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Perfectionism as Predictor of Psychological Wellbeing among College Students

By Kalpna Anand & YK Nagle

Institute of Aerospace Medicine

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.

Keywords: perfectionism, psychological wellbeing, college student.

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Perfectionism as Predictor of Psychological Wellbeing among College Students

Kalpna Anand ^α & YK Nagle ^σ

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.

Keywords: perfectionism, psychological wellbeing, college student.

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 distress (Aldea & Rice, 2006; Bieling, Israeli, & Antony, 2004; Rice, Leever, Christopher, & Porter, 2006).

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

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

II. METHOD

a) Participants

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

b) Measures

i. The Perfectionism Scale (Kalpna & Nagle)

It was used to measure the magnitude of self oriented perfectionism; socially prescribed perfectionism and others oriented perfectionism. It consists of 41 items, representing *Self oriented perfectionism* (16

Author ^α: Institute of Aerospace Medicine, IAF.
e-mail: kalpnadev@gmail.com

items), *Socially prescribed perfectionism*, (13 items), *Others oriented perfectionism* (12 items) which are to be rated on a 5-point rating scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The reliability was established at 0.82- 0.89 which is high. It takes about 20 minutes to complete the test. Standard scoring procedure is adopted.

ii. *The Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being* (Ryff, 1989)

It has 54 items which consists of six subscales: (a) Positive Relations with Others, Self-Acceptance, Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, Personal Growth and Purpose in Life which are to be rated on a 6- point scale that ranges from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Test – retest reliability coefficients range from 0.81 to 0.85.

c) *Procedure*

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

III. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

Table 1 gives an overview of the scores and standard deviation of three dimensions of perfectionism and six dimensions of psychological wellbeing.

Variables	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Autonomy (AU)	28.0	54.0	40.833	5.3282
Environmental Mastery (EM)	29.0	54.0	42.146	4.7453
Personal Growth (PG)	30.0	54.0	45.737	4.4177
Positive Relations (PR)	25.0	54.0	44.801	5.6495
Purpose in Life (PL)	27.0	54.0	43.637	4.7611
Self Acceptance (SA)	24.0	54.0	43.046	4.9318
Psychological WB (Total)	194.0	319.0	260.199	22.6150
Self Oriented Perfectionism (SOP)	35.0	78.0	59.555	8.1809
Others Oriented Perfectionism (OOP)	14.0	55.0	33.228	7.0669
Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)	12.0	46.0	27.509	5.9408
Age	18	24	21.37	1.518
Years of Education	15	20	18.26	1.231

The participants were in the age range of 18-24 years (M=21.37, SD= 1.518) with 90% of the participants between the age group of 19-23 years. The mean score on the dimension of Self oriented perfectionism (KSOP) came out to be 59.555 (SD= 8.1809) which can be considered as high perfectionism as the total scores range for this dimension is 16-80. The mean score of the sample on Socially prescribed perfectionism (KSPP) was 33.228 (SD= 7.0669), which is within average ranges considering the total score range of 13-65. Their mean score on Others oriented perfectionism (KOOP) came out to be 27.509 (SD=

5.9408), which is within average ranges considering the total score range of 12-60. Psychological well being has six dimension, each one's scores ranging from 9-54; positive relations with other (M= 44.801, SD= 5.6495), autonomy (M= 40.833, SD= 5.3282), environmental mastery (M= 42.146, SD= 4.7453), positive growth (M= 45.737, SD= 4.4177), purpose in life (M= 43.637, SD= 4.7611), self acceptance (M= 43.046, SD= 4.9318) and overall psychological wellbeing (M= 260.199, SD= 22.6150) indicating overall above average psychological wellbeing of the participants.

Table 2 : Showing correlations among Perfectionism and psychological wellbeing

	PR	AU	EM	PG	PL	SA
PR	1	.387**	.571**	.527**	.496**	.549**
AU	.387**	1	.497**	.394**	.417**	.385**
EM	.571**	.497**	1	.505**	.483**	.588**
PG	.527**	.394**	.505**	1	.522**	.563**
PL	.496**	.417**	.483**	.522**	1	.479**
SA	.549**	.385**	.588**	.563**	.479**	1
SOP	.159**	.123*	.298**	.210**	.247**	.218**
SPP	-.428**	-.333**	-.375**	-.349**	-.311**	-.408**
OOP	-.314**	-.209**	-.163**	-.268**	-.192**	-.217**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Self Oriented Perfectionism has significant positive relation with Positive Relation with others ($r = .159, p < .01$), Autonomy ($r = .123, p < .05$), Environmental Mastery ($r = .298, p < .01$), Personal Growth ($r = .210, p < .01$), Purpose in Life ($r = .247, p < .01$) and Self Acceptance ($r = .218, p < .01$). Socially Prescribed Perfectionism has significant negative relation with Positive Relation with others ($r = -.428, p < .01$), Autonomy ($r = -.333, p < .01$), Environmental Mastery ($r = -.375, p < .01$), Personal Growth ($r = -$

