

Development and Validation of Perfectionism Scale for Indian Adults

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Abstract There are varieties of definitions of perfectionism owing to diverse conceptualizations as understood by different researchers based on culture. Perfectionism can be defined as striving for or the tendency to maintain or to reach unreasonably high standards. Perfection is an emerging construct in India. Confining to the various definitions of perfectionism, the present study endeavours to evolve a perfectionism scale for youth in the Indian context since India has a culture very different from the countries where existing scales were developed. Based on Hewitt & Flett's perfectionism model and expert reviews, various attributes of perfectionism scale were initiated with a pool of 129 items. These items were subjected to subject matter experts' opinion and reduced to 93. The scale was administered on a sample of 531 participants and the item analysis was carried out and the items having a value of 0.40 and above were retained for factor analysis. After initial factor analyses the scale was again administered on a sample of 281 participants. The principal component analyses were employed and 41 items were retained covering three factors i.e. Self Oriented Perfectionism, Socially Prescribed Perfectionism and Others Oriented Perfectionism. The measure demonstrated high internal consistency; the reliability was 0.896 and validity was 0.486.

Keywords Factor Analysis, Perfectionism, Youth

1. Introduction

Perfectionism is a multidimensional construct with both positive and negative dimensions, which can be either adaptive or maladaptive. Perfectionism has been described as the desire to achieve ambitious- and perhaps faultless standards [1]. Perfectionism can also be defined as striving for flawlessness [2] or the tendency to maintain or to reach unreasonably high standards [3].

Three dimensions of perfectionism were identified, i.e. self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism and socially-prescribed perfectionism [4]. Individuals with high self-oriented perfectionism have unrealistic standards for themselves, they strive hard for these standards, are overly critical of themselves, tend to overly focus on their flaws, and try to avoid failure. In other-oriented perfectionism, individual has unrealistic standards and expectations about the abilities of others, and is often overly evaluative of others' performance. In socially-prescribed perfectionism, individual believes that others have perfectionist expectations and motives about them, and they must attain these standards [5, 6, 4, 7-11].

Many researchers found that maladaptive forms of perfectionism were consistently linked with negative outcome variables such as higher levels of perceived stress [12] (Chang, Watkins, & Banks, 2004), psychological distress [13-15]. However, findings related to adaptive forms of perfectionism have not been as consistent. In a review, on the basis of large no. of literature of review it was found that there is a link between adaptive perfectionism and a variety of positive outcome variables, such as positive affect and life satisfaction [16, 12], conscientiousness [18-20], active coping [21], and higher academic achievement [22, 19]. Despite the consistency of these findings, less is known about the role of broader contextual features within which youth perfectionism is situated. Cultural-religious factors such as family expectations, social pressures and personal obligations might directly impact youth functioning (and therefore potentially reduce the impact attributed to perfectionism), or they might alter the relationship between perfectionism and youth functioning.

Concept of Perfectionism

Perfectionism has been delineated in many and various ways according to a number of scholars. However, it seems that there is no generally accepted definition of perfectionism that takes into account the nature of the discipline, diversity of culture, diversity of status, and diversity of social setup, among others. Historically, perfectionism has been conceptualized as a one-dimensional

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construct [23], and there has been a particular focus on the negative correlates of perfectionism. Perfectionism has been associated with psychopathology, with psycho-dynamic theory stressing that perfectionism was a sign of neurotic and disordered personality. Even though studies have distinguished between two forms of perfectionism (normal and neurotic), at the end of 1970's, the dominant view of the 1980's was that perfectionism was always neurotic, dysfunctional and indicative of psychopathology [24]. Empirical findings supported this view. This changed at the beginning of the 1990's, when two research groups independently demonstrated that perfectionism is multidimensional in nature, and provided perfectionism research with two multidimensional scales to capture the construct in all its facets [26, 27]. It proposed that six facets in the experience of perfectionism be differentiated- personal standards, organization, concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, parental expectations and parental criticism- indicating that perfectionists have high standards, value order and organization and try to attach great importance to past and present evaluations by their parents. On the other hand, proposed that three facets of perfectionism be differentiated- self oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism and other oriented perfectionism- indicating that perfectionists may see their high standards as self-imposed or as imposed by others and that they may equally have high expectations of others [26]. In recent years, one significant development in the perfectionism literature has been the demonstration that the perfectionism construct has identifiable interpersonal components [27].

