. G. Garanyan and A. B. Kholmogorova). The aim of the questionnaire is to identify perfectionism and determine its structure; it can be applied both in practical work and for research purposes. The questionnaire consists of 18 statements distributed across three scales:

1. Concern about other people's evaluations in case the comparisons are unfavorable.

2. High standards and demands on oneself.

3. Negative selection of one's own imperfections and fixation on them, which implies dichotomous assessment of activity results, planning based on the "everything or nothing" principle, selection of information about one's own failures and mistakes while ignoring real successes and achievements.

The detailed description of the scales can be found in the work by clinical psychologists A. B. Kholmogorova, N. G. Garanyan, T. Yu. Yudeeva (Garanyan et al., 2001).

- Mathematical and statistical methods: descriptive statistics, Mann — Whitney U test, Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (r).

Results

Having applied A. A. Rean's "Motivation for Success and Fear of Failure" questionnaire, we discovered that the motivation for success (67,6%) and a certain tendency towards the latter were the most pronounced (17,1%). A certain tendency towards motivation for failure accounts for 7,6%. Motivation for failure came next (2,9%). Motivational pole (4,8%) is not pronounced strongly. The quantitative indicators are provided in the histogram (fig. 1).

In terms of the procrastination scale ("Procrastination Scale" questionnaire by P. Steel), the smallest number of respondents turned out to exhibit pronounced procrastination (6,7%). Most of them had average (56,2%) and low scores (37,1%). The complete presentation of the results is shown in the histogram (fig. 2).

According to the level of perfectionism on the Three-factor perfectionism questionnaire (N. G. Garanyan and A. B. Kholmogorova), it was shown that the sample of respondents is characterized by average and low levels of perfectionism.

The quantitative data are presented in the histogram (fig. 3).

The analysis of the obtained data on the sample showed no statistically significant differences in the expression of motivation for success/avoiding failure, tendency to procrastination, as well as perfectionism in groups of respondents ($p > 0,05$).

Yet, differences in the expression of some indicators were revealed in the group of adults who are married / not married. Also, some differences in motivation for success were found in the group of not married / cohabiting adults. Thus, the results show that single respondents demonstrated higher level of perfectionism than married ones ($U = 885$, $p = 0.04$). Furthermore, the level of motivation for success in cohabiting respondents was

