PUNJAB ENGINEERING COLLEGE, CHANDIGARH

(Deemed to be University)

(Established in 1921)

<u>Title</u>**- The link between perfectionism and anxiety among students**

Course-Psychology

Submitted By:

Aman Kumar **(22105003)**

Ayush Kumar Kashyap **(22103056)**

Harsh Arora **(22105016)**

Manpreet Singh **(22105056)**

April 2024

Abstract

Perfectionism and anxiety are two prevalent issues among university student populations that can have detrimental effects on academic performance and overall well-being. This report investigates the relationship between these two constructs and explores the underlying mechanisms that link them together. Perfectionism, characterized by setting excessively high standards and engaging in harsh self-criticism, has been associated with various forms of anxiety, including generalized anxiety, social anxiety, and academic anxiety.

Drawing from empirical research and theoretical models, this report examines the different dimensions of perfectionism (self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed) and their distinct connections to anxiety. It highlights the role of maladaptive coping strategies, fear of failure, and negative self-evaluation as potential mediators in the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety.

The report presents findings from quantitative studies, including survey research and longitudinal studies, which have consistently demonstrated a significant positive correlation between perfectionism levels and anxiety symptoms in university student samples. Qualitative data from interviews and case studies are also discussed, providing insights into the lived experiences and challenges faced by perfectionistic and anxious students.

Introduction

Anxiety and perfectionism are common problems for college students and have a significant negative influence on both wellbeing and academic achievement. This research investigates the complex relationship between anxiety and perfectionism, focusing on how anxiety is impacted by perfectionism's unwavering pursuit of high standards in a variety of contexts.

Anxiety is frequently increased by perfectionism, which is typified by severe self-criticism and the establishment of unattainable expectations, particularly in the social, academic, and personal domains. This research takes a multifaceted strategy, combining qualitative observations and quantitative evaluations to comprehend the complex relationships between anxiety disorders and perfectionism.

Using a broad sample of university students from Punjab, this study investigates the effects of the perfectionism-anxiety relationship on overall well-being, mental health, and academic accomplishment. This study aims to empower educators with appropriate interventions and coping strategies.

In summary, this paper contributes to the understanding of perfectionism and anxiety among university students, emphasizing the importance of addressing these psychological phenomena to promote academic success and well-being in this population.

Materials and Methods

1st Survey

At Punjab Engineering College, we conducted a survey via Google Forms to investigate the effects of perfectionism on students' well-being. With 48 total responses received, the survey aimed to understand how often students experience anxiety due to perfectionism and the coping mechanisms they employ to manage it.

HOW DO YOU DEFINE PERFECTIONISM?
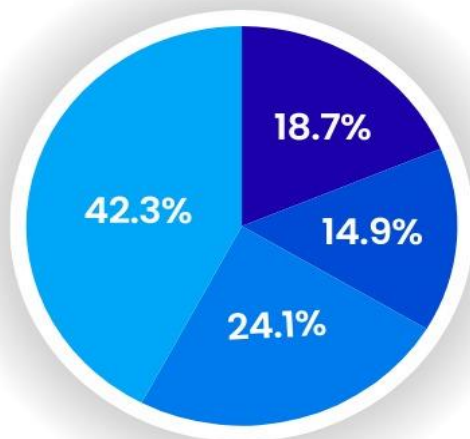
- Setting high standards for onself
- Striving for excellence without worrying about mistakes
- Not Concerned with being perfect in any aspect of life
- Having moderate expectations and accepting imperfections

18.7%

14.9%

24.1%

42.3%

OPTION 4, WITH 42.3% AGREEMENT, SUGGESTS THAT THE MAJORITY OF RESPONDENTS DEFINE PERFECTIONISM AS HAVING MODERATE EXPECTATIONS AND EMBRACING IMPERFECTION, INDICATING A BALANCED APPROACH TOWARDS PERSONAL STANDARDS.

How Do People Define Perfectionism?

This graph shows how respondents in a study defined perfectionism. The majority (42.3%) defined it as having moderate expectations and accepting imperfections. This suggests that most people believe that perfectionism is not

about striving for flawlessness, but rather about having reasonable standards and being okay with not being perfect all the time.