Currently, no single definition of perfectionism has been agreed upon in the literature [2, 28]. Inconsistencies in the conceptualization has always been a cause of concern and resulted in different usage of the same terms.

Rationale of the Study

In Western societies, perfectionism is generally regarded as positive quality yet is linked to many psychological problems. Furthermore, perfectionism is generally regarded as personality orientation which is linked to both maladaptive traits and negative outcomes and less frequently to adaptive traits and positive outcomes. India is a collectivistic society wherein the expectations of and obligations towards significant others, viz. family, friends, etc., play a very important in decision making, career choices and way of life in general.

In literature, societal factors have also been linked to the development of perfectionism [29], especially during adolescence and young adulthood wherein the struggle to separate oneself from parents and define individuality is still on and on almost at its peak. It was also emphasized on the fact that social factors such as interaction with peers and broader cultural values are important contributors to the development and maintenance of perfectionism [30]. In collectivistic cultures Socially Prescribed Perfectionism should be more prominent which emphasizes self in relation to others [2].

The aim of the study was to develop a scale of Perfectionism based on dimensions identified by Hewitt & Flett, for Indian Youth. The goal was to develop a concise measure, with sound psychometric properties including internal reliability, Test- Retest Reliability and validity. Hence, this paper describes the procedure followed for the development of the Perfectionism Scale for Indian youth (18 yrs and above).

2. Method

Participants: 531 students (males = 319; females = 212) from seven cities (from seven states of India) participated in the study. Their mean age was 21.17 years ($SD = 1.63$). 197 of them were attending professional courses like engineering, business administration, etc and 334 of them were regular courses. 77% of the participants followed Hinduism and 9% followed Islam and 8% followed Sikhism. 76% of the participants belonged to urban areas and 24% were from rural background. The convenient sampling method was used to collect data.

Material: The development of scale ensued in three phases: first, a development phase wherein the items were selected; second, a refinement phase, and finally the psychometric evaluation phase. The study was conducted to develop a scale for the Adults on Perfectionism based on Indian sample. It was kept in consideration that students in collectivistic societies view societal pressure differently from the individualistic societies, therefore all the items were created accordingly to represent their thought process and experiences better.

Item Generation: A panel of psychologists was provided with the apriori dimensions based on Hewitt & Flett's model to develop the item pool. This led to the generation of 129 items. These items were primarily screened for their face validity and content validity by a panel of six subject matter experts. **Peer review discussions** were carried out to check for the repetition of items, their intended meaning, linguistic appropriateness, culture freeness etc. Following the thorough peer review discussion, 93 items out of 129 were retained in the preliminary form of the Perfectionism scale. The items were then arranged in a numerical sequence with positive and negative statements placed in alternate to one another to avoid halo and horn effects. Thus out of 93 items 41 items were retained, representing **Self oriented perfectionism** (16 items), **Socially prescribed perfectionism**, (13 items), **Others oriented perfectionism** (12 items).

Some of the items of the finalized scale are given below:

Self Oriented Perfectionism Items

- I must try to surpass my previous performance.
- I must achieve my goal no matter what it takes.

Socially Prescribed Perfectionism Items

- My family gets upset with smallest mistakes I make.
- I try extra hard to achieve excellence to please my parents.

Others Oriented Perfectionism Items

If others around me are not trying hard to be perfect then they are not good enough.

Those who are important to me need not be the best.

