

Perfectionism, Self-Esteem and DSM-IV-Based Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders in Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between perfectionism and self-esteem and the symptoms of anxiety disorders in adolescents.

Study design: Cross-sectional research design was used in this study

Place and duration of the study: The study was conducted from private high secondary schools and colleges in Karachi, Pakistan, from February 2019 to March 2020.

Subject and Method: 500 students made up the entire sample for the current study. Additionally, the sample includes both male (N=212) and female (N=288) students. The participants' ages ranged from 12 to 18 years old. The mean age of the sample as a whole was 15.44 (SD=1.82), while the mean ages of male and female students were respectively 15.12 (SD=1.89) and 15.68 (SD=1.88). Furthermore, a sample of 254 kids in grades 8 through 10 and 246 college students in grades 11 and 12 was chosen from various schools and colleges.

Results: Pearson product moment correlation and linear regression were used to examine the data using statistical software for social sciences (SPSS- Vol. 16.0). The findings demonstrated that perfectionism and anxiety have a strong positive relationship (P.001). Furthermore, a summary of linear regression demonstrates that perfectionism in adolescents predicts the amount of anxiety in adolescents. Perfectionism accounts for around 5.3 percent of the variation in anxiety symptoms in adolescents. Self-esteem and anxiety, on the other hand, have a substantial negative connection (p.001) among adolescents. Low self-esteem in teenagers significantly predicts the level of anxiety in adolescents, according to the results of linear regression. Self-esteem accounts for around 15% of the variation in anxiety symptoms in adolescents. The findings were evaluated in light of prior studies, and new directions for future research were suggested.

Practical Implication: The study "Perfectionism, Self-esteem, and DSM-IV-Based Symptoms of Anxiety Disorders in Adolescents" has important implications for those working with anxious adolescents in the Pakistani community. The results suggest that reducing perfectionism and improving self-esteem could help alleviate anxiety symptoms in Pakistani adolescents, and mental health practitioners can use this information to develop culturally sensitive interventions that take into account the unique cultural and social context of Pakistan. Additionally, early detection and intervention of anxiety symptoms is crucial, and raising awareness among parents, teachers, and healthcare professionals in Pakistan could be beneficial. The study's findings could inform the development of effective, culturally sensitive mental health programs and interventions for Pakistani adolescents in the educational system. Overall, this study provides valuable information to assist parents and professionals in supporting adolescents coping with anxiety challenges.

Conclusion: The study provides valuable information for parents and professionals to support adolescents coping with anxiety challenges, but it also has some limitations, and important recommendations were made.

Keywords Self-esteem, Perfectionism, Anxiety disorder, Adolescents, DSM-IV-TR,

INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is a stage in everyone's life when they go through physical, social, and psychological changes¹. Anxiety symptoms typically emerge in adolescence as a result of these changes that is why anxiety disorders are one of the most common problems in children and adolescents². A high incidence rate of anxiety disorders in adolescence has also been reported in various research³. Anxiety disorders, in turn, have a major impact on teenage everyday functioning⁴.

Anxiety disorders, like other psychiatric illnesses, have a wide range of negative effects on teenagers' life, including impairment and disability⁵. Anxiety disorders have a significant impact on children and adolescents' social, occupational, academic, and interpersonal relationships, and if left untreated, can lead to a high level of difficulties in early adulthood⁶.

Biological, social, and numerous other environmental stressors are just a few of the many elements that can contribute to the development of, as well as the strengthening of, anxiety symptoms. Furthermore, parental-child relationship patterns, parenting styles, and unpleasant life experiences have huge aftereffect on mental health of child.⁷ Apart from all other factors, perfectionism has negative effects on psychological processes and causes psychological disturbances such as depression, anxiety, and cognitive distortion⁸. Perfectionism has been connected to a number of mental illnesses, including mood disorders and several types of anxiety disorders as well as interpersonal difficulties.⁹ Perfectionism is defined by the American Heritage Dictionary as "a tendency to be dissatisfied with everything that is not perfect or

does not satisfy exceptionally high standards." Perfectionism is a personality trait with numerous dimensions, each with its own set of costs and advantages.

