

Research Paper: Relationship between Psychological Capital and Perfectionism among Female High School Students in the City of Gonabad



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ABSTRACT

Background: The current study was aimed to investigate the relationship between psychological capital and perfectionism among the high school students of Gonabad city.

Methods: This research used the correlation method and the data collection tool was questionnaire. The statistical population consisted of all-female high school students in Gonabad city. The sample size was calculated through Morgan's table and 261 questionnaires were analyzed. Psychological capital has four aspects: hope, self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. Perfectionism has negative and positive dimensions. Its positive dimension includes personal standards and a tendency towards discipline. While its negative dimension has four aspects: individuals' excessive worry about their mistakes, perception of parents' expectations, perception of parents' criticism, and tendency to have doubt and hesitation.

Results: The findings showed that all four aspects of psychological capital affect the negative perfectionism. The type of school was effective on both negative and positive perfectionism; however, the two variables of resilience and optimism did not affect the positive perfectionism. The results also showed that 23% of positive perfectionism changes and about 45% of negative perfectionism changes were justifiable by the mentioned variables.

Conclusion: Since the type of school was found to be an affecting factor on the mean score, specifically for the negative and positive perfectionism, it can be stated that one of the most effective solutions in this regard is implementing the educational activities at schools.

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Introduction

Positive psychology is a new approach in psychology which focuses on understanding and analyzing happiness, the feeling of mental well-being and predicting the effective factors on them [1]. Psychological capital is an indicator of positive psychology, which is explained as individuals' belief to get succeed, diligence in following their goals, creating positive attributes about themselves and tolerating the problems [2]. This variable can prevent from the development of many mental disorders such as perfectionism.

"Perfectionism" as a word may have different meanings, some of which indicate a positive characteristic and some indicate a negative one. Thus, perfectionism as a personality trait has different types which may be healthy or unhealthy.

Although there are many studies on perfectionism among college and university students [3], [4], few researches has been done on perfectionism among school students. Due to harmful effects of perfectionism especially in the academic field, it is important to identify its different aspects so that be intervened more effectively by therapists focused by educational authorities in planning for talent detection among high school students.

A study [5] showed a positive and significant relationship between adaptive perfectionism and test anxiety among ordinary students and between the adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism and exam anxiety among gifted students. The average score of adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism and the average score of exam anxiety among ordinary students were significantly higher than gifted students. Thus, it seems that perfectionism plays a significant role in decreasing or increasing the anxiety of exam among students. As it was mentioned, these traits depend on the individuals' view toward themselves as well as their existential privileges which might be related to the individuals' psychological capital or their positive assets. Thus, the reason of such perfectionist behaviors may be the individuals' psychological capital.

Analysis of the researches in the field of the present study showed that perfectionism is a relative concept. Therefore, each person is somehow perfectionist while the perfection or desired state for each person or group is different from others. Perfection is referred to a desired state which is far from the status quo. Initial observations and explorations of the researcher showed that many students who possess these characteristics,

postpone their homework because they want to do it as the best as possible; so they stay behind others and get distressed. Generally, fear of failure and worry about others' viewpoint causes anxiety and it leads to academic failure in long-term. Besides, the students may never take on a certain responsibility or leave it half-done due to their fear of failure in achieving their goals.

Prior studies have paid less attention to the relationship between these two variables. Most of them deal with the relationship between perfectionism, tenacity and other variables [6], [7] such as psychological capital [8], [9], [10], [11], [12] while the topic of the current study is so important. Overall, it can be said that recently, researches in the field of perfectionism has considerably increased but mostly through a descriptive manner or by considering the role of only one aspect of psychological capital on perfectionism. Literature review in this field showed that there is a need to investigate the relationship between all four aspects of psychological capital with perfectionism among the population of high school students. Therefore, the researcher has endeavored to study this topic in the city of Gonabad among female students. Gonabad as a deprived city, has certain characteristics which may affect its residents. Besides, female students compared to male ones, may show more sensitivity towards people's view in this city.

Thus, the researcher aimed to determine the relationship between perfectionism and psychological capital as well as the relationship between the underlying variables with these two variables among female high school students in Gonabad separately for each dimension.

Methods

This research was a correlational study. The statistical population consisted of all female students in the secondary level of high schools in Gonabad. According to Morgan's table, 261 subjects were selected using stratified random sampling method. Out of all secondary level of high schools for girls in Gonabad, five schools were selected (categorized into schools for: exceptional talents, gifted students, governmental, the children of martyrs/ war heroes and technical schools).

