

The Relationship between Perfectionism and Mental Health in Students of Golestan University College of Science and Research, Iran

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between perfectionism and mental health of students in Gorgan, Iran. The research method was descriptive and correlation type. The statistical population consisted of 2000 individuals that were all the students of Golestan University College of Science and Research, based on Morgan table, 322 individuals were selected for sampling. Perfectionism Questionnaire of Hill and General Health Questionnaire (GHQ12) was used to collect the data. Correlation and regression were used for data analysis. The results showed that there was a positive and significant correlated relationship (0.28) between students' mental health and perfectionism. Perfectionism was able to predict mental health. In general, it can be said that mental health was dependent on perfectionism, and mental health status was lower in perfectionists.

Keyword: Mental Health, Perfectionism, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Human is thinker not because of the events that happen to him, but also because of the manner and attitude toward the facts, issues, problems and events that he faced with, his physical and mental health will be affected (Aghaei et al., 2007). The health is the basic needs of human and plays a vital role in sustainable development. Although, at first only physical health was considered as health, by the advancement of science and reaching an acceptable level of physical health and by fighting against many diseases, human has paid attention to other aspects of health, including mental health. Mental health agencies have defined mental health vital as a fundamental need, and to improve the quality of human life. This organization defines mental health as "a state of complete physical, psychological and social health (not the absence of disease or infirmity)" (Behrad et al., 2015). Also, the Mental health is defined as a positive feel of the person, the world around, where he lives, people around him (especially with regard to responsibility he has towards others), how he compromise with his income and his temporal and spatial understanding (Levinson et al., 1992; quoted by Attar, 1995). According to many individual differences, factors affecting the mental health are diverse with no doubt, but one of the factors that can affect the mental health is perfectionism. Although, the concept of perfectionism was considered in the two last decades of the twentieth century, but still it has been proposed as an almost unknown phenomenon. In community, we see fewer families

who do not blame and criticize their children about for a little mistake and who have not excessive expectations of them.

Undoubtedly, most of us would like to do our works without fault, and if we commit even a small mistake, we blame ourselves, and we create problems for our internal processes by this blaming and negative evaluation (Najafi, 2004 quoted by Zare Nezhad, 2011). Perfectionism, as structural neurotic is defined trying in terms of features to be perfect and setting too high standards for performances combined with willingness to openly criticizing evaluation of the behavior (Burns, 1980, Fleet & Hewitt, 2002).

In addition, perfectionist people often measure their value in terms of unattainable goals, and managed their life based on the law of "despotism "(Horny, 1950; quoted by Habib Nezhad et al., 2009). According to this approach, in the captions on perfectionism, negative and abnormal aspects of this structure are more considered. For this reason, the relationship between perfectionism components have been studied more with psychopathological aspects rather than with normal functioning indicators and mental health (Viat & Gilbert, 1998; quoted by Habib Nezhad et al., 2009). For example, when Fleet & Hewitt (1991) divided perfectionism in the context of social relations to self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism, and community-oriented perfectionism, they highlight Pathological aspects of perfectionism in comparison with its normal aspects (Stumpf & Parker, 2000; quoted by Habib Nezhad et al., 2009). Total Research findings suggest that the two dimensions of perfectionism are distinct (Stumpf & Parker, 2000; Terry-short, Owens, Slade, Dewey, 1995; Hamachek, 1978; quoted by Habib Nezhad et al., 2009). One dimension has been described as a normal, healthy, adaptive and positive perfectionism, which include aspects of perfectionism that are associated with the optimal efforts, such as having high personal standards, imposing strict criteria for performance and striving for excellence. This dimension has shown positive correlation with optimal compatibility criteria like positive affect. Another dimension is described as neurotic, unhealthy, negative or maladaptive perfectionism, which include aspects of perfectionism that are associated with optimal concerns such as worries about mistakes, doubts about actions, fear of others' disapproval and lack of coordination between expectations and outcomes. This dimension has shown positive correlation with conflict indicators, such as negative affect (Stoeber & Otto, 2006; Stoeber, Harris & Moon, 2007). As a result, it is expected that these two dimensions have a different relationship with psychological well-being and psychological distress. Thus, this study sought to examine the relationship between perfectionism and mental health in students of Golestan University College of Science and Research.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The research method was descriptive and correlation type. The statistical population consisted of 2000 people that were all the students of Golestan University College of Science and Research, based on Morgan table, 322 individuals were selected for sampling. In the stage of performing the study, after the presentation of preliminary explanation about the purpose of the test and measurement tools, how to respond to tests was described in detail for participants. Regarding moral considerations, after obtaining the consent of the individuals and giving them the necessary awareness, they were assured that the received information will be used only in research and they will be protected from any abuse. To measure the research variables, the following questionnaires were used.

