Perfectionism and Well-being among Academic Achievers

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Abstract - The relationship of perfectionism and well-being among academic achievers was investigated. In this total of 254 students' achievers participated in the study from different colleges in Lyceum of the Philippines- Batangas . The instruments used are The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) and the Domains of well-being. The objective of the study is to test the hypothesis if there is a relationship between perfectionism and well-being among academic achievers. ANOVA correlated two- tailed computation was used in analyzing the data. Sample mean and standard deviation of scores were calculated. The study of perfectionism is correlated with well- being and the satisfaction level.

Keyword: perfectionism, well – being, academic achiever, satisfaction

I. INTRODUCTION

Perfectionism refers to a set of self-defeating thoughts and behavior. These are concerned with reaching excessively high and unrealistic goals, even in areas in which high performance does not matter. Perfectionists often engage in overly critical self-evaluations. Failure experiences are often overgeneralized, and they will often pay particular attention to their failures at the expense of their successes. Perfectionists often experience all-or-none thinking, where they believe they are a failure if not all of their goals are completed without any mistakes - they have inflexible notions of what constitutes success and failure. They often experience a fear of making mistakes, and measure their self-worth in terms of productivity and accomplishment.

Failure to achieve their goals results in a lack of personal worth. The fear of failure, of not being perfect and of not being able to live up to the expectations of themselves and others can cause overwhelming feelings that lead to procrastination as an avoidance tactic - this allows the individual to avoid a less than perfect performance (Peters, 2005). Perfectionists also fear disapproval by others, and believe that if they let others see their flaws they will not be accepted. They commonly believe that others achieve success with minimal effort or stress, while they feel they have to work hard without obtaining success (Frost & Hall, 2005).

According to (Sheldon & Krieger, 2007) the recent longitudinal study used a *model* of thriving based on Self-Determination Theory to explore possible factors in the learning environment that influenced subjective well-being and academic achievement. Their analysis supported a model that links subjective well-being to satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of autonomy, competence and relatedness, which are influenced by the degree to which students perceive the learning environment as autonomy supportive.

In additional, according to Pajares (2002), students who were achievers are the one who always *tops* in the class. They all have the competence because they know that they have even more knowledge and they were intellectual deep within. They were the one who always pushed by their teachers and promoted their knowledge to pursue the prescribed tasks. Students who have a high self-esteem will have a very good result. The more you believe in yourself the more you will earn competence. Academic performance affects self-esteem; it molds your ability to work harder enough because academic achievers are knowledgeable about everything the teacher discussed. Academic achievers are tending to enhance their skills especially the cognitive side. There is always an advantage when it comes to those academic achiever students; they easily cope with their subjects and being gifted in their own way.

College students encounter competitive for higher attainment like achieving to be a dean's lister, to be on top of the class and to be recognized as one of the outstanding students in their university. This study will benefit students who achieved because of well – being. It will be the beginning of *their* life to achieve their goal so they will exert more effort for their attainment in life. They are determine to finish what they have started especially the task that has a deadline. For them promptness is a must because it is a part of their perfection. Well – being achiever will be a source of perfectionism.

The researchers wanted to know the relevance between perfectionism and academic achievements. Perfectionism became more interesting because of the

people who are really wanted to make things organized in any aspects meanwhile academic achievements became challenge because of the people who are competitive since even before they achieved their goals. The researchers further analyze that it could have been a relationship between the two variables.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The researchers aimed to 1) determine the level of perfectionism and well-being of academic achievers. 2) determine the respondents perception of well-being 3) correlate perfectionism with well-being. 4) propose an enhancement program based on the results of the study

III. METHOD

Research Design

For this study, the researchers decided to do qualitative and quantitative type of research. Qualitative research is a kind of method which aims to understand aspect of social life which is usually generated not in numbers but instead words are used for the analysis of the data gathered (Brickci & Green, 2007).

On the other hand, quantitative research, based on the summary provided by Psychology Press Ltd. (2004), can generate information from the participants that are expressed in numerical form. Merging these types for this research would require the researchers.

In this study which is entitled "Perfectionism and Well-being among Academic Achievers" the researcher decided to do qualitative and quantitative type of research. Qualitative research is a kind of method which aims to understand aspect of social life which is usually generated not in numbers but instead words are used for the analysis of the data gathered (Brickci & Green, 2007). On the other hand, quantitative research based on the summary provided by Psychology Press Ltd. (2004) can generate information from the participants that are expressed in numerical form. Merging these types for this research would require the researchers to use triangulation method to obtain the necessary data needed.