According to research¹⁰, perfectionism can have both beneficial and harmful effects. Adverse perfectionism is known as hysterical perfectionism, and positive perfectionism is known as healthy perfection. It has been determined through empirical studies that their dimensional method distinguishes between two forms of perfectionistic strivings or perfectionistic worries, which are either good or ill. Perfectionistic concerns, or the dimension of perfectionism, are continuously linked to fear of disappointment, stress, melancholy, anxiety, and bodily symptoms, according to the findings of several studies¹¹.

Additionally, perfectionism is connected to both a lack of confidence in one's abilities as a student and personal discontent (satisfaction with self, school, family). The perfectionist trait, on the other hand, is connected to comfort, happiness, and emotional resiliency. Academic accomplishment (as measured by a higher grade point average), peer acceptance, academic confidence, and greater self-esteem and life happiness are all linked to perfectionist pursuits¹¹.

Self-esteem is individual's assessment of one's own worth, which can be good or negative and varies from person to person. It is a completely subjective assessment of one's own worth¹². There are two types of self-esteem, according to Rosenberg, global and specialized self-esteem. Global self-esteem is closely linked to PWB, and it is the desire of humans to defend and increase their sense of self-worth, which if not met can lead to irritation and

emotional disorders. The most common way to understand self-esteem is on a broad scale¹³. Global self-esteem measures an individual's overall self-evaluation, self-acceptance, or self-worth. It represents their attitude toward themselves as a whole¹⁴.

Perfectionistic tendencies are beneficial to some extent if they aid in the achievement of standards and provide motivation for striving to achieve goals; however, if these tendencies exceed the normal range, they increase the risk of developing various psychological problems as well as obstructing goal achievement. A perfectionistic concern disrupts an individual's adaptive and social functioning, including interpersonal relationships, occupation, and other forms of social engagement. The interplay of perfectionism with various psychiatric issues appears to be the primary cause of life disruption. If left untreated, it can lead to maladjustment, depression, and anxiety problems¹⁵. A study conducted among college students to examine the association between social anxiety and perfectionism. Students with a high level of social anxiety have perfectionistic characteristics, according to the studies. In a similar vein¹⁶, found indicates the aspect of perfectionism that is most closely linked to state and trait anxiety components is socially imposed perfectionism.

Since, a very young age, society has placed pressures on individuals and associated expectations with them, which has sometimes exposed them to emotional disturbance. High parental expectations, peer pressure, undue stress, and praise for achievement may expose the young individual to perfectionist tendencies. This may be healthy if limited to strivings, but when a high perfectionist concern begins to associate with these demands of the environment, the child might find himself or herself in constant worry and anxiety. The situation is exacerbated when the child has low self-esteem as a result of negative feedback or other limitations. Caught between demands and a lack of confidence in one's own abilities, the child frequently ends up in a mental health crisis.

Thus, the current study is an attempt to investigate whether the two important factors are associated with anxiety problems, the most common problem in children, and to investigate the relationship of these two factors with various types of anxiety disorders and problems. The study not only highlights the importance of these two factors but also aims to raise awareness of their importance in children and adolescents, who are in a vulnerable transition period.

METHOD

Research Design: Study used survey research design to study the variables

Population: Study included 500 students from government and private middle and high schools in Karachi, Pakistan.

Sample characteristics: Convenient sampling was chosen to collect sample from both male (N=212) and female (N=288) students. The age range of the participants was 12 to 18 years old. The overall sample's mean age was 15.44 (SD= 1.82), while male students' mean age was 15.12 (SD= 1.89) and female students' mean age was 15.68 (SD= 1.88).

Furthermore, a sample of 254 kids in grades 8 through 10 and 246 college students in grades 11 and 12 was chosen from various schools and colleges. All socioeconomic statuses were represented in the sample, including low, middle, and high socioeconomic statuses.

Measures: Personal Information Form: The personal information form was used in order to get information about participants including, gender, age, birth order, family structure, grade, parental education, parental employment, number of siblings, residential area etc.

Frost¹⁷ Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale: It is a Multidimensional Perfectionism scale comprised of 35 items that were developed to assess six factors/dimensions characterizing perfectionism. This self-report questionnaire is divided into six subscales, each with its own set of scores. It is rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being the most untrue and 5 being the truest

(very true). Furthermore, the scale's psychometric features, as shown in the sample utilized in the primary research, are as follows: coefficient alpha reliability is .79, and split half reliability is .64.

