Research Paper

Fear of Negative Evaluation and Perfectionism Among Young Adults in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

In a circumstance involving social evaluation, an individual's processing of information about himself or herself and the information about others differs due to fear of negative evaluation. On the other hand, Perfectionism is a personality trait that aspires for high performance standards and is accompanied by a tendency to critically evaluate oneself. It is strongly correlated with one's mental health and has a significant negative impact on one's career, studies, and overall quality of life. The present study aims to determine the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among young adults. Sample of 200 young adults (91=males, 109=females) was taken from different districts in the state of Kerala. The study aimed to check the significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among young adults and as well as to find out the significance difference in fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism based on gender and place of residence. Brief fear of negative evaluation scale and Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) were used. The data were analysed using different statistical tools such as the student's t- test and Pearson's correlation. Findings revealed positive correlation between fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism and significant difference in perfectionism among males and females. The study concluded that fear of negative evaluation when increased, perfectionism also increases among young adults.

Keywords: *Fear of negative evaluation, Perfectionism*

As per India's Census 2011, 15-24 year olds in India constitutes one-fifth (19.1%) of India's total population and it is expected to rise to 34.33% by 2010. Kerala, the southwest region of the country in the Malabar coast, has an estimated population of 35 million, up from 33.38 million in 2011. The period of growth from adolescence to adulthood is an important time of life in its own right and is also significant because it sets the stage for later adult life (Arnett, 2000; George, 1993; Hogan & Astone, 1986; Shanahan, 2000). We consider young or emerging adulthood roughly to be defined as the timespan from approximately age 18 to age 25. Others have argued that the emerging adulthood period persists as late as age 29 (Arnett, Kloep, Hendry, & Tanner, 2011), and the international youth development field routinely considers "youth" to cover the period from early adolescence to age 30 or even slightly beyond (USAID, 2012). A large and relatively

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new body of research is revealing that young adulthood is a time of dramatic change in basic thinking structures, as well as in the brain. Adolescence and Young adulthood and are stages of rapid physical, psychological, and social change. It is also a time in life when people are exposed to a variety of stressors, which can lead to mental health problems in certain people. The crucial period of transition from adolescence to adulthood is receiving more attention, since how this psychological and social shift is handled may have an impact on both present and future wellbeing.

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE), also atychiphobia, is a psychological construct reflecting "apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over negative evaluations by others, and the expectation that others would evaluate one negatively". The construct and a psychological test to measure it were defined by Watson & Friend (1969). It can also be explained as a worry people have when they are put in an evaluating circumstance. Regardless of how well they do, this dread makes them assume that others will judge them poorly or point out their flaws, which causes them discomfort and makes them completely flee the scenario. They could also feel uncomfortable and distressed when speaking to others.

Those who have fear of being negatively evaluated could feel unappreciated by others. According to Kumar et al. (2015), there are no significant differences between men and women in the levels of fear of negative evaluation but there is a strong positive correlation between fear of negative evaluation and anxiety. Leary in 1983 found that individuals tend to have more anxiety and try avoiding interpersonal contact when they have high levels of fear of negative evaluation. Sehgal (2021) found 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. Karakashian et al. (2006) conducted a study on how Fear of negative evaluation affects helping behaviour: the bystander effect. The study revealed that fear of negative evaluation is a marginal predictor of helping behaviour. Individuals who score high on fear of negative evaluation are less inclined to lend a hand. Individuals who scored less on fear of negative evaluation are more likely to lend a hand in non-social circumstances than those with marginally higher fear.

In a circumstance involving social evaluation, an individual's processing of information about himself and information about others differs due to fear of receiving a negative evaluation. In a social evaluation situation, a person views himself more adversely than he would another person. Learning about social evaluation is biased by fear of negative evaluation. The more fear of negative assessment a person has, the more likely he will judge himself adversely in social situations. Fear of negative evaluation and learning unfavourable social appraisal about oneself are positively associated. Those with relatively low levels of fear of negative evaluation reject feedback and are insensitive to negative evaluations, whereas people with relatively high levels of fear of negative evaluation are more sensitive to negative feedback or evaluation (Button et.al., 2015). Sunkarapalli & Agarwal (2017) found that there is a significant positive correlation between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Perfectionism, mainly socially prescribed perfectionism. And it can be useful to develop an intervention for people with either high levels of fear of negative evaluation or socially prescribed perfectionism, as there exists a strong positive relationship between the two variables.