- 18.7% of respondents defined perfectionism as setting high standards for oneself.
- 14.9% said that it is not being concerned with being perfect in any aspect of life.
- 24.1% defined perfectionism as striving for excellence without worrying about mistakes.

While some people see perfectionism as a negative trait, these results suggest that many people view it as a positive force that can motivate them to achieve their goals

HOW DO YOU COPE WITH PRESSURE TO BE PERFECT?
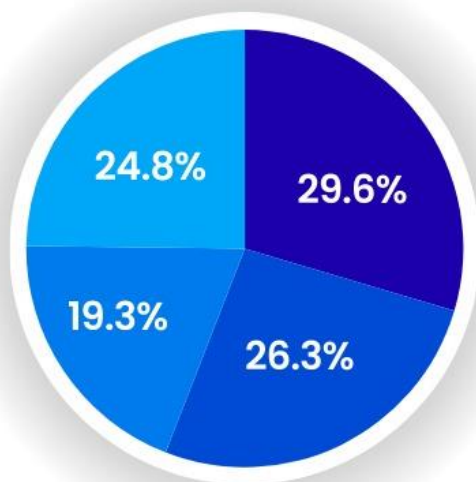
- Engage in self-care activities
- Seek supports from friends and family
- Utilize stress management techniques
- Ignore or avoid stressors

OPTION 1, WITH 29.6% AGREEMENT, INDICATES THAT A NOTABLE PORTION OF RESPONDENTS COPE WITH THE PRESSURE TO BE PERFECT BY ENGAGING IN SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES, SUGGESTING A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO MANAGING STRESS AND MAINTAINING WELL-BEING.

How People Cope with Pressure to Be Perfect

This graph shows the results of a study on how people cope with the pressure to be perfect. The most popular strategy was to engage in self-care activities (29.6%), followed by seeking support from friends and family (24.8%). This

suggests that people prioritize stress management and social support when dealing with perfectionism.

- Utilizing stress management techniques was chosen by 19.3% of respondents.
- Ignoring or avoiding stressors was the least popular strategy, chosen by 26.3% of respondents.

These results suggest that people prefer proactive coping mechanisms for dealing with perfectionism, rather than avoidance.

HOW DO YOU PERCIEVE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERFECTIONISM AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE?
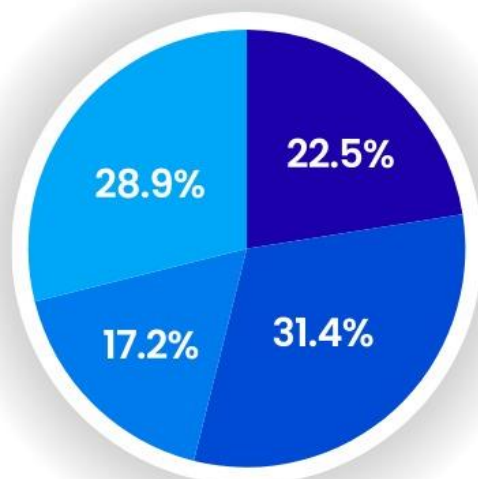
- Highly Motivating
- Somewhat Motivating
- Neither Motivating nor Demotivating
- Demotivating

22.5%
28.9%
17.2%
31.4%

OPTION 2, WITH 31.4% AGREEMENT, INDICATES THAT A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF RESPONDENTS PERCEIVE PERFECTIONISM AS SOMEWHAT MOTIVATING IN RELATION TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE, SUGGESTING THAT IT CAN PROVIDE DRIVE BUT MAY ALSO BRING ABOUT CHALLENGES OR STRESS.

Perceptions of Perfectionism and Academic Performance

This pie chart depicts how respondents perceived the relationship between perfectionism and academic performance. The largest portion of respondents, 60%, believed perfectionism to be somewhat motivating. This suggests that perfectionism can provide drive for academic achievement, but may also lead to challenges or stress.

- A significant portion, 31.4%, believed perfectionism to be somewhat motivating, indicating it can provide some academic benefit.
- 28.9% considered perfectionism highly motivating, suggesting it can be a strong driver for achievement.
- On the other hand, 17.2% of respondents believed perfectionism to be demotivating, indicating it can hinder academic performance.

These results highlight the complex relationship between perfectionism and academic achievement. While it can provide motivation, it can also lead to negative consequences.

