**Research Paper**

# Perfectionism, Perceived Academic Stress and Social Support among the College Students of Bengaluru

Subasreebala R.[1]*, Sreedevi J.[2]

## ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the relationship between perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support among the college students of Bengaluru. A correlational research design was adopted and data was collected from a sample of 200 college students between the ages of 18-24 in Bengaluru. The tools used in this study are Frost Multidimensional perfectionism Scale (Frost, et al., 1990), perceived academic stress scale, Bedewy and Gabriel (2015) and Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988). The results of this study show that perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support are significantly correlated. Significant associations are also found between parental expectations, friends support and perceived academic stress. The study also reported a significant gender difference in levels of perceived social support, females reported higher social support than males.

Perfectionism is often considered as an attractive trait when it comes to academic pursuits, career endeavors and in everyday life. High achievers, top performers are usually awarded to maintain their motivation and continue their winning streaks. Perfectionism indeed drives the individual to pay attention to detail and produce high quality outputs but being overly perfectionistic on the other hand might turn counterproductive. In fact, perfectionistic concerns were found to be associated with higher levels of academic stress among college students (Kahn, J.H et al., 2023). Academic stress was also found to serve as a predictor of depression in students thus negatively affecting their academic performance and excessive or prolonged stress can result in physiological difficulties such as fatigue, loss of appetite, headache and gastrointestinal issues (Deng, Y et al.,2022). Over time, this perfectionism might also lead to difficulty in forming or maintaining relationships as perfectionistic individuals tend to respond by taking responsibility and distancing themselves from others when faced with painful relational events, thus affecting the overall well-being and productivity (Woodfin, V., Hjeltnes, A., & Binder, P. E., 2021). Studies have found that there exists a significant positive correlation between perfectionism and stress & anxiety symptoms (Hamblin, E 2018). And social support of high quality was found to enhance an individual's resilience to stress (Ozbay, F et al. 2007). Studies have also found a

[1]Student, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bengaluru
[2]Assistant Professor, Kristu Jayanti College (Autonomous), Bengaluru
*Corresponding Author

significant association between perceived social support and immune function (Copertaro, A et al. 2014).

- **Perfectionism:** Perfectionism can be defined as the setting of excessively high standards for performance accompanied by overly critical self-evaluation (Frost et al., 1990)
- **Academic stress**: Academic stress is defined as a student's psychological state resulting from continuous social and self-imposed pressure in a school environment that depletes the student's psychological reserves (Misra, R et al, 2000)
- **Social support**: Social support can be defined as the perception that one is being loved and cared for, esteemed and valued, and part of a social network of assistance and mutual obligations (Wills, T.A., 1991)

*Significance of the Study*

Not much Indian studies have been done employing all the three variables of perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support among the college students and so this study which seeks to understand the relationship between perfectionism, perceived social support and academic stress may provide valuable insights regarding college student's mental wellness in the city of Bengaluru. The findings of this study might lead to students addressing their own perfectionistic tendencies, stress and social support levels which might have a profound impact on their academics, interpersonal relationships and in future may be their workplace behaviours.

## METHODOLOGY

*Objectives*

- To assess the relationship between perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support among the students.
- To assess the relationship between excessive concern with parents' expectations & evaluation and perceived academic stress
- To assess the relationship between family/ friends support and perceived academic stress.
- To find out if there is a significant difference between the levels of perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support between males and females.

**Hypotheses**

- There is a significant relationship between perfectionism and perceived academic stress
- There is a significant relationship between perceived social support and perceived academic stress
- There is a significant relationship between perfectionism and perceived social support
- There is a significant relationship between excessive concern with parents' expectations & evaluation and perceived academic stress.
- There is a significant relationship between family/ friends support and perceived academic stress.
- There is a significant difference in the levels of perfectionism, between males and females.

- There is a significant difference in the levels of perceived academic stress between males and females
- There is a significant difference in the levels of perceived social support between males and females

### *Research design*

A Quantitative study using a correlational research design will be used to assess the relationship between the three variables: Perfectionism, perceived social support, perceived academic stress.