Data collection tool was as follows: Luthans psychological capital questionnaire had four sub-scales of hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy which is valid and reliable [13]. This questionnaire consisted of 24 (6-item) questions. Besides, Frost et al. Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) which is made

to assess different dimensions of perfectionism was used in this study. This questionnaire consisted of 35 (6 sub-scale) questions. The sum of four sub-scales of excessive worry about mistakes, individuals' perception of their parents' criticism, individuals' perception of their parents' expectations and tendency to have doubt and hesitation make negative perfectionism. Besides, tendency towards discipline and being organized and personal performance criteria make positive perfectionism. Higher score indicates the individual's high perfectionism in the intended area. The validity and reliability of this questionnaire has been also evaluated in Iran [14].

The questionnaires were distributed among the school students. Therefore, in regard to the number of students in each school and the study sample size, 57 questionnaires were distributed among exceptionally talented students, 65 questionnaires among gifted students, 48 questionnaires among children of martyrs and war-heroes, 64 questionnaires among ordinary governmental and 25 questionnaires among technical students. The number of questionnaires were distributed according to the proportion of the sample size for each school. Then, the completed questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS software (version 21).

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Results

Regarding the condition of variables, the researcher utilized Manova Technique. Before the analysis, the initial assumptions were observed and the test of normal distribution was conducted on the variables. The results of data normality is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of data normality test for dependent variable and the test of equivalence of covariance matrices

Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov test			Shapiro test			Box's M test (equivalence of covariance matrices)	
	Statistics	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	Statistics	Degree of Freedom	Significance Level	Statistics	Numbers
Worry	0.233	11	0.098	0.861	11	0.060	Box's M	232.070
Criticism	0.224	11	0.129	0.888	11	0.130	F	1.186
Expectations	0.197	11	0.200	0.936	11	0.476	df1	168
Doubt	0.205	11	0.200	0.949	11	0.632	df2	14830.548
Organization	0.247	11	0.059	0.901	11	0.190	Significance Level	051.
Discipline	0.199	11	0.200	0.840	11	0.032		

After conducting the assumption tests (Table 1), the final analysis was performed. As it is seen in Table 2, the results of the effects among samples showed that except for two cases, all four aspects of psychological capital and the type of school affect both the positive and negative perfectionism. Two variables of resilience and optimism did not have any effect on positive per-

fectionism. Overall, 23% of changes in positive perfectionism and about 45% of the changes in negative perfectionism were explained by the mentioned variables in an adjusted mode. In other words, when the number of variables decreases, the ratio of sample to the variable is adjusted and the coefficient of determination increases.

Table 2. Effects tests among the samples

Source	Dependent variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Self-efficacy	Positive Perfectionism	2.382	1	2.382	10.860	0.001	0.043
	Negative Perfectionism	13.553	1	13.553	39.469	0.000	0.142
Hope	Positive Perfectionism	5.271	1	5.271	24.034	0.000	0.091
	Negative Perfectionism	5.763	1	5.763	16.784	0.000	0.066
Resilience	Positive Perfectionism	0.155	1	0.155	0.705	0.402	0.003
	Negative Perfectionism	8.650	1	8.650	25.192	0.000	0.095
Optimism	Positive Perfectionism	0.782	1	0.782	3.565	0.060	0.015
	Negative Perfectionism	12.022	1	12.022	35.011	0.000	0.128
Type of School	Positive Perfectionism	3.608	4	0.902	4.113	0.003	0.064
	Negative Perfectionism	3.754	4	0.938	2.733	0.030	0.044

b. R Squared= 0.466 (Adjusted R Squared= 0.448)

a. R Squared= 0.253 (Adjusted R Squared= 0.228)

The final investigation of the results is briefly explained as follows:

As it was mentioned in table 2, the significance level for the relationship between all four aspects of psychological capital is less than 5% and it has a significant relationship with negative perfectionism. So the first assumption is approved.

Table 2 demonstrates the significance level for the relationship between the aspects of psychological capital (for the aspects of hope and self-efficacy) is less than 5%. So, it has a significant relationship with positive perfectionism. For second assumption there was a significant relationship between two aspects of the independent variable and the dependent variable while the aspects of resilience and optimism did not have a significant relationship with positive perfectionism.

According to Table 2, it can be said that among the underlying variables, only the type of school had a significant difference with negative and positive perfectionism and its significance level was less than 5%. It means that the score for negative and positive perfectionism among the students was varied in different schools.