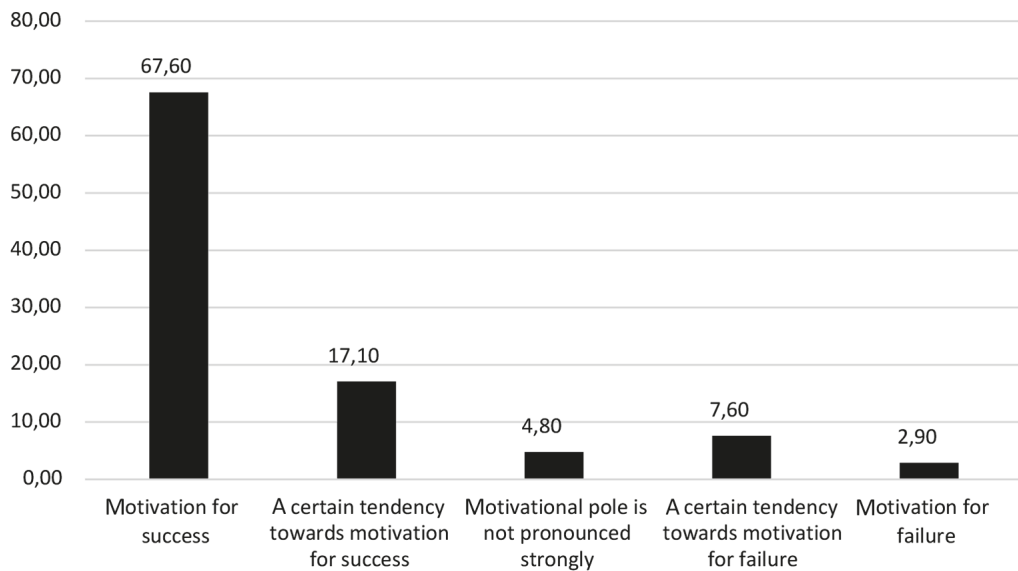


Fig. 1. Types of motivation, %

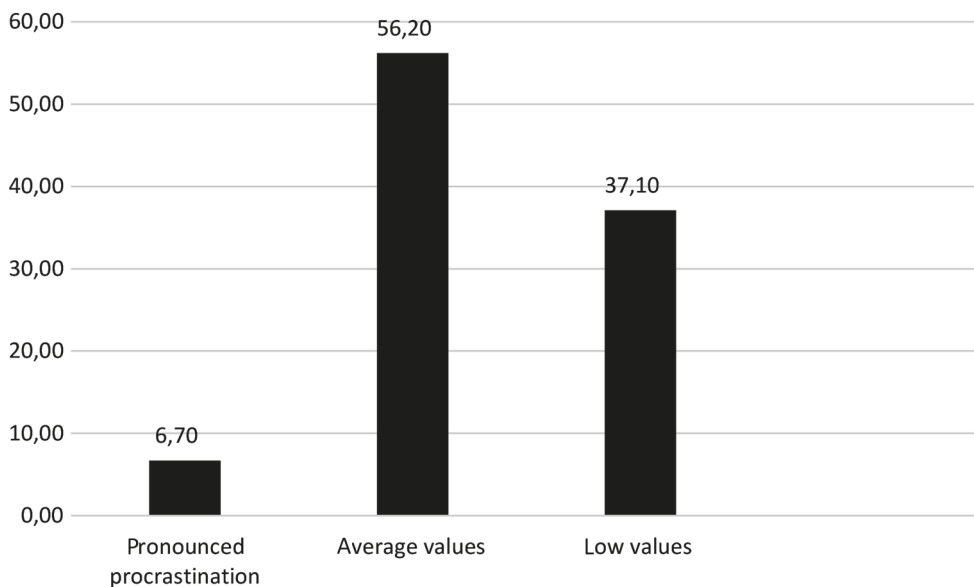


Fig. 2. Procrastination level, %

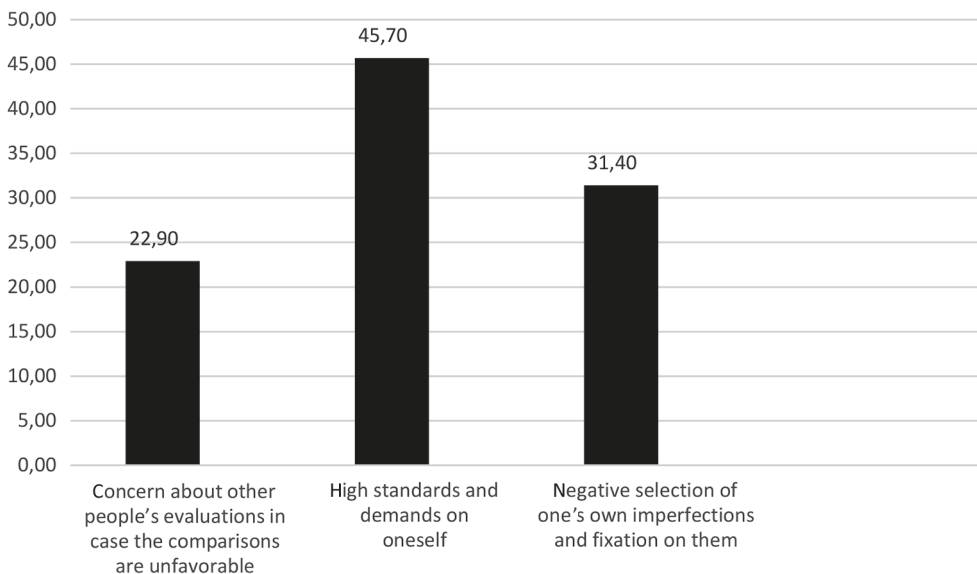


Fig. 3. Perfectionism scale, %

higher than in those who were single ($U = 109, p = 0.02$). We might assume that filling in the Internet-forms and differences in perception of their marital status (not married / cohabiting) could affect the result. However, this hypothesis requires further investigations in future research.

Overall, we can say that motivation for success on the sample demonstrates quite high measures; it is clearly expressed among 69 respondents, 34 respondents have the tendency to expressed motivation. We think that this result is natural and corresponds with general traits of the study sample, i. e. adult and accomplished people with university degrees, who decided to continue learning, the latter requiring significant efforts.

Correlation analysis with Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was conducted for all measures to identify the presence or absence of interconnection. The results are presented in Table 2, where all significant correlations of all methodology scales are provided.