### *Sampling Procedure*

The participants will be selected based on the specific characteristics relevant to the research question and the study has a predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria.
So, a Purposive sampling method will be used for data collection

### Tools used:

1. **Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale - (Frost et al., 1990)** It is the brief version of the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale developed by (Frost, R.O et al, 1990). It consists of 35 items with the responses ranging in a 5 likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). It consists of 4 subscales, Concern over mistakes and doubts over actions (13 items), excessive concern with parental expectations and evaluation (9 items), excessively high personal standards (7 items) and Organization (6 items). The scale was found to have a good concurrent validity and the reliability of .90 for the total scale and for the subscales ranging from .70 to .93 (Basheer, MR., Ninitha, J & Betty, P 2020). Potential scores in this scale range from 29-145 with high scores indicating higher perfectionistic tendencies (Stoeber, J., 2000).

2. **Perceived academic stress scale (PASS) developed by Bedewy and Gabriel (2015).** It consists of 18 items and the responses range in a 5 Likert scale (1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree) and for the first five items scores are reversed. 4 main areas studied in this scale are pressures to perform, perceptions of workload and examinations, self-perceptions, and time restraints. Psychometric properties of the scale were found to have a good construct validity and the test retest reliability of this scale was found .70, Scoring involves higher the scores, higher the perceived academic stress.

3. **Multidimensional scale of perceived social support by Zimet et al., (1988).** It contains 12 items and is a 7 likert scale (1= very strongly disagree to 7= very strongly agree). It consists of 3 subscale: Family subscale, friends subscale and significant other subscale (4 items each), Scoring involves adding all items divide by 12, (12-35) low perceived social support, (36-60) moderate perceived social support and (61-84) high perceived social support, Psychometric properties include good construct validity and excellent internal consistency of .92 in indian context (John, S & Vigraanth, B. K. G., 2022)

### *Inclusion criteria*

- Eligibility to participate in this study will be restricted to the English speaking population since all the questions will be administered in English.
- Only college students between the ages of 18-24 were included in this study.

- The research was restricted to the college going students in Bengaluru.

*Exclusion criteria*
- The non-English speaking population was restricted from participating in this study.
- The college students below and above the age of 18 and 24 were not included in this study.
- The sample of college students outside Bengaluru were restricted from participating in this study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study includes a population of 200 students, 100 males and 100 females aged between 18-24 years. The scales utilised in this study were Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990), Perceived academic stress scale (PASS) Bedewy and Gabriel (2015) and Multidimensional scale of perceived social support (Zimet et al., 1988). This study aims to find the relationship between perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support among the college students of Bengaluru. The results of this study are mentioned below:

*Table 1 Spearman Correlation Between Perfectionism, Perceived Academic Stress and Perceived Social Support Among College Students In Bengaluru*

| | | | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spearman's rho** | 1.Perfectionism | Correlation coefficient | - | .532** | -.238** |
| | 2.Perceived academic stress | | .532** | - | -.181* |
| | 3.Perceived social support | | -.238** | -.181* | - |

*\*\*. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)*
*\*. Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)*

The table 1 presents the Spearman correlation between perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support among college students in Bengaluru. The Spearman correlation results shows a moderate positive relationship between perfectionism and perceived academic stress with the p value of 0.000 (p<0.05) indicating that there is a statistically significant relationship between Perfectionism and academic stress thus rejecting the null hypothesis. This finding is supported by the studies conducted by Fernández-García, O et al. (2022) and Cowie et al. (2018) which stated that there is a significant positive relationship between perfectionism and academic stress and effective levels of perfectionism is associated with higher psychological well-being. The Spearman Correlation results show a weak negative correlation between perfectionism and perceived social support with the p value of 0.001 (p<0.05), indicating that there is a statistically significant relationship between Perfectionism and perceived social support and they tend to vary inversely with each other. This finding is in relation to the study conducted by Molnar, D.S et al (2012) which stated that individuals with high levels of socially prescribed perfectionism reported lower perceived social support and high stress leading to poorer health outcomes. The Spearman Correlation result show a weak negative correlation between perceived social support and perceived academic stress with the p value of 0.010 (p<0.05) indicating that there exists a statistically significant relationship between perceived academic stress and

social support rejecting the null hypothesis. The results of this study was found to support the results of previous researches conducted by McLean, L., Gaul, D., & Penco, R (2022) and Wilks, S.E (2008) which stated that academic stress has a significant negative relationship with social support and resilience and students with a higher level of social support reported lower levels of academic stress. And friends' support was found to significantly moderate the relationship between academic stress and resilience.

