

Self-worth and Perfectionism among Young Adults

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This review examines the complex relationship between perfectionism and self-worth and how it affects young adults' academic achievement and quality of life. Increased self-criticism and a fear of failing are associated with perfectionism, which is frequently defined by an unrelenting quest for perfection. Perfectionism can motivate people to pursue greatness, but it can also lead to stress, anxiety, and low self-esteem all of which have a detrimental effect on well-being. Perceptions of success and failure are intimately related to self-worth, which is the intrinsic value that people attach to themselves. Since their sense of identity frequently depends on accomplishments and approval from others, young adults-especially those enrolled in academic settings-are susceptible to changes in their feelings of self-worth. To investigate how maladaptive perfectionism and poor self-worth lead to a decline in life happiness, increased academic pressure, and mental health issues in young people, this research analyses the evidence. The study also discusses the possible moderating elements that could lessen these adverse effects, like coping strategies and social support. According to the research, encouraging adaptive perfectionism and cultivating a healthy sense of self-worth can improve academic achievement and general life satisfaction. The review emphasizes how crucial early intervention and psychoeducation are in helping young adults deal with the demands of school and strike a better balance between pursuing success and preserving psychological health.

Keywords: perfectionism, self-worth, academic achievements, quality of life, young adults

Young adults all over the world, face a lot of pressure in terms of the way they should behave dress, score, etc. They are so engaged in wanting to increase their self-esteem, that they often forget to work on their self-worth. Our culture is one that is very competitive and doesn't allow us to take our mental health into consideration, a lot of times. Due to societal standards, we choose to search for perfection so much, that it often affects our self-worth and the way we react to our external stressors. Therefore, the present research intends to concentrate on the connection between perfectionism and self-worth. Very few studies have actually been done, on self-worth as a separate factor of its own. This study would help to analyse and check the correlation between the two variables. The aim of this study also includes determining the difference in self-worth and perfectionism in relation to males and females

Self-worth

Self-worth and self-respect are two of the most crucial aspects of an individual's life. Both of these factors come into play in one's daily life since they help us believe in ourselves and our abilities and give us the confidence to succeed without limiting ourselves to anything.

In 1979, Rosenberg defined self-worth as an individual's global positive or negative feelings toward himself or herself. Self-worth is a state that is constant since it's all about how one values himself and respects how he is, regardless of what society has to say about him. When external circumstances or elements change, it's something that

takes time and effort to adjust. This is so significant that it has the power to improve your life if it is strong enough. When an individual has a high self-worth, they believe in themselves so much that they know they can accomplish anything and everything they want to. People with higher levels of self-worth don't criticize their flaws and limitations and accept themselves as they are. According to Ackerman (2018), Self-worth is all about our innate feelings and behaviours that are, in a way, based on how we perceive ourselves and our value, as humans. It is determined or evaluated by our abilities and our achievements in activities that are valuable or important to us.

Perfectionism

Often, individuals aim to have goals that are higher and beyond their imagination. Every human has a goal; however, for perfectionists, it gets so competitive and unrealistic that it starts becoming harmful for them to even do something that is not perfect, in their eyes. Perfectionism is all about being afraid to make mistakes; if the individual's work/ tasks are not up to the mark, they become fearful of abandonment by society; this condition has become so intense in today's world, that it now comes under the label of psychological disorders (Frost et al., 1990).

In 1980, Burns explained that individuals with perfectionism have unreasonable expectations of themselves, strive obsessively and relentlessly to achieve impossibly high standards, and gauge their own value solely by their level of achievement and productivity. The desire to succeed can only be counterproductive for these individuals. Following this, according to Frost et al. (1990), Perfectionism is characterized by high-performance standards and a propensity to judge one's own actions too harshly. Perfectionism, according to Flett (1991), is a broad and complex personality construct that includes the need for perfection or the appearance of perfection for oneself or other people. In 1990, Frost, Marten, Lahart, and Rosenblate explained that an individual's propensity to hold themselves to extremely high standards and engage in self-critical assessment is known as perfectionism. Recently, in 2011, The pursuit of perfection and extremely high-performance

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standards, along with a propensity for harsh criticism, were characterized as perfectionism, by (Stoeber, 2011).

As per Adler (1956) "The desire for perfection is intrinsic in that it is a natural aspect of life, an impulse, and something that would be unthinkable without it", however, people try to reach their perfection-related objectives in different ways, and their particular efforts can be changed, on the basis of their dysfunctional and functional behaviours towards the particular goal.