A) *Perfectionism Inventory of Hill:* This questionnaire has 59 articles and 8 subscales. Its validity and reliability was tested in the research of Jamshidi et al. (2008). The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and convergent validity was assessed by examining the relationship of scale and the scale of public health. Cronbach's alpha coefficient showed the acceptable reliability (0.80) of this questionnaire. The validity of the scale was also confirmed, even with the negative aspects of the relationship between perfectionism and general health status. The response scale was the Likert's five-point scale. In Table 1, various aspects of Questionnaire and questions related to of each dimension are presented:

Table 1. Dimensions of perfectionism questionnaire.

Concern Over Mistakes	High Standards for Others	Need for Approval	Organization	Perceived Parental Pressure	Having Plan	Rumination	Striving for Excellence
6	3	2	4	7	5	8	1
14	11	10	12	15	13	16	9
22	19	18	20	23	21	24	17
30	27	26	28	31	29	32	25
38	35	34	36	39	37	40	33
46	43	42	44	47	45	48	41
53	50	49	51	54	52	55	
57		59	56	58			

B) General Health Questionnaire GHQ: This questionnaire was developed by Goldberg in 1972. Its short form consists of 28 articles and consists of four sub-scales including somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction and depression. In the study which was conducted by Chan (1983) in China and by Abbas Hooman (1997) in Iran, the internal consistency coefficient of the test was reported equivalent to 85% and 83% by using Cronbach's alpha (Quoted by Behrad et al., 2015). Abbas Hooman used factor analysis by principal component with varimax rotation, in order to determine the validity of the structure, and the result of these calculations indicated the saturation of the test with four significant and important factors, and the criterion estimated by calculating the correlation coefficient of the questionnaire has been reported as 82%. Likert's method was used to assess the questionnaire: More than usual (no) is given 0, as usual (slightly) 1, less than usual (high) 2, and much less than usual (very high) is given 3 scores. The cut off point for this test is the point 23, this means that score higher than 23 is the sign of disorder and less than 23 is the sign of health. Average time to complete this questionnaire is about 8 to 10 minutes. Those who answer the questions in more than 13 minutes are probably resisting and trying to express their condition in other ways. Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to verify the accuracy and consistency of assessment tool. Results showed that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for perfectionism and mental health was respectively 0.85 and 0.89, which shows the accuracy and stability of the research measurement tools. Pearson correlation and regression were used for data analysis. In all analyzes, the significance level was considered as $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results showed normal distribution of the data ($p > 0.05$). To study the relationship between perfectionism and mental health of students, Pearson correlation was used. Results are presented in Table 2. According to the results, it can be said that there is a positive and significant correlation between mental health and perfectionism of the students ($P \text{ value} > 0.01$), to the amount of 0.28. So, it can be said that by increasing perfectionism in students, their mental health scores will be increased (decreasing students' mental health). In fact, by increasing the perfectionism of students, their mental health will be reduced and vice versa.