Moderate and statistically significant interconnections (at $p \leq 0.05, p \leq 0.001$) between types of motivation, manifestations of procrastination and perfectionism, and their types among respondents were considered. The following correlations were identified on the scales: Motivation and Procrastination (negative, $r = -0.484; p = 0.000$), Motivation and Concern about Evaluations from Others (negative, $r = -0.369; p = 0.000$), Procrastination and Perfectionism (positive, $r = 0.407; p = 0.000$), Procrastination and Concern about Evaluations from Others (positive, $r = 0.496; p = 0.000$), Procrastination and Negative Selection (positive, $r = 0.372; p = 0.000$).

Having examined statistically significant correlations, it has been established that:

1. Adults with a high level of achievement motivation (positive motivation) exhibit a low level of procrastination.
2. Adults with a high level of achievement motivation are not prone to maladaptive manifestations of perfectionism (concern for evaluations from others); among adult

Table 2. Interconnections between types of motivation, manifestations of procrastination and perfectionism, and their types among respondents in the extended sample (N = 105)

Scales	Procrastination Scale	Perfectionism Scale	Concern about Evaluations from Others	High Standards	Negative Selection
Motivation Scale	-0.484**	-0.249*	-0.369**	-	-0.242*
Procrastination Scale	-	0.407**	0.496**	-	0.372**
Perfectionism Scale	-	-	0.845**	0.534**	0.878**
Concern about Evaluations from Others	-	-	-	-	0.665**
High Standards	-	-	-	1.000	0.322**

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level. * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

learners, a negative correlation between positive motivation and high levels of perfectionism and its individual manifestations, such as negative selection and fixation on their shortcomings, have also been identified.

3. There is a connection between the level of procrastination and the level of perfectionism, as well as negative manifestations of the latter: concern for evaluations from others while comparing unfavorably with them and fixation on one's own shortcomings.

Discussion

The results of the research allow us to come to certain conclusions:

1. The obtained data concerning the negative correlation between the motive for achievement and the manifestation of procrastination showed that people who do not procrastinate have a strong motivation for success, which helps them set goals and successfully achieve them. In contrast, procrastinators have a motivation to avoid failure. With this type of motivation, a person's activity is associated with the need to avoid criticism, punishment, and failure. People experiencing high fear of failure tend to delay task completion in order to avoid potential setbacks. They also choose easier tasks to reduce the likelihood of errors and mishaps, which is also characteristic of procrastination.

2. There is a strong link between motivational attitudes and manifestations of maladaptive perfectionism, such as concern about evaluations from others if comparisons are unfavorable (socially prescribed perfectionism). Moreover, among adult participants in further education programs, connections between motivational attitudes and the overall level of perfectionism and its individual manifestations have been found; those manifestations include negative selection and fixation on one's own shortcomings. This may be related to establishing much higher and unrealistic demands on oneself to avoid failure.

The obtained results complement the findings described in the works by N. G. Garanyan, A. B. Kholmogorova, T. Yu. Yudeeva, where the authors say that motives for achiev-

ing success and avoiding failure are closely related in the content to the phenomenon of perfectionism (Garanyan et al., 2001).

3. The reasons for the positive correlations observed between procrastination and perfectionism can be associated with the manifestation of maladaptive perfectionism: pre-occupation with others' evaluations and unfavorable comparisons, negative self-selection and fixation on one's own imperfections (perfectionistic cognitive style). The first is characterized by individuals' beliefs that others often harshly evaluate them and require perfection. This belief, in turn, is linked to individuals' understanding of their inability to meet others' expectations. This can result in task avoidance due to the fear of receiving negative evaluations or being devalued by others if not meeting their expectations. The second is manifested in the cognitive element, which offers only two options for the perfectionist to complete a task — "everything" or "nothing", leading to procrastination as the subject delays task completion indefinitely (Beck, 1987; Frost et al., 1990; Garanyan, 2018). Numerous studies indicate conflicting data regarding the relationship between perfectionism and procrastination (Hewitt, Flett, 1989; Karlovskaya, 2008; Garanyan, 2010; Pushkina, 2015). Perfectionism being presented as a one-dimensional or multi-factor construct in these studies, both direct and inverse dependencies between these phenomena have been identified.

Considering all the above mentioned, we can now specify some aspects of motivation:

- the higher the manifestations of motivation for success, the lower the manifestations of procrastination;
- the higher the manifestations of motivation for success, the lower the manifestations of non-adaptive components of perfectionism: concern for evaluations from others; negative fixation on one's own imperfection.

The connection between procrastination and perfectionism, and its negative manifestations, has been established.

