



To-Do Checklists and the Procrastination Levels of Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to determine if using *To Do Checklists* as a form of scaffolding, enhanced the motivation and self-regulation levels of students. Students were randomly assigned to one of two groups for five weeks. Group 1 filled out a weekly checklist. The *checklist* group (Group 1) experienced reported improved self-regulation and decreased procrastination levels. The control group (Group 2) experienced the opposite, increasing in its procrastination levels and feeling overwhelmed as the quarter progressed.

Methods

Students (n=22) completed a pretest and posttest asking them about their procrastination levels. Students were then randomly assigned to one of two groups for five weeks: Group A constructed *To Do checklists* and Group B, the control group, did a placebo assignment of writing comments on a *wiki*. T-tests were calculated to determine if differences existed between the groups at the pretest and posttest. Significant differences at $p < .05$ were found on the posttest.

Conclusion

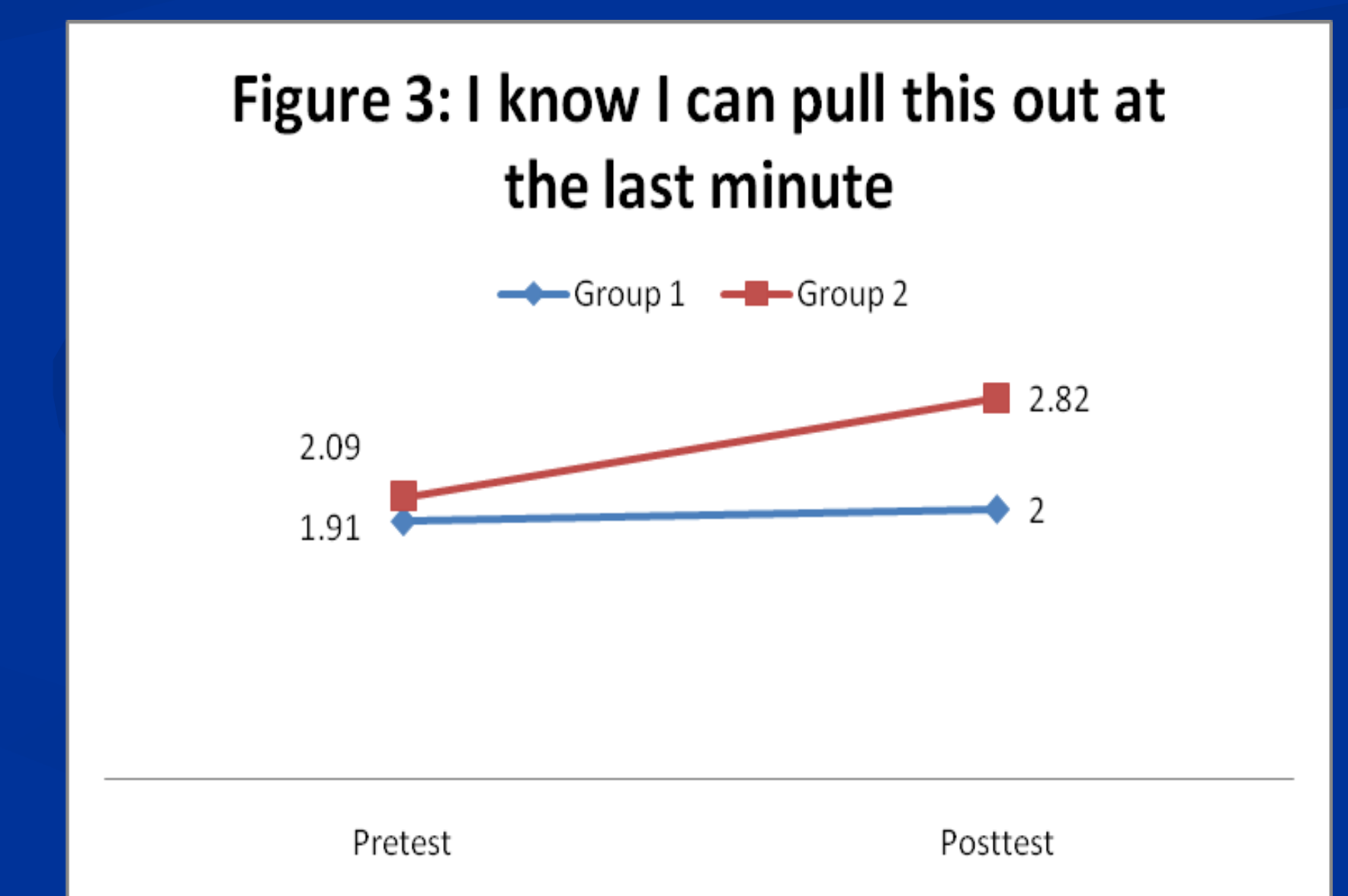
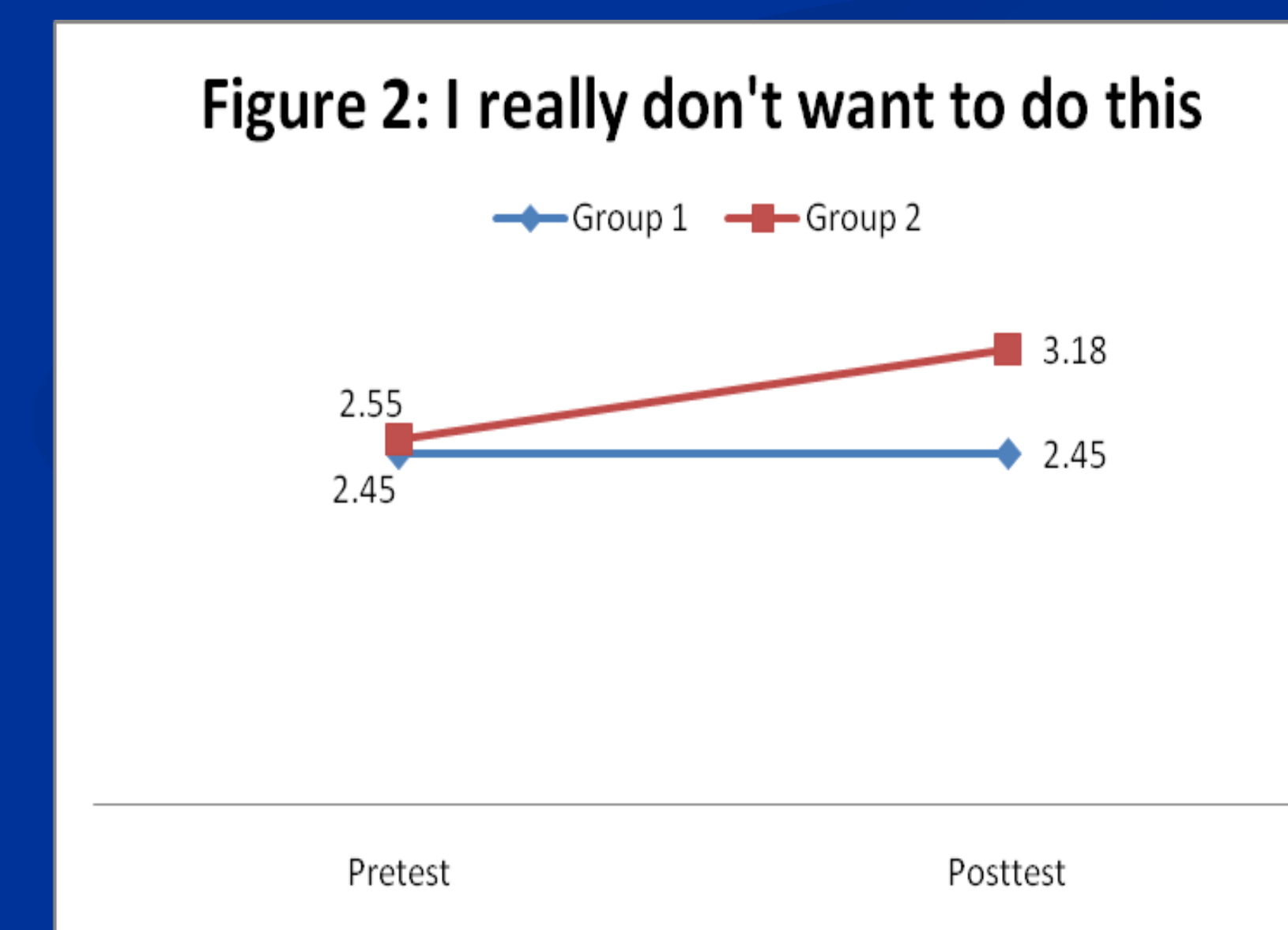
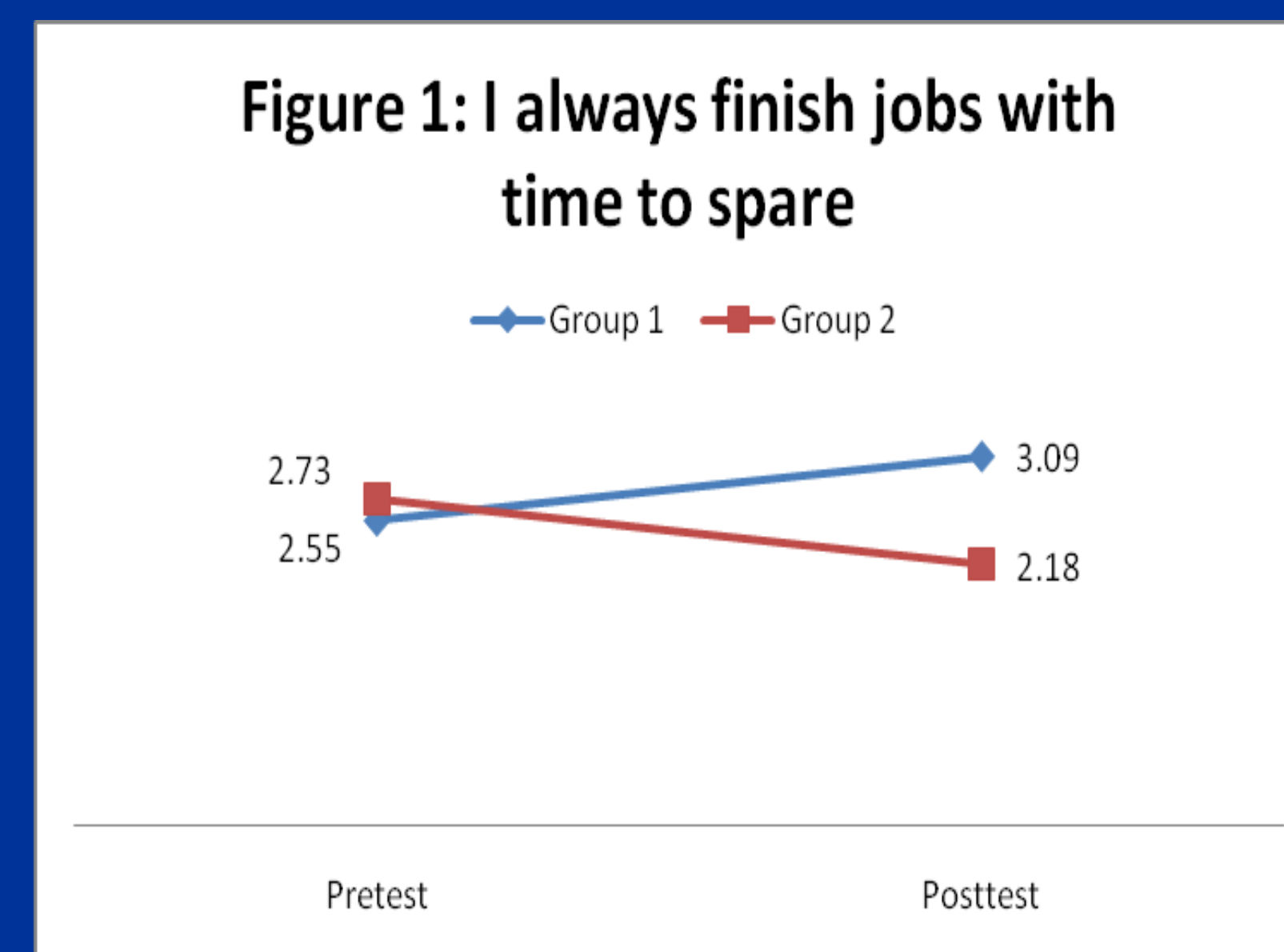
If using the *To Do Checklist* improves self-regulating behavior by increasing motivation and reducing procrastination among students, then instructors should consider including this exercise in their courses. Helping students develop good study habits will not only help them as a student, but can enhance their life-long learning skills needed when they become professionals.

Theories

Drive theory is a behavioral theory stating that getting or avoiding something good or bad reduces drive. According to the theory, students seek pleasure over doing homework thereby reinforcing delay. As the deadline approaches, however, doing the homework reduces anxiety. Student comments from Group 1 revealed that they did not like constructing the checklists, but did so to earn points. Unbeknownst to the *checklist* group, the checklist assignment helped them regulate their behavior, a type of **self-efficacy**. Some of the *checklist* students discovered that their homework could be spread over time, thereby reducing anxiety levels. On the other hand, the control group members increased in their levels of procrastination, attributing it to circumstances outside of their control, a trait of **attribution theory**. The control group attributed their procrastination to having too many things hanging over their head, and not enough time to do them.

Results

Procrastination and rationalizations **increased** for the Control group (Group 2)



Self-regulation (time management) **improved** for the Checklist group (Group 1)

