

Perfectionism, Self Compassion, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Dispositional Envy among Performing Artists

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ABSTRACT

It's needless to say how passionate people in the creative fields are about their respective projects. Yet, there is a reality beyond the glamour, behind the served dish. Incessant practice, guilt on the failure to be able to do so, self-criticism, trials and errors, crests -troughs of productivity, self-doubt, need for proper validation, insecurities, comparison stress and creative blockages are an active part of the lives of artists. Perfectionism has been unduly romanticised for years together but artists have been seen to suffer its ill effects. With stiff competition, harsh criticism and the pressure to create, it is hard to be compassionate towards oneself. This may even stimulate performance anxiety and envy. The research aims to study Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Dispositional Envy among Performing Artists, for the purpose of which a sample of 35 artists in the age range of 20-40 years was taken. Standardised measures of the aforementioned variables were administered to the respondents. Findings of the study revealed a significant positive relationship between rigid perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation, self-critical perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation, benign envy and rigid perfectionism and benign envy and self-critical perfectionism. A significant negative relationship was revealed between rigid perfectionism and self-compassion, self-critical perfectionism and self-compassion and fear of negative evaluation and self-compassion. With these findings, we can conclude that following one's heart takes a toll and comes with responsibility too. There's a need for programmes to help artists overcome these mental obstacles and enhance their productivity.

Keywords: *Performing Artists, Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, Fear Of Negative Evaluation, Envy*

"The role of the artist is to ask questions, not answer them"- Anton Pavlovich Chekhov.

An artist is a person engaged in the expression of creative skill related to creating art, practicing the arts, or demonstrating an art such as painting, music, drama, dance, etc. In short, a person whose work shows exceptional creative ability or skill can be referred to as one. In 1906, Pablo Picasso, determined to reinvent the portrait and influence realism, spent months in his studio to rework paint on his canvas and yet wasn't satisfied. He didn't finish it until after a trip to Spain. Unfortunately, in the fast paced modern-age, in

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the midst of cut-throat competition and the pressure to sustain oneself, an artist finds oneself unable to afford the luxury of time.

In a study, the dimensional personality profile was assessed on NEO –FFI (1989) on the domains of neuroticism, extraversion, openness, agreeableness conscientiousness. It was found that higher scores were found on each of these dimensions for the creative groups compared to non-creative groups (Pavitra et al., 2007)

In the research into the connection between creativity and psychopathology, a theoretical connection was drawn between creative functioning and unusual or regressed thinking processes, personality traits, values and behavioural characteristics. (Martindale, 1999; Barron, 1961) The idea that creativity and psychopathology are somehow linked goes way to the time of Aristotle, who stated that “No great mind has existed without a touch of madness.” There is a long list of creative achievers who have suffered from psychopathology including Vincent Van Gogh, Mozart, Beethoven, etc.

A study on outstanding individuals who had their biographies published in the New York Times Book Review found a general increase in alcohol abuse in artists, especially writers (Ludwig, 1995). Ernest Hemingway for example won a Nobel Prize for Literature during his days of intoxication, and later committed suicide.

There have been a handful of studies to establish the relationship between creativity and mental health in India. The most prominent one by Pavitra et al., (2007) found that there was no difference between creative and non-creative groups regarding stress profile. The findings of Western literature state otherwise, hence more research is needed to study the link between them in Indian population. In a study conducted by Mor et al., (1995) on 87 professional performers, it was found that self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and low personal control were associated with greater debilitating performance anxiety, somatic anxiety, and less goal satisfaction. Similarly, it was found that low goal satisfaction was associated jointly with high self-oriented perfectionism and low personal control.

Perfectionism

Hollender (1965) defined perfectionism as “the practice of demanding of oneself or others a higher quality of performance than is required by the situation.”

Frost et al., (1990) defined it as “the setting of excessively high standards for performance which are accompanied by tendencies for overly critical evaluation of one’s own behaviour.” It has been repeatedly associated with depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and other mental health problems.

In a research conducted by Basak (2012) on perfectionist attitudes of artistically inclined students, several characteristics associated with perfectionism were highlighted such as such as excessive concern about others’ perceptions of oneself, jealousy, extreme sensitivity to mistakes, trouble with time management and organisation, difficulty with initiating and completing a task, mood changes and experiencing distress while working on tasks, procrastination, excessive compulsiveness and difficulty with concentration on specific tasks.

