

## The Relationship between Perfectionism and Depression with Academic Achievement among the Students of Ilam University of Medical Sciences

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**Abstract:** Introduction- Perfectionism is an irrational or illogic belief that people have about themselves and their surroundings. Depression is one of the results of extreme perfectionism. Perfectionism and depression are of the factors influencing on academic progress. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between perfectionism and depression with academic achievement in the students of Ilam University of Medical Sciences. Methodology-200 students of Ilam University of Medical Sciences were enrolled in this study by classification sampling method. Data collection was performed using Frost Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) and Beck Depression Questionnaire. The questionnaire reliability was confirmed by Alpha coefficient of 87%. The FMPS questionnaire has six sub-scales. The collected data were analyzed using the SPSS16 software and Mann-Whitney and Kruskal-Wallis tests. Findings- There was no significant relationship between gender, educational field, semester and faculty with depression, while a significant relationship was seen between the sex and some of the sub-scales of perfectionism ( $P < 0.01$ ). There was a significant and negative correlation between the depression ( $P = 0.04$ ,  $r = -0.193$ ) and the parental criticism ( $P = 0.000$ ,  $r = 0.346$ ). Conclusion-Depression and parental criticism were the effective factors on academic achievement.

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### Introduction

Perfectionism in fact is an irrational or illogic belief that people have towards themselves and their surroundings. The perfectionist people believe that they and their surroundings have to be perfect and any attempt in life must be without error and mistake. The perfectionism dimensions should be added to the research components, the dimensions that represent the inner-personal, inter-personal and social multi- aspects nature of perfectionism (1). Hewitt and Flett have distinguished three dimensions, namely, self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism and community-oriented perfectionism (2). The self-oriented perfectionism is associated with a tendency to establish unrealistic measures for itself and focusing on imperfections and failures in performance and is specified with precise self-controlling. The other-oriented perfectionism tend to have extreme expectations from others and critical evaluation of them. The community-oriented perfectionism is applied to feel the necessity to observe the criteria and realization of expectations prescribed by the important

people in order to obtaining approval. The characteristics of perfectionist individuals can be mentioned as ambition, fear of making mistake, fear of disapproval by others, all or nothing thinking, frustration and finally depression. Depression occurs in these people since they consider themselves as an incompetent person, and when they fail to achieve their goals, they become depressed and disappointed. Depression is a serious and common disease that is specified with obvious disorder in the mood. The prevalence rate of depression has also been reported up to 25% (3). Depression can be chronic and recurrent and leads to the loss of social, personal and career functionality (4), (5), (6) (7) . Since the perfectionism and depression can be of influencing factors on academic achievement, thus, the aim of this research is to study the relationship of perfectionism and depression with academic achievement in the students of Ilam University of Medical Sciences.

## Materials & methods

This study is carried out based on evaluation of the students of Ilam University of Medical Sciences employing 200 students of both genders using the clustering sampling method. The research tool was a three-part questionnaire, including the demographic questions as the first part, the Frost multidimensional perfectionism questionnaire (EMPS) as the second part and the Beck standard questionnaire as the third part. The demographic questions include questions about gender, educational field, faculty of education, semester, previous semester grade and the total average of the previous semesters. The Frost multidimensional perfectionism scale has been developed in order to assess different dimensions of perfectionism. This test consists of 35 statements and 6 sub-scales, including concerning about mistakes or errors, hesitation than to actions, parental expectations, parental criticism, individual standards and discipline. The overall perfectionism score is obtained by summing the scores of all the 35 statements of the test. To obtain the score of each sub-scale, the scores of all statements related to the studied sub-scale should be summed; a high score indicates the excessive perfectionism of the individuals in the studied area. High scores on this test indicate a high perfectionism of the person in the studied area. The method of grading the options in this test is as follows: Completely Disagree = 1; Disagree = 2; 3 = No Comment; Agree = 4; Completely Agree = 5. (8) have been reported the internal consistency coefficient of the test sub-scales between 73% to 93% and the total internal consistency coefficient of the test as 90% (9), (10). The reliability coefficient in the present study was as 87%. The Beck-2 depression questionnaire (BDI-II) includes 21 questions that measures physical, behavioral and cognitive symptoms of depression. Each question has four options that are respectively graded from 0 to 3 scores and determines different degrees of depression from mild to severe. The maximum score on this questionnaire is equal to 63 and its minimum is zero. The validity and reliability of this test has been proven in various studies (10). A high score indicates more severe depression. The questionnaires were provided for research samples by the researcher, and after giving them the necessary explanations about the objectives of the study, if they were announcing their consent to participate in the study, they would be asked to return the questionnaires to the researcher after completion. From a total of 200 questionnaires that was distributed at the first stage, 176 questionnaires were returned to the researcher. Thus, the responding percentage was 88%. 14 questionnaires were also excluded due not-completing the first, second or third section. Finally, 48 other questionnaires were prepared and made available for the students who have

not attended in the first stage. After completion of these questionnaires and end of inquiry, the necessary data was extracted from the questionnaires and entered into SPSS software database.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS19 software. Data normalizing was investigated using Kolmogorov – Smirnov test. Normal data was analyzed using parametric tests and non-normal data was analyzed using non-parametric tests. Based on this test, the scores of the following were not normally distributed: the depression score ( $P < 0.007$ ), the sub-scales of concern about errors ( $P < 0.01$ ), hesitation than to actions ( $P < 0.01$ ) and discipline ( $P < 0.002$ ).

