

The Comparison of Perfectionism in Students with Test Anxiety and Normal Students

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ABSTRACT: The present research was performed with the purpose of the comparison of perfectionism in students with test anxiety and normal students. The research method is causative – comparative. The study population consisted of high school students in Rezvanshahr in the academic year 2014-2015 that they were selected in the two-step sampling method available as follows. First, 500 people were selected among high school students in Rezavanshahr and they completed the questionnaire of test anxiety of Sarason. Then, 100 people of the students who obtained the highest score and 100 people who obtained the lowest score were selected. Then, both of the groups completed the questionnaire of perfectionism of Hill et al. Data analysis was performed using SPSS statistical software and in the method of multivariate analysis of variance. The results showed that the components of interpersonal sensitivity, striving for excellence, perceiving pressure from the parents, purposefulness and perfectionism of the students with test anxiety were increasing. As a result, it can be concluded that the perfectionism variable has been among variables associated with test anxiety and needs plans for balancing the variable.

Keywords: Perfectionism, Test Anxiety, Students.

INTRODUCTION

Anxiety is a kind of very unpleasant and often ambiguous generalized sense which is associated with one or several physical feeling such as palpitations, sweating, headache, restlessness, frequent urination, etc. Anxiety is a warning sign which gives news of the imminent danger and prepares the person to counter the threat (Sadock & Sadock, 2007, translated by Pourafkari, 2009). Test anxiety is one of anxiety disorders. Test anxiety is a particular type of anxiety determined by physical, cognitive and behavioral symptoms in preparing for the exam and the tests and quizzes. Test anxiety is an important educational problem which affects millions of students around the world. Test anxiety is an unpleasant emotional reaction to the situation assessed. This excitement is determined by a feeling kind of tension, anxiety and arousal of the autonomic nervous system (Mehrabizadeh Honarmand et al., 2000). Characteristics of individuals can be effective in causing this problem. Perfectionism is one of the features which seem this can be involved in test anxiety, because this feature is also caused by a fear of failure and therefore this can be involved in the development of test anxiety. Perfectionism is a personality construct and this is determined with features such as trying to perfect and determination of very great and extreme criteria in the performance associated with tendency to critical evaluation of behavior (Stoeber et al., 2009). From the view of the dimensions of perfectionism, theories are different. Bronz (1990) considers it a one-dimensional structure and Hewitt and Flett

(1991) considers it a three-dimensional structure: self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism and society-oriented perfectionism. People who are perfectionists believe that they and their environment must be perfect, and that any attempt on the life must be without any mistake. Since in most cases, negative perfectionism between the demands of neurotic perfectionism and actual performance contrasts is understood, it is believed that the resulting conflict has adverse effects on the anxiety of the person. The findings of the research of Hewitt et al (2003) showed that automatic thoughts involved perfectionism and interpersonal aspects of perfectionism were associated with the anxiety. Also, in another research, Flett and Hewitt (2002) showed that self-oriented perfectionism in interaction with social stress could predict the anxiety. The results of the research of Mehrabizadeh Honarmand et al (2000) showed that there was a significant and positive relationship between perfectionism and anxiety. Besharat (2004) showed that there was a negative relationship between parental positive perfectionism and test anxiety in children and a positive correlation between parental negative perfectionism and test anxiety of children.

Recent efforts by researchers in order to express the concept of perfectionism, its characteristics and mechanisms of normal and abnormal psychological impact of these structural processes are very valuable, but they are still primitive and inadequate (Besharat & Dejkam, 2002). Perfectionist people usually predict denial and rejection from others and scare them. With this fear, they tend to take defensive against criticism and thereby fail and remove others from them (Khalatbari et al., 2011).

