

## Perfectionism and Fear of Negative Evaluation among Experienced and Novice Musicians

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### ABSTRACT

This quantitative study explores the relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among musicians in Kerala, differentiating between experienced and novice musicians. The sample included 70 musicians, out of which 35 were experienced and 35 were novice Musicians. A descriptive and correlational research design was employed. Perfectionism was assessed using the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990), and fear of negative evaluation was measured with the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983). Data were collected through random sampling and analyzed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and Pearson correlation coefficients. Findings indicated no significant differences in perfectionism or fear of negative evaluation between experienced and novice musicians. However, a significant relationship was observed between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation within both groups.

**Keywords:** *Perfectionism, Fear of Negative Evaluation, Experienced Musicians, Novice Musicians*

Instrumentalists, singers, composers, and conductors are all considered musicians. In order to hone their skills, musicians frequently go through rigorous training programs. They can also work in a variety of environments, such as recording studios, concert halls, and educational institutions. Their responsibilities may include educating, creating new music, recording music, giving live performances, or working with other musicians. An experienced musician is someone who has acquired knowledge or skill in the field of music over a period of more than 5 years. A novice musician is someone who is new to and inexperienced in the field of music, with less than 5 years of experience.

When they are unable to physically create the music, they are hearing in their heads, many artists become dissatisfied. Regardless of expertise level, musicians frequently deal with certain psychological issues that can affect both their overall wellbeing and performance. Perfectionism and the dread of receiving a poor review stand out as important variables influencing artists of all skill levels.

According to Frost et al. (1990), "Perfectionism is defined as setting excessively high standards for performance and experiencing overly critical self-evaluation. Perfectionists

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strive for flawlessness, have unrealistic standards, and feel intense pressure to be perfect". Frost et al (1990) highlighted that it is not possible to explain the construct of perfectionisms through a longing for achieving high standards alone. There are some other characteristics of perfectionism that are high standards resulting in extremely self-critical behavior, fear of making mistakes, feeling suspicious of the quality of one's performance, significance attached to expectations and criticism from parents and extreme emphasis put on organization. Like many other traits perfectionism has both its good sides and bad sides. The dimension of perfectionistic strivings comprises those facets of perfectionism that may be considered normal, healthy, or adaptive. In contrast, the dimension of perfectionistic concerns comprises those facets of perfectionism that are considered neurotic, unhealthy, or maladaptive (Stoeber & Eismann,2007).

Fear of negative evaluation (FNE) is defined as an "apprehension about others' evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations and the expectation that others would evaluate oneself negatively" (Watson and Friend, 1969). People who are afraid of being evaluated tend to think that, no matter how well they perform, people will see their flaws and failings and judge them unfavourably. They might also go through physiological changes like sweating, numbness, and palpitations. They become distressed by this dread and frequently avoid such circumstances as a result. Anxiety over being judged poorly is closely linked to social anxiety.

### *Need and Significance of the study*

Music is an essential medium for honing the art of self-expression, which is a potent tool in and of itself. Singing or playing an instrument teaches persistence, self-control, and accountability—qualities necessary for success in any undertaking. Success in the music industry frequently requires exceptional dedication and near-perfect performances. A lot of musicians talk about how their perfectionism has benefited and hurt their careers. Although aiming for perfection might be a beneficial way to achieve excellence, doing so frequently causes nervousness and discomfort when performing. This anxiety—which is connected to perfectionism—comes from an unfavourable and obviously unhealthy perspective of imperfection.

Regardless of skill level or preparation, musicians may suffer from severe anxiety over making errors and falling short of their own high expectations. A lot of the time, anxiety is conditioned by bad events from the past. Despite having a strong love for music, a lot of artists quit because they are afraid of making mistakes and receiving negative feedback from others.

Musicians' psychological health and general well-being are significantly impacted by success. It is essential to comprehend how one's experience in the music industry is entwined with perfectionism and the fear of negative evaluation. Thus, the purpose of this study is to look into the connection between experienced and novice musicians' perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation.

## **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Stoeber and Eismann (2007) conducted a study on 'Perfectionism in young musicians: Relations with motivation, effort, achievement, and distress'. 146 young musicians completed measures of perfectionism, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, effort, achievement, and distress in order to examine the relationships between various aspects of perfectionism and these factors in musicians. The findings indicated that aiming for

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perfection was linked to greater accomplishment, increased effort, and intrinsic drive. Negative responses to imperfection were linked to extrinsic incentive and increased suffering, while perceived pressure from music professors was also linked to internal motivation. The results show that musicians' perfectionism has both advantages and disadvantages.

Patston & Osborne (2016) conducted a study on 'The developmental features of music performance anxiety (MPA) and perfectionism in school age music students'. They were given two questionnaires: the child multidimensional components of perfectionism in children, which includes worries about mistakes, organization, parental expectations, and doubts about actions, and the music performance anxiety inventory for adolescents, which assesses the somatic, cognitive, and behavioural components of MPA. From the age of 10 to 17, the results showed a robust, favourable, and statistically significant link, especially when it came to worry about making mistakes. Gender was the subject of the second significant association between MPA and perfectionism, wherein females underwent a more intensive and steep developmental trajectory than males. The study's third significant conclusion was that perfectionism and MPA levels rise with experience years.