**Table 2** *Spearman Correlation Between Excessive Concern with Parental Expectation & Evaluation and Perceived Academic Stress Among College Students of Bengaluru*

|  |  |  | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spearman's rho** | 1.Excessive concern with parental expectations & evaluation | Correlation coefficient | - | .433** |
|  | 2.Academic stress |  | .433** | - |

*\*\*. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2 tailed)*

The table 2 presents the Spearman correlation between excessive concern with parental expectations & evaluation and perceived academic stress among the college students of Bengaluru. The Spearman correlation results show a moderate positive correlation between Excessive concern for parental expectations & evaluations with the p value of 0.000 (p<0.05) indicating that there is a significant relationship between excessive concern with parental expectations & evaluation and perceived academic stress, thus rejecting the null hypothesis. This finding is supported by Talha, M.A., Qi, X & Rizwan, M (2020) which stated that parental expectations have a significant impact on academic stress. Male students and students whose parents were unemployed reportedly perceived higher levels of parental expectations and academic stress. Another research finding by Díez López, M et al (2023) also stated that high parental expectations and self-oriented perfectionism were significantly related to higher levels of stress.

**Table 3 Spearman Correlation Between Support of Friends and Perceived Academic Stress Among College Students of Bengaluru**

|  |  |  | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Spearman's rho** | 1.Friends support | Correlation coefficient | - | -.170* |
|  | 2.Perceived academic stress |  | -.170* | - |

*\*. Correlation is significant at 0.05 level (2 tailed)*

Table 3 presents the Spearman correlation between friends' support and perceived academic stress among the college students of Bengaluru. The Spearman correlation results show a weak negative correlation between the two variables with the p value of 0.016 (p<0.05) indicating that there is a statistically significant relationship between support of friends and perceived academic stress, rejecting the null hypothesis. This is consistent with the findings by Rayle & Chung (2007) which stated that high levels of social support from friends often predicted low academic stress levels and a study conducted by Abdul Aziz, N. A., Baharudin, N. S., & Alias, N. A. (2023) also claimed that students with a high level of support from family, friends and significant others reported being less stressed than individuals who perceived low levels of support from family, friends and significant others.

*Table 4 Mann Whitney Test Results of Comparison of Levels of Perfectionism, Perceived Academic Stress and Perceived Social Support Between Males and Females*

|  |  | N | Mean rank | Sum of Mean ranks | U | Z | P value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Perfectionism | Male | 100 | 103.85 | 10384.50 | 4665.500 | -.818 | .414 |
|  | Female | 100 | 97.16 | 9715.50 |  |  |  |
| Academic stress | Male | 100 | 96.57 | 9656.50 | 4606.500 | -.963 | .336 |
|  | Female | 100 | 104.44 | 10443.50 |  |  |  |
| Social support | Male | 100 | 87.68 | 8767.50 | 3717.500 | -3.136 | .002 |
|  | Female | 100 | 113.33 | 11332.50 |  |  |  |

*Grouping variable: Sex*

Table 4 presents the Mann Whitney test conducted to determine the significant difference in the levels of perfectionism, perceived academic stress and perceived social support between males and females. The test results showed that although on a mean score basis (M=103.85), Males tend to exhibit higher level of perfectionism than females (M=97.16) the p value with respect to perfectionism was found to be .414 (p>0.05) indicating that there is no significant in levels of perfectionism between males and females, accepting the null hypothesis. This finding is supported by the study conducted by Hassen et al (2012) which stated that perfectionism levels both self-oriented and self-prescribed were higher among the students regardless of significant gender differences. The Mann Whitney test results showed that according to mean ranks (M=104.44), females tend to experience higher levels of academic stress than males (M= 96.57), but the significant value was found to be .336, (p>0.05) indicating that there is no statistically significant difference between levels of academic stress as experienced by males and females thus accepting the null hypothesis. This finding is similar to the results of the study conducted by Calaguas, G. (2011) which too stated that there was no significant difference found between male and students in their perception of academic stress. The Man Whitney test results also showed that p value with respect to perceived social support between males and females was found to be .002 (p<0.05) indicating that there exists a significant gender difference in the levels of perceived social support between males and females thus rejecting the null hypothesis. As per the mean score basis (M=113.33), females were found to perceive their social support higher than the males (M=87.68). This finding is consistent with the results of the studies conducted by Olson, D. A., & Shultz, K. S. (1994) and Kneavel, M. (2021) which stated that women have higher social support and greater social support quality than men.