The pathological core of perfectionism is expressed as phobia of failure and persistent pursuit of success. For the perfectionist, every failure leads to minimization, self-critical and preservation of negative comments, it also strongly depend on their views about effort and achievement of their goals. The evidence of the research shows a negative correlation between the fear of failure and self-esteem (Joubert, 1990). Because test anxiety and performance reduce the negative consequences on the performance of students, it is necessary that it pay more attention and the factors related be identified so that appropriate programs are designed for prevention and control of design students in the community. In this regard, the present research aims to answer the question of whether there is any difference between perfectionism in students with test anxiety and normal students or not.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present research was performed with the purpose of the comparison of perfectionism in students with test anxiety and normal students. The research method is causative – comparative. The study population consisted of high school students in Rezvanshahr in the academic year 2014-2015 that they were selected in the two-step sampling method available as follows. First, 500 people were selected among high school students in Rezavanshahr and they completed the questionnaire of test anxiety of Sarason. Then, 100 people of the students who obtained the highest score and 100 people who obtained the lowest score were selected. The tools used in the study were:

The questionnaire of test anxiety of Sarason (1980): this questionnaire is a scale of 37 items made by Sarason (1980). This scale is a short questionnaire that the participant must respond to at least 10 to 15 minutes for any item (yes or no) and thus, based on a way of self-reporting, we can obtain to mental states and psychological experiences during, before and after the test. Whatever the score are higher, the anxiety will increase more. On this scale, the score range is between 0 and 37, respectively. The cut-off points determined are such that mild anxiety is (the score 12 and less), average anxiety (the score 13-20), severe anxiety (the score higher than 20). The validity and reliability of the questionnaire has been evaluated in several studies and obtained through Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.88 and internal consistency 0.98 and criterion validity 0.72 which are totally acceptable.

The questionnaire of perfectionism of Hill (2004): Hill et al (2004) started to build an instrument which is based on self-reporting and objective questionnaires and it is made based on the behavioral-cognitive view. The Persian version of perfectionism list with 58 statements and 6 sub-scales which were normalized validated and credited by Homan and Samaei in 2010 in Iranian sample. This includes 6 sub-scales, interpersonal sensitivity, striving for perfection, discipline and organization, perceiving the pressure from the parents, purposefulness and high standards for others. The study of Pearson correlation coefficient between the score of general health and dimensions of perfectionism showed that among the different dimensions of perfectionism, the only negative aspect of perfectionism, focusing on mistakes and ruminating about the lack of public health had a significant positive correlation. It should be noted that other negative aspects of perfectionism and lack of public health have a positive correlation (though not significantly). The dimensions of the similarity of perfectionism and lack of public health have a negative correlation (though not significantly). For adequacy, the instance is 0.82. Stairs (2009) has reported

total tests 0.86 and 0.92 for the sub-scales in addition to internal consistency. Also, this coefficient has been reported by Sharifi et al (2011) to 0.92.

RESULTS

Table 1. The results of the study of the frequency and percent between normal groups and test anxiety.

Groups		Boy	Girl	Total
Normal	Frequency	56	44	100
	Percent	56%	44%	100%
Test anxiety	Frequency	64	36	100
	Percent	64%	36%	100%

As it can be seen in the Table above, 56% of the subjects in normal group of boys, 44% percent were girls. Also, 64% of the boys and 36% of the girls were in the group of test anxiety.

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation of variables among students with test anxiety and normal students.

Groups of statistical indicators Variables	Test anxiety students		Normal students	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Perfectionism	0.4801127	0.633	0.6401170	0.633

As it can be seen in the above Tables, the average score among normal students is higher than students with test anxiety on the variable of perfectionism but about the variables of loneliness and obsession, the average score among normal students is higher than students with test anxiety.

The results of F statistic show that the slope of the pre-test and post-test regression of the score of perfectionism in two experimental and control groups is not significant ($f = 2.452$, $p > 0.136$). Therefore, it can be concluded that the slope of the pre-test and post-test regression of the score of perfectionism in groups is equal.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviation of the components of perfectionism among the test anxiety and normal students.

Groups	Statistical indicators of components	Mean	SD	Number
Test anxiety students	Interpersonal sensitivity	22.580	0.246	100
	Striving for excellence	21.700	0.263	100
	Ordering and organizing	21.990	0.317	100
	Perceiving pressure from parents	20.570	0.262	100
	Purposefulness	19.290	0.259	100
	High standards	21.350	0.190	100
Normal students	Interpersonal sensitivity	30.010	0.246	100
	Striving for excellence	28.050	0.263	100
	Ordering and organizing	28.970	0.317	100
	Perceiving pressure from parents	29.150	0.262	100
	Purposefulness	25.580	0.259	100
	High standards	28.880	0.190	100

In the above Table, mean and standard deviation of the components of perfectionism in test anxiety and normal students can be seen. According to data from this Table, the average score of the components of perfectionism among normal students is higher than the students with test anxiety.

