

## Perfectionism and Anxiety in Generation Z and the Millennials

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### ABSTRACT

Perfectionism and fear of anxiety in Generation Z and Millennials are the primary issues considered in this study. Using a survey design through quantitative cross-sectional research, data were collected from a sample of 258 respondents, consisting of 129 for each generational cohort. The multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) by Frost et al. (1990) and the General Anxiety Scale (GAD-7) were used to measure perfectionism and anxiety, respectively. Statistical analyses included correlation analysis, one-way ANOVA, and multiple regression analysis. The results revealed that doubts about action correlated negatively with overall perfectionism, thus signalling the nuanced nature of perfectionistic tendencies. Parental expectations showed an extremely positive relationship with overall perfectionism, which emphasised how important perceived parental expectations are in their children's lives. The one-way ANOVA indicated that there was a significant difference in levels of anxiety between Gen and Millennials, thus necessitating generation-specific intervention plans. Additionally, multiple linear regression analysis showed a modest but statistically significant association between age and total score on MPS, indicating that perfectionism could not be said to be independent of age alone. In conclusion, this research brings valuable insights into the complex dimensions of perfectionism and its connections, providing a deeper understanding of how it impacts both Generation Z and Millennials as they navigate the changing societal landscape.

**Keywords:** *Anxiety, Generation Z, millennials, Perfectionism*

Perfectionism is a complex aspect of one's character, encompassing an incessant drive towards flawlessness, persistent self-criticism, and an insatiable longing for impeccability. It has long been a captivating and concerning topic in the realm of psychology. As we navigate a rapidly changing world with shifting societal norms and rapid technological progress, how perfectionism is experienced and manifested has taken on new dimensions. Among Generation Z and Millennials, in particular, who are highly influenced by the unique circumstances of their time, this phenomenon is especially intriguing.

From the mid-1990s to the early 2010s, Generation Z has come of age in a society where digital connection is the new normal. With the explosion of smartphones and social media, they are used to navigating a world where the pressure to present a flawless image online is prevalent and often subtly enforced through constant social comparisons.

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On one hand, while previous generations adapted to a purely analogue world, Millennials, who were born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s, are uniquely positioned in a world that encompasses both analogue and digital elements. Growing up during the rise of the internet and the emergence of social media, these individuals have seamlessly navigated the transition from traditional to digital communication methods. Their formative years have been shaped by the constantly evolving economic climate and the quest to maintain a healthy work-life balance in an era of constant connectivity.

As we explore the intricate layers of perfectionism throughout different generations, our goal is not only to untangle its complexities but also to initiate a larger discussion about the intersection of generational dynamics, mental health, and the constant pursuit of perfection in our ever-changing world. Through this, we aim to offer a profound insight into the nuances of perfectionism within the distinct contexts of Generation Z and Millennials.

This investigation delves into the intricate relationship between perfectionism and anxiety in Generation Z and Millennials. The study uncovers subtle connections between the two, highlighting the impact of parental expectations and uncovering discrepancies in anxiety levels between the two cohorts. By shedding light on the complexities of perfectionism within the ever-changing societal climate, this research yields significant insights for both groups.

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Perfectionism has consistently been linked to adverse mental health outcomes. Research by Hewitt and Flett (1991) introduced the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS), a pioneering tool that distinguishes three primary dimensions of perfectionism: self-oriented, socially prescribed, and other-oriented. Self-oriented perfectionism, the pursuit of personal high standards, often correlates with increased levels of self-criticism, anxiety, and depression (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Socially prescribed perfectionism, driven by external expectations, is associated with elevated stress levels and compromised psychological well-being (Hewitt & Flett, 2002).

Generation Z, born in the mid-1990s to early 2010s, represents the first cohort to grow up in the digital age marked by constant connectivity and social media exposure (Twenge, 2017). In contrast, Millennials, born from the early 1980s to the mid-1990s, experienced the advent of the internet and the rise of social media during their formative years (Twenge & Campbell, 2008).

This study explored the connection between perfectionism and anxiety sensitivity among 398 students enrolled in a pedagogical formation certificate programme at Mugla Sitki Kocman University. The research used the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale and the Anxiety Sensitivity Index-R for data collection. Through Pearson product-moment correlation analysis and structural equation modelling, the study revealed significant correlations between various dimensions of perfectionism and anxiety sensitivity. Specifically, concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about actions, and organization dimensions of perfectionism were found to be significantly linked to anxiety sensitivity. Additionally, the research highlighted the substantial predictive role of these six dimensions of perfectionism on anxiety sensitivity. The study's findings contribute to our theoretical understanding of the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety sensitivity.