Limitations

This study has some limitations mainly related to the sampling, i. e. its size and grouping. A more representative number of recruited subjects would be a plus for the beneficial continuation of the theme.

The limited number of participants resulted in data processing without consideration of participants grouped according to their gender and age. We can suggest that division by age and gender (considering differences in age psychology, emotional status in learning environment, etc.) can provide beneficial results.

Conclusion

Post-graduate learning, as an ingredient within the lifelong learning frame, is becoming an essential trend in the modern educational environment; it is recognized as being important for an individual's competitiveness and employability. It is evident that the learning process should be professionally designed. Consequently, the research of educational motivation area, academic procrastination and perfectionism in adult learners can contribute and enhance the work of educationalists who design programs and

curricula. Thus, the study conducted on a normative sample of participants — adults aged 21 to 53 — has practical significance for professionals involved in adult education, as well as for the adults themselves who plan to pursue lifelong learning. Digging deeper into procrastination and perfectionism, we are likely to better realize the issues that adults can face while learning and help them by designing and adjusting forms and methods of learning.

This is a pilot study, the first stage of the investigation into motivation for success in the context of procrastination and perfectionism. Further on we are planning to conduct research on an extended and well-structured sample as well as designed to reveal an in-depth and holistic picture of interconnections between manifestations of procrastination and perfectionism and motivation for achieving success / avoiding failure.

However, even at this stage of the research we can offer some recommendations that can be beneficial both for educationalists involved in adult education, and for adults aspiring for taking up further education programs:

- it is important to consider the personality traits of each adult learner, their learning motives and obstacles they can face while learning;
- the results of the study will allow educationalists and adult learners to choose the most effective teaching methods and design personalized learning strategies. For example, learners who show the tendency to perfectionism should be taught to set realistic standards and goals; it is necessary to explain to them that making mistakes can be instructive and beneficial for them;
- the established interconnection between types of motivation, procrastination, and maladaptive manifestations of perfectionism indicates the need to stimulate adults' motivation for success in order to increase their motivation for learning and achieving success in their studies, as well as to reduce manifestations of procrastination and perfectionism.

To conclude, our study updates and extends insights into the domain of academic motivation. The implementation of the research findings related to motivation and associated with the phenomena of procrastination and perfectionism can be beneficial for educationalists involved in lifelong learning as well as adults who are willing to develop their professional and personal skills.

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Личностная склонность к перфекционизму и прокрастинации как фактор мотивации успеха при обучении взрослых

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Актуальность исследования обусловлена высоким уровнем распространения феномена прокрастинации в академической среде, отмечаемым падением мотивации к успеху среди учащейся молодежи, а также недостаточной изученностью феноменов перфекционизма и прокрастинации среди взрослых, получающих дополнительное профессиональное образование на краткосрочных курсах и переподготовке. В статье представлены результаты исследования мотивации к успеху у обучающихся взрослых на курсах повышения квалификации в связи с перфекционизмом и прокрастинацией. В выборке было обследовано 105 человек (взрослые, имеющие высшее образование, в возрасте от 21 до 53 лет, средний возраст 38 лет). Методики исследования: опросник «Мотивация успеха и боязнь неудачи» (МУН) А. А. Реана, опросник «Шкала прокрастинации» П. Стила (в адаптации Н. М. Клепиковой и И. Н. Кормачевой), Трехфакторный опросник перфекционизма Н. Г. Гаранян и А. Б. Холмогоровой. В результате исследования были обнаружены отрицательные корреляционные связи мотивационных установок на успех с уровнем прокрастинации и неадаптивными проявлениями перфекционизма (озабоченность оценками со стороны других; негативное селектирование). Обнаружены положительные связи неадаптивных параметров перфекционизма (озабоченность оценками со стороны других и негативное селектирование) и прокрастинации. Таким образом, чем выше проявления мотивации достижения успеха, тем ниже проявления прокрастинации; чем выше проявления мотивации достижения успеха, тем ниже проявления неадаптивных составляющих перфекционизма: озабоченность оценками со стороны других людей; негативная фиксация на собственном несовершенстве. Исследование, проведенное на нормативной выборке, представляет практическую значимость для специалистов, которые занимаются обучением взрослых, а также для самих взрослых, которые планируют получить постдипломное образование. Результаты расширяют уже полученные данные по изучению мотивации достижения успеха и про-

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явлений прокрастинации и перфекционизма взрослых учащихся, в целом дополняют знания по педагогической психологии.

Ключевые слова: прокрастинация, перфекционизм, мотивация к обучению взрослых, мотивация успеха.

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