Participants

A total of 154 students in Lyceum of the Philippines University- Batangas were involved in this study. These students range from 16 - 21 years age group who are dean's listers or students who experienced as dean's lister. There are 26 percent of the participants were female while or 74 percent cover the male respondents.

Measures

Through the course of this study, the researchers used series of questionnaires and interview questions to measure and know to determine the level of perfectionism and well-being of academic achievers. The first questionnaire is the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) was utilized by the researchers. There are 35 item self- report measures of perfectionism developed by Frost, et al. (1990). As well as providing a total perfectionism score, this measure has six subscales. The concern over mistakes scale (CM) reflects a tendency to interpret mistakes as failures and to believe that one will lose the respect of others following failures. The parental criticism scale (PC) reflects the perception of parents as overly critical. The parental expectation scale (PE) reflects the perception that parents set very high goals. The personal standard scale (PE) reflects the setting of extremely high standard by the individual. The doubt about actions scale (D) reflects the extent the individual doubts his ability to accomplish tasks. The organization scale (Q) reflects the excessive importance placed on orderliness (Frost, 1990). Participants respond to a 5-point scale indicating the extent each statement is true, ranging from "strongly disagree" to strong agree".

The second questionnaire used is the Domain of Well-being Questionnaire. It is comprised of 71 items that assess students' well-being and 72-80 items assess students' satisfaction. And lastly, is the interview questions drawn out from the previous questionnaire and scale to obtain more needed information for this research.

Procedure

The researchers first administered the instruments to the respondents who met the present criteria. After the distribution and collection of the questionnaires, the researchers assessed the answers to determine who has the highest score in each scale. Upon doing so, the researchers asked or have set appointments to the participants and asked if the participant remembered his/her GPA, the researchers asked for the copy of each Department's academic achiever's GPA in the Registrar's Office. Expressions of gratitude are then made together with request for come back for any re-validation of their answers. After generating results from this interview, the researchers have analysed the data gathered. Then the researchers re-contacted the respondents for the re-confirmation of their answers in the interview. After getting all the necessary data needed for this study, the researchers then proceeded to

the next step of making a psychological research, the interpretation of the results.

Data Analysis

After all the data has been gathered, the acquired information were analyzed and computed in ways that will answer the said objectives of the study. Textual presentation and tabular presentation of data were both employed in this study. Textual presentation was used to present statements with numeral or numbers to describe data. Furthermore, this was used to focus attention on some important data and to supplement tabular presentation. Tabular presentations of data were used in terms of statistical table or simple table to systematically arrange essential data on the study.

RESULTS

Table 1. Level of Perfectionism and Well – Being among Academic Achievers

Variable	WM	SD	Interpretation
Perfectionism	105.92	13.56	Average
Well – Being	238.44	39.88	Average

Table 1 explains the level of perfectionism among academic achiever. It shows that perfectionism, with a mean of 105.9, and a standard deviation of 13.56 is on average level. These positive aspects of perfectionism can be associated with higher academic achievement. This was in agreement with the proposed hypothesis.

Although it was not significantly found here, negative aspects of perfectionism are thought to impede academic achievement. Perfectionist students are often impatient with the trial-and-error style of learning that is necessary in the learning process. They are often reluctant to try a learning task that may be difficult due to their fear of failing, they may fail to complete work to avoid the risk of low marks, or they may have problems making realistic decisions about the length of time spent on academic studies (Adderholt - Elliot, 2005 in Arthur & Hayward,2007). Perfectionistic students may not fulfill their potential as they waste a lot of energy on focusing on stress and disappointment over lower achievement, rather than focusing their attention on what they need to do to achieve academically. This supports the idea that perfectionists use avoidance behavior to cope with their fear of failure. This procrastinating behavior may provide relief from dealing with the academic workload in the short term, but in the long run.

As shown in the table, the well – being as indicated by the a mean score of 238.44, and a standard deviation of 39.88, academic achievers is on average level.

Table 2. Correlation of Perfectionism and Well - Being

Variables	Mean	SD	W	P
Well – Being (w)	238.44	39.88		
Perfectionism (P)	105.922	13.56		.177**

**Correlation is significant in 0.01 level (2 – tailed); * Correlation is significant in 0.05 level (2 – tailed)

As shown in Table 2, well –being [Mean=238.44, SD=39.88] is strongly correlated to satisfaction [Mean=31.47, SD=5.41] in 0.01 level (2-tailed). As such, well –being, based on the table, is also strongly correlated to perfectionism [Mean=105.92, SD=13.56] on the same alpha level.

Table summarizes the descriptive statistics for the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale. The mean for concern over mistakes was 21.41, with a standard deviation of 7.3, a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 38. The mean was (19.7 and 22.8). The standard deviation was (7.1 and 7.4). The distribution was slightly positively skewed.