Editing was done for vocabulary appropriateness, connotative meaning, reframing of sentences in first person form was done as a final modulation of the scale before it was administered to the participants. The scale was designed in likert form of scale ranging from strongly disagree (SD) to strongly agree (SA) with score of 1 to 5 for the positive statements where as 5 to 1 in case of negative statements.

Procedure: Principals of various colleges were approached to obtain permission to interact with students during classes. The scale was administered on **531** participants in 23 sessions for the ease of admissibility. The purpose and the nature of the study was explained to the participants and due permission was obtained before the administration of the scale. The participants were not given any monetary compensation for participating in this study. The data was scored as per the criteria of positive and negative statements. Thereafter it was entered in the excel sheet and analyzed for the errors and missing values so as to tune it for the utility in a statistical software (SPSS-21).

3. Results and Discussion

Test construction was carried out for development of the Perfectionism scale. The means were analyzed and all items with extreme responses were deleted. Items were also analyzed for their item total correlations and items with low coefficients were deleted. The retained items, Means, Standard Deviation, Correlated item total correlations are displayed in table 1.

The data was subjected to principal component analysis. The details are shown in table 2.

The **table 2** shows the total variance in the data as explained by 29 components extracted which explain **68%** of variance in the variable of Perfectionism. The rotations failed to converged in 25 iterations (Convergence= .628) in the data and was found less appropriate for 29 factors and hence with the focus on consolidation a scree plot was tried out to predict the best possible number of factors which can explain some acceptable level of variance. Following the above procedure the components was fixed to a number of three based on the scree plot shown below in *figure 1* and the component analysis was attempted again. The communalities and the loading for each item on the Perfectionism Scale have also been analyzed before finally attempting for the component analysis.

Table 1. Mean standard deviation and Item total correlations of the retained Items

Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item-total Correlation	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Item-total Correlation
3	3.10	1.182	.505	52	4.06	.876	.403
7	4.25	.912	.277	56	3.66	1.097	.460
10	3.52	1.162	.427	57	2.31	.976	.188
14	2.68	1.278	.192	59	2.19	1.014	.352
17	2.41	1.226	.091	62	3.62	1.016	.443
18	2.51	1.152	.455	64	3.81	1.008	.368
22	3.65	1.112	.413	71	3.89	1.049	.423
23	2.95	1.318	.339	73	3.48	1.242	.550
25	3.64	1.059	.349	75	2.18	.970	.223
26	2.88	1.086	.441	77	2.56	1.178	.382
29	2.20	1.045	.198	78	2.44	1.218	.272
31	2.80	1.221	.448	79	3.76	1.024	.235
33	4.23	.860	.211	82	3.89	1.043	.352
34	4.04	.991	.367	83	2.78	1.100	.179
39	2.56	1.064	.342	84	2.26	1.137	.343
40	3.87	1.105	.398	87	2.53	1.080	.377
43	3.22	1.128	.372	88	3.06	1.158	.503
44	3.01	1.121	.279	89	3.05	1.242	.345
45	2.16	1.043	.384	91	3.63	1.072	.402
46	3.03	1.009	.380	93	3.96	.979	.319
49	3.27	1.121	.309				