Table 4. The results of the variance analysis to compare the components of perfectionism among normal and test anxiety students.

Variable	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Eta square
Interpersonal sensitivity	2760.245	1	2760.245	455.687	0.000	0.697
Striving for excellence	21016.125	1	21016.125	291.435	0.000	0.595
Ordering and organizing	2436.020	1	2436.020	242.634	0.000	0.551
Perceiving pressure from parents	3680.820	1	3680.820	534.603	0.000	0.730
Purposefulness	1978.205	1	1978.205	295.177	0.000	0.599
High standards	2835.045	1	2835.045	786.949	0.000	0.799

The results of the above Table show that there is a significant difference between the test anxiety and normal students on the components of perfectionism. ($f = 455.687$ and $p < 0.000$) for the component of interpersonal sensitivity, ($f = 291.435$ and $p < 0.000$) for the component of striving for excellence, ($f = 242.634$ and $p < 0.000$) for the component of ordering and organizing, ($f = 534.603$ and $p < 0.000$) for the component of perceiving the pressure from the parents, ($f = 295.177$ and $p < 0.000$) for the component of purposefulness and ($f = 786.949$ and $p < 0.000$) for the component of high standards. Therefore, the null hypothesis of H_0 is rejected and the hypothesis of the research of H_1 is confirmed. Therefore, with 95% of the confidence, it can be said that the components of perfectionism among the test anxiety and normal students have a significant difference.

To follow which the dependent variables help the significance of the final result, Bonferroni correction was used. In this case, a significant result is considered when P value is less than 0.05. In this hypothesis given that there are six dependent variables, with division of 0.05 divided by six is the significant limit should be less than 0.008. This is true on all variables of the hypothesis studied. Eta squared values which show the contribution to the variance of the dependent variable has been reported. Accordingly, the greatest proportion of the variance of the variables for the components of the variable of perfectionism includes; high standards (0.779), perceiving the pressure from the parents (0.730), interpersonal sensitivity (0.697), purposefulness (0.599), striving for excellence (0.595) and ordering and organizing (0.001).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results show that there is a significant difference between the test anxiety and normal students on the components of perfectionism ($p < 0.01$) and perfectionism in the test anxiety students is more than normal students. Therefore, the research hypothesis is confirmed.

Kazemi et al (2012) in a research with the aim of evaluating and comparing dimensions of perfectionism in students with high test anxiety and normal students showed that there was a significant difference between students with high test anxiety and normal students in all three dimensions of perfectionism and the students with high test anxiety had higher perfectionism in all three dimensions. Also, the results of the research of Egan (2008) indicate the high prevalence of the perfectionism in anxious students. In a similar research, Mahdavi Gharavi et al (2012) showed that there was a significant relationship between test anxiety and perfectionism. Furthermore, the results of the research of Faraji (2001) showed that autonomous perfectionism had a positive correlation with test anxiety.

On the interpretation of these results, it can be stated that on the one hand, Hewitt and Flett (1991) considered perfectionism as the tendency of an individual to have very high standards for him or others and focus on his flaws and failures in his performance. Kelly Ink (1998) defines perfectionism as full confidence and feeling of anxiety and stress and fear on that he cannot achieve his expectations which include his attitudes of underestimation. He predicts failure in the situation of test and he cannot get to the performance criteria of others or himself for this reason and he considers the unpleasant situation which the thinking and the idea of the child are just the thoughts of perfectionism.

Also, in another explanation, it can be stated that perfectionist people are always thinking the achievement of their best and highest standards and the criteria are most relevant to course assignments, exams and so on for the perfectionist students (Carpenter, 2001). According to the results, the attention of the students with test anxiety directed to stressful stimuli during the feelings of anxiety cannot focus on the main issue (test) (Cronk & Stefanie, 2004). This factor makes these children do not always have the best score of anxiety and anxiety is the cause duplication so that people with high test anxiety report that they most use inhibitor thoughts of task, including

inaccurate and unfavorable social comparisons about their performance and also the thoughts related to duty on escaping of test status and inability to focusing (Raoufi, 2011).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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