



THE EFFECT OF PERFECTIONISM AND SELF-COMPASSION ON POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE AFFECT AND APPEARANCE ANXIETY AMONG ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract

Perfectionism is unquestionably ingrained in our daily lives and can be found in a variety of contexts, including work, school, relationships etc. While self-compassion entails being compassionate and understanding towards oneself in the face of perceived failures or weaknesses, perfectionism manifests itself by setting unreasonably demanding standards for self and being unduly critical of one's own performance.. Through a comprehensive review of existing literature and quantitative research, this study examines the effect of perfectionism as well as self-compassion on appearance anxiety and positive and negative affect. For this purpose, 240 Pakistani students were selected. The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), The Self Compassion Scale (SCS), Appearance Anxiety Inventory (API) and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) were selected to collect the data. It is hypothesized that there will be a significant positive relationship between perfectionism and appearance anxiety and negative affect, as well as significant negative relationship between perfectionism and positive affect. Furthermore, self-compassion will have significant positive relationship with positive affect and significant negative relationship with appearance anxiety and negative affect.

Keywords: Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, Affect, Appearance Anxiety.



Background: The study explores the complex connections between the quest of perfection, self-compassion and their impact on feelings and appearance anxiety. Appearance issues are becoming more and more common in modern culture, where the never-ending quest for perfection feeds depressive feelings and aids in the emergence of appearance anxiety. In order to offer light on potential techniques for fostering good feelings and well-being among people who struggle with appearance anxiety, this study aims to evaluate the potential protective function of self-compassion in reducing the negative impacts of social expectations for perfection. This research aims to contribute to the development of evidence-based therapies targeted at creating improved self-perceptions and boosting general psychological well-being by examining these links.

Methodology: The study was quantitative utilizing a purposive sampling approach in a sample of 240 adolescents. It utilized Frost Multidimensional Scale FMDS (35-items), Self-Compassion Scale SCS (17-items), Positive and Negative Affect Scale PANAS (20-items) and Appearance Anxiety Inventory AAI (10-items).

Results: Perfectionism was found to be significantly positively correlated with Appearance anxiety and Negative Affect and negatively correlated with Positive Affect among the study sample. Furthermore, Self-compassion was found to be significantly negatively correlated with Appearance anxiety and Negative Affect and positively correlated with Positive Affect among the study sample.

Limitations: The quantitative nature of the study does not delve into the reasonings of the proven relationships between the variables. In order to confirm that the results are generalizable, replication studies using various samples are required.

Conclusion: The study's conclusions point to perfectionism as a possible risk factor for social anxiety related to appearance and negative emotions whereas self-compassion counters it. This information can help in the early detection and prevention of social anxiety in populations at risk.

Introduction

The desire to conform with societal expectations, meet the desired standards for living, and live without going against these norms are one of the few aspects of collectivist culture. In doing so, immense pressure is put on the individuals to climb this social ladder and perform one's best in every aspect be it academically, aesthetically, or appealingly.

Perfectionism is basically the desire to be faultless- frequently involving being intolerant about flaws (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Whereas, according to Neff (2003), self-compassion is characterised



by kindness, warmth, and compassion towards oneself. It also includes having a positive opinion of oneself and accepting that one is merely human.

A tripartite paradigm of perfectionism shows three dimensions of perfectionism. The first dimension is self-oriented perfectionism, which entails high standards for oneself and a drive to attain perfection for oneself. Second, perfectionism that is other-centered and involves exaggerated expectations for close relationships (Smith et al., 2014). The belief that one is held to perfectionistic norms and expectations by others is the final component of socially prescribed perfectionism. According to Hewitt and Flett, there may be a connection between certain kinds of emotional distress and perfectionism. For instance, the characteristics most associated with depression are self-centeredness and socially prescribed perfectionism (Smith et al., 2014).

Particularly, extreme parental demands and criticism are thought to contribute to the development of perfectionism (Flett et al., 2002). Therefore, according to a number of researchers, those who show higher levels of perfectionism do so by amplifying the drawbacks of both personal standards perfectionism (PSP) and everyday occurrences perfectionism (SCP), as well as by engaging in constant self-evaluation.