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Perfectionism has also been associated with performance anxiety (Kenny, Davis, & Oates, 2004). As Eugene Delacroix rightly said, “The artist who aims at perfection at everything achieves it in nothing”. To process that having crafted a good image is always better than having never attempted an imagined masterpiece is a hard pill to swallow for a perfectionist. Contrary to popular belief, perfectionism is not a desirable trait and may potentially act as a major hurdle in the creative process. According to Hollender (1965), the adult perfectionist battles with haunting self-doubt and exacting demands. Hence, performance demands are seen as opportunities for testing self-worth. Perfectionism can be paralyzing in a symbolic sense. Perfectionism could be understood as-

Rigid Perfectionism

According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), it is referred as “the rigid insistence on everything being flawless, perfect, and without errors or faults, including one’s own and others’ performance”.

Self-Critical Perfectionism

According to Dunkley et al., (2003), “self-criticism measures the tendency to engage in harsh criticism when performance falls short of perfection. It subsumes four facets: concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, self-criticism and socially prescribed perfectionism”. Priel & Shahar (2000) found that self-criticism predicted increased stress and decreased social support over time, which partly accounted for increases in depression.

Narcissistic Perfectionism

According to Nealis et al., (2015), “It is characterized by an outwardly directed need for perfection alongside a grandiose self-image, interpersonal entitlement and unreasonably high expectations for others”. It is composed of four facets: other oriented perfectionism, hypercriticism, entitlement and grandiosity.

Self-Compassion

Neff (2008) defined it as “being warm and understanding towards oneself while encountering suffering, inadequacy or failure, rather than ignoring one's pain or flagellating oneself with self-criticism”. Self-compassion is composed of three main components: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness.

Individuals scoring low on dispositional self-compassion were more anxious and depressed (Neff, 2003). There is a dearth of studies conducted to assess self-compassion among artists, yet links between self-compassion and creative originality have been established historically. Zabelina & Robinson (2010) tested 86 undergraduates in control and self-compassion conditions. Their creative originality came out to be low for self-judgemental individuals in the control condition but equal in the self-compassion condition.

In a study conducted to evaluate the difference in self-compassion levels among music and non-music students by Kelley and Farley (2019), no significant difference was found between the two groups.

Fear of Negative Evaluation

According to Weeks et al., (2005), “It refers to the irrational thoughts related to being judged in a hostile way or looked down upon by others in social situations and belongs to the cognitive component of social phobia”.

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It is a persistent sense of apprehension or anxiety that a person will be negatively assessed in social and performance situations and was measured in a study using Fear of Negative Evaluation (FNE) Scale developed by Watson & Friend (1969). Individuals with high FNE tend to experience more anxiety in social situations and avoid interpersonal encounters that they perceive as threatening (Leary, 1983).

Individuals in the creative field often regard feedback as their income. Therefore, it is highly likely that they would tie evaluations by others closely to their sense of self-worth and thus the prevalence of a high fear of being negatively evaluated is probable. All performers go through evaluations and critiques by numerous people (McQuade, 2008).

Envy

According to Parrott & Smith (1993); Smith & Kim (2007), Envy is defined as “a negative emotional response to another person’s superior quality, achievement, or possession, in which the envier either desires the advantage or wishes that the other person lacks it”.

Cohen-Charash & Larson (2017) defined it as “a painful emotion that involves the beliefs that one lacks a desired object that another person has, and the desired object is important to the person’s self-concept or competitive position. Envy includes the motivation to reduce the pain it entails and to improve one’s relative standing”.

While some research points to inspirational effects of admiration (Algoe & Haidt, 2009), there’s a lack of research on whether admiration leads to improved performance. It is safe to say that envy has mixed components and has proven to stimulate performance in some cases, and has induced excessive frustration in others.

- **Benign Envy:** It increases the motivation to invest more effort to improve one’s position. It can increase the desire to get what the envied person has, but lacks hostility. It elicits upward motivation. (Crusius & Lange et al., 2014)
- **Malicious Envy:** It increases the motivation to harm an envied person’s success representing hostility. It results when envied person’s advantage is evaluated as subjectively undeserved and the envier experiences less control over personal outcomes. (Van de Ven et al., 2011) Fear of failure should be related to it. (Smith and Kim, 2007)

Purpose

The purpose of the research is to study perfection, self-compassion, fear of negative evaluation and envy among performing artists.

METHOD

Hypotheses

- Self-Compassion will be negative correlated with Perfectionism.
- Fear of Negative Evaluation will be positively correlated with Perfectionism.
- Fear of Negative Evaluation will be negatively correlated with Self Compassion.
- Envy will be positively correlated with Perfectionism.

Sample

A total of 35 Performing Artists comprising musicians, designers, illustrators, painters, dancers, writers, actors, poets, etc. in the age range of 20-40 years from across the Tricity (Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali) participated.

