Assessing Consistency of Three Perfectionism Scales

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Assessing Consistency of Three Perfectionism Scales
Brianna N. Lawry & Charles A. Waehler, Ph.D.

Abstract
Perfectionism is described as a personality trait characterized by having excessively high standards and overly critical evaluations of performance. However, there is some debate as to whether perfectionism is a stable personality trait or a fluctuating state attribute. To investigate this, the current study assessed the test-retest reliabilities of the three most widely used perfectionism scales (the APS-R, HFMPs, and FMPS) over a three-week period and examined the influence of various contextual variables. Data from this college sample (N=43; mean age=21; SD=3.7) demonstrated high reliability and internal consistency for all three scales with negligible influence from the contextual variables examined. These findings support the notion that perfectionism is a trait characteristic that remains stable over time.

Introduction
Background
- The increase in perfectionism noted over recent decades is concerning considering the link between perfectionism and various negative health outcomes
- Determining contextual variables related to higher levels of perfectionism may help identify individuals who are especially at risk

Objectives
- Investigate whether levels of perfectionism are consistent over time by measuring temporal consistency of three perfectionism measures
- View perfectionism scores in relation to various contextual variables (e.g., plans to attend graduate school, completing an important exam or project, perceived competition in field, positive self-beliefs)

Methods
Materials
- Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R)
- Hewitt-Flett Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (HFMPs)
- Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

Procedure
- Students completed two surveys spaced three weeks apart, each containing the APS-R, the HFMPs, and the FMPS
- Correlation coefficients and Cronbach’s Alpha were calculated for each scale
- Correlations and t-tests examined the influence of contextual variables

Participants
- 106 participants completed part 1; 60 completed part 2
- Final sample of N=43
- Mean age = 21, SD = 3.7

Results

Demographics
- Gender: 68% Women, 30% Men, 2% Non-binary
- Race/Ethnicity: 89% White, 2% Black, 2% Asian, 2% Hispanic
- Year in College: 28% Sophomore, 23% Senior, 14% Freshmen, 12% Freshmen, 9% Junior, 2% 5th Year+

Overall Scale Test-Retest Correlation Coefficients and Alpha Levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Time 1</th>
<th>Time 2</th>
<th>Test-Retest</th>
<th>Alpha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APS-R SD</td>
<td>112.16</td>
<td>109.26</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HFMPs SD</td>
<td>29.44</td>
<td>30.53</td>
<td>.90</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMPS SD</td>
<td>18.36</td>
<td>18.82</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Subscale Correlations of Interest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>APS-R</th>
<th>HFMPs</th>
<th>FMPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Test-Retest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-beliefs</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- *Indicates significance at the .05 level; ** Indicates significance at the .01 level

Discussion

Conclusions
- Good reliability and excellent internal consistency was demonstrated for all three perfectionism scales
- Plans to attend graduate school and completing an important exam or project showed little to no effect on mean perfectionism scores
- Significant positive correlations were found between an individual’s perception of competitiveness in their major/field of interest and the High Standards, Self-Oriented, and Personal Standards subscales
- Significant negative correlations were found between an individual’s positive self-beliefs and the subscales for Discrepancy, Concern over Mistakes and Doubts, and Parental Expectations and Concerns
- Based on the data, perfectionism appears to be a trait characteristic that is stable over time
- More research is needed to investigate the relationship between certain subscales and contextual variables

Limitations
- Data analysis was limited by small sample size
- Questionable representativeness — more perfectionistic students may be more inclined to earn extra credit through research participation

Future Research
- Investigate more contextual variables with a larger, more diverse sample
- Examine long-term fluctuations in perfectionism through longitudinal study
- Administer perfectionism scales during times of high and low academic stress (finals week vs. summer break) for better control of variables

References