Noticeably, study on self-compassion has been thriving. The concept has been connected to personal development, success, and motivation (Williams et al., 2008). Self-compassion has been proven to be beneficial in dealing with psychological distress or faced with any sort of failure (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Particularly given that it reflects enduring Buddhist principles like mindfulness, Neff (2003) has suggested that self-compassion has its roots in Asian culture. Furthermore, self-compassion shares similarities with typical Asian values like that of collectivism. For instance, interdependence (Sirois et al., 2015) is a prominent view of the self in the Asian context that defines the self in relation to others. In line with this idea, the self-compassionate person profoundly recognises the interweaving of their experiences with the greater humanity (Neff et al., 2013).

There is growing evidence that self-compassion can help individuals who struggle with perfectionism to break free from its negative consequences. A study by Sirois and Molnar (2016) found that individuals with high levels of perfectionism who also scored high in self-compassion were more likely to experience positive emotions and less likely to experience negative emotions when faced with setbacks or failures. Another study by Terry-Short et al. (2013) found that self-compassion was negatively associated with maladaptive aspects of perfectionism such as self-criticism and concern over mistakes.

Perfectionism and self-compassion may appear to be at odds with one another, yet investigating their impact on other psychological constructs like appearance anxiety and emotions in research

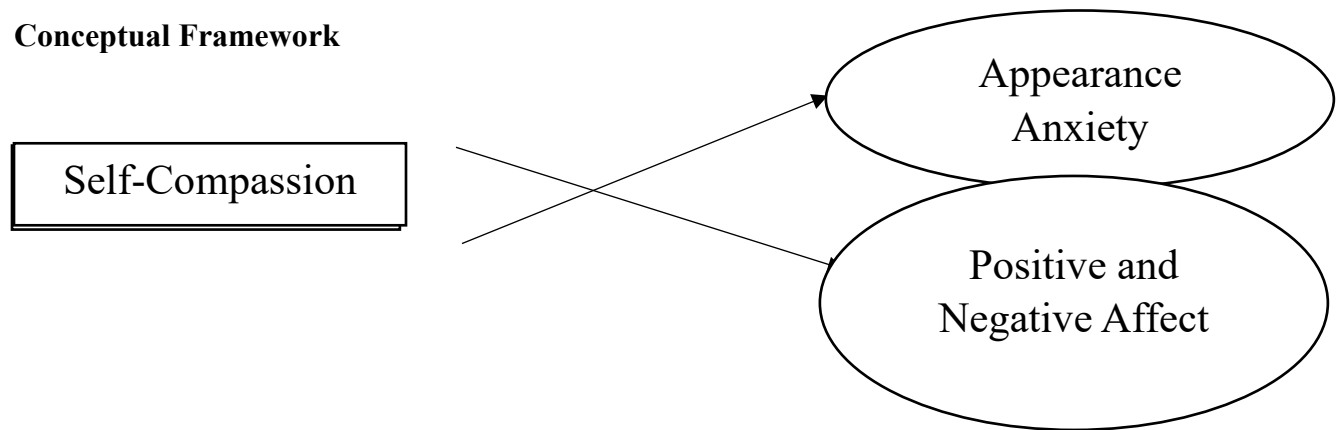


can reveal the complex dynamics of their interaction (Şahin, 2021) and provide important information about the psychological health and functioning of individuals.

Perfectionism, self-compassion, appearance anxiety, and affect are complexly interconnected, highlighting the significant influence of our self-image on our mental health (Foroughi, 2019). For the purpose of increasing mental strength and a more positive outlook, the comprehension of these relationships is crucial. We may manage the complexity of these factors and subsequently cultivate a more tender and accepting connection with our mental and physical self by practicing self-compassion, admitting our flaws, and getting help when we need it.

All in all, these studies suggest that self-compassion may be a helpful tool for reducing appearance anxiety and promoting emotional well-being, while perfectionism may contribute to negative emotions and appearance anxiety. By cultivating self-compassion and reducing perfectionistic tendencies, individuals may be better equipped to manage appearance anxiety and improve their emotional well-being.

Conceptual Framework



Aim and Hypothesis

The adolescent years are a time of great transformation. These changes—which are physical, social, and emotional—could pose difficulties and roadblocks in a young person's existence (Choudhury et al, 2008). The study's findings could contribute to a better understanding of how perfectionism and self-compassion can affect individuals' emotional well-being and appearance anxiety, which is important for personal growth and development.