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Measures

- **The Big Three Perfectionism Scale- Short Form (BTPS-SF)**, given by Fehr et al., (2019) comprising 16 items on a 6 point scale, is the shorter version of the original 45-item BTPS. It is an efficient and novel means of assessing multidimensional perfectionism.
- **Self-Compassion Scale- Short Form (SCS-SF)**, developed by Raes et al., (2011) comprises 12 of the original 26 items of the SCF on a 5 point scale and is a reliable alternative, especially to determine overall self-compassion scores.
- **Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale** by Leary (1983) consists of 12 items on a 5 point scale, 11 of which are same as the original FNE. It is a commonly used instrument to measure social anxiety.
- **The Benign and Malicious Envy Scale (BeMaS)** by Lange & Crusius (2014) consists of 10 items built on a 5 point scale. It is a measure of dispositional envy designed to assess people's tendency to react with benign or malicious envy towards superior comparison standards.

Procedure

The participants were informed about the purpose of the research and the questionnaires were filled through Google forms. Standardized Psychological Tests were administered to them. Each participant was thanked for their cooperation.

Analysis of Data

Table 1: Showing the Mean and Standard Deviation data of all Variables. N=35

	Rigid Perfectionism	Self-Critical Perfectionism	Narcissistic Perfectionism	Self-Compassion	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Benign Envy	Malicious Envy
N	35	35	35	35	35	35	35
Mean	14.7	18.9	12.3	3.07	36.3	3.37	1.55
Standard deviation	3.11	5.29	3.78	0.660	11.5	0.842	0.588

Table 2: Showing Correlation between the Variables.

	Rigid Perfectionism	Self-Critical Perfectionism	Narcissistic Perfectionism	Self-Compassion	Fear of Negative Evaluation	Benign Envy	Malicious Envy
Rigid Perfectionism	—						
Self-Critical Perfectionism	0.471**	—					
Narcissistic Perfectionism	0.372*	0.364*	—				
Self-Compassion	-0.529**	-0.659***	-0.307	—			
Fear of Negative Evaluation	0.493**	0.612***	0.296	-0.601***	—		
Benign Envy	0.370*	0.480**	0.347*	-0.288	0.301	—	
Malicious Envy	-0.053	-0.025	0.297	-0.241	0.122	-0.108	—

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The results found out a significant positive correlation between Self Critical Perfectionism and Rigid Perfectionism ($r= 0.471, p<.01$). There also is a significant positive relationship between Narcissistic Perfectionism and Rigid Perfectionism ($r=0.372, p<.05$). There is a significant positive correlation between Narcissistic Perfectionism and Self Critical Perfectionism ($r=0.364, p<.05$). The study revealed a significant negative correlation between Self-Compassion and Rigid Perfectionism ($r=0.529, p<.01$). It also revealed a significant negative correlation between Self-Compassion and Self-Critical Perfectionism ($r=0.659, p<.001$). There is a significant positive correlation between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Rigid Perfectionism ($r=0.493, p<.01$). A significant positive correlation between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Self-Critical Perfectionism ($r=0.612, p<.001$) was also revealed. A significant negative correlation between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Self-Compassion ($r=0.601, p<.001$) was found. The study revealed a significant positive correlation between Benign Envy and Rigid Perfectionism ($r=0.370, p<.05$). A significant positive correlation between Benign Envy and Self-Critical Perfectionism ($r=0.480, p<.01$) was also found. There is a significant positive correlation between Benign Envy and Narcissistic Perfectionism ($r=0.347, p<.05$). Further, no significant relationship between Narcissistic Perfectionism and Malicious Envy was found.

Wanke et al. (2012) found through a survey of German theatre students that 79.5% of the males and 78.1% of the females were an average weight according to the body mass index. When asked about body satisfaction, diet, and substance use, only 21.6% stated they were 'very content' with their body. 11.6% had 'mental stress', 12.7% had 'physical fatigue', and 4.2% had 'bad drinking habits'.

CONCLUSION

The study investigated relationship between Perfectionism, Self-Compassion, Fear of Negative Evaluation and Dispositional Envy among Performing Artists. There came out a significant positive relationship between rigid perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation, self-critical perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation, benign envy and rigid perfectionism and benign envy and self-critical perfectionism. A significant negative relationship was revealed between rigid perfectionism and self-compassion, self-critical perfectionism and self-compassion and fear of negative evaluation and self-compassion. It is understandable how the fear of being assessed negatively triggers the urge to achieve perfection and makes one overly critical of oneself. Such insecurities and harsh treatment with oneself result in lack of self-compassion. The lack of contentment with oneself can spark envious feeling towards others. These traits have been known to affect the mental health and lower productivity of artists severely. The creativity and happiness of an artist is lost somewhere between the hurdles of job insecurity, financial struggle, fighting societal norms, unconventional nature of job along with variables covered in the research. The life of one is far away from the perceived image of being glamorous and this issue needs limelight.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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