Dobos, Piko, and Kenny (2018) examined the relationship between music performance anxiety (MPA), social phobia, and various dimensions of perfectionism. They used musicians who had either finished their musical education or were studying music as part of their sample. In addition to responding to extra questions on music, participants finished the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, the Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory, and the Social Phobia Inventory. The study discovered that while perfectionism levels did not significantly differ across genders, female musicians reported higher levels of MPA and social anxiety. Perfectionism and social anxiety both have a strong correlation with MPA. Four of the six perfectionism subscales—parental criticism and doubts about actions, on the one hand, and parental expectations and preference for organization, on the other—were found to be strongly correlated with MPA by multiple regression analysis. The study demonstrates the close connection between perfectionism, social anxiety, and MPA, indicating that certain MPA instances may also involve comorbid social phobia that is not related to performance.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Objectives of the study*

- To find out the perfectionism among experienced and novice musicians.
- To find out the fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians.
- To find out whether there is any relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians.
- To find out whether there is any relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians.

### *Hypotheses*

- H1: There is no significant difference in perfectionism among experienced and novice musicians.
- H2: There is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians.
- H3: There is no significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians.

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- H4: There is no significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians.

### *Sample*

The participants were 35 experienced (Above 5 years of experience in music field) musicians and 35 novice (Below 5 years) musicians who were chosen as the research population in the current study. The musicians included both instrumentalists and vocalists. The participants were drawn using cluster sampling method. The age ranges of the participants are between 18-40 years.

### **Inclusion criteria:**

- Individuals who actively engages in music, either as vocalists or instrumentalists
- Both Men and Women are included
- Includes both novice musicians and experienced musicians
- Musicians belonging to the age 18-40

### **Exclusion Criteria:**

- Musicians who are not based in Kerala.
- Individuals whose primary engagement is not music.
- Individuals who are not currently engaged in music in any capacity.

### *Measures*

- **Personal data sheet:** A personal data schedule developed by the researcher was used for the collection of data. Personal details like age, gender, socio economic status, years of experience in the music field, whether they have studied music professionally, the kind of Musician they are, was included in the data sheet.
- **The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale:** The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism scale was developed by Dr. Randy Frost and colleagues Martin.P, Lahart.C, & Rosenblate.R (1990). The possible range from the 35 5- point Likert - type items is from 35 to 175, with higher scores suggesting greater amounts of perfectionism.
- **The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale:** Developed by Leary in 1983. The Brief FNE is 12 item scale, 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.

### *Procedure*

The study involved musicians categorized according to specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. A random sampling method was used for participant selection. Each participant received a data collection form, which included a personal data sheet, the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), and the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (BFNE). Participants were informed about the study's purpose and their rights, were made aware that participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Informed consent was obtained before they completed the questionnaires.

### *Statistical techniques*

The following statistical techniques are used:

- **Descriptive statistics:** Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation have been used to describe the demographics details of the group.

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- **Student's t test:** Independent samples t test was used to compare the means of the sample groups.
- **Correlation:** Pearson's correlation analysis was used to measure the strength and direction of the linear relationship between the variables.

### *Ethical Considerations*

The ethics given below are followed throughout the research:

- The confidentiality of the responses gathered from each participant was guaranteed to all participants.
- The dignity of research participants has been given top priority. The research participants' and organizations' anonymity has been guaranteed. The subjects in the research were not harmed physically or psychologically, and the researcher protected their right to privacy.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**H1:** There is no significant difference in perfectionism among experienced and novice musicians.

*Table 1 The mean, standard deviation and corresponding t-value of perfectionism among musicians.*

Variables	Experienced Musicians(n=35)		Novice Musicians (n=35)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Perfectionism	108.5	19.43	113.3	15.55	1.134

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation and corresponding t-value of perfectionism among experienced and novice musicians. In experienced musicians, the mean score and SD of perfectionism is 108.5 and 19.43 respectively. In novice musicians, the mean score and SD of perfectionism is 113.3 and 15.55 respectively. Their corresponding t-value is 1.134. Higher scores indicate that novice musicians have higher levels of perfectionism than experienced musicians. Independent samples t-test was done to find the significant difference between two groups. It has been found that there is no significant difference in perfectionism among experienced and novice musicians.

The mean score of perfectionism is higher in novice musicians than experienced musicians. It would make sense to anticipate that musicians would get more at ease, less nervous, and less perfectionistic with their playing as they gained more experience with the instrument and familiarity with the instruction connected with instrumental classes over time. Experienced and novice musicians' perfectionism mean scores do not significantly differ from one another. This demonstrates that musicians of all skill levels exhibit similar levels of perfectionism, regardless of their years of experience in the industry. On there being no significant difference in perfectionism for both experienced and novice musicians, the hypothesis is accepted.

