

## Perfectionism and Social Anxiety among Post-graduation Students

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### ABSTRACT

Social anxiety is a very prevalent condition in the society. The need to be perfect or flawless is often linked with social anxiety. The study investigates relationship between perfectionism and social anxiety in post-graduation students and also if there is a difference in these due to gender. The study was conducted on 71 students (36 boys and 35 girls) undergoing post-graduation in India. After analysing the data, it was found that there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and social anxiety in post-graduation students. No statistically significant difference due to gender was reported.

**Keywords:** *Perfectionism, Social Anxiety, Post-graduation Students*

Post-graduation can be described as a course pursued after the completion of an under-graduation course. These courses help the students to gain in depth information about a specific subject or to specialize in a certain field. There are a lot of post-graduation courses in India, which includes Masters in Art, Science, Architecture, Law among others. The eligibility for joining these courses vary according to the courses chosen and the university they plan to pursue their studies. But it is important that an under-graduation degree has to be completed before pursuing PG course in India. As there are a lot of college graduates and a lesser number of jobs, the need for PG courses is increasing each day because a person needs to be well qualified when applying for a job. The requirement for PG courses also depends on the career choice.

National Comorbidity Survey (NCS) and National Comorbidity Survey Replication (NCS-R) indicates that social anxiety disorder is one of the most common mental disorders with lifetime prevalence of 16% and 12.1%. Social anxiety is defined as fear of social situations in which embarrassment may occur (e.g., making conversation, meeting strangers, dating) or there is a risk of being negatively evaluated by others (e.g., seen as stupid, weak, or anxious). Social anxiety involves apprehensiveness about one's social status, role, and behaviour. (American Psychological Association). A person with social anxiety often fears about being the centre of attention or doing something that might embarrass them in public. This can also lead them to avoid social situations and if they cannot avoid them, they experience many symptoms of anxiety and physical distress like sweating, increased heart rate and others. Socially anxious

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individuals often tend to have higher standards and expectations in social situations. Setting high standards is common in perfectionism. Perfectionism is a characteristic when a person is overly concerned about achieving flawlessness. This may cause the person to set high expectations for themselves and are often highly self-critical of oneself.

**Perfectionism.** the tendency to demand of others or of oneself an extremely high or even flawless level of performance, in excess of what is required by the situation. (APA). People with perfectionism often have high expectations of oneself. According to findings of Camp et al. (2022), it was found that in different family types, the participants from maladaptive perfectionistic families experienced higher levels of depression and anxiety (Camp et al., 2022). The findings by Sand et al. (2021) stated that the levels of perfectionism in males and females were almost similar (Sand et al., 2021).

**Social Anxiety.** fear of social situations in which embarrassment may occur (e.g., making conversation, meeting strangers, dating) or there is a risk of being negatively evaluated by others (e.g., seen as stupid, weak, or anxious). Social anxiety involves apprehensiveness about one's social status, role, and behavior. When the anxiety causes an individual significant distress or impairment in functioning, a diagnosis of social phobia may be warranted. (APA). The findings of Bemmer et al. (2021) found that CBT interventions given to a group of adolescents and young adults with autism spectrum disorder helped improve their condition when looked into social anxiety and mental health (Bemmer et al., 2021).

In a study conducted by Wang et al. (2022) on 169 college students to know the psychometric properties of Family Almost Perfect Scale (FAPS), there was a significant positive correlation between perfectionism and social anxiety. When comparing different family types, the students from maladaptive perfectionistic family were experiencing increased levels of depression and anxiety. Overestimating the social standards and underestimating their self-ability to meet those standards are factors of social anxiety. High standards are typical features of perfectionism (Wang et al., 2022). The study conducted by Scott et al. (2014) on 371 participants out of which only 245 participants finished all the scales. The results of the study suggested that there was a significant effect of maladaptive perfectionism on social anxiety. But this effect seems to have occurred due to the indirect effect of maladaptive anticipatory processing. The maladaptive anticipatory processing showed positive relation with social anxiety even after controlling variables like depression and maladaptive perfectionism. (Scott et al., 2014). The findings in the study conducted by Levinson et al. (2015) on 602 undergraduates indicated that in patients with SAD (social anxiety disorder), the low personal standards and high maladaptive perfectionism were associated with high social anxiety. In the finding from self-report, low personal standards and high maladaptive perfectionism were associated with social anxiety whereas in informant reports, high standards and high maladaptive perfectionism were associated with social anxiety (Levinson et al., 2015). Abdollahi (2019b) conducted a cross sectional study on 450 undergraduates to know the mediating role of rumination in the relation between perfectionism and social anxiety. The results indicated that evaluative concerns perfectionists were more likely to have social anxiety as they might experience rumination. (Abdollahi, 2019b). Mohammadian et al. (2017) conducted a study on 131 students to understand how perfectionism and other variables like anger affects the social anxiety in the students. In his study, he concluded that there was a significant relationship between perfectionism and social anxiety. He also found that other variables like interpersonal rejection sensitivity were associated with social anxiety (Mohammadian et al., 2017). The study conducted by Lynch et al. (2021) was to understand the gender differences in the stigma about social anxiety and depression in adolescents. In this

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study with 315 adolescents about the personal and perceived stigma, the results concluded that while males scored higher in personal stigma, females scored higher in perceived stigma. (Lynch et al., 2021)

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Objectives*

The objective of the study was to understand if there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and social anxiety among postgraduation students and also if there is a gender difference in the level of perfectionism and social anxiety of students undergoing postgraduation.