Table 2. Correlation coefficients matrix, Mental Health and Perfectionism.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Mental health	1								
Concern Over Mistakes	0.26**	1							
High Standards for Others	0.24**	0.58**	1						
Need for Approval	0.15**	0.51**	0.32**	1					
Organization	0.05	-0.02	0.15**	0.08	1				
Perceived Parental Pressure	0.21**	0.52**	0.44**	0.25**	0.06	1			
Planfulness	0.06	0.13*	0.23**	0.07	0.40**	0.23**	1		
Rumination	0.24**	0.62**	0.53**	0.57**	0.10	0.54**	0.24**	1	
Striving for Excellence	0.11*	0.22**	0.33**	0.14*	0.41**	0.34**	0.54**	0.40**	1
Perfectionism	0.28**	0.73**	0.73**	0.71**	0.46**	0.70**	0.52**	0.76**	0.64**

** p-value < 0.01

* p-value < 0.05

Linear regression was used to investigate the predictability of college students' mental health from their perfectionism. The correlation coefficient between the criterion variable (mental health) and the remaining predictor variables in the regression (perfectionism) is 0.28 and adjusted coefficient of determination is 7 percent. So, it can be said that perfectionism of students explained 7 percent of their mental health variance (Table 3). It should be noted that subscales of perfectionism influenced by perfectionism lost their effect on the mental health of students and was removed from the regression.

Table 3. Summary of the Model.

R^2_{adj}	R^2	R
0.07	0.08	0.28

Considering ($F_{1,235} = 19.60$ and $P \text{ value} < 0.01$), it can be said that the regression model chosen for the study hypothesis is valid (Table 4).

Table 4. Analysis of the variance.

Source of variance	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Regression	1412.39	1	1412.39	19.60	0.0000
Remaining	16932.13	235	72.05		
Total	18344.52	2236			

Regression equation with Standard coefficients:

Perfectionism 0.277 = Y Students' mental health

According to the regression equation with above standard coefficients, perfectionism has a direct effect on the mental health of students. Each unit added in perfectionism of the students will increase 0.277 of the scores of their mental health (their mental health will be decreased). In fact, with each increased unit in perfectionism, 0.277 can be expected to be decreased in the students' mental health (Table 5).

Table 5. Regression coefficients.

	Non Standardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	b Coefficient	Standard error	β Coefficient		
Intercept	8.69	1.13	-----	2.10	0.03
Perfectionism	0.086	0.019	0.277	4.42	0.000

Criterion variables: mental health

Predictor variables: scale and subscales of perfectionism

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between perfectionism and mental health in students of Golestan University College of Science and Research, Iran. Results showed that there is a positive and significant correlation between mental health and perfectionism of the students. So, it can be said that by increasing perfectionism in students, their mental health scores will be increased (decreasing students' mental health). In fact, by increasing the perfectionism of students, their mental health will be reduced and vice versa. It should be said in explanations that perfectionism causes stress and anxiety in people, because perfectionists have high expectations of themselves, thus, they have lower mental health. The results of this research were consistent with the study of Besharat (2005), Habib Nezhad et al (2009), and it was inconsistent with the research results of Mehrabi Zadeh et al, (1999), Abdekhodae et al, (2009) and Mahmoudi (2005); they showed in their research that there is an inverse relationship between a kind of perfectionism and mental health. Other results showed that perfectionism has a direct effect on the mental health of students. Each unit added in perfectionism of the students will increase 0.277 of the scores of their mental health (their mental health will be decreased).

In fact, with each increased unit in perfectionism, 0.277 can be expected to be decreased in the students' mental health. It must be said in explanation that perfectionism concerns such as worry about mistakes, doubts about actions, fearing the disapproval of others and lack of coordination between expectations and results will reduce mental health. Perfectionism is correlated with conflict indicators, such as negative effect. In general, it can be said that mental health is associated with perfectionism and mental health is lower in perfectionist people. Perfectionists have some concerns, including worries about mistakes, doubts about actions, fear of disapproval of others and lack of coordination between the expectations, which decrease the mental health. According to the findings, it is suggested to policy makers and performers in the field of mental health, especially among students, to design a practical policy that increase consolidation of religious beliefs and as a result, reduce stress and lead to mental health.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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