

Perfectionism as Predictor of Psychological Wellbeing among College Students

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Abstract

India is a collectivistic society that places considerable amount of importance on its members to strive for the best as every action, desire, accomplishment and failure has social connotations for family and other close members of society. There are social pressures to achieve and to be perfect. This has a direct implication on the wellbeing of an individual especially college students since they are in the transition phase wherein they are looking for meaning in life in terms of right career choices and making their parents proud. The present study explored perfectionism and psychological wellbeing among college students and their interrelationship. A total of 281 college students (Males=174, Females= 107) in the age range of 18-24 years, participated in the study. They were administered Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale and Ryff's Scale of Psychological Wellbeing. Results revealed that all the three dimensions of perfectionism show significant relationship with all the six dimensions of psychological wellbeing. Perfectionism, both self oriented and socially prescribed, accounted for a large variance in many dimensions of psychological wellbeing. Others Oriented Perfectionism did not come out to be contributing to psychological wellbeing. Perfectionism emerged to be one of the major contributors to psychological health and wellbeing.

Index terms— perfectionism, psychological wellbeing, college student.

1 I. Introduction

Perfectionism can be defined as striving for flawlessness (Flett & Hewitt, 2002) or the tendency to maintain or to reach unreasonably high standards (Hill, Zrull, & Turlington, 1997). Slaney et al. (2001) differentiated between adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism in term of individual's characteristics by the setting of high personal standards for one's work or behaviour. Adaptive perfectionists perceive a low level of distress resulting from the discrepancy between their personal standards and their performance, while maladaptive perfectionists perceive a high level of distress, resulting from discrepancy of the perceived inability to meet high standards set for the self. Similarly, Gilman and Ashby (2006) suggested that adaptive perfectionists are described as individuals who set high standards for themselves and gain a sense of satisfaction from pursuing their goals. Further, they proposed that adaptive perfectionists seek to stretch their limits, whereas maladaptive perfectionists are on a mission to outperform and surpass goal after goal.

Many researchers found that maladaptive forms of perfectionism were consistently linked with negative outcome variables such as higher levels of perceived stress (Chang, Watkins, & Banks, 2004) Psychological Wellbeing is the dynamic and active process that gives a sense of knowledge to the people about how their lives are enduring the interaction between their circumstances, activities and psychological resources or 'mental capital'. It is about lives going well. It is the combination of feeling good and functioning effectively." (Huppert, 2009). Feelings of wellbeing are vital to the overall health of individuals, enable them to successfully overcome difficulties and achieve what they want out of life. Well-being is associated with numerous health, job, family, and economically-

43 related benefits. Individuals with high levels of well-being are considered to be more productive at work and are
44 more likely to contribute to their communities.

45 The current has been taken up to assess the relationship between perfectionism and psychological wellbeing
46 among college students studying in various colleges across six cities (Jaipur, Delhi, Ambala, Chandigarh,
47 Bangalore and Bhopal) in six states of India. The years of college life are highly demanding and stressful.
48 It is important to study the wellbeing as experienced by the students as well as the effect of perfectionism on
49 it. Perfectionism can affect the psychological wellbeing and how it affects the students is the major endeavour of
50 this study.

51 2 II. Method a) Participants

52 296 college students from six locations across India participated in this study. Responses from 15 students were
53 incomplete; hence they were rejected from this study. Final sample consisted of 281 participants and their age
54 ranged from 18-24 years with a mean of 21.37. The total years of education ranged from 15-20 years with a mean
55 of 18.26 years.

56 3 b) Measures

57 i. The Perfectionism Scale (Kalpna & Nagle) It was used to measure the magnitude of self oriented perfectionism;
58 socially prescribed perfectionism and others oriented perfectionism. It consists of 41 items, representing Self
59 oriented perfectionism (16 P items), Socially prescribed perfectionism, (13 items), Others oriented perfectionism
60 (12 items) which are to be rated on a 5-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The
61 reliability was established at 0.82-0.89 which is high. It takes about 20 minutes to complete the test. Standard
62 scoring procedure is adopted.

63 ii. The Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989) It has 54 items which consists of six subscales:
64 (a) Positive Relations with Others, Self-Acceptance, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth and
65 Purpose in Life which are to be rated on a 6-point scale that ranges from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".
66 Test -retest reliability coefficients range from 0.81 to 0.85.

67 4 c) Procedure

68 The students were instructed in groups. Each group had 20-25 participants and they were administered the
69 questionnaire. Average time taken to complete the questionnaires was 25 minutes. Data were scored manually
70 and fed into excel sheet. The survey data obtained were analyzed descriptively, zero order correlation and
71 Stepwise Multiple Regression was carried out to infer the perfectionism predictors of psychological wellbeing
72 among college students.

73 5 III. Results & Discussion

74 Table ?? gives an overview of the scores and standard deviation of three dimensions of perfectionism and six
75 dimensions of psychological wellbeing.

