

Perfectionism as A Predictor of Psychological Adjustment in Adults

Tianyue Wang¹, Mengrui Zhang², Yuxin He³, Yanbang Zhou⁴

¹Beijing Etown Academy school, Beijing 100176, China.

²Jinan Foreign Language school, Shandong 250108, China.

³Saint Joseph High School, Hong Kong 06611, China.

⁴Wuhan Britain-China School, Wuhan 430022, China.

Abstract

People could conclude the different aspects of dimensions of perfectionism. It is made up of six scales: concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about actions, and organization. Perfectionism includes two levels: normal perfectionism and neurotic perfectionism. Thus, it could both bring positive and negative effects to humans. Perfectionism could bring positive outcomes, such as a sense of discipline, life satisfaction and self-esteem, and negative outcomes. Psychological outcomes in this research were assessed by sample of thirty-one males and sixty-nine females from these dimensions. Results indicated that perfectionism indeed influence adjustment in adults because the data tendency could show the positive correlation between perfectionism and depressive system.

Keywords

Perfectionism, Depression, Predictor, Life satisfaction, Adults.

1. Introduction

In the work, we conceptualizing and measuring perfectionism as the predictor of psychological adjustment in adults. Perfectionism is perfectionist personality which someone often sets high levels for performance and is critical of their own behavior [1]. By using statistics we conclude the relationship between perfectionism and depression.

2. Perfectionism as a Predictor of Depression and Life Satisfaction in Adults

Perfectionism is perfectionist personality which someone often sets high levels for performance and is critical of their own behavior [1]. In conceptualizing and measuring perfectionism, some researchers indicate that perfectionism mainly involves six different dimensions. The major dimension is excessive concern over making mistakes, which is the major distinction between neurotic perfectionists and normal perfectionists [2]. Normal perfectionists will also pursue better standards, but they will accept their own mistakes, while neurotic perfectionists are too concerned about mistakes and tend to make critical evaluations of themselves. Therefore, the first dimension plays a relatively important role in defining the extent of perfectionism. In addition to concern over making mistakes, the other five dimensions include high personal standards, the concern of parents' high expectations, the perception of high parental criticism, the tendency to be suspicious of one's actions, and the overemphasis on strictness and order. Unlike focusing on mistakes, the personal standard is generally considered to have a positive impact on people. And the other four dimensions indicate that perfectionists tend to over concern parents' attitudes, be not confident about their actions, and pursue

orderliness. All in all, this model reveals that perfectionism has several dimensions. Thus, it should be measured in a multidimensional way [3].

Perfectionism can be divided into two opposite concepts: normal perfectionism and neurotic perfectionism. The first one may be part of a healthy pursuit of excellence [4]. Thus, a higher standard will build a challenging target and the mind that wants to reach the standard will be the best catalyst [5]. For example, normal perfectionism can be linked to a sense of discipline, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and constructive striving. Neurotic perfectionism is those who cannot tolerate any mistake once they have the setting of excessively high standards. In this case, perfectionists are prone to mental illness because of an unbalance situation: fail performance and high self-standard [6]. So, perfectionism is apt to infuriate perfectionists or break perfectionists down. For instance, neurotic perfectionism can be linked to self-defeating behavior, suicide, poor fault-tolerant function, paranoid, obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorder, and depression.

The reason for the importance of studying the specific outcome of “life satisfaction and depression” is complexed. First of all, both of these two variables could influence people a lot. Life satisfaction is the need of the hour. It is of much importance in today’s stressful life. Needless to say, depression can be devastating and even fatal. Furthermore, these two outcomes play an important role in measuring perfectionism. Also, several dimensions of perfectionism can predict depression [7]. First, depressed patients had higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism. Self-oriented perfectionists tend to set unrealistic standards and they strictly evaluate their performance, which not only increases the frequency of failure but also increases the personal impact and significance of the failure experience. These people may be experiencing their failures, which makes them particularly prone to depressive episodes. Second, depressed people had higher levels of socially prescribed perfectionism. This is also consistent with the idea that neurotic forms of anxious-depression are caused by a lack of deprivation and satisfaction felt from others. The dimension of perfectionism also plays a role in predicting life satisfaction. Those with higher personal standards are also much more satisfied with life than those with lower standards, even if they have not met those standards. Scientists can help patients develop self-standards that are appropriate for them. Increase life satisfaction while reducing the risk of depression.

2.1. Purpose of the Present Study

The aim of this study is to examine if there is any correlation between perfectionism and depression. Also, the result needs to find out whether different dimensions of perfectionism are correlated with depression symptoms. Proving this correlation can help us make deeper analysis and research on psychology about perfectionism. However, this is not enough to make use of this research in our lives. So, the research conducted hierarchical regression analyses and determine which dimension can be the predictor of depression symptoms so that people can treat depression patients timely by taking precautions in advance.

