

A Review of Research on Perfectionism and Creativity

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Abstract: The personality trait of perfectionism is very common among college students, while previous studies have concluded that perfectionism has a hindering effect on the development of creativity in individuals, the present study concluded that perfectionism also has a positive effect on creativity. Therefore, this study wants to explore the positive aspects of perfectionism on creativity.

Keywords: Perfectionism; Creativity; College Students.

1. Introduction

With the rapid development of the national economy, this large group of college students' creativity cannot be ignored. At the same time, the personality trait of perfectionism is common in this group of college students. While the definition of the concept and connotation of perfectionism is still controversial, the definition of perfectionism by previous researchers mainly focuses on the negative aspects of perfectionism.

From Adler (1956) onwards, it has been put forward that perfectionism is the nature of human beings. It is completely normal for people to want to pursue perfectionism. Hamachek (1978), on the other hand, first proposed a two-dimensional view of perfectionism, dividing perfectionism into normative perfectionism and neurotic perfectionism, where normative perfectionists want to achieve standards that are reasonable and realistic and are satisfying from the process, thus increasing the level of self-esteem, but neurotic perfectionists tend to aim for standards that are too high or beyond the level of what an individual is capable of attaining, while neurotic perfectionists are more afraid of failure and more concerned about disappointing others by not meeting their expectations. Level, while neurotic perfectionists are more afraid of failing and more concerned about what others think of them, fearing that their behavior will disappoint others by not meeting their expectations. Although some researchers' studies support the existence of positive perfectionism, the social perception of perfectionism remains negative (Flett, 2003; Hewitt, 1986; Bell, 2010; Kawamura, 2001) so scholars need to explore perfectionism from another perspective and explore the positive aspects of perfectionism to change the social perception of the one-dimensional perception of perfectionism in society.

Meanwhile, in today's era of rapid social development, innovativeness has been given great significance, and individual creativity has become the focus of researchers' attention, and the factors affecting the development of creativity include physiological bases and intellectual factors, as well as non-intellectual factors such as motivation and beliefs (Amabile, 1996). Individual's non-intellectual factors are usually closely related to personality traits (Li, 2013), and perfectionism, as a multidimensional personality trait, is a complex psychological phenomenon, as well as a behavioral

tendency to seek to achieve perfection in everything, which influences people's psychological, behavioral, life, and work qualities, and affects individual's creativity in an external behavioral way (Chen, 2013). Previous empirical studies have shown that perfectionism harms creativity, and these studies support the idea that perfectionism may hinder creativity but do not take into account the multidimensional nature of perfectionism that has been established (Wigert, 2012). In addition, the scale used by these researchers, MPS, is biased toward maladaptive perfectionism, with more maladaptive items in the scale. In summary, the issues associated with utilizing the MPS as a unidimensional assessment of perfectionism may explain why past research has shown a negative correlation between perfectionism scores and creativity.

For the study of perfectionism and creativity, in previous studies, it is believed that perfectionism negatively predicts creativity and Feist's (1999) study found that perfectionists have a weaker tendency to innovate, and their tendency to pursue perfection inhibits the development of creativity, and it was also found that the number of perfectionists grows with age. However, recent studies have divided perfectionism into positive and negative perfectionism, and on this basis have found that positive perfectionism has a facilitating effect on creativity (Ma, 2014). It has also been found that the dimension of high standards in perfectionism has a significant positive correlation with creativity, and similarly, Gallucci (2011) et al. found that the trait of high personal effort in perfectionists has a significant positive correlation with creativity.

Besides that, we have found that adaptive perfectionism is positively correlated with creativity based on Wigert (2012), who argues that it is precisely because adaptive perfectionism shows a high level and quality of performance all the time, which relates to one of the key qualities of creativity, i.e., the quality of the mind, which demands high standards. So perfectionism can also promote creative behavior. However, excessive adaptive perfectionism can also lead to the fixation of thinking, excessive pursuit of quality, and fear of the destabilizing factors that come with innovation. Based on Wigert's (2012) study, Yu (2021) et al. investigated the effect of a mentor's perfectionism on protégé's creativity, which again verified that perfectionism can effectively and positively predict creativity.

This finding can be explained in terms of the effect of perfectionism on an individual's sense of efficacy. From the two dimensions of positive perfectionism, i.e., high standards and the discrepancy between ideals and reality, it can be inferred that when a student sets higher and stricter standards in the pursuit of better creative performance, he is at the same time more confident in his abilities and expects that his goals will be achieved; whereas, when a student fails to accept the discrepancy between the ideals and the reality and feels sorry for himself if he fails to achieve his goals, it also indicates that he is not sure of his abilities and not certain of whether he will be able to achieve his goals or not. If the student cannot accept the gap between the ideal and reality and feels sorry for himself when he fails to achieve the goal, it also shows that he is not sure of his ability and is not sure whether he can achieve the goal. Thus, a motivated perfectionist has a stronger belief in the self's ability to produce original and realistic products. In addition, other explanations have been proposed by researchers.

Ma (2009) found that perfectionism is positively associated with pursuing success and failure avoidance. Another study showed (Yang, 2008) that perfectionism positively predicts the pursuit of success and the avoidance of failures, and that perfectionists usually set high standards and requirements for themselves while they are worried about failing. We need to distinguish between positive and negative perfectionism, positive perfectionism is mainly about pursuing success while negative perfectionism is about avoiding failure, and individuals with high achievement motivation will also pursue high standards like positive perfectionists. At the same time, perfectionism is a personality trait and achievement motivation are a tendency to pursue high standards, so they are essentially the same. It also shows why the higher the positive perfectionism of college students, the higher the motivation to pursue success.

And the higher the self-efficacy of a perfectionist, the more it also affects his or her creativity to some extent. For example. Relevant researchers believe that when an individual's self-efficacy is at a high level, the individual will be more likely to try something new, and at the same time, once their attempts are successful, the results of this behavior will give the individual corresponding reinforcement, which will motivate the individual to continue to innovate, and also continue to improve the individual's creative self-efficacy. A study divided students into high and low levels of creative self-efficacy according to their creative self-efficacy scores and found that there are significant differences in the total score of creativity at different levels and that there is a significant positive correlation between creative self-efficacy and creativity, which is also consistent with the findings of previous studies. Meanwhile, Hong's (2007) study also found that there is a positive correlation between an individual's creative self-efficacy and creative behavior. So, the findings of this study are consistent with the findings of previous studies.

2. Conclusion

In summary, positive perfectionism directly and positively predicts individual creativity. Therefore, in future research, perfectionism needs to be viewed from a more holistic and dialectical perspective to utilize the traits of perfectionism to bring out more strengths in students.

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