Methodology



Research Design: The current study applied a quantitative approach. Utilizing the questionnaires, a survey approach was carried out. Purposive sampling technique was utilized as the analysis requires information specifically from adolescents.

Participants: A sample of 240 young adults were selected through purposive sampling technique. The age ranges lied from 10-19. In order to promote harmonious gender representation, the thorough screening process made sure that there were 240 people distributed evenly among men and women.

Procedure: The current study applied a quantitative approach and was conducted in the year of 2023. A sample of 240 adolescents were selected through purposive sampling technique. 4 questionnaires per person were distributed. The demographic sheet included requiring basic information like age, qualification and gender. Confidentiality was maintained with the help of informed consent.

Data Analysis: Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to carry out the analysis. The associations between variables were evaluated using Spearman's correlational statistics. A regression analysis was carried out to examine the impact of various independent variables on the dependent variable.

Materials:

The Self Compassion Scale (SCS): The Self Compassion Scale assesses three bipolar components in six subscales, including mindfulness against over-identification, self-compassion versus self-judgment, and isolation versus common humanity. 17 items on this measure range from 1 (almost never) to 5 on a five-point Likert scale (nearly always) (Neff et al.,2021) The Cronbach's alpha is $\geq .82$

Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS): One of the most used scales to gauge mood or emotion is the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). This short scale has 20 items, 10 of which measure positive affect (such as excited or inspired) and 10 of which measure negative affect (e.g., upset, afraid) (Watson et al., 1988). For the Positive Affect Scale, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.86 to 0.90; for the Negative Affect Scale, 0.84 to 0.87.

The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMDS): The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale is a 35-item self-report measure of perfectionism consisting of six scales: Concern over Mistakes, Doubts about Actions, Personal Standards, Organization, Parental Expectations, and Parental Criticism (Stober J, 1998). The Cronbach Alpha for the total of the FMPS was .87.



Appearance Anxiety Inventory (AAI): A 10-question self-report questionnaire called the Appearance Anxiety Inventory assesses the cognitive and behavioral components of body image anxiety in general and body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) in particular (Veale et al., 2014). It has the Cronbach’s alpha of .86

Results

In the sample of 240 adolescents chosen, 50% were male and 50% were female. 20% were adolescent with the age range of 10-12 years, 15% lied between 13-15 years, 32% were 16-18 years and 33% were 19-year-olds. The highest qualification level was university level (29%), with college (37%) and school (34%) following.

Correlational Analysis

Table 1

Inter-correlations among study variables (n=220)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1 Self-Compassion	-	-.775**	-.657**	.632**	-.722**
2 Perfectionism	-	-	.698**	-.581**	.718**
3 Appearance Anxiety	-	-	-	-.482**	.550**
4 Positive Affect	-	-	-	-	-.632**
5 Negative Affect	-	-	-	-	-

*Note. *p < .05. **p < .01.*

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation results revealed that that Perfectionism was found to be significantly positively correlated with Appearance anxiety ($r = .698^{**}$) and Negative Affect ($r = .718^{**}$) negatively correlated with Positive Affect ($r = -.581^{**}$) among the study sample. Furthermore, Self-compassion was found to be significantly negatively correlated with Appearance anxiety ($r = -.657^{**}$) and Negative Affect ($r = -.722^{**}$) positively correlated with Positive Affect ($r = .632^{**}$) among the study sample.



Regression Analysis

Table 2

Regression Coefficients of Perfectionism and Self-compassion on Appearance Anxiety (n=220)

Variables	B	SE	T	p	95% CI
Constant	17.77	5.04	3.53	.001	[7.83, 27.69]
Perfectionism	.16	.02	6.36	.000	[.11, .21]
Self-Compassion	-.19	.05	-3.91	.000	[-.29, -.09]

Note. B = Beta, SE= Standard Error, p= Significance level, CI = Confidence Interval

The multiple linear regression results also revealed that the predictors explained 50% variances in appearance anxiety. It can also be seen that perfectionism positively predicted appearance anxiety ($\beta = .16, p < .000$) whereas self-compassion negatively predicted appearance anxiety ($\beta = -.19, p < .000$) among adolescents.