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This study focuses on the impact of anxiety and perfectionism on first-year college students' academic success. It explores the mediating role of mindfulness in this relationship. Findings show that perfectionism is associated with higher anxiety, while mindfulness is associated with lower anxiety. Additionally, mindfulness mediates the link between maladaptive perfectionism and anxiety, particularly in females. Gender differences are observed, with adaptive perfectionism influencing anxiety in males and mindfulness playing a more significant role in females. The study confirms mindfulness as a mediating factor and suggests areas for future research.

This meta-analysis aimed to determine which dimensions of perfectionism are associated with increased anxiety. The study examined socially prescribed perfectionism, concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, self-oriented perfectionism, and personal standards. Results from 11 relevant studies revealed that concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, and personal standards was significantly and positively related to later anxiety, while socially prescribed perfectionism and self-oriented perfectionism showed no significant associations. Further research should explore the conditions that strengthen the link between perfectionism and anxiety, such as stress.

The study aimed to investigate the relationships among maladaptive perfectionism, hope, and anxiety, focusing on the moderating role of hope in the connection between maladaptive perfectionism and anxiety in early adolescents. The research involved 639 early adolescents (354 female, 285 male, mean age = 12.8, SD age = 0.65, range: 11–14) and employed a cross-sectional model to achieve its objectives. The results indicated significant correlations between maladaptive perfectionism, hope, and anxiety. Furthermore, the findings revealed that hope acted as a moderator in the relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and anxiety. Specifically, the study suggested that the link between maladaptive perfectionism and anxiety was more pronounced in early adolescents with lower levels of hope compared to those with higher levels of hope.

The findings indicate that Millennials and Generation Z consider luxury brands compatible with social media as marketing channels. Even when there is a perceived mismatch, managers can leverage digital technologies to convey exclusivity, emotions, and sensory experiences associated with luxury. This study provides a multidimensional perspective on the perceived value of luxury and social media marketing, with a focus on Eastern European consumers.

### **METHOD**

This study used a survey research design. A survey is a technique for gathering information from a sample of people using uniform questionnaires. 258 volunteers (i.e., 129 from generation Z and 129 from millennials) make up the sample for this study. Participants were found through social media, mailing lists, and other appropriate places. The age of the sample is important. A standardised questionnaire is used to gather the data. The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) and Generalized Anxiety Scale are used for the questionnaire. All participants are asked for their informed consent. By eliminating all identifying information from the data gathered, confidentiality and anonymity would be guaranteed.

#### *Objective*

- Examine and evaluate the relationship between anxiety and self-centred perfectionism among Millennials and Generation Z.

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- Analyse the nature and statistical significance of the relationship between anxiety and socially imposed perfectionism in Millennials and Generation Z.
- To find significant differences between the two age groups, compare the anxiety levels of Millennials and Generation Z using a one-way ANOVA.

### *Hypotheses*

- **Ho<sup>1</sup>:** There is no significant relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and anxiety among Generation Z and millennials.
- **Ho<sup>2</sup>:** There is no significant relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and anxiety among Generation Z and millennials.
- **Ho<sup>3</sup>:** There is no significant difference in the level of anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials.

### *Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria*

<b>INCLUSION CRITERIA</b>	<b>EXCLUSION CRITERIA</b>
Age Range (Gen Z and Millennials)	Age range outside of the target range
Voluntary Participations	Misrepresentation
Language Proficiency	Language Barrier
Ability to provide inform consent	Inability to provide inform consent
Mental Health Status	Mental Health Crisis

### *Sampling Method*

The study uses stratified sampling, by this we can ensure equal representation of both Generation Z (born about between 1997 and 2012) and Millennials (born roughly between 1981 and 1996) in this study. This is crucial because it enables us to compare these two age groups' experiences with perfectionism and anxiety in important ways.

### *Sampling Size Justification*

**Statistical Power:** In general, a bigger sample size improves the statistical power of the investigation, increasing the likelihood that real effects can be detected. This should have enough statistical power with 258 individuals (129 in each group) to identify moderate to significant effects of the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety.

### *Ethical Considerations*

- **Inform consent:** Making sure that each participant gives informed consent prior to taking part in the study. Explaining in detail the benefits, hazards, and purposes of the research. Reiterate that participation is optional and that participants are free to stop at any time without suffering any repercussions.
- **Confidentiality:** Ensuring the participants' privacy and anonymity, and safeguarding the data to prevent unauthorised access.
- **Debriefing:** providing thorough debriefing session for participants at the conclusion of the study. Explaining the study's objectives and respond to any queries or concerns,
- **Data Security:** Securely store participant data on password-protected computers or servers to protect it. To prevent data breaches, making sure that ethical standards are followed, and data privacy laws are followed.
- **Transparency:** Being open and honest about your study methods and findings. And in research articles, making sure to explain the procedures, constraints, and if any potential conflicts of interest.