Table 2. Factor Analysis of Perfectionism scale

Components	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.454	12.316	12.316	11.454	12.316	12.316
2	6.420	6.903	19.219	6.420	6.903	19.219
3	4.067	4.373	23.592	4.067	4.373	23.592
4	2.892	3.109	26.701	2.892	3.109	26.701
5	2.716	2.920	29.621	2.716	2.920	29.621
6	2.596	2.791	32.413	2.596	2.791	32.413
7	2.053	2.207	34.620	2.053	2.207	34.620
8	2.027	2.180	36.800	2.027	2.180	36.800
9	1.924	2.068	38.868	1.924	2.068	38.868
10	1.843	1.982	40.850	1.843	1.982	40.850
11	1.774	1.908	42.757	1.774	1.908	42.757
12	1.693	1.820	44.577	1.693	1.820	44.577
13	1.634	1.758	46.335	1.634	1.758	46.335
14	1.586	1.706	48.041	1.586	1.706	48.041
15	1.526	1.640	49.681	1.526	1.640	49.681
16	1.471	1.581	51.263	1.471	1.581	51.263
17	1.407	1.513	52.775	1.407	1.513	52.775
18	1.362	1.465	54.240	1.362	1.465	54.240
19	1.317	1.416	55.656	1.317	1.416	55.656
20	1.293	1.390	57.046	1.293	1.390	57.046
21	1.269	1.365	58.411	1.269	1.365	58.411
22	1.236	1.329	59.740	1.236	1.329	59.740
23	1.192	1.282	61.022	1.192	1.282	61.022
24	1.156	1.243	62.265	1.156	1.243	62.265
25	1.130	1.215	63.480	1.130	1.215	63.480
26	1.092	1.174	64.654	1.092	1.174	64.654
27	1.089	1.171	65.825	1.089	1.171	65.825
28	1.030	1.108	66.933	1.030	1.108	66.933
29	1.003	1.078	68.011	1.003	1.078	68.011

NB: 1. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

Table 3. Variance Explained - Perfectionism Scale

Component	Initial Eigen values			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	11.454	12.316	12.316	9.278	9.976	9.976
2	6.420	6.903	19.219	6.359	6.837	16.813
3	4.067	4.373	23.592	6.304	6.778	23.592

Once the factors have been restricted to three the variance explained was 23.592% of the Perfectionism as shown in Table 2.

Thereafter a rotated component matrix was employed with varimax rotation to see the individual items' contribution for the variance and also to which factor the items consolidate to, with the mode of automated deletion of loadings of items less than 0.40 the factors converged in five rotations. The factor loadings were shown in table 3.

Deletion of the items

After the principal component analyses it was felt that there is a need to weed out certain items based on the loadings with the assumption that the retention of adequately loaded items might give a fair percentage of explaining variance of Perfectionism scale. 52 items with loadings of less than 0.40 in all the three factors were decided to be deleted from the scale. Hence the items, where the loadings were below the requisite level were excluded from the scale.

The identified factors after the component analysis are as follows. Factor - I (16 items), Factor - II (13 items), Factor - III (12 items). After factor analysis and exclusion of certain items (which have not loaded sufficiently in any of the factors) rest 41 items were retained. At this juncture 41 items have been retained for measuring the Perfectionism.

Naming of the factors The final version of the scale has 41 items. The factors so arrived at are later named on the basis of the apriori dimensions and representation of the items. They are named as follows.

- Factor I is constituted by 16 items (**Self oriented perfectionism**)
- Factor II is constituted by 13 items (**Socially prescribed perfectionism**)
- Factor III is constituted by 12 items (**Others oriented perfectionism**)

Reliability and Validity of the Perfectionism Scale: Internal consistency analyses were conducted using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to obtain reliability estimates. All the factors (**Self oriented perfectionism**, **Socially prescribed perfectionism** and **Others oriented perfectionism**) shows strong internal consistency estimates ($\alpha = .89$ for Self oriented perfectionism, $\alpha = .85$ for Socially prescribed perfectionism, $\alpha = .82$ for Others oriented perfectionism). Test-retest reliability was conducted by correlating scores obtained at the two administrations for each factor with a time gap of two weeks. Scores were calculated using means due to differences in the number of items for each scale. Test-retest reliability was strong for the

factors and ($r = .83$ for Self oriented perfectionism, $r = .78$ for Socially prescribed perfectionism, $r = .75$ for Others oriented perfectionism; all p 's $< .001$).

Perfectionism Scale has been validated with its equivalent form of all three factors i.e Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). The Pearson's correlations for all three factors with the scale are very satisfactory. ($r = 0.76$ for Self oriented perfectionism, $r = 0.52$ for Socially prescribed perfectionism, $r = 0.38$ for Others oriented perfectionism at the 0.01 significance level).