According to our common sense, it’s easy to make sure that the intensity of depressive symptoms will be greater with the increase in the level of perfectionism. For a predictor, the search conjectured only concern over mistakes and doubts about action will be most conspicuous because they are both self-oriented perfectionism, and SOP can be perceived directly by one person. The main aim of this study is to examine if there is any correlation between perfectionism and depression.

2.2. Method

2.2.1. Participants

One hundred participants were included in the present study. Thirty-one were males and sixty-nine were females.

2.2.2. Measures

Perfectionism. We used the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. It is made up of six scales. Higher scores on these scales indicate greater perfectionism on each dimension. Depressive symptoms. We used the Beck Depression Inventory. Higher scores on the scale indicate greater depressive symptoms.

2.2.3. Procedures

All participants were recruited from a psychology class attending a university in North America.

Table 1. Correlations Between Perfectionism and Depressive Symptoms

	Depressive Symptoms	M	SD
Concern Over Mistakes	.57***	25.07	7.17
Personal Standards	.33**	25.18	4.72
Parental Expectations	.11	16.31	3.82
Parental Criticism	.27**	8.91	3.39
Doubts about Actions	.47***	10.97	3.59
Organization	.11	23.19	5.25
M	8.68		
SD	8.04		

Note. N = 100.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 2. Results of Hierarchical Regression Analyses Showing Amount of Variance in Depressive Symptoms Accounted for by Perfectionism in College Students, Controlling for Demographic Variables

Outcome and Predictor	β	R ²	ΔR^2	F	p
Dependent Variable					
Step 1: Demographic Variables		.00	--	.15	n. s.
Age	-.03				
Sex	-.05				
Step 2: Perfectionism		.39	.39	9.33	< .001
Concern Over Mistakes	.44***				
Personal Standards	.05				
Parental Expectations	-.21				
Parental Criticism	.10				
Doubts about Actions	.25*				
Organization	-.00				

Note. N = 100.

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001

2.3. Results

Correlations, means, and standard deviations for study measures are presented in Table 1. As the table 1 shown to us, depressive symptom was found positively correlated with CM (r= .57, p < .001), PS (r= .33, p= .001), DOA (r= .47, p< .01), and OR (r= .11, p < .01). However, depression system was not significantly correlated with PE (r=.11, p=.29),

Perfectionism as a Predictor of depression

The result conducted a regression analysis in which people put these six dimensions of perfectionism in the prediction equation. Results of this analysis are in Table 2.

Demographic variables in Step 1 were not found to account for a significant amount of variance in depressive symptoms, $F(2,93) = .15, p = .86$.

When perfectionism was entered in Step 2, it was found to account for additional unique variance in depressive symptom, $F(6.87) = 9.33, p = .00$. Among perfectionism dimensions, only concerns over mistakes ($\beta = .44, p < .001$) and Doubts about Actions ($\beta = .25, p < .05$) were found to emerge as significant predictors of depressive system.

2.4. Discussion

This study tests the influence of perfectionism, as measured by Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, on depressive symptoms [8]. The result found the relation between perfectionism and depression. Similar to the results of previous studies, perfectionism was significantly associated with scores on depressive symptoms. In addition, Among the six dimensions of perfectionism, people are able to find that it is positively correlated with depressive symptoms. These correlations imply that perfectionism and depressive symptoms are strongly linked together. When the level of perfectionism increases, the intensity of depressive symptoms may be greater.

To further determine whether perfectionism is an important predictor of depressive symptoms, the research conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses in the present study [9]. In keeping with previous studies, the result from the analyses showed that multidimensional perfectionism significantly predicted subsequent depressive symptoms. This finding suggests that perfectionists indeed are more likely to experience depressive symptoms subsequently.

The results of our research not only found a deep connection between overall perfectionism and depressive symptoms, but also proved that some dimensions of perfectionism can be used as crucial predictors of depressive symptoms. In our study, concern over mistakes and doubts about actions are discovered that predict depressive symptoms that is positive with a number of past studies [10]. However, beyond these two dimensions, the connections between the other dimensions of perfectionism and depressive symptoms contained small inconsistencies. For example, according to Chang [11], lack of personal standards was also a significant predictor of depressive symptoms. In another research, parental expectation was found to be a unique predictor of depressive symptoms. In contrast, some other research and the present study presented that none of the dimensions of perfectionism apart from concern over mistakes and doubts about actions significantly predicted depressive symptoms [12]. These inconsistencies were formed [13] may because these findings were based on different racial groups, or may because more complex relations have not been found or noticed. This implicates that future research could replicate the present findings with other diverse ethnic groups to explore the relation between perfectionism and depressive symptoms in different contexts. Considering the concepts of normal perfectionism and neurotic perfectionism [14], parental expectations and organization may also be related to positive mental states and attitudes to life, which still needs further research and exploration. Moreover, future research may further study the detailed connection between depressive symptoms [15] and certain specific dimensions of perfectionism in order to find out more potential relations. To sum up, despite some small inconsistencies with some previous research findings, the present findings still indicate that concern over mistakes and doubts about actions are more closely related to depressive symptoms than other perfectionism components.