Table 3 Subscale of Perfectionism

	Measure	Mean	SD	Min	Max
a.	Concern over mistakes	21.41	7.3	9	38
b.	Personal Standards	22.63	5.72	9	38
c.	Parental Expectations	13.03	4.87	5	25
d.	Parental Criticisms	8.03	3.64	4	20
e.	Doubts about Actions	10.53	3.01	4	18
f.	Organization	21.51	4.89	8	30
g.	Positive Perfectionism	44.13	8.7	17	61
h.	Negative Perfectionism	53	14.75	25	100
i.	Total Perfectionism	81.96	20.53	40	156

The mean for personal standards was 22.63, with a standard deviation of 5.72, a minimum of 9 and a maximum of 35. The mean was slightly lower, compared with 35 (25.9 and 23.54). The standard deviation was (5.3 and 5.48). The distribution was slightly negatively skewed.

The mean for parental expectations was 13.03, with a standard deviation of 4.87, a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 25.

The mean for parental criticisms was 8.03, with a standard deviation of 3.64, a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 20. The mean was in-between the means

(6.8 and 10.08). The standard deviation was (3.2 and 4.43). The distribution was strongly positively skewed.

The mean for doubts about actions was 10.53, with a standard deviation of 3.01, a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 18. The mean was (9.4 and 10). The standard deviation was (3.0 and 3.27). The distribution was approximately normal.

The mean for organization was 21.51, with a standard deviation of 4.89, a minimum of 8 and a maximum of 30. The mean was slightly lower (23.2 and 22.79). The standard deviation was (5.6 and 5.53). The distribution was slightly negatively skewed. The mean

for positive perfectionism was 44.13, with a standard deviation of 8.7, 36 minimum of 17 and a maximum of 61. The distribution was slightly negatively skewed.

Table 4 summarizes the domains and categories of the effects of Well – being discussion conducted to the respondents. From the data collected, it shows that the first two categories under the domain of satisfaction of an individual's values, goals and needs through the actualization of their abilities or lifestyle to have a general frequency and the remaining domains have a variant frequency.

Table 4 Perceptions on Well – Being among Academic Achievers

Domain	Category	Frequency
Well – Being as Over – all status of being healthy	• Over all status being stable physically mentally emotionally and also the act of being healthy • the state of being healthy, secure and happiness in life	Typical (8) Variant (4)
Coping as a sign of Well – Being	• nakakacope sa daily activities as long as happy ka sa ginagawa mo at nagiging productive ka na lahat ng bagay	Variant (4)
satisfaction of psychological needs as way of obtaining good welfare	• tama tulog, personal hygiene, yun yung para wala pong sakit yung correct medicine, yung tama yung pag inom ng medicine yung exercise din tama	Variant (3)
Maintaining Well – Being through good interpersonal relationship	• maintain good relationship among your peer and classmates there will always have a good welfare • having enough social interaction	Typical (6) Variant (4)
Maintaining Well – Being through Priority management	• Priority management some say it time management but in think priorities are more important.	Variant (5)
Maintaining Well – Being through external motivation by desire	• title holder sa posisyon ko as student journalist mhirap ang allocation ng time sa mga acads, social life, at press work	Variant (2)
Happiness as Definition of Personal Well - Being	• wala sense kung malungkot ka lng • lagi kang nakasmile kasi sbi nga daw kagaya nung sa experiment ko din dati 45 muscles yung gumagana pag nagsmile ka tsaka ang ganda gandang tingnan at walang iniisip • life is too short, kailangan kong maging happy kasi sobrang saya ng mga tao sa paligid	Variant (8)
factors that may contribute to your well – being	• First of all yung family ko, sunod yung friends ko tapos yung huli si Lord. • friends, at pagmasaya ang family ko	Variant (8)

Note: We identified a category as general when it included almost all cases (n=10-12), a category was called typical when it applied to half or more than half of the cases (n=6-9), a category was called variant when it applied to a few cases (n=2-5). Categories identified by only one participant (rare) were dropped.

Based on the gathered data, the researchers were able to come up with an intervention program or strategy that will address the results of this study which you can see on Table 5.

Table 5 The Development of Perfectionism and Well-being among academic achievers.