According to Stoeber (2018) Perfectionism is a multidimensional personality disposition characterized by striving for flawlessness and setting exceedingly high standards of performance accompanied by overly critical evaluations of one's behaviour. According to Adler, "the striving for perfection is innate in the sense that it is a part of life, a striving, an urge, a something without which life would be unthinkable" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1956), but individuals attempt to achieve the goal of perfection differently, and their individual attempts can be differentiated by their functional and dysfunctional behaviors toward this goal (Akay-Sullivan et al., 2016). Individuals, who strive for perfectionism, evaluate their behaviour severely. They aim for flawlessness and do not accept any mistakes on their part. The three kinds of perfectionism are other-oriented perfectionism, self-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt et al., 1991). Other-Oriented Perfectionists have very high standards for other people and demand that those standards be satisfied. They hold others to a very high standard and anticipate perfection from them. When someone expects others, rather than themselves, to be flawless, they are said to be practising other oriented perfectionism. Self-Oriented Perfectionists have very high expectations for themselves. They hold themselves to a high standard of perfection and harshly assess and condemn any failure, error, or shortcoming on their part. They aim for perfection in all that they do. People with socially prescribed perfectionism strive for perfection because their significant ones hold them to extremely high standards. The norms and values that others have for them put constant pressure on them. (Hewitt et al., 1991). Esfahania & Besharat in 2010 conducted study on Perfectionism and Anger among 242 students. The results revealed that self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism were positively associated with anger dimensions, and negatively associated with anger control dimensions. No significant correlation was found between other-oriented perfectionism and dimensions of anger and anger control.

METHOD
Research design
The present research was descriptive in nature. Descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study. Among the different methods that are used in the descriptive research, the survey (questionnaire) method was used for the present study. A survey is an attempt to collect the data from members of the population with respect to one or more variable.

Objectives
To determine the relation between fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among young adults based on gender and place of residence.

Hypothesis
- H01: There is no significant differences in the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among males and females.
- H02: There is no significant differences in the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among people in urban and rural.
- H03: There is no significant relationship between the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among young adults.

Sample: The sample consist of 200 participants, out of which 109 (54.50%) were females and 91 (45%) males. The mean age of participants ranged from 18-25 years. The participants were selected from all over Kerala.

Inclusion criteria
- The age group of participants ranged from 18-25 years.
- The study was conducted among young adults.
- Both male and female were included in the sample.

Exclusion criteria
- Physically and mentally challenged groups of people coming under this age group were excluded from the study.
- Those people who were not fluent in English were excluded from the study.

Ethical considerations
- No harm was done to anyone in this study.
- Informed consent was obtained from the participants and they had complete freedom to quit from the study at any point.
- All the information provided was maintained with confidentiality.

Instruments
In this study, to measure fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism the following tools are used:

1. **Brief fear of negative evaluation scale -** The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE) is created by Leary in 1983. It is the the first version of the short form of the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (FNE) which was first developed by Watson and Friend. The FNE consists of a total of 30 true-false items with 17 straightforwardly-worded (directly scored) and 13 reverse-worded items (reverse scored). The BFNE consists of 12 items, 11 of which are exactly the same as FNE. Eight of these items are straightforwardly-worded (directly scored) and 4 are reverse-worded (reverse scored). The Brief FNE is rated on a five point scale in terms of how characteristic each item is of the respondent. . Total scores are the sum of the item responses and range from 12 to 60. The Brief FNE has excellent internal consistency with Cronbach's alpha of .90. The Brief FNE is also considered stable with a test-retest correlation of .75 over a four-week period. The Brief FNE was evaluated for validity first by correlating scores with the full-length FNE; this correlation was .96. Criterion-related validity was shown with scores on the Brief FNE correlating with anxiety, avoidance, the degree to which respondents said that they were well presented and the degree to which respondents were bothered by an unfavourable evaluation from others.

2. **Frost multidimensional perfectionism scale -** The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) is created by Frost, Martin, Lahart and Rosenblate. It is a 35-item instrument designed to measure several components of perfectionism. The 35 items comprise six factors: concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubt about actions and organizations. The subscale and total scores are derived simply by summing individual item scores. The possible range from the 35, 5-point Likert- type items is from 35 to 175. The FMPS has good to excellent reliability, with alphas that range from .77 to .93 for the subscales. The alpha for the total scale was .90. No test-retest data were provided. The FMPS has good concurrent validity, significantly correlating with 3 other perfectionism scales, the BURNS, EDI and IBT. The overall FMPS and /or several of its subscales have good construct validity, correlating with a variety of measures of psychopathology including the Brief Symptom Inventory, the Depressive Experiences Questionnaire, several measures of compulsivity and with procrastination.

Procedure

The aim of the study is to find out the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among young adults in Kerala. A total of 200 participants took part in the study. The study followed a descriptive research design. Survey method was used and data was collected through questionnaires distributed through Google forms. The participants were aged between 18-25 and all were from different districts in Kerala. Informed consent, debriefing and voluntary participation were ensured. The participants were ensured of the confidentiality of the responses they given. The participants were given instructions to select the response which is most suited to them from given. The doubts were clarified accordingly. The participants took about 7-10 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Statistical analysis

The data collected were analysed using the following statistical tests. The statistical analyses such as Student's t-test and Pearson's Correlation coefficient were carried out using the SPSS. Microsoft word and Microsoft excel were used to generate tables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and t value in the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism between male and female

Variables	Males (N =91)		Females (N=109)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Fear of negative evaluation	29.462	8.4503	29.807	8.0617	.296
Perfectionism	108.341	15.8235	102.560	15.2087	2.628

Table 1 indicates the mean, standard deviation, and t value among the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism with respect to gender. Here, we see the mean value and standard deviation for perfectionism is higher than that of fear of negative evaluation. But there is no significant difference between mean values and standard deviation for both fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism with respect to male and female s category.