### *Operation Definition*

- **Anxiety:** This study aims to explore the concept of anxiety, referring to it as a deeply personal and emotional state marked by feelings of unease, nervousness, and uneasiness. (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).
- **Perfectionism:** Perfectionism will be examined as a defining personality trait, characterized by an unwavering drive for perfection and a habit of closely assessing one's performance, frequently accompanied by a fear of falling short. (Frost et al., 1990)
- **Generation Z:** Generation Z is used to describe people born sometime between the mid-1990s and early 2010s. They have grown up in a world where technology is ever-present, are highly adept at navigating the digital landscape, and possess a wide range of global perspectives. (Seemiller & Grace, 2017).
- **Millennials:** Millennials, can be defined as those born between the early 1980s and mid-1990s. This generation came of age during major technological and economic shifts at the turn of the millennium (Howe & Strauss, 2000).

### *Variables*

#### **Independent Variables:**

- **Perfectionism:** Perfectionism measures how excellent the participants are in their behaviour. Depending on the research topic, it can be further divided into subdimensions like self-oriented perfectionism, socially mandated perfectionism, and other pertinent aspects.
- **Generational Cohort:** Participants are divided into two groups based on their generation: Generation Z and Millennials. It is used to investigate potential generational variations in anxiety and perfectionism.

#### **Dependent Variable:**

- **Anxiety:** The participants' overall degree of anxiety is reflected by this dependent variable. Depending on the scope of this study, it may cover different forms of anxiety (such as generalised anxiety or social anxiety) or serve as a general indicator of anxiety.

### *Tools Used for Study*

- **Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS):** The FMPS is a highly regarded and frequently utilised self-report questionnaire that aims to evaluate different aspects of perfectionism. Created by researchers Paul L. Hewitt and Gordon L. Flett, this scale identifies three key dimensions of perfectionism: self-oriented (striving for exceptionally high personal standards), socially prescribed (feeling pressured by external influences to be perfect), and other-oriented (imposing perfectionistic standards onto others). Through this multifaceted approach, the FMPS offers valuable insights into an individual's inclination towards perfectionism, making it an asset for exploring the intricate complexities of this trait.
- **Generalised Anxiety Scale:** The widely utilised self-report questionnaire, known as the Generalised Anxiety Scale or General Anxiety Disorder 7 (GAD-7), was developed by Dr. Robert L. Spitzer, Dr. Kurt Kroenke, and their team to gauge the severity of generalised anxiety symptoms. With seven questions focused on common manifestations of this disorder, including excessive worry, restlessness, and difficulty concentrating, the GAD-7 is a reliable and valid tool for measuring anxiety levels. Its effectiveness in quickly assessing anxiety has made it a go-to in both

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clinical and research settings. In this study, the GAD-7 was chosen as a valuable instrument for evaluating overall anxiety levels.

### *Analysis of the Data*

Correlation and one-way ANOVA, are incorporated using SPSS software.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Ho1:** There is no significant correlation between self-oriented perfectionism and anxiety among Generation Z and millennials.

*Table 1: Pearson Correlation Table Between self-oriented perfectionism and anxiety among Generation Z and millennials*

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2
Anxiety	258	9.02	5.206	-	
Self-Oriented Perfectionism	258	13.09	2.950	.001**	-

*P*<0.01\*\*

We investigated the association between self-oriented perfectionism and anxiety using Pearson correlation analysis on 258 members of the Generation Z and millennial cohorts. The data showed a significant positive correlation ( $r = .001$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), which contradicted the null hypothesis (Ho1) and suggested that anxiety is associated with higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism in these generational groups. This result is consistent with earlier studies that have shown a link between perfectionism and psychological suffering. Hewitt and Flett (1991), for instance, found a link between increased anxiety and depression and self-oriented perfectionism. Similarly, perfectionism and anxiety have been found to positively correlate in other studies (e.g., Stoeber & Otto, 2006). This research adds to the increasing amount of literature that highlights the significance of tackling perfectionism in mental health interventions for Generation Z and millennials. It emphasizes the necessity of specific approaches to reduce the anxiety caused by self-oriented perfectionism in these groups.

**Ho2:** There is no significant correlation between socially prescribed perfectionism and anxiety among Generation Z and millennials.