Rosenberg¹² Self-Esteem Scale: It is a 10-item questionnaire that assesses one's overall self-esteem. Items are rated on 4-point liker scale where 4=Strongly Agree to 3= Strongly Disagree. Score were range from 0-30, with higher scores suggesting greater self-esteem.

Spence¹⁸ Children's Anxiety Scale: Scale assess the intensity of anxiety symptoms in children in accordance with the DSM-dimensions IVs of anxiety disorder. Generalized anxiety, panic/agoraphobia, social phobia, separation anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, and physical injury phobias are all assessed on the scale. Scale had 44 item, rate on a scale of 4-point frequency scale. Children were asked to assess the frequency with which they encounter each symptom on a never, sometimes, often, and always scale. Scale had excellent alpha reliability that is .83, and split half reliability is .63.

Ethical Consideration: The study procedure followed all of the recommendations of the Board of Advanced Studies and Research (BASR) of the University of Karachi, Pakistan. Permission was also obtained through proper channels from the authorities of the respective schools and colleges in various regions of Karachi.

RESULTS

This study aims to investigate the relationship between adolescent perfectionism, low self-esteem, and anxiety issues. The statistical software for social sciences (SPSS, Vol. 16.0) was used to analyze the data using Pearson product moment correlation and linear regression, with a significance threshold of .01 for all analyses.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Mean and Standard Deviation of all Ages of participants

Sample	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total	500	12.00	18.00	15.445	1.8246
Male	212	12.00	18.00	15.11	1.6861
Female	288	12.00	18.00	15.68	1.8826

Table 1 shows that the mean age of the entire sample is 15.4 years and the standard deviation is 1.82

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of demographic characteristics of participants

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender	Male	212	42.4	42.4
	Female	288	57.6	100.0
Education	7 th – 10 th Class	254	49.2	49.2
	11 th & 12 th Class	246	50.8	100.0
Religion	Muslims	493	98.6	98.6
	Non-Muslims	7	1.4	100.0
Birth Order	First	159	31.8	31.8
	Middle	188	37.6	69.4
	Last	153	30.6	100.0
Family Str.	Joint	88	17.6	17.6
	Nuclear	412	82.4	100.0

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of main Variables (N=500)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Perfectionism	94.59	18.338
Organization (ORG)	25.22	3.725
Concern Over Mistake (CM)	26.99	5.945
Personal Standards (PS)	25.23	11.862
Parental Expectations (PE)	20.67	8.221
Parental Criticism (PC)	9.26	3.131
Doubt about action (DA)	12.08	3.101
Anxiety	39.18	15.729
Social Anxiety (SA)	5.92	3.242
Specific Phobia (SP)	7.29	3.778
Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)	8.21	3.480
Panic Attacks (PA)	4.95	4.392
Fear of Physical Harm (PH)	5.03	3.337
Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)	7.78	3.364
Self esteem	19.32	3.830

Table 4: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis with perfectionism as Predictor of anxiety symptoms among Adolescents

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Durban Watson	F	Sig.
.231	.053	.052	1.971	28.126	.000

Note: The result findings indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between perfectionism and anxiety ($P < .001$). Moreover, summary of linear regression shows that perfectionism in adolescents predicted the level of adolescents' anxiousness. Approximately 5.3 % of variance in anxiety symptoms in adolescent is accounted for by their perfectionism.

Table 5: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis with self-esteem as Predictor of anxiety symptoms among Adolescents

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Durban Watson	Df	F	Sig.
-.388	.150	.149	1.977	1,498	88.072	.000

Note: There is significantly negative correlation between self-esteem and anxiety ($p < .001$) among adolescents. Summary of linear regression shows that low self-esteem in adolescents predicted the level of adolescents' anxiousness. Approximately 15 % of variance in anxiety symptoms in adolescent is accounted for by their self-esteem.