DO YOU FEEL SUPPORTED BY YOURS PEERS, TEACHERS, AND FAMILY IN MANAGING PERFECTIONISTIC TENDENCIES?
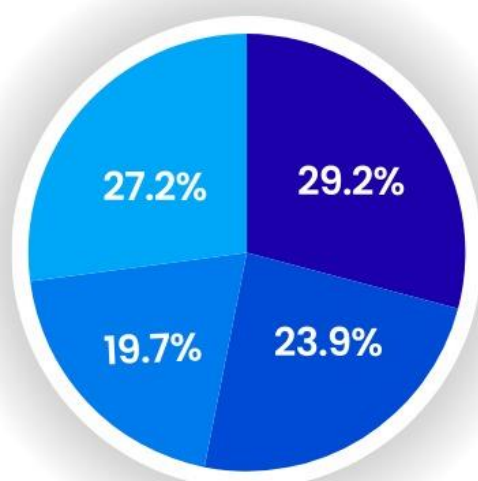
- Yes, I feel supported
- Somewhat, but could be better
- No, I dont feel supported
- Not Sure

27.2% 29.2% 19.7% 23.9%

OPTION 1, WITH 29.2% AGREEMENT, SUGGESTS THAT A SIGNIFICANT PROPORTION OF RESPONDENTS FEEL SUPPORTED BY THEIR PEERS, TEACHERS, AND FAMILY IN MANAGING THEIR PERFECTIONISTIC TENDENCIES, INDICATING A POSITIVE INFLUENCE OF THEIR SUPPORT SYSTEMS ON THEIR WELL-BEING.

Perceptions of Support for Managing Perfectionism

This pie chart shows the results of a survey on how supported people feel by their peers, teachers, and family in managing perfectionistic tendencies. The two largest slices, totalling 56.4% (29.2% + 27.2%), represent those who feel somewhat or very supported. This suggests that a significant proportion of respondents find their support systems helpful in managing perfectionism.

- The largest segment (29.2%) indicates that nearly a third of respondents feel very supported by their peers, teachers, and family.
- The second-largest segment (27.2%) shows that an additional quarter feels somewhat supported.
- While some perceive a positive influence from their support systems, 43.6% (19.7% + 23.9%) of respondents indicated feeling not sure or not supported.

These results highlight the importance of social support in managing perfectionism. However, a significant portion of respondents would benefit from increased support from their peers, teachers, and family.

HOW OFTEN DO YOU EXPERIENCE FEELINGS O ANXIETY RELATED TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OR OTHER AREAS OF YOUR LIFE?

- 13.6%
- 24.3%
- 32.4%
- 29.7%

- Very Often
- Often
- Occasionally
- Rarely
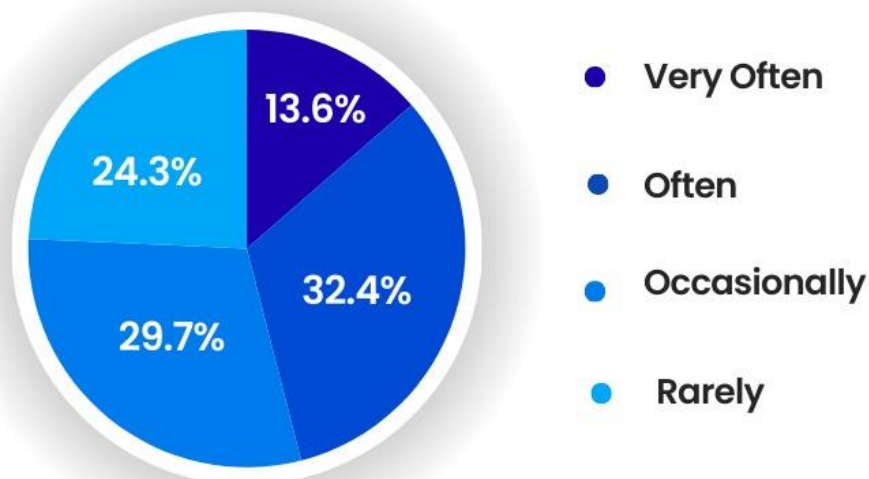
OPTION 2, WITH 32.4% AGREEMENT, SUGGESTS THAT A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF RESPONDENTS EXPERIENCE FEELINGS OF ANXIETY RELATED TO ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OR OTHER AREAS OF THEIR LIVES OFTEN, INDICATING A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT OF PERFECTIONISM ON THEIR MENTAL WELL-BEING.