***Limitations***
There are some limitations of this study that deserves to be highlighted. The sample is not representative which makes it difficult to generalize the results and restrict it only to the examined sample. Furthermore, the non-English speaking students and students below or above the age range of 18 to 24 were excluded from the study. And from the results it can be concluded that additional research could be conducted based on the demographic variables like age, socioeconomic status, location, family composition as this study was confined to examine the differences in levels of perceived academic stress based only on sex and level of education.

## CONCLUSION

The study assessed the relationship between the variables perfectionism, perceived academic stress and social support among the college students in Bengaluru. A sample of 200 students, (100 males and 100 females) were included as the part of the study upon informed consent and data was collected through survey and google forms were used to administer the survey. This study concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between perfectionism and perceived academic stress and excessive concern for parental expectations & evaluation and perceived academic stress among the students of Bengaluru. The results also showed a significant negative relationship between the variables, perfectionism and perceived social support, perceived academic stress and social support & between friends' support and perceived academic stress among the students of Bengaluru. A significant difference in the levels of social support was also found between males and females, indicating females experience higher social support than males. However, there was no significant difference reported in the levels of perfectionism and perceived academic stress with respect to males and females.

### *Implications*

The findings of this study might be useful to emphasize the importance of student's mental health and wellness and to create an awareness among the college students, teachers and educational institutions of suitable interventions such as creating mental health clubs, peer support programmes and counseling services, workshops, seminars, mentorship programmes and most remarkably policy implications such as development of flexible academic deadlines, peer mentoring, wellness day offs etc. which would help the students effectively navigate the challenges and manage the academic demands which would ultimately contribute to their overall well-being and academic success.

## REFERENCES

Abdul Aziz, N. A., Baharudin, N. S., & Alias, N. A. (2023). Association between Stress and Social Support Perceived among Undergraduate Health Sciences Students. T*he Malaysian journal of medical sciences: MJMS, 30(3)*, 176–183. https://doi.org/10.21315/mjms2023.30.3.16

Bedewy, D., & Gabriel, A. (2015). Examining perceptions of academic stress and its sources among university students: The Perception of Academic Stress Scale. *Health psychology open, 2(2),* 2055102915596714. https://doi.org/10.1177/2055102915596714

Calaguas, Glenn. (2011). College Academic Stress: Differences along Gender Lines. *Journal of Social and Development Sciences. 1.* 194-201. https://doi.org/10.22610/jsds.v1i5.644

Copertaro, A., Bracci, M., Manzella, N., Barbaresi, M., Copertaro, B., & Santarelli, L. (2014). Low perceived social support is associated with CD8+CD57+ lymphocyte expansion and increased TNF-α levels. *BioMed research international, 2014,* 635784 https://doi.org/10.1155/2014/635784

Cowie M. E., Nealis L. J., Sherry S. B., Hewitt P. L., Flett G. L. (2018). Perfectionism and academic difficulties in graduate students: Testing incremental prediction and gender moderation. *Personality and Individual Differences, vol.123*, 223–228, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2017.11.027

Deng, Y., Cherian, J., Khan, N. U. N., Kumari, K., Sial, M. S., Comite, U., Gavurova, B., & Popp, J. (2022). Family and Academic Stress and Their Impact on Students'

Depression Level and Academic Performance. Frontiers in psychiatry, 13, 869337. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyt.2022.869337

Díez López, M., Jiménez Iglesias, A.M., Paniagua Infantes, C.E. y García Moya, I. (2023). The Role of Perfectionism and Parental Expectations in the School Stress and Health Complaints of Secondary School Students. *Youth & Society, online first*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X231205929