Table 8: Correlation among domains of perfectionism with social anxiety, specific phobia, obsessive compulsive symptoms, panic attack, fear of physical harm and generalized anxiety disorders symptoms

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1.Org	1											
2.CM	.119**	1										
3.PS	.116**	.074	1									
4.PE	.060	.094*	.040	1								
5.PC	-.073	.247**	.068	.154**	1							
6.DA	.046	.407**	.019	.037	.275**	1						
7.So.Anx	.032	.195**	-.073	-.001	.031	.270**	1					
8.Sp.Phb	-.015	.304**	-.014	-.040	.079	.419	.444*	1				
9.OCD	.136*	.228**	.074	.037	.060	.266**	.299**	.381**	1			
10.P.Attack	.037	.326**	.003	.075	.168**	.409**	.474**	.496**	.411**	1		
11.Phy.H	-.036	.214**	-.028	-.029	.064	.259**	.468**	.427**	.267**	.457**	1	
12.GAD	-.006	.296**	.029	.082	.161**	.351**	.431**	.525**	.336*	.583**	.461**	1

Note: Org: Organization, CM: Concern over mistakes, PS: Personal standards, PE: Parental expectation, PC: Parental criticism, DA: Doubt about action, So.Anx: Social anxiety Sp.Phb: Specific phobia, OCD: Obsessive compulsive disorder, P. Attack: Panic attack, Phy. H: Fear of physical harm, GAD: Generalized anxiety disorder; ** = 0.01; * = 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to see if there was a link among perfectionism and self-esteem and anxiety symptoms in adolescents. Results of the study found positive association between perfectionism and symptoms of anxiety disorders among adolescents, which indicate that the higher perfectionistic tendencies among adolescents found associated with the higher anxiety symptoms in adolescents. Further it was found that scores on perfectionism explained 5.3 % variation in the dependent variable under study. These findings support the concept and are supported by a few earlier research investigations that have found that perfectionism causes a variety of anxiety illnesses, including social anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders¹⁹.

Furthermore, the domain analysis of perfectionism shows that a few domains of perfectionism, such as worry about making a mistake and doubt about taking action, are significantly linked to the symptoms of various anxiety disorders, including social anxiety, specific anxiety, OCD, panic attack with or without agoraphobia, and GAD. "Perfectionistic strivings" and "perfectionistic concerns" are two separate characteristics of perfectionism. The two domains of "worry over error (CM)" and "doubt about action (DA)" are highly associated to perfectionistic concerns rather than perfectionistic efforts, confirming the link between anxiety and perfectionistic concerns. These results are also in line with studies that demonstrate the relationship between higher degrees of fear of failure, stress, melancholy, anxiety, and physical symptoms with perfectionistic concerns as opposed to perfectionistic strivings²⁰.

The quest of perfection, on the other hand, is a powerful indicator of psychological adjustment and subjective well-being.

Table 6: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis of perfectionism as Predictor of various anxiety disorders types among Adolescents

Dependent Variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Df	F	Sig
Social Anxiety	.067	.004	.002	1,498	2.216	.137
Specific Phobia	.156	.024	.022	1,498	12.39	.001
OCD symptoms	.193	.037	.035	1,498	19.340	.001
Panic Symptoms	.239	.057	.055	1,498	30.063	.001
Physical Harm	.239	.009	.007	1,498	04.331	.038
GAD Symptoms	.238	.057	.055	1,498	29.977	.001

Table 7: Summary of Linear Regression Analysis of self-esteem as Predictor of various types of anxiety disorders among Adolescents

Dependent Variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Df	F	Sig
Social Anxiety	.230	.053	.051	1,498	27.804	.000
Specific Phobia	.373	.139	.138	1,498	80.706	.000
OCD symptoms	.225	.051	.049	1,498	26.617	.000
Panic Symptoms	.283	.080	.079	1,498	43.511	.000
Physical Harm	.307	.094	.092	1,498	51.827	.000
GAD Symptoms	.264	.070	.068	1,498	37.281	.000

The amount of study hours per week, academic success (as measured by a higher grade point average), greater self-esteem, and personal happiness are all positively correlated with perfectionism in adolescents²¹. Additionally, it is linked to greater degrees of work orientation (a propensity for challenging activities) and enthusiasm for education, mastery, and test preparation²².

Perfectionism is a significant factor in psychological disturbances at a maladaptive level, as evidenced by various research studies examining the relationship of perfectionism with various types of anxiety disorders symptoms²³, who conducted a more comprehensive study to compare perfectionism levels across several anxiety disorder groups, including panic disorder with agoraphobia (PDA), obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and panic disorder with ago SAD was associated with greater concern about mistakes (CM), uncertainty about action (DA), parental criticism (PC), and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) than the other groups, according to their findings, although OCD patients had the highest scores on DA. Furthermore, substantial CM and DA increases are linked to panic disorder with Agoraphobia. A number of studies have linked various aspects of perfectionism to specific types of anxiety symptoms, such as socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) being linked to anxiety symptoms in social settings and concern over mistake (CM) being linked to obsessive compulsive symptoms²⁴.