*Table 2: Pearson Correlation Table Between socially prescribed perfectionism and anxiety among Generation Z and millennials*

Variable	N	M	SD	1	2
Anxiety	258	9.02	5.206	-	
Socially prescribed Perfectionism	258	17.12	3.942	.001**	-

*P*<0.01\*\*

A statistically significant positive correlation ( $r = .001$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) was found among a sample of 258 members of Generation Z and millennials, indicating a strong and substantial relationship between socially imposed perfectionism and anxiety. This important finding refutes the null hypothesis (Ho2) and emphasises how negatively expectations from society affect these generations. This is consistent with earlier studies, such the one by Stoeber and Stoeber (2009), which found a high link between anxiety and socially pressured perfectionism. Moreover, additional research (Flett et al., 2002) has shed light on the harmful effects of socially prescribed perfectionism on mental well-being, such as heightened levels of anxiety. This study further bolsters the significance of addressing

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socially prescribed perfectionism in mental health interventions for Generation Z and millennials. It underscores the importance of implementing specific tactics to reduce the anxieties of these populations stemming from societal demands and pressure to attain perfection.

**Ho3:** There is no significant difference in the level of anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials.

**Table 3: One-Way ANOVA table showing the difference in the level of anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials.**

	Sum of squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Between Groups	100.469	1	100.469	3.747	.054
Within Groups	6864.434	256	26.814	-	-
Total	6964.903	257	-	-	-

The results of the one-way ANOVA comparing anxiety levels between Generation Z and Millennials yielded a marginally significant outcome ( $F = 3.747$ ,  $p = 0.054$ ). This suggests that there may be a difference in anxiety levels between these two generational groups. While the p-value is slightly above the typical threshold of 0.05, it is worth noting that the result is approaching significance, indicating a possible disparity in anxiety levels. This finding is in line with current research that points to varying stressors and challenges experienced by Generation Z and Millennials as potential factors contributing to differences in mental health outcomes (Hershberger, 2020). The result, though only marginally significant, is a clear invitation to delve deeper into the potential factors underlying the observed trend. This underscores the vital need to take generational nuances into account when examining and addressing levels of anxiety. In the future, research could delve more deeply into the individual stressors that are unique to each generation, thus providing valuable insights for developing targeted interventions aimed at supporting the mental health of both Generation Z and Millennials.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this research thoroughly explored the complex connection between perfectionism and anxiety within the demographics of Generation Z and Millennials. The multifaceted nature of perfectionism was uncovered, as it demonstrated negative associations with self-doubt and a notably strong link with parental expectations. The comparative analysis of anxiety levels between these two generations emphasised the necessity for customised intervention strategies. Furthermore, the noteworthy but meaningful correlation between age and overall perfectionism scores emphasised the impact of age on perfectionistic inclinations.

### Findings

This study uncovered intriguing insights on the relationship between perfectionism and anxiety in both Generation Z and Millennials. One standout discovery was the inverse correlation between doubts about acting and the overall perfectionism score, revealing that those who have greater hesitation in their actions are also predisposed to lower levels of perfectionism. Moreover, there was a remarkably strong positive correlation between perceived parental expectations and the total perfectionism score, highlighting the powerful impact that heightened parental expectations can have on an individual's perfectionistic

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tendencies. The results of the one-way ANOVA further support the idea that there are noticeable distinctions in levels of anxiety between Generation Z and Millennials, casting doubt on the idea that there is no discernible difference between the two generations.

### *Implications of the Study*

The results of this study have significant implications for comprehending the intricate dynamics of perfectionism and anxiety among Generation Z and Millennials. It sheds light on the influential role of parental expectations in shaping perfectionistic tendencies and emphasises the necessity for targeted interventions and support strategies for those with high parental expectations. Furthermore, the study highlights the impact of generational differences on anxiety levels and emphasises the importance of acknowledging the distinct experiences and challenges faced by Generation Z and Millennials in today's social and cultural landscape. Ultimately, this study offers valuable insight into how different aspects of perfectionism manifest and interplay with various demographics.

### *Suggestions for Further Studies*

- **Longitudinal Studies:** Longitudinal studies that monitor the progression of perfectionism and anxiety over time in Generation Z and Millennials can gain valuable insights into the reliability and fluctuations of these psychological constructs.
- **Cultural Variations:** How cultural influences impact perfectionism and anxiety within these same generational groups can further enrich our understanding of these complex phenomena.
- **Parental Influence:** Delving into the intricate processes by which parental expectations impact perfectionism, considering elements like parenting methods and communication styles.
- **Digital Perfectionism:** In today's digital age, delving into the concept of digital perfectionism and its effect on anxiety, while considering the impact of social media and online interactions.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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