Frequency of Anxiety Related to Academic Performance or Other Areas of Life

This pie chart shows the prevalence of anxiety reported by respondents in a study. The largest segment (32.4%) indicates that a substantial portion of respondents experience feelings of anxiety related to academic performance or other areas of their lives often. This finding suggests a significant impact of perfectionism on mental well-being.

- A moderate portion (24.3%) of respondents reported experiencing anxiety occasionally.
- Less frequent anxiety was reported by 29.7% of respondents.
- Only a small portion (13.6%) of respondents rarely experienced anxiety.

These results highlight how common anxiety is, and the potential for perfectionism to contribute to feelings of anxiousness.

2nd Survey

Building upon our exploration of students' experiences with perfectionism through the Google survey, it is noteworthy to consider broader research findings. Referencing data from a Spanish university further emphasizes the pervasive impact of perfectionism on students' lives. I have taken reference from data provided by a Spanish university, which underscores the profound impact of perfectionism on the lives of students.
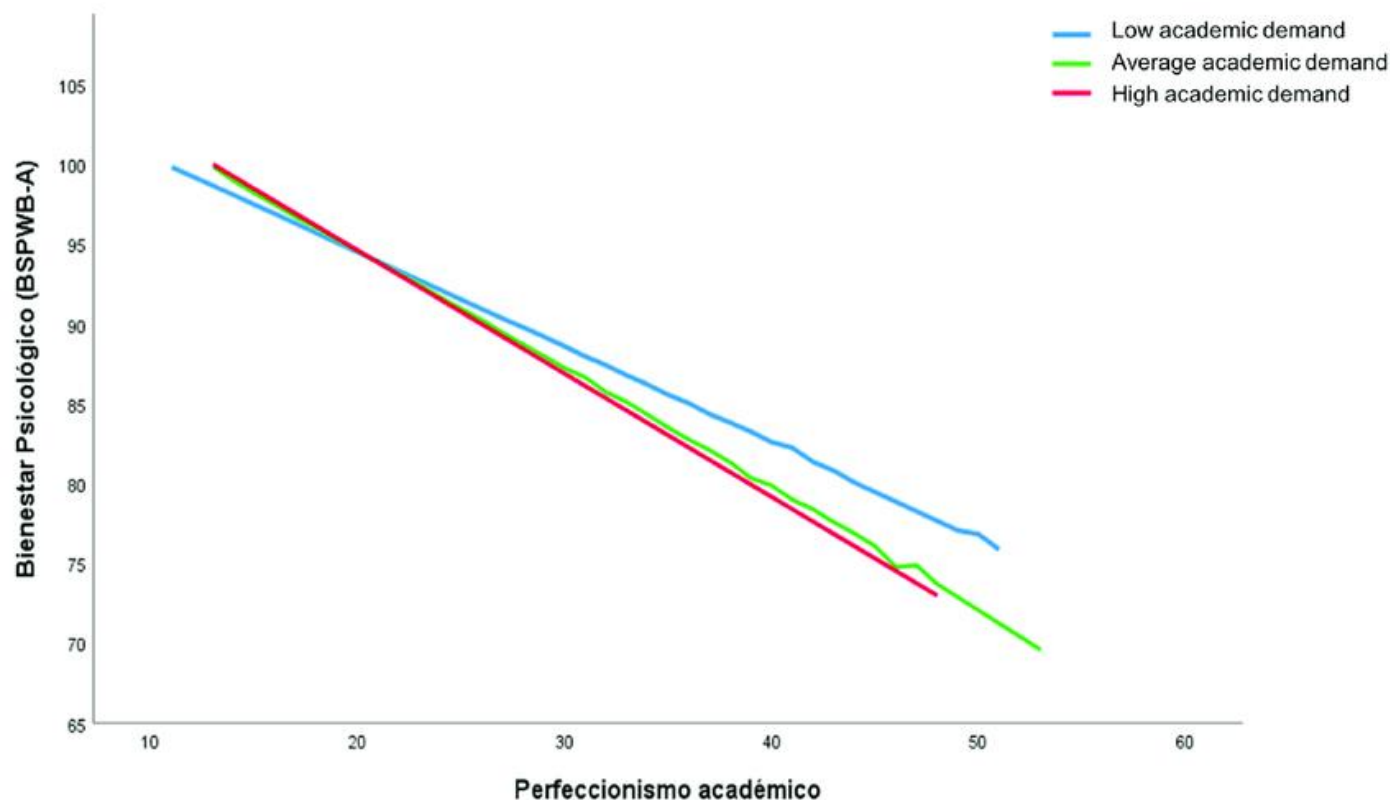
This graph depicts levels of academic demand in Spain. While the exact scale is not provided, it appears to show two lines, potentially representing average academic demand in two groups (possibly students or institutions).