#### *Hypothesis*

H<sub>0.1</sub>: There is no significant relationship between perfectionism and social anxiety among post-graduation students.

H<sub>0.2</sub>: There is no significant difference between males and females in the levels of perfectionism and social anxiety.

#### *Sample*

The sampling method used was convenience sampling and the sample consisted of 71 participants from Kerala, out of which 35 were females and 36 were males. They were from various colleges undergoing post-graduation courses in Kerala. The data was collected using google forms which were distributed through various social media platforms.

#### *Inclusion Criteria*

All the participants who were undergoing post-graduation in different colleges and who had given their informed consent were included to participate in the study.

#### *Tools*

- **Interaction Anxiousness Scale:** This is a 15-item instrument used to measure the social anxiety of an individual. The subject has to indicate the level of which he can relate to the given item. It is scored as a 5-point Likert scale. The internal consistency reliability index (Cronbach's Alpha) has been reported ranging from 0.87-0.89. when looked into the validity of the scale, many number of studies have indicated good convergent validity, good discriminant validity. The data concerned with factorial validity are also good.
- **Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale:** This is a 35-item instrument used to measure perfectionism of an individual. The individual is asked to answer each item according to how much that item applies to them. It is then scored by 5-point Likert system. The reliability is excellent, with an alpha of 0.9. The scale has excellent validity.

#### *Research Design*

A descriptive research design was used to assess the relationship between perfectionism and social anxiety among postgraduates and also to find out if there is a significant difference in the level of these variables due to gender.

#### *Procedure*

The data was collected from 71 students undergoing postgraduation courses. The sample was obtained through convenient sampling. The questionnaires to measure social anxiety and perfectionism with demographic sheet and ethical consent were shared to the sample by

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WhatsApp and other social media. Using IBM SPSS Statistics 21, Pearson correlation and independent t-test was conducted. The data obtained from the study was processed in Microsoft Excel and the statistical analysis was done through IBM SPSS Statistics 21.

### RESULTS

**H<sub>0.1</sub>:** there is no significant relationship between perfectionism and social anxiety among post-graduation students.

**Table 1. Pearson's Rank Correlation among perfectionism and social anxiety in post-graduation students**

	N	M	SD	1	2
Perfectionism	71	102.46	17.665	-	
Social anxiety	71	46.83	9.101	.481**	-

\*Statistically significant at 0.01 level

Table 1 shows Pearson's Rank Correlation among perfectionism and social anxiety in post-graduation students. From the results, it can be inferred that the correlation value between perfectionism and social anxiety is 0.481.

**H<sub>0.2</sub>:** there is no significant difference in the levels of perfectionism and social anxiety in different genders.

**Table 2: Independent sample t-test for perfectionism and social anxiety based on gender**

	Males		Females		df	t	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Perfectionism	104.56	15.520	100.31	19.624	69	1.012	.130
Social anxiety	47.94	9.011	45.69	9.180	69	1.046	.943

Table 2 shows Independent sample t-test for perfectionism and social anxiety based on gender. From the results, it can be inferred that for perfectionism, the mean and standard deviation for males is 104.56 and 15.520 respectively and the mean and standard deviation for females is 100.31 and 19.624 respectively. The t value is 1.012 and p value is .130. For social anxiety the mean and standard deviation for males is 47.94 and 9.011 respectively and the mean and standard deviation for females is 45.69 and 9.180 respectively. The t value is 1.046 and p value is .943

### DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis states that there is no significant relationship between the social anxiety and perfectionism in post-graduation students in India. The results showed that there is significant relationship between the social anxiety and perfectionism and the null hypothesis was rejected. Similar results were seen in other studies. Wang et al. (2022) conducted his study on 169 college students and the results suggested that there was a significant relationship between social anxiety and perfectionism. (Wang et al., 2022b).

The second hypothesis states that there is no significant difference between males and females in the level of social anxiety and perfectionism. The results of the present study showed that there was no significant difference between levels of perfectionism and social anxiety in the two genders. The findings by Sand et al. (2021) stated that the levels of perfectionism in males and females were almost similar (Sand et al., 2021).

## CONCLUSION

Similar to previous studies, there was a significant relationship found between perfectionism and social anxiety in post-graduation students.

### Limitations

- The sample size of the study could be increased.
- The students could also be categorised according to family type, type of post-graduation courses they are pursuing and others.
- The study was conducted only on post-graduation students. Under graduation students could also be included in the study.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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