Table 2.1

Regression Coefficients of Perfectionism and Self-compassion on Positive and Negative Affect (n=220)

Variables	B	SE	T	p	95% CI
Positive Affect					
Constant	24.43	5.072	4.82	.000	[14.43, 34.42]
Perfectionism	-.07	.03	-2.80	.006	[-.12, -.02]
Self-Compassion	.28	.05	5.55	.000	[.18, .38]
Negative Affect					
Constant	22.77	4.83	5.75	.000	[18.26, 37.29]
Perfectionism	.14	.02	5.73	.000	[.89, .18]
Self-Compassion	-.29	.05	-5.99	.000	[-.38, -.19]

Note. B = Beta, SE= Standard Error, p= Significance level, CI = Confidence Interval

The R^2 value of .6 in negative affect illustrated that the predictors explained 60% variances in the NA. Perfectionism positively predicted negative affect ($\beta = .14, p < .000$) whereas self-compassion negatively predicted negative affect ($\beta = -.29, p < .000$) among adolescents.

The R^2 value of .4 in positive affect illustrated that the predictors explained 40% variances in the outcome variable with $F(2, 217) = 78.51, p < .000$. The findings demonstrated that perfectionism negatively predicted positive affect ($\beta = -.07, p < .000$) whereas self-compassion positively predicted positive affect ($\beta = .29, p < .000$) among adolescents

Discussion

A significant negative relationship between adolescents' perceptions of perfectionism and positive emotions was found. Participants who described themselves as being more perfectionist had lower



levels of positive affect, such as feelings of pride, contentment, and accomplishment. These results imply greater the feelings of perfectionism, lower will be the positive emotions such as joy and happiness.

My study's findings also showed a significant positive relationship between adolescent's perceptions of perfectionism and unfavorable feelings i.e negative affect ($r=.781^{**}$, $p<.01$). Higher scores on measures of negative emotions, such as worry, self-criticism, and feelings of inadequacy, were seen in those who claimed to be more perfectionists. This finding is consistent with the perfectionism literature already in existence, which contends that perfectionism can increase the unpleasant emotional experiences that adolescents have.

It was discovered that higher degrees of perfectionism were linked to higher levels of concern about one's looks ($r=.698^{**}$, $p<.01$) proving the second objective right. This demonstrates that teenagers who have perfectionistic tendencies—basically, who set unrealistically high standards for themselves and practice severe self-evaluation—are more likely to report feeling anxious about their appearance.

There was also significant positive relationship between self-compassion and positive affect and significant negative relationship between self-compassion and negative affect. The analysis of the data gathered gave evidence to support the hypothesis that self-compassion and appearance anxiety in adolescents had a significant negative relationship. The correlation study showed a statistically significant negative correlation between the two variables. This research suggests that adolescent appearance anxiety reduces as self-compassion levels rise.

The study's findings could contribute to a better understanding of how perfectionism and self-compassion can affect individuals' emotional well-being and appearance anxiety, which is important for personal growth and development.

Since the study demonstrated a significant impact of perfectionism and self-compassion on affects and appearance anxiety in adults, it will have practical implications for the development of new interventions and the improvement of existing therapies for these concerns.

Limitations and future Recommendations

One shortcoming of the current study is that since it is purely quantitative, it does not delve into the reasonings of the proven relationships between the variables. It does not answer the hows and whys.

Controlling for every possible confounding factor that could affect how perfectionism, self-compassion, appearance anxiety, and emotions interact can be difficult. Relationships could be



impacted by elements like personality traits, past events, or other psychological factors. More thorough measurements or experimental layouts might be used in future studies to take these confounding factors into consideration.

Since this study was conducted among adolescents in Pakistan, it is crucial to take into account if the results can be applied to different demographics and cultural settings. In order to confirm that the results are generalizable, replication studies using various samples are required.

Conclusion

Perfectionism and self-compassion both have their own positive and negative relationship with appearance anxiety and affect. The study's conclusions point to perfectionism as a possible risk factor for social anxiety related to appearance and negative emotions whereas self-compassion counters it. Knowing how these conceptions are related can aid in identifying those who may be more prone to developing heightened social anxiety due to their perfectionistic tendencies. This information can help in the early detection and prevention of social anxiety in populations at risk.



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