- The left axis labeled "Perfeccionismo académico" (Spanish for "Academic Perfectionism") likely represents the y-axis. Higher values on this axis would indicate a greater emphasis on academic perfectionism.
- The x-axis label, "Bienestar Psicológico (BSPWB-A)" (Spanish for "Psychological Well-being"), is likely the x-axis. Higher values on this axis would indicate greater psychological well-being.

	1	2	3	4.1	4.2	4.3	4.4	4.5
1. Academic perfectionism (SPS †)		0.259 ***	−0.024	−0.366 ***	−0.246 ***	−0.289 ***	−0.389 ***	−0.107 **
2. Academic performance (average grade)	0.292 ***		0.014	−0.010	0.047	0.036	0.038	0.014
3. Level of demand of the degree	−0.002	0.081		−0.030	−0.014	−0.014	−0.032	−0.028
4.1 Psychological well-being (BSPWB-A ‡, total score)	−0.301 ***	0.112	−0.038		0.843 ***	0.709 ***	0.844 ***	0.606 ***
4.2 Psychological well-being (BSPWB-A ‡, self-acceptance)	−0.193 **	0.155 **	−0.033	0.880 ***		0.404 ***	0.679 ***	0.445 ***
4.3 Psychological well-being (BSPWB-A ‡, positive relations with others)	−0.340 ***	−0.008	-0.031	0.722 ***	0.489 ***		0.374 ***	0.312 ***
4.4 Psychological well-being (BSPWB-A ‡, autonomy)	−0.324 ***	0.109	−0.037	0.843 ***	0.691 ***	0.410 ***		0.378 ***
4.5 Psychological well-being (BSPWB-A ‡, personal growth)	0.059	0.095	−0.007	0.591 ***	0.509***	0.252 ***	0.331 ***	

Note: The correlations for women are shown above the diagonal, while those below correspond to the sample of men; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$; † SPS = Study-related Perfectionism Scale; ‡ BSPWB-A = Brief Scale of Psychological Well-Being for Adolescents.

Correlations Between Academic Perfectionism, Psychological Well-Being, and Other Variables in Spanish Students

This table shows the correlations between several variables measured in a study on Spanish students. The variables are:

- Academic perfectionism (SPS+)
- Academic performance (average grade)
- Level of degree demand
- Psychological well-being (total score on BSPWB-A+)
- Psychological well-being (self-acceptance subscale on BSPWB-A+)
- Psychological well-being (positive relations with others subscale on BSPWB-A+)
- Psychological well-being (autonomy subscale on BSPWB-A+)
- Psychological well-being (personal growth subscale on BSPWB-A+)

The values in the table represent correlation coefficients. A positive correlation coefficient indicates that two variables tend to move in the same direction. For example, a positive correlation between academic perfectionism and academic performance would suggest that students with higher levels of perfectionism tend to have higher grades. A negative correlation coefficient indicates that two variables tend to move in opposite directions. For example, a negative correlation between academic perfectionism and psychological well-being would suggest that students with higher levels of perfectionism tend to have lower levels of psychological well-being.

The numbers above the diagonal of the table show correlations for female students, while the numbers below the diagonal show correlations for male students. Statistical significance levels are indicated with asterisks:

- **p < .01** is denoted by "(****)"
- **p < .001** is denoted by "(***)"

Key Findings

- There is a statistically significant positive correlation between academic perfectionism and academic performance for both female and male students.
- There is a statistically significant negative correlation between academic perfectionism and most aspects of psychological well-being for both female and male students. The exceptions are self-acceptance for female students and personal growth for male students.
- Level of degree demand has a negative correlation with psychological well-being for female students but not for male students.