Review of Literature

Literature reviews are designed to provide an overview of sources that were explored by an individual while exploring a particular topic and to depict to his audience how his research fits within a wider field of study. This review of literature focused on previously conducted research based on the relationship between perfectionism and self-worth. These reviews are helpful and are an important part of this dissertation as they would present gaps in other studies that this current study is willing to help with. This could also help in providing references to other researchers to explore related topics. The review of the literature mentioned in this study is based on relationships between perfectionism and self-worth with other factors or variables. More than 60 articles were studied to write this review of literature.

Self-worth

Piek et al. (2005) examined the relationship between fine and gross motor ability, and they also examined the relationship between self-perceptions and self-worth in children and adolescents; they aimed to investigate how children and adolescents, both male and female, perceive themselves to their gross and fine motor skills. The McCarron Assessment of Neuromuscular Development was distributed to schools participating in the study. It was found that children and young adults who go through or have poor motor abilities tend to be more vulnerable to social, emotional and behavioral problems. Females, regardless of having Developmental Coordination Disorder (DCD), depended on academic competition and fine motor ability, for their self-worth. Females with DCD were found to depend on gross motor ability and its link with perceived athletic competition, to increase their self-worth. This suggests that the mental consequences may be more intense for females with DCD as either fine or gross motor abilities would compromise their self-worth. In males, athletic competence was found to be a more significant determinant of self-worth, as compared to scholastic competence; males with or without DCD also found it to be equally important. *Seeing the relationship between gross motor ability and athletic competence, it was found that males with DCD were prone to low self-worth along with social and emotional consequences if they portrayed poor gross motor abilities.*

Clabaugh, Karpinski, and Griffin in 2008, based on Body Weight Contingency of Self Worth; To determine whether or not people rely on their body weight to boost their self-esteem, two research examined the body weight contingency to the overall appearance-related contingency of self-worth. Research showed that both body weight (e.g., body shape anxiety, anxiety disorders) and general psychological well-being (e.g., self-esteem, instability of self-esteem, depression, & anxiety) were associated with the predicted results. *According to the results of both researches, many individuals put their sense of self-worth on their body weight.*

Schraml et al. (2011) studied three major groups of factors linked to stress-adolescent subjective psychosocial conditions, self-esteem,

and lifestyle. The study's findings support the notion that a significant number of high school students-mostly females-experience psychological strain. Also, it's said that people who have high levels of stress are more prone to feeling bad about themselves and rely on their performance for their self-esteem, along with problems related to sleep, as compared to individuals who aren't stressed. *Positive features of personality were found to be negatively connected to psychological distress symptoms and functional impairment and positively linked to levels of self-esteem.* Psychological distress causes low self-esteem and functional impairment; hence, it is protected by positive personality features, during times of protracted stress. This is deemed true as per the "scar model" of self-esteem, that talks about how frequently noticed relationships among psychological distress and self-esteem are often an outcome of distress and not low esteem (Besser & Zeigler-Hill, 2012).

Perfectionism

Schouwenberg (1992) examined perfectionism and procrastination with the help of 278 students from the Netherlands who were asked to complete a lot of reasons for procrastination, along with measures of trait procrastination, behavioural procrastination, and fear of failure. An analysis regarding the causes/ reasons for procrastination concluded with six factors, which included fear of- failure something that is closely linked to and resembles perfectionism. Total analyses of the data from the sample, depicted slight positive relationships between the two variables, leading the researcher to conclude that there is no substantial relationship between fear of failure and procrastination.

Hewitt et al. (1992) studied perfectionism with suicide potential. In his study, if variables of perfectionism predicted a variation in suicide threat and suicide intention which are not caused due to feelings of hopelessness and depression. There were 87 psychiatric patients, who attempted the 21 Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, the MMPI Threat Suicide Scale, and the Beck Depression Inventory. Regression-based analysis revealed that, even after excluding differences resulting from degrees of hopelessness, socially dictated perfectionism explained a considerable amount of disparity in suicide threat and intent ratings. Given that hopelessness is thought to be one of the most accurate and dependable psychological predictors of suicidal tendencies, the fact that socially enforced perfectionism explains variances that are far higher than the hopelessness variable has become crucial. Thus, the current research demonstrates that a certain type of hopelessness that includes an individual's beliefs about other's expectations may be one of the factors contributing to suicide threat. Findings also showed that there was a unique variance in threats and intent of suicide even after eliminating reasons related to depression, in socially prescribed perfectionism. There is a link found in clinical and sub-clinical samples, relating to this dimension of perfectionism and depression. Regression analysis results show that even though socially prescribed perfectionism and depression do share a variance, the relationship between this perfectionism dimension and the suicide threat is not because of that factor entirely.