Fernández-García, O., Gil-Llario, M. D., Castro-Calvo, J., Morell-Mengual, V., Ballester-Arnal, R., & Estruch-García, V. (2022). Academic Perfectionism, Psychological Well-Being, and Suicidal Ideation in College Students. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 20(1), 85. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20010085

Frost, R. O., Marten, P., Lahart, C., & Rosenblate, R. (1990). The dimensions of perfectionism. Cognitive Therapy and Research, *14*(5), 449–468. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01172967

Hamblin, E. (2018). Stress in College Students: Associations with Anxiety and Perfectionism. Honors Theses. https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/320

Hassan, Hala K., Abd-El-Fattah, Sabry M., Abd-El-Maugoud, Mohamed K., Badary, Aly H.A Perfectionism and performance expectations at university: Does gender still matter? *European Journal of Education and Psychology, 5(2),* december, 2012, pp. 133-147.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/307817997_Perfectionism_and_performance_expectations_at_university_Does_gender_still_matter

Kahn, J.H., Fishman, J.I., Galati, S.L., & Meyer, D. (2023). Perfectionism, Locus of Control, and Academic Stress among College Students, *Personality and individual differences, vol 213*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4431913

Kneavel, M. (2021). Relationship Between Gender, Stress, and Quality of Social Support. *Psychological Reports, 124(4),* 1481-1501. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033294120939984

McLean, L., Gaul, D., & Penco, R. (2022). Perceived Social Support and Stress: a Study of 1st Year Students in Ireland. I*nternational journal of mental health and addiction,* 2101–2121. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11469-021-00710-z

Misra, R., & McKean, M. (2000). College Students' Academic Stress and Its Relation to Their Anxiety, Time Management, and Leisure Satisfaction. *American Journal of Health Studies, 16*, 41-51.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/209835950_College_students'academic_stress_and_its_relation_to_their_anxiety_time_management_and_leisure_satisfaction

Molnar, D. S., Sadava, S. W., Flett, G. L., & Colautti, J. (2012). Perfectionism and health: a mediational analysis of the roles of stress, social support and health-related behaviours. *Psychology & health*, *27*(7), 846–864. https://doi.org/10.1080/08870446.2011.630466

Olson, D. A., & Shultz, K. S. (1994). Gender differences in the dimensionality of social support. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 24(14)*, 1221–1232. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1994.tb00555.x

Ozbay, F., Johnson, D. C., Dimoulas, E., Morgan, C. A., Charney, D., & Southwick, S. (2007). Social support and resilience to stress: from neurobiology to clinical practice. *Psychiatry (Edgmont (Pa.: Township)), 4(5)*, 35–40. https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2921311/

Rayle, A. D & Chung, Kuo-Yi. (2007). Revisiting First-Year College Students' Mattering: Social Support, Academic Stress, and the Mattering Experience. *Journal of College*

*Student Retention: Research, Theory and Practice.* 9(1), https://doi.org/10.2190/X1 26-5606-4G36-8132

Talha, M.A., Qi, X & Rizwan, M (2020). Cultural Impact of Perceived Parental Expectations on Students' Academic Stress. Annals of Social Sciences and Perspective, 1(2), 53-65, ISSN: 2707-7063, DOI: 10.52700/assap.v1i2.25

Wills, T. A. (1991). Social support and interpersonal relationships. In M. S. Clark (Ed.), Prosocial behavior (pp. 265–289). *Sage Publications, Inc.* https://psycnet.apa.org/ record/1991-97117-010

Wilks, S.E. (2008) Resilience Amid Academic Stress: The Moderating Impact of Social Support among Social Work Students. *Advances in Social Work, 9(2),* 106-125. DOI: https://doi.org/10.18060/51

Woodfin, V., Hjeltnes, A., & Binder, P. E. (2021). Perfectionistic Individuals' Understanding of How Painful Experiences Have Shaped Their Relationship to Others. *Frontiers in psychology, 12*, 619018. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.61 9018

Zimet, G. D., Dahlem, N. W., Zimet, S. G., & Farley, G. K. (1988). The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support. *Journal of Personality Assessment, 52(1)*, 30–41. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa5201_2