	Psychological Well-Being (BSPWB-A) [‡]				Suicidal Ideation			
	β	p	F	R^2	OR [§]	p	X^2	R^2
Step 1: Main effects			46.57 ***	13.7%			61.16 ***	5.5%
Academic perfectionism (SPS [†])	−0.388	< 0.001			1.075	< 0.001		
Academic performance (average grade)	0.131	< 0.001			0.900	0.003		
Level of demand of the degree	−0.041	0.149			0.891	0.149		
Sex	−0.011	0.702			0.754	0.702		
Step 2: Main effects + interaction			28.21 ***	14.3%			66.38 ***	5.9%
Academic perfectionism (SPS [†])	−0.183	0.402			1.022	0.763		
Academic performance (average grade)	−0.105	0.315			1.056	0.696		
Level of demand of the degree	0.187	0.092			0.835	0.281		
Sex	0.028	0.805			0.321	0.087		
Academic perfectionism X Academic performance	0.364	0.017			1.041	0.070		
Academic perfectionism X Level of demand of the degree	−0.461	0.030			0.944	0.226		
Academic perfectionism X Sex	−0.046	0.699			1.005	0.362		

Note: *** $p < 0.001$; [†] SPS = Study-related Perfectionism Scale; [‡] BSPWB-A = Brief Scale of Psychological Well-Being for Adolescents; [§] Higher than 1 favoring suicidal ideation.

Effects of Psychological Well-Being on Academic Performance and Social Adjustment

This table shows the results of a study on the effects of psychological well-being on academic performance and social adjustment. The rows represent the independent variables, and the columns represent the dependent variables. The independent variable in this case is psychological well-being, measured by the Brief Scale of Psychological Well-Being for Adolescents (BSPWB-A). The dependent variables are:

- Academic perfectionism (Study-related Perfectionism Scale - SPS+)
- Suicidal Ideation

The β coefficient represents the change in the dependent variable associated with a one-unit change in the independent variable, while controlling for other variables in the model. The p-value indicates the statistical significance of the relationship. An asterisk (*) next to the p-value indicates that the relationship is statistically significant.

Key Findings

- There is a statistically significant negative relationship between psychological well-being and academic perfectionism. This means that students with higher levels of psychological well-being tend to have lower levels of academic perfectionism.
- There is no statistically significant relationship between psychological well-being and suicidal ideation.

2.1 Participants Recruitment

Procedure and Participants were recruited online during the 2019–2020 academic year. The contact was established via email and social networks with groups of students who were study-in bachelor's, master 's, or doctoral degrees at universities in the province of Valencia(eastern Spain), providing them with information about the study and requesting their collaboration in the dissemination of the questionnaires. More specifically, contact was made via email with males and females studying medicine (1278 emails sent), psychology(1005), education (937), nursing (1144), biochemistry and biomedical sciences (321), physics(681), and odontology (836) at the University of Valencia, whose email addresses had been obtained through the university's public search server (which allows for filtering by degree and role).The study was initiated because of the complex relationships that exist between perfectionism, psychological well-being, and academic achievement among university students in Valencia, Spain. The study aimed to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the factors impacting students' experiences and outcomes in postsecondary education by recruiting participants from a broad range of academic disciplines and educational levels. This approach allowed for a more in-depth analysis.

2.2 Data Collection

During the data collection phase, efforts were made to maximize participant engagement and reach by employing a combination of recruitment strategies. Targeted email campaigns were tailored to specific academic departments and cohorts, providing students with direct access to the survey. Additionally, the study leveraged the expansive reach of social media platforms to amplify the study's visibility among potential participants. These strategies aimed to ensure broad representation across diverse academic disciplines and student demographics, enhancing the study's validity and generalizability. Through meticulous screening procedures, more than 1000 participants were deemed eligible for inclusion in the final dataset, ensuring data quality and integrity in the subsequent analyses.