Our research findings also provided important implications for the precaution and treatment of depression symptoms. The result can be used to help scientists determine whether a person is depressed or not, and treat some patients with depression. From relations between perfectionism and depressive symptoms, people could realize many habitual details in their

lives are possibly the indication of the following depressive symptoms. In addition, when helping patients with depression, because concern over mistakes and doubts about actions are the major predictors of depressive symptoms, psychiatrists could mainly focus on reducing patients' concerns and doubts about themselves in order to help the patient effectively relieve the symptoms of depression through treatment. Future studies could investigate ways to reduce these two dimensions so that psychologists could find a valuable format of perfectionism interventions in the treatment of depression.

2.5. Limitations of the Study

However, there are some limitations of the study. First of all, all participants were recruited from a psychology class attending a university in North America. It is important to replicate and expand the study in different areas, in order to evaluate the generalizability of our findings. Second, only a hundred people took part in the survey, so there may be some numerical error in the results. Third, some students may not really cooperate with the investigation and they fabricate the truth, since they do not want to reveal their true situation, which will also influence the results. Fourth, there are some third variable that can affect the results, such as the social positions and income.

3. Conclusion

To sum up, the research found perfectionism was significantly associated with depressive symptoms. Several dimensions, such as concern over mistakes and doubts about actions, can effectively predict depressive symptoms. Our findings suggest the importance of a multidimensional measure of the relationship between perfectionism and depressive symptoms, as well as the potential usefulness of considering predictors in the treatment of depression. People can avoid depression by reducing their high standard [16].

References

- [1] Frost, R. O., Marten, P., Lahart, C., & Rosenblate, R. (1990). The dimensions of perfectionism. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 14, 449-468.
- [2] Dunkley, D.M., Sanislow, C.A., Grilo, C.M., & McGlashan, T.H. (2006). Perfectionism and depressive symptoms 3 years later. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 47, 106-115.
- [3] Dunkley, D. M., Zuroff, D. C., & Blankstein, K. R. (2006). Specific perfectionism components versus self-criticism in predicting maladjustment. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 40, 665-676.
- [4] Shafran, R., Cooper, Z., & Fairburn, C. G. (2002). Clinical perfectionism: A cognitive-behavioral analysis. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 40, 773-791.
- [5] Paul L. Hewitta, Carmen F. Caeliana, Gordon L. Flettb, Simon B. Sherrya, Lois Collinsc, Carol A. Flynna Perfectionism in children: associations with depression, anxiety, and anger *Personality and Individual Differences* ,32 ,1049-1061.
- [6] Frost, R. O., Marten, P., Lahart, C., & Rosenblate, R. (1990). The dimensions of perfectionism. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 14, 449-468.
- [7] Dunkley, D.M., Sanislow, C.A., Grilo, C.M., & McGlashan, T.H. (2006). Perfectionism and depressive symptoms 3 years later. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 47, 106-115.
- [8] Enns, M. W., & Cox, B. J. (2002). The nature and assessment of perfectionism: A critical analysis. In G. L. Flett & P. L. Hewitt (Eds.), *Perfectionism: Theory, research, and treatment* ,33-62.

- [9] Flett, G. L., & Hewitt, P. L. (2002a). Perfectionism and maladjustment: An overview of theoretical, definitional, and treatment issues. In G. L. Flett & P. L. Hewitt (Eds.), *Perfectionism: Theory, research, and treatment*, 5-13.
- [10] Smith, M. M., Saklofske, D. H., Yan, G., & Sherry, S. B. (2017). *Journal of Individual Differences*, 38, 63-70.
- [11] Castro & Rice, 2003; Chang, 2013; Dunkley, Zuroff, & Blankstein, 2006; Smith, Saklofske, Yan, & Sherry, 2017.
- [12] Chang, E. C., Hirsch, J. K., Sanna, L. J., Jeglic, E. L., & Fabian, C. G. (2011). A preliminary study of perfectionism and loneliness as predictors of depressive and anxious symptoms in Latinas: A top-down test of a model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58, 441-448.
- [13] Chang, E. C., Hirsch, J. K., Sanna, L. J., Jeglic, E. L., & Fabian, C. G. (2011). A preliminary study of perfectionism and loneliness as predictors of depressive and anxious symptoms in Latinas: A top-down test of a model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 58, 441-448.
- [14] Chang, E. C. (2013). Perfectionism and loneliness as predictors of depressive and anxious symptoms in Asian and European Americans: Do self-construal schemas also matter. *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 37, 1179-1188.
- [15] Hamachek, D. E. (1978). Psychodynamics of normal and neurotic perfectionism. *Psychology: A Journal of Human Behavior*, 15(1), 27-33.
- [16] Frost, R. O., Heimberg, R. G., Holt, C. S., Mattia, J. I., & Neubauer, A. L. (1993). A comparison of two measures of perfectionism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 14, 119-126.
- [17] Blatt, S. J. (1995). The destructiveness of perfectionism: Implications for the treatment of depression. *American Psychologist*, 50(12), 1003-1020.