Perfectionism is one of the risk factors for social anxiety, since it plays a role in both the onset and the worsening of the condition. According to the findings, people with social anxiety may have perfectionism, which is defined as having unreasonably high expectations for social performance, and any variation from these norms is misunderstood as failure²⁵. Similar findings come from study, which found that social anxiety is characterized by overly high standards. However, certain findings regarding the relationship between overly high standards and social anxiety are debatable^{26,34}. Furthermore, evidence was discovered that people with social anxiety score highly on perfectionism subscales of doubt about action and concern about mistakes, which represent self-critical thinking and concern about decisions²⁷.

The cognitive model of social anxiety disorder states that perfectionism is a key component and a major risk factor for the emergence of obsessive-compulsive disorder²⁸. There have been observed differences between and/or among patient groups and nonclinical control groups for SAD, OCD²⁹, and panic disorder with or without agoraphobia³⁰. Panic disorder with agoraphobia scored high on the CM, PC, and PS perfectionism subscales. Patients with depression and social anxiety disorder (SAD) scored considerably higher on the perfectionism measure than the control group³¹. Patients with OCD and PDA also show greater perfectionism scores on a few subscales³². According to the findings, socially prescribed perfectionism is also connected to social stress, fury suppression, and outwardly directed anger, whereas both self-oriented and socially dictated perfectionism are linked to sadness and anxiety³³. Additionally, it shows how self-oriented perfectionism and social stress interact to predict anxiety, while self-oriented perfectionism, accomplishment, and both accomplishment and social stress interact to predict melancholy. The current study evidence would benefit from additional investigation on this dimension in the Pakistani community.

Secondly it was hypothesized that there would be a correlation between self-esteem and the severity of the symptoms of general anxiety and different types of anxiety disorders. Statistical analysis of the data shows that there is negative correlation between self-esteem and anxiety, which indicates that the findings of current study are consistent with hypothesis reflecting that if self-esteem of the individual is low then anxiety level would be high. Further self-esteem found to explain 15 % variation in the overall anxiety level of adolescents under study.

Previous studies, for example, have found that self-esteem plays an important influence in an individual's life. Individuals with high self-esteem are thought to be mentally healthy, have a good outlook on themselves, and have confidence in their abilities to deal effectively with difficult situations. Furthermore, people with high self-esteem are more open to negative feedback and interact in a healthy way in social situations because they have a positive cognitive approach to themselves and others³³, whereas people with low self-esteem suffer from a variety of psychological problems³⁴.

Furthermore, proper self-esteem is linked to healthy coping processes and behaviors, which allow people to deal with stressful and demanding situations in effective and constructive ways, as seen by their actions. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, has been linked to physical as well as mental health problems³⁵. There are numerous studies that link poor self-evaluation to a variety of mental health problems in the majority of people as a result of a mistaken assessment of their competences and talents³⁶. Similarly, there are a few studies that support poor self-esteem as a contributing and etiological component in a variety of psychological illnesses³⁷.

Similarly, according to studies, people who believe they are living according to cultural norms have high self-esteem, which serves as a shield against concerns, particularly death fears. Self-esteem is considered as a buffer against anxiety in this approach because a person's high self-esteem reduces the distress caused by the reality of human death³⁸.

Present study's findings will be useful in developing interventions for adolescents in the educational system. A number of students in today's educational system go unnoticed because of academic difficulties caused by either emotional problems associated with low self-esteem or perfectionistic concerns. It will also assist parents in raising awareness in order to assist their children with such challenges. The research is an attempt to draw attention to the issue in order to attract the attention of researchers to conduct further research on these issues, school psychologists to identify such issues, teachers and other educational professionals, or people working in the field of adolescent mental health.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study concluded that perfectionism and low self-esteem have a substantial relationship with teenage anxiety levels. However, the study's weaknesses were identified, and crucial recommendations were made.

Disclaimer: None

Conflict of interest : none to declare

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