## Research findings

Of a total of 200 studied students, 98 subjects (49%) were female and 32 subjects (16%) were medical students. 53 students (5/26%) were at third semester and 87 subjects (5/43%) were paramedical college students. The Grade Point Average (GPA) of the previous semester and the overall GPA of last semesters of the studied students were  $16.2 \pm 1.4$  and  $16.0 \pm 1.3$ , respectively. Demographic characteristics of the studied students are given in Table 1.

The mean depression score was  $14.65 \pm 12.41$  and the depression distribution based on severity were as follows: more than half of the samples (54%) with minor depression, 15.5% with mild depression, 16.5% with moderate depression and 14.5% with severe depression. The average of perfectionism overall score was  $18.2 \pm 2.9$  and the scores about its sub-scales were as the following: concerning about the mistakes ( $2.6 \pm 0.6$ ), hesitation than to actions ( $2.9 \pm 0.6$ ), parental expectations ( $3.1 \pm 0.7$ ), parental criticism ( $2.5 \pm 0.7$ ), individual standards ( $3.3 \pm 0.6$ ) and discipline ( $3.6 \pm 0.8$ ). There was no significant relationship between depression score and sex, educational field and educational year. There was a significant relationship between sex and perfectionism overall score (CI 95%, 0.19-1.8,  $P = 0.01$ ). There were also significant relationships between sub-scales of perfectionism, including parents expectations (CI 95%, 0.12-0.54,  $P = 0.002$ ), individual standard (CI 95%, 0.04-0.38,  $P = 0.01$ ) and discipline ( $P = 0.001$ ) with sex. No significant relationship was observed between the educational field and academic year with perfectionism subscales.

A negative and significant correlation was observed between depression score and the GPA of the last semester ( $r = -0.193$ ,  $P = 0.04$ ) and the overall GPA of the previous semesters ( $r = -0.197$ ,  $P = 0.04$ ) of the studied students. There was a negative correlation between the total score of perfectionism and the GPA of the last semester ( $r = -0.150$ ,  $P = 0.12$ ) and the total GPA of the previous semesters ( $r = -0.028$ ,  $P = 0.78$ ) of

the studied students, but it was not significant. There was a negative and significant correlation between the parental criticism subscale and the GPA of the last semester ( $r = -0.346$ ,  $P = 0.000$ ) and the total GPA of the previous semesters ( $r = -0.255$ ,  $P = 0.01$ ) of the studied students. There was a positive correlation between the sub-scales of hesitation than to actions and discipline and academic achievement, but this correlation was weak and was not statistically significant. There was a positive but weak correlation between depression and perfectionism and also it was not statistically significant. There was a positive, strong and significant correlation between the depression and concerning about the mistakes ( $P = 0.004$ ,  $r = 0.201$ ). Except for the individual standards and discipline, there was a positive correlation between the depression and other sub-scales of perfectionism. There was a significant relationship between different degrees of depression and concerning about the mistakes based on Kruskal – Wallis test, so that the students who were suffering from severe depression had a higher average scale score in the sub-scale of concerning about the mistakes ( $P = 0.05$ ). There was a significant and inverse relationship between parental criticism and depression with academic achievement and also a significant difference between sex and perfectionism. The mean depression score was  $14.65 \pm 12.41$ , and 14.5% of the students were suffering from severe depression based on Beck depression questionnaire (11), (12). There was a significant relationship between the depression and previous semester GPA and the total GPA of last semesters, so that, with increasing the depression score, the students' GPA was declined.

### Discussion and Conclusion

A relationship between each of the two aspects of perfectionism (positive and negative perfectionism) with depression and stress was also shown by Afshari et al. that, so that the positive perfectionism is considered as a protective factor to prevent depression and stress in a person (13) but the negative or extreme perfectionism, itself, causes depression and stress in a person. There was a negative correlation between perfectionism score with the last semester GPA and the total GPA of previous semesters of studied students, but not significant. There was a negative and significant correlation between the parental criticism subscale with the last semester GPA and the total GPA of previous semesters of studied students. Parents' over-criticism of children not only causes loss of their academic achievement, but also can cause depression and loss of academic in them (13), (14).

Hamacheck in a research to review the issue that personality traits are related to perfectionism have noted that the positive perfectionism is associated with the sense of duty. People who expect to be in full from

themselves, tend to perfectionism due to individual differences that one of its reason includes family factors, including non-critical parents or sometimes critical, some times strict (15). Given that individual characters began to form in the family, the stresses and depressions due to extreme perfectionism and unrealistic expectations can be reduced by giving awareness to the parents in children's educational areas as well as notifying them in the areas of perfectionism and its positive and negative aspects in social life of the person. Reducing the stress of extreme perfectionism and the resulted depression, its negative effects on individual' academic achievement can be prevented.

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