Frost and Steketee (1997) studied OCD and perfectionism by comparing OCD diagnosed clients' perfectionism levels with those of non- clients and also some clients diagnosed with agoraphobia and panic disorders. 84 patients and community controls between the ages of 24 and 66 were chosen as samples, for the test. The group

having OCD consisted of 35 clients who were participating in a study about treatment outcomes. *These findings did end up demonstrating that there is some relationship between perfectionism and OCD; however, the findings didn't occur only in OCD, but in agoraphobia clients as well.*

Discussion

The study reveals the psychological difficulties that perfectionists confront by highlighting a strong negative correlation between high levels of perfectionism and self-worth. A strong fear of failing and an over-reliance on other approvals to gauge their own worth are common traits of young adults with strong perfectionistic tendencies. This dependence produces a brittle sense of self-worth that is extremely susceptible to criticism or setbacks from the outside world.

Perfectionists frequently hold themselves to unreasonably high standards, aiming for perfection in their social, professional, or academic lives. People suffer from severe self-criticism, feelings of inadequacy, and self-doubt when these criteria are not fulfilled. Chronic tension and anxiety can arise from this never-ending cycle of establishing impossible objectives and dealing with perceived failure, which lowers one's feeling of self-worth. Regardless of their accomplishments, survey participants said they felt "never good enough," underscoring the destructive cycle of perfectionism.

Furthermore, loneliness is made worse by the demand for approval from family, friends, or society, which is motivated by perfectionism. Because they are afraid of being rejected or condemned, these people usually avoid expressing their weaknesses or asking for help. Unresolved emotional pain builds up over time, increasing the likelihood of mental health conditions like anxiety or depression as well as maladaptive behaviors like avoidance or procrastination.

The information also emphasizes how perfectionism results in a strict assessment of one's value based only on performance results. Failure in one area of life, such as academics, relationships with others, or looks, for example, tends to overwhelm all other achievements and create a pervasive sense of failure. The idea that their worth as a person is contingent and only acceptable when they fulfill impossibly high criteria is maintained by this cognitive error.

Finally, a key element of a good sense of self-worth is self-compassion, which is hampered by perfectionistic tendencies. Perfectionists find it hard to forgive themselves for mistakes because they tend to magnify their perceived flaws instead of seeing them as a normal part of being human. This lack of self-compassion feeds a vicious cycle of emotional weariness and intensifies emotions of unworthiness.

The results show how urgently strategies to end this loop are needed. To lessen the psychological effects of perfectionism, it is essential to encourage self-compassion, acceptance of flaws, and a change from performance-based to intrinsic self-worth. To assist young adults, reevaluate their values and develop resistance against the detrimental effects of perfectionism, interventions including mindfulness exercises, cognitive restructuring, and psychoeducation might be extremely important.

Conclusion

The results of this study highlight the deep and intricate connection between perfectionism and self-worth, especially for young adults

negotiating the challenges of social expectations. It emphasizes how, although being frequently viewed as a motivating quality, perfectionism may negatively impact a person's psychological health if it is allowed to run amok. The study shows that people who are perfectionists often place a greater value on their accomplishments and approval from others, which weakens their sense of self and makes them more susceptible to stress, anxiety, and self-criticism.

Notably, the study's gender-based findings provided insight into how social norms influence behavior and self-perception. Females rely more on outward looks and social acceptance to determine their self-worth, whereas males have greater propensities for performance-driven perfectionism. This necessitates a comprehensive knowledge and treatment of self-worth and perfectionism in both genders.

Most significantly, by highlighting the protective function of intrinsic self-worth and self-compassion, the research offers a glimmer of hope. Despite outside constraints, people who own their flaws and develop internal resilience have better psychological results. This emphasizes the necessity of treatments meant to promote self-acceptance and lessen the tendency for perfection.

This study is an essential reminder of the value of fostering self-worth from within in a world where social judgment and competitive standards are taking over. People can escape the cycle of perfectionism and lay the groundwork for long-term mental health and well-being by reorienting their attention from outward validation to internal acceptance.

According to the findings, families, educators, and mental health specialists should work together to establish nurturing environments that value individuality over perfection. This study is a foundation for future research and psychological treatment since it not only fills a vacuum in the literature but also provides fresh perspectives on perfectionism and self-worth in different age groups.

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