Discussion

The results of the current research showed that the different aspects of these two variables have significant relationship with each other. The analysis of the research findings are presented in this section. The score for resilience among the students was different depending on the type of school. Also, the low score average for optimism and self-efficacy, indicated the weakness of samples in these two aspects. According to results, increase in self-efficacy can promote the positive perfectionism which is a good trait rather than a weakness. Besides, increase in optimism would change the individuals 'excessive worry, perception of their parents' criticism and their tendency to have doubt and hesitation to a good level. Furthermore, the students' perception of their parents' expectations varies depending on the type of their school. Also, resilience and optimism have an important effect on negative perfectionism.

Other researches showed that there is a significant positive relationship between spiritual health and mindfulness with psychological capital (self-efficacy, resilience, optimism and hope). Besides, there is [11] a significant relationship between psychological capital (hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy) with the goals of academic achievement and performance

among students.

Since learning plays a significant role in affecting perfectionism, negative perfectionism among the participants may be related to the training manner of parents or having a perfectionist mother. According to some experts [15], probably perfectionists have learned from childhood that they are worthy to the others based on their performance and as a result, they may have learned to consider themselves valuable only if the others accept them. This can make the individuals vulnerable and sensitive to others' views and criticisms. Making effort to support themselves and get rid of this kind of criticisms lead perfectionists to believe that being perfect is the only way to defend themselves [15]. According to Denollet [16], two other factors related to this trait would be having perfectionist parents or authoritarian parents, specifically mothers which raise perfectionist daughters through their training or transferring their traits to their children.,

Besides, resilience has a significant relationship with negative and positive perfectionism. This is in line with other similar researches [8] which showed that perfectionist people have more tenacity. Besides, high self-efficacy is related to the improvement of the immune system, decrease in releasing stress hormones and decrease in vulnerability toward respiratory infections [18]. In fact, if we consider the stress as similar as the excessive worry in perfectionism, this result verifies the relation between self-efficacy and excessive worry. As it was mentioned, the results of this research showed that how these aspects can cause or increase negative the outcomes. Therefore, paying attention to these traits and using proper approaches to increase the different aspects of psychological capital can turn people into a normal character during time and help them to be on balance. Since in different schools the average score was different for both negative and positive perfectionism, it can be stated that one of the most effective approaches is performing educational activities in the schools. Considering the significant effects of spiritual health and mindfulness on fostering and developing of psychological capital traits; it is suggested that the schools invest on these two variables and develop spiritual and mental health among teenagers.

Regarding the mentioned results and the study limitations and considering the fact that these traits are mostly transferred through family, the relationship between the upbringing manner with the perfectionism of mothers and teenagers is better to be investigated. Since education has direct effect on different dimensions of perfectionism, it is recommended that various

dimensions of this variable get compared among high school, college and university students as well as university professors.

Conclusion

Regarding the collected statistical information, it seems that the students are better at positive perfectionism than negative perfectionism. The scores average in different aspects of psychological capital showed that the score for optimism was lower than other aspects which indicates a weak self-concept. Since self-concept affects other aspects such as self-efficacy, resilience and hope and plays an important role in the personality development of teenagers, a fundamental action needs to be taken to increase it.

Among the various aspects of psychological capital, the score for resilience was varied among the students for different schools. It revealed that the students had a higher resilience score in the schools for children of martyrs and war-heroes compared with those in the schools for gifted students. In other words, the schools for the gifted students require to reinforce the resilience among their students. It reveals the dependency of this variable on the life and education environment. Based on the obtained results, resilience may have an essential impact on individuals' excessive worry about their mistakes.

However, the low scores average for optimism and self-efficacy shows the weakness of samples in these two aspects. Self-efficacy has a significant relationship with positive and negative perfectionism. Besides, a decrease in self-efficacy can increase the negative perfectionism. According to Shultz (1988) the more the level of physiological and emotional arousal is, the less the level of personal effectiveness will be. In other words, in a certain situation, the more we feel fear, anxiety or tension, the less we feel to be able to deal with it [18].

A decrease in optimism can increase the excessive worry, perception of parents' criticism and the tendency to doubt and hesitation more negatively. Resilience and optimism also have an important impact on negative perfectionism. Thus, its reinforcement requires education.

Ethical Considerations

Compliance with ethical guidelines

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Authors' contributions

Study design: Zahra Sarshar; Data collection and analysis: Zahra Sarshar, Maryam Eskafi; Manuscript preparation: Zahra sarshar Maryam eskafi Hadi Mohammadpour.

Conflict of interest

The authors declared no conflict of interest.

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