Specific Objectives	Strategies	Target Persons	Responsible persons	Incentives
Enhancement of Well – Being				
1. To fully understand the students who appear to have high level of perfectionism and well-being	Counselling	Students aging from 16-20 years old	Guidance Counsellors	
2. How to cope up with the expectations from parents	Seminars and Trainings	Students	Speakers, Guidance Counsellors	Certificate of Participation

DISCUSSION

The results of the study found out that Lyceum of the Philippines University – Batangas Academic Achievers tend to have an average level of perfectionism. However, the results showed that academic achievers are in low level when it comes to well - being which is in contrast to the study conducted (Blankstein & Dunkley, 2002). In his study, it was stated that risk taking vulnerability is greatest around puberty. The results also contradicts what he had stated in his paper that the parts of the brain responsible for controlling. Since the level of exploratory and perfectionism is low among the participants, researcher can assume that the part of the brain responsible for controlling urges is already mature even if they still have not reached the age specified.

Further, results showing that age only affects the level of perfectionism and well – being was supported by the research conducted by (Marano, 2005) perfectionism starts in childhood when children are valued and loved because of what they accomplish, not who they are; this is conditional love. These children soon decide that being 'perfect' is the only way out of a dilemma; it gets them the love they need and protects them from the harsh criticism and failure in people's eyes. It also supports his assumption that compared to adults, this is the period or stage where individuals tend to act carelessly and often times associated to manifestations of immaturity.

In accordance to the study conducted by (Alden, Ryder & Millies, 2002), it was mentioned that females upon reaching childhood stage experience more difficulty in the changes they underwent either in physical, mental or emotional aspects, and these feelings are heightened by the gender stereotypes made by the society. It can be said that this stereotyping affects the way an academic achievers perceives their capabilities, thus, leading them to have different perspective on how vulnerable they are as a person. These were manifested in the results were it is said that the only factor affected by sex is invulnerability. These results, however, are in contrast to the study conducted by (Hewitt & Flett, 1990), which states that perfectionism is affected by the increase in the level of well –being in academic achievers that is not even manifested by the respondents of the study.

When the computed results were correlated, it appeared that there are several factors that have strong correlations. Mainly, the ones who have a strong correlation to each other academic achievers, perfectionism and well - being. This may be of support to the study conducted by (Khalil, 2005), in which they described academic achievers as having a lot of insecurities in them and would always try to do activities that may even struggle to keep up the concept of "I" whilst thinking that this would do them no harm was somehow supported by these results.

Although the results obtained in this study are correlational in nature, they do provide evidence that positive and negative perfectionism have differential associations with well-being. Generally, positive perfectionism was found to be associated with satisfaction. These results may provide an explanation as to why tertiary students or academic achievers, who have the potential to succeed academically, may not do so, even with the best intentions. Knowing this, teachers and the students themselves may be able to understand why they may not be achieving the grades they are capable of, and may be able to make changes in their lives to alter this.

This study needs to be replicated to investigate if there is indeed a relationship between positive and negative perfectionism and academic achievement (GPA). A larger sample size needs to be used, as this

study had a fairly low sample size, and may have found more significant and stronger results had there been a larger sample size. The relationship between positive and negative perfectionism and well – being also needs to be investigated further. In particular, further analysis should be carried out using a more up to date measure of well – being.

Although the results were correlational, they indicated that there was a relationship between the personal standards perfectionism subscale and GPA. A higher level of personal standards was associated with a higher Grade Point Average. Although there were no significant correlations between overall positive and negative perfectionism, and GPA, this result indicates a relationship between a subscale that is thought of as positive (personal standards). This provides some evidence that positive aspects of perfectionism can be associated with higher academic achievement. This was in agreement with the proposed hypothesis. Blatt (2005) has suggested that personal standards are related to GPA because having high personal standards is also associated with having good work habits and high striving, which contribute to higher academic achievement (in Accordino et al, 2007). Individuals with higher personal standards are thought to have better work habits compared with those who possess high levels of negative perfectionism. They generally put a lot of time and effort into what they do, rather than procrastinating and putting things off. If they achieve lower than what they expected of themselves, they have the ability to continue on, rather than focusing on the "failure". This enables them to succeed in the things they put their minds to.

Although it was not significantly found here, negative aspects of perfectionism are thought to impede academic achievement. Perfectionist students are often impatient with the trial-and-error style of learning that is necessary in the learning process. They are often reluctant to try a learning task that may be difficult due to their fear of failing, they may fail to complete work to avoid the risk of low marks, or they may have problems making realistic decisions about the length of time spent on academic studies (Adderholt - Elliot, 2005 in Arthur & Hayward, 2007). Perfectionistic students may not fulfill their potential as they waste a lot of energy on focusing on stress and disappointment over lower achievement, rather than focusing their attention on what they need to do to achieve academically. This supports the idea that perfectionists use avoidance behavior to cope with their fear of failure. This procrastinating behavior may provide relief from dealing with the academic workload in the short term, but in the long run it increases the performance pressure for the student (Arthur & Hayward, 2007).

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