The purpose of the current study was to develop a multidimensional measure of Perfectionism using a sample of Indian youth. Perfectionism in cultural context, a growing body of research has considered associations between young peoples' perfectionism and development [2]. Perfectionism is characterized by setting very high personal standards for oneself and being overly concerned with meeting those high standards [24, 27, 31]. For the purposes of this study, perfectionism will be defined as a multidimensional personality style in which a person sets extremely high standards for oneself and is overly critical of his/ her own behavior [27, 32]. Self- oriented perfectionism can be conceptualized as setting high standards for oneself and believing that it is important to be perfect. Other-oriented perfectionism measures the degree to which the participant expects others to be perfect. Socially prescribed perfectionism can be operationalized as pressure from family and the environment resulting in tendencies of perfectionism.

Table 4. Rotated Component Matrix and evolution of Factors – Perfectionism Scale

Factor-1 Self Oriented Perfectionism		Factor-2 Socially Prescribed Perfectionism		Factor-3 Others Oriented Perfectionism	
Item no	Loading	Item no	Loading	Item no	Loading
52	.653	89	.568	75	.543
7	.625	22	.526	84	.541
40	.606	14	.510	26	.532
73	.574	23	.496	18	.516
64	.563	56	.486	57	.505
34	.561	17	.476	29	.484
25	.540	49	.469	45	.452
33	.527	77	.465	78	.446
79	.520	83	.459	39	.430
88	.517	62	.458	3	.421
46	.510	44	.456	31	.416
10	.507	71	.447	87	.414
93	.492	76	.411		
91	.470				
43	.463				
82	.447				

NB: 1. Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. 2. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotations converged in 5 iterations. 4. Negative loadings indicate the inverse relationship with the measured variable. 4. Items with loadings of less than 0.40 were not shown in the table.

The aim of the study was to identify underlying dimensions in the data. Factor analysis results suggested a three-factor structure was most appropriate. Factor I, labeled *Self Oriented Perfectionism* consists of items that assess the extent of perfectionism that one has entirely of one's own accord. The items in the scale refer Self Oriented Perfectionism in setting excessive and severe standards and striving to accomplish these perfectionistic standards. Items also tap the tendencies related to being over self-critical, guilt associated with anything less than perfect and a lack of relaxation.

Factor II, labeled *Socially Prescribed Perfectionism*, consists of items that assess the extent to which one feels that others expect him/her to be perfect, and involves the belief that anything short of perfection will lead to loss of approval from significant others.

Factor III, labeled *Others Oriented Perfectionism*, consists of items that assess the extent to which a person expects perfection from others and harshly criticizes others' performance. Items also assess if the person's relationships are based on competence level and suffers from zero error syndrome.

The second aim of the study involved establishing reliability and readability estimates for the measure. Reliability analyses indicated that factors showed strong internal consistency. Test-retest reliability for the factors and composite was also good. It is expected that Perfectionism Scale is fairly stable, especially over a relatively short period of time. The Perfectionism Scale factor demonstrated high Validity. Finally, the reliability analysis suggested that the measure is appropriate for youth and young adults. It is a five-point likert scale which respondents felt comfortable with and very few chose a neutral response to the items. This scale will help individuals get a better understanding of their behaviour and personality, and its impact on themselves and their environment.

4. Limitations of the Research

This instrument is specific to Indian and collectivistic society context and the results cannot be generalized to individualistic societies. Most of the participants belong to urban areas and all of them were pursuing higher education which is considered a limitation and necessitates further validation with rural sample as well. The study necessitates further research work to establish norms for various age groups and strata of society. The Perfectionism scale instigates plenty of deliberations and criticisms for its refinement. The views, opinions and criticism on this work will be welcomed as goodwill interest to refine the Scale.

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