According to Duke et al. (2006), Females have been shown to experience higher levels of fear of negative evaluation compared to males. West and Newman (2007) pointed out that during adolescence, parents and the society prevent girls from acting and behaving in a certain manner due to which they experience a higher level of social phobia. As a result, society expects boys to be more assertive and aggressive, while girls are expected to be calm and modest. Girls are more worried about what others are thinking or judging about their behaviour and particularly about negative evaluations of their peer group than are boys. Girls may also able to internalize their problems more effectively than boys, which may make them more sensitive towards negative evaluations (La Greca& Lopez, 1998). In the present study, there is no significant differences in fear of negative evaluation among gender.Accordingly, the meta-analysis by Curran & Hill (2017), did not find evidence for a gender effect on levels of perfectionism among college students over time, for either self-oriented perfectionism or socially prescribed perfectionism.

Interestingly, the study by Ytterdal (2018) found a significant gender effect with higher scores on overall perfectionism among boys than girls, which was the case in the present study as well. That is there is significant differences in perfectionism among males and females.

Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and t value in the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism based on place of residence.

Variables	Urban (N=99)		Rural (N= 101)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Fear of negative evaluation	28.879	8.279	30.406	8.134	1.316
Perfectionism	104.788	15.840	105.584	15.668	.357

Table 2 indicates the mean value, standard deviation and t value among the level of fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism regarding with place of residence (urban/ rural). Here we see the mean in fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism in Rural is slightly higher than that of urban and when looking into standard deviation, in both fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism, Urban is slightly higher than that of rural.

There are few social barriers in urban regions, and there are equal chances for employment, education, etc. Due to differences in gender, religion, caste, culture, and other factors, social standing is always very different in rural regions.

According to Karakashian et al., (2006) Participants with high scores on fear of negative evaluation are less likely to help. Individuals with low fear of negative evaluation are more inclined to help in non-social situations than individuals with a marginally higher fear Kawmura,Y in 1999 conducted a study on differences in perfectionism across cultures: a study of Asian American and Caucasian college students and the findings indicated that Asian American students reported their parents as being more harsh and as exhibiting more authoritarian behaviours than did Caucasian students. Asian-American students generally had higher levels of perfectionism than did Caucasian students. Furthermore, the relationship between parental characteristics and perfectionism was similar between the two ethnic groups. Within the Asian-American group, highly acculturated Asian Americans had lower levels of Concern Over Mistakes. There were no significant differences between various Asian-American ethnic groups on measures of parental characteristics and perfectionism.

In the present study, there is no significant differences in fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism based on place of residence both urban and rural.

Table 3: Correlation between Fear of negative evaluation and different factors of Perfectionism among young adults.

Perfectionism Factors	Fear of Negative Evaluation
Concern over mistakes	.512**
Personal standards	.178
Parental expectations	.241**
Parental criticism	.267**
Doubts about actions	.334**
Organization	-.103**

*Note: ** - Significant at 0.01 Level*

Table 3 shows the correlation between fear of negative evaluation and different factors of perfectionism among young adults. The correlation value, shows positive correlation between fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism which means that even though not

very significant for all factors, fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism are positively correlated overall. i.e., higher fear of negative evaluation means higher perfectionism level. In the first 5 factors of perfectionism; concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about organization; it shows positive correlation and except for the factor personal standards in these, all others have significant positive correlation. for the factor concern over mistakes, it is very high significance and positive correlation. For the factor, organization, it is showing significance and is negatively correlated.

Sunkarapalli & Agarwal (2017) found that there is a significant positive correlation between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Perfectionism, mainly socially prescribed perfectionism. According to Levinson et al. (2013), there is a significant positive correlation between fear of negative evaluation and social appearance anxiety, social anxiety and maladaptive perfectionism.

Major findings
- There is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation among males and females.
- There is significant difference in perfectionism among males and females.
- There is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among people in urban and rural.
- There is significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and different factors of perfectionism among young adults.

Limitation and suggestion
The study only included participants from Kerala. Hence, the study could have been done on a wider scale with sample involving people from all states of India as well as from individuals representing each country. Hence, a wider study could have provided more credibility to the results as well as in the generalisation of the findings.

The study excluded people who are not fluent in English language.

CONCLUSION
The research concluded that there is significant relationship between fear of negative evaluation and different factors of perfectionism. There is significant difference in perfectionism among males and females, but there is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation among gender. There is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among place of residence (urban/ rural). The study is very relevant since fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism which determine the degree of anxiety about the possibility of humiliation, critical or hostile judgment, and disgrace by others and high standards of performance accompanied by overly critical evaluations of one's own behaviour, which is very relevant in present scenario.

This study suggests that there is significant relationship between both fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among young adults. The significant differences are not present in fear of negative evaluation among genders and both fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among people live in rural and urban, it could be because of the sample that we have taken. If we increase our sample size and included more people from different states as well, we could get more significant findings.

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