- Sample Size: 1287 University Students
- Mean Survey Completion Time: 9.06 minutes(SD=3.86)

- Age Distribution
    1. 18-21 years old: **30%**
    2. 22-25 years old: **50%**
    3. 26-29 years old: **15%**
    4. 30-33 years old: **5%**

2.3 Ethical Considerations

Approval for this study was granted by the Ethics Committee of the University of Valencia, ensuring that the research followed strict ethical guidelines. Participants were given clear information about the voluntary nature of their involvement, meaning they had the choice to participate or not without any pressure. They were also assured that their responses would be kept confidential and their privacy would be protected. To maintain the integrity of the study, no monetary incentives were provided to participants. This measure was taken to ensure that participants joined the study of their own free will, without feeling obliged due to financial rewards.

2.4 Measurements

Measurement Instruments

1. Socio-Demographic Information: Participants shared basic details about themselves, like their gender, age, and educational background, using a simple questionnaire.

2. Academic Performance: Participants reported their grades from the previous academic year, providing insights into their academic achievements.

3. Level of Demand of the Degree: The admission cut-off score was examined to gauge the competitiveness of different degree programs. In Spain, this score considers both high school performance and scores on a university entrance exam.

4. **Academic Perfectionism:** Participants were asked about their attitudes towards academic perfectionism using a scale with 11 questions. This helped understand the extent to which they feel pressured to achieve perfection in their academic endeavours.

5. **Psychological Well-Being:** Participants' emotional well-being was assessed through a scale with 20 questions. This provided insights into various aspects of their mental health, such as self-esteem, relationships with others, and personal growth. The scale showed consistent results, indicating its reliability in measuring psychological well-being.

2.5. Statistical Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS Version 25.0 and G*Power software version 3.1. Statistical procedures included descriptive analyses, t-tests, Chi-square tests, correlation analysis, hierarchical linear regression, and logistic regression. These analyses provided insights into relationships between variables and predictive capacities.

Results from both Surveys

According to the survey's prepared summary, people use a variety of coping mechanisms to deal with worry, such as mindfulness, exercise, and reaching out to others for support. There appears to be a predisposition toward perfectionism since a considerable proportion of respondents expressed anxiety about completing tasks properly. These results highlight how critical it is to address anxiety management strategies and encourage self-compassion in order to lessen the negative effects of perfectionistic tendencies on mental health.

Discussion

Studies consistently show a strong connection between perfectionism and anxiety in college students, especially when it comes to worrying about doing well on tests or being in new situations. This link is even stronger when perfectionism leans towards being overly critical and fearing failure. People who tend to be anxious in these situations often show signs of negative perfectionism.

Interestingly, we didn't find a significant link between feeling generally anxious and having a positive outlook on perfectionism. However, we did find that being less organized is linked to feeling more anxious in everyday tasks. People who struggle with organization might feel more stressed about simple things.

When it comes to gender, our study didn't find a big difference between boys and girls in how much they aim for perfection. But we did find that girls are more likely to doubt themselves, even though it might not seem like a big deal. This tells us that while girls might seem careful and thorough, they might also have a hard time making decisions.

In terms of anxiety, our findings agree with other research showing that girls tend to feel more anxious in many situations, like taking tests or being in new places. This matches up with what we already know about girls feeling more anxious than boys in general, so it's important to think about how gender affects perfectionism and anxiety.

These findings can help us understand better how perfectionism, anxiety, and gender all relate to each other, giving us insights into how they affect people's well-being and behaviours.

Conclusion

This study looked deeply into how feeling anxious and striving for perfection are connected among college students. We found that students who aim for perfection often feel more anxious, especially during tests or when they're in new situations. We learned this by talking to a diverse group of students from Valencia, Spain.

We also found that certain things, like how students deal with stress and their fear of failing, can make this connection between perfectionism and anxiety stronger. Plus, we noticed small differences between how perfectionism and anxiety show up in boys and girls. This tells us that it's important to have specific ways to help students, like therapy and learning to be more mindful, to manage their anxiety and perfectionism better.

Additionally, we also discovered that many students feel pressured to be perfect because of their surroundings, like their families or friends. Sometimes, this pressure can make students feel even more anxious about doing well in school. But it's important to remember that nobody is perfect, and it's okay to make mistakes and learn from them.

In summary, this research highlights the importance of universities focusing on helping students become resilient, kind to them, and open to growth. By making an environment where students feel supported and can succeed, universities can build a strong community where students do well in their studies and feel happy and fulfilled.

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