$.349, p < .01$), Purpose in Life ($r = -.311, p < .01$) and Self Acceptance ($r = -.408, p < .01$), whereas Others Oriented Perfectionism has significant negative relation with Positive Relation with others ($r = -.314, p < .01$), Autonomy ($r = -.209, p < .01$), Environmental Mastery ($r = -.163, p < .01$), Personal Growth ($r = -.268, p < .01$), Purpose in Life ($r = -.192, p < .01$) and Self Acceptance ($r = -.217, p < .01$).

Table 3 : Multiple Regression summaries of Psychological Wellbeing (total)

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

Dependent Variable: PWBtotal

Predictors: (Constant), SPP

Predictors: (Constant), SPP, SOP

Predictors: (Constant), SPP, SOP, OOP

Among the three dimensions of perfectionism, SPP accounts for 23.4% variance (sig, .000) in Psychological Wellbeing and SOP adds 13.7% to it making the total explained variance 37.1% (sig, .000). It shows that higher the score on SPP, the lower will be the score on psychological wellbeing. SPP is negatively related to the experience of psychological wellbeing. OPP added to this variance and increased it by 2.3% thus making it 39.4%. SPP an SOP came out to be the more significant predictor of psychological wellbeing whereas OPP though significant did not add substantially to this relationship.

IV. DISCUSSION

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

Self oriented perfectionism shows significant positive relation with all the six dimensions of wellbeing, i.e. Environmental Mastery (EM), Personal Growth (PG), Purpose in Life (PL) and Self Acceptance (SA). Socially Prescribed Perfectionism shows significant negative relation with Autonomy (AU), Personal Growth (PG) and Purpose in Life (PL). This shows that the perfectionistic tendencies having social pressure as its genesis are counterproductive to the psychological wellbeing.

Perfectionism, both self oriented and socially prescribed, accounts for a large variance in many dimensions of psychological wellbeing like Environmental Mastery (EM), Personal Growth (PG), Purpose in Life (PL), Self Acceptance (SA) and Autonomy (AU). The ability to find meaning and direction

in life, and having goals and following them, despite setbacks is an important aspect of well-being. Psychological wellbeing is all about having self acceptance and striving for personal growth and having purpose in life. High SOP and low SPP makes for a very efficient combination making it conducive for wellbeing to flourish. The results are confirmed as in a study conducted with 200 South Korean students Adaptive perfectionism was found to be significantly related to environmental mastery dimension of psychological wellbeing (Park & Jeong, 2015). Further the finding of another study conducted with 323 university students elaborated that perfectionism was strongly linked to environmental mastery and purpose in life (Butt, 2010). Research findings provide evidence that adaptive perfectionism tends to promote positive outcomes including openness to learning new skills (Gould et al., 2002), completion of interpreter training programs (Bontempo & Napier, 2011), higher levels of self-esteem (Ashby & Rice, 2002), and greater life satisfaction (Wang et al., 2009). Positive and negative perfectionism is related with psychological well-being. Psychological well-being is defined as an individual's perception and assessment of their lives. In other words, it refers to some combination of feeling good or positive affective states and functioning effectively social life (Rasulzada, 2007; Huppert, 2009; Winefield et al., 2012).

The findings are in line with other studies wherein Positive perfectionism has been found to result in low levels of depression while negative perfectionism bring about psychological distress and stress (Chang, 2006; Chan, 2007; Butt, 2010; Cumming & Duda, 2012; Black & Reynolds, 2013; Kung & Chan, 2014). Various

studies have shown that perfectionists worry and ruminate more about work than non-perfectionists making it difficult for perfectionists to switch off and relax after work, and this may negatively affect their work-life balance, health, and well-being (Flaxman, Ménard, Bond, & Kinman, 2012; Mitchelson, 2009).

V. LIMITATIONS

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

VI. CONCLUSION

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

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