76 The participants were in the age range of 18-24 years ($M=21.37$, $SD= 1.518$) with 90% of the participants
77 between the age group of 19-23 years. The mean score on the dimension of Self oriented perfectionism (KSOP)
78 came out to be 59.555 ($SD= 8.1809$) which can be considered as high perfectionism as the total scores range
79 for this dimension is 16 Self Oriented Perfectionism has significant positive relation with Positive Relation with
80 others ($r = .159$, $p < .01$), Autonomy ($r = .123$, $p < .05$), Environmental Mastery ($r = .298$, $p < .01$), Personal
81 Growth ($r = .210$, $p < .01$), Purpose in Life ($r = .247$, $p < .01$) and Self Acceptance ($r = .218$, $p < .01$),
82 Socially Prescribed Perfectionism has significant negative relation with Positive Relation with others ($r = -.428$,
83 $p < .01$), Autonomy ($r = -.333$, $p < .01$), Environmental Mastery ($r = -.375$, $p < .01$), Personal Growth ($r =$
84 $-.349$, $p < .01$), Purpose in Life ($r = -.311$, $p < .01$) and Self Acceptance ($r = -.408$, $p < .01$), whereas Others
85 Oriented Perfectionism has significant negative relation with Positive Relation with others ($r = -.314$, $p < .01$),
86 Autonomy ($r = -.209$, $p < .01$), Environmental Mastery ($r = -.163$, $p < .01$), Personal Growth ($r = -.268$, $p <$
87 $.01$), Purpose in Life ($r = -.192$, $p < .01$) and Self Acceptance ($r = -.217$, $p < .01$). Among the three dimensions
88 of perfectionism, SPP accounts for 23.4% variance (sig. .000) in Psychological Wellbeing and SOP adds 13.7% to
89 it making the total explained variance 37.1% (sig. .000). It shows that higher the score on SPP, the lower will
90 be the score on psychological wellbeing. SPP is negatively related to the experience of psychological wellbeing.
91 OPP added to this variance and increased it by 2.3% thus making it 39.4%. SPP an SOP came out to be the
92 more significant predictor of psychological wellbeing whereas OPP though significant did not add substantially
93 to this relationship.

94 6 IV. Discussion

95 Results indicate that students were high on self oriented perfectionism and low on others oriented perfectionism.
96 Their overall psychological wellbeing was higher than the normal individuals.

97 Self oriented perfectionism shows significant positive relation with all the six dimensions of wellbeing, i.e.
98 Environmental Mastery (EM), Personal Growth (PG), Purpose in Life (PL) and Self Acceptance (SA). Socially

99 Prescribed Perfectionism shows significant negative relation with Autonomy (AU), Personal Growth (PG) and
100 Purpose in Life (PL). This shows that the perfectionistic tendencies having social pressure as its genesis are
101 counterproductive to the psychological wellbeing.

102 Perfectionism, both self oriented and socially prescribed, accounts for a large variance in many dimensions
103 of psychological wellbeing like Environmental Mastery (EM), Personal Growth (PG), Purpose in Life (PL),
104 Self Acceptance (SA) and Autonomy (AU). The ability to find meaning and direction in life, and having goals
105 and following them, despite setbacks is an important aspect of well-being. Psychological wellbeing is all about
106 having self acceptance and striving for personal growth and having purpose in life. SOP and low SPP makes
107 for a very efficient combination making it conducive for wellbeing to flourish. The results are confirmed as in a
108 study conducted with 200 South Korean students Adaptive perfectionism was found to be significantly related to
109 environmental mastery dimension of psychological wellbeing (Park & Jeong, 2015). Further the finding of another
110 study conducted with 323 university students elaborated that perfectionism was strongly linked to environmental
111 mastery and purpose in life (Butt, 2010). Research findings provide evidence that adaptive perfectionism tends to
112 promote positive outcomes including openness to learning new skills (Gould et al., 2002), completion of interpreter
113 training programs (Bontempo & Napier, 2011), higher levels of self-esteem (Ashby & Rice, 2002), and greater
114 life satisfaction (Wang et al., 2009). Positive and negative perfectionism is related with psychological well-being.
115 Psychological well-being is defined as an individual's perception and assessment of their lives. In other words,
116 it refers to some combination of feeling good or positive affective states and functioning effectively social life
117 (Rasulzada, 2007;Huppert, 2009;Winefield et al., 2012).

118 The findings are in line with other studies wherein Positive perfectionism has been found to result in low levels
119 of depression while negative perfectionism bring about psychological distress and stress (Chang, 2006;Chan, 2007

120 7 V. Limitations

121 This study was conducted on students attending college in urban areas which is one of the limitations. In order
122 to understand the relationship between perfectionism and wellbeing it is important to include students from rural
123 colleges as well. The convenient sampling has in built limitations that are associated with this study too. A more
124 representative sample would help in better generalizations.

125 8 VI. Conclusion

126 Results indicated that all the three dimensions of perfectionism were found to be significantly related with
127 psychological wellbeing. It becomes evident that Socially Prescribed Perfectionism is most significant and
128 potent factor that affects psychological wellbeing. Together Socially Prescribed Perfectionism and Self Oriented
129 Perfectionism predict a large amount of variance in the experience of psychological wellbeing among college
130 students. In view of the small sample size further study on large sample including more students with
representation from rural colleges is suggested. ¹

Figure 1:

2

-80.

[Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level(2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level(2-tailed).]

Figure 2: Table 2 :

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Dependent Variable: PWBtotal
 Predictors: (Constant), SPP
 Predictors: (Constant), SPP, SOP
 Predictors: (Constant), SPP, SOP, OOP

Figure 3: Table 3 :

Model	Predictor	Adj R ²	?	F-value	Significance
1	SPP	.234	-.487	86.701	.000
2	SPP SOP	.371	-.560 .380	83.742	.000
3	SPP SOP OOP	.394	-.483 .410 -.181	61.775	.000

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; Butt, 2010; Cumming & Duda, 2012;
 Black & Reynolds, 2013; Kung & Chan, 2014). Various

Figure 4:

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8 VI. CONCLUSION

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