**H2:** There is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians.

**Table 2** *The mean, standard deviation and corresponding t-value of fear of negative evaluation among musicians.*

Variable	Experienced Musicians(n=35)		Novice Musicians (n=35)		t-value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>Fear of Negative Evaluation</b>	34.37	9.40	35.80	9.405	0.635

Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation and corresponding t-value of fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians. In experienced musicians, the mean and SD of fear of negative evaluation is 34.37 and 9.40 respectively. In novice musicians, the mean score and SD of fear of negative evaluation is 35.80 and 9.405 respectively. Their corresponding t-value is -0.635. Higher scores indicate that the novice musicians have higher fear of negative evaluation levels than experienced musicians. It has been found that there is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians. This is because there is only a slight increase in the mean scores of novice musicians when compared to experienced musicians.

The slight difference in mean value of experienced and novice musicians shows that, fear of negative evaluation is high in novice musicians. This is because experienced musicians are more experienced in performing and engaging in social situations. So, they feel less anxious than novice musicians. The mean values of fear of negative evaluation between experienced and novice musicians do not show any significant difference. Both experienced musicians and novices develop anxiety when faced with consecutive stage programs and unfamiliar settings. Most performers in a field like music have to spend most of their time on stage. Experienced and novice musicians experience fear at the same level that something will go wrong while performing, that it will affect their profession. Therefore, there is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation between experienced and novice musicians. Hence, we accept the null hypothesis.

**H3:** There is no significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians.

**Table 3** *The coefficient of correlation between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians.*

Variable(n=35)	Fear of Negative Evaluation
<b>Perfectionism</b>	0.520*

*Correlation significant at 0.01 level*

Table 3 shows the coefficient of correlation between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians. In experienced musicians, Pearson’s correlation coefficient has been found to be 0.520 at 0.01 level of significance. This indicates that there is a moderate positive relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians. This means that an increase or decrease in perfectionism will also be accompanied by an increase or decrease in fear of negative evaluation respectively.

One of the most essential elements for a musician’s survival is to perform perfectly in a way that conquers the minds of audience. Experienced musicians who have been proficient in the field of music for a long time, but are still afraid of how others will judge them if they do not perform better. Audiences expect great performances from experienced musicians. The thought of having to perform with that expectation makes a musician a perfectionist. Since,

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there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians, the null hypothesis is rejected.

**H4:** There is no significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians.

**Table 4** *The coefficient of correlation between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians.*

Variable(n=35)	Fear of Negative Evaluation
Perfectionism	0.481*

*Correlation significant at 0.01 level.*

Table 4 shows the coefficient of correlation between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians. In novice musicians, Pearson's correlation coefficient has been found to be 0.481 at 0.01 level of significance. This indicates that there is a slight positive relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians. This means that an increase or decrease in perfectionism will also be accompanied by an increase or decrease in fear of negative evaluation in novice musicians respectively. As a newcomer to the field of music, one of the reasons for the increase in perfectionism may be past negative experiences. It's common for someone to make a mistake if they are new to the music field. These experiences create the impression that people who come into the music field need to perform more perfectly. Fear of being judged negatively by others drives one to become more perfect. So, there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians. Hence the null hypothesis is rejected.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study aimed to examine the relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians.

The objectives were to assess perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation in both groups, determine if there is a relationship between these factors among experienced musicians, and investigate the same for novice musicians. Conducted with 70 participants, divided equally into 35 experienced and 35 novice musicians, the study gathered data from musicians in Kerala. Perfectionism was measured using The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990), while fear of negative evaluation was assessed with the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983). A personal data sheet was also included. Data collection utilized the random sampling method, and statistical analysis was performed using descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and Pearson correlation coefficients.

### *Major Findings of the study*

- Results shows that there is no significant difference in perfectionism among experienced and novice musicians.
- Results shows that there is no significant difference in fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians.
- Results shows that there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians.
- Results shows that there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians

### *Implications of the study*

The aim of the study was to find out whether there is any difference in or any relationship between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced and novice musicians. Although, there are researches on the characteristics of the musicians, there are only few studies on how it all varies according to the experience in the music field. The results of this study will help to understand how perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation are related to musicians who are new to the field of music and to any experienced musicians in the field of music. These findings suggest that music education and performance are integral aspects of a musician's life, and that's why musicians work hard to preserve the integrity of their compositions from start to finish. Depending on how he feels at the moment, one selects the song he wishes to hear. In a similar vein, this study advances our understanding of the connection between a musician's thinking and performance. Careers that are more successful and satisfying can result from assisting musicians in gaining confidence through skill development, positive reinforcement, and encouraging situations. The study's conclusions will serve as impetus for additional in-depth investigation into a wide range of musical genres and populations.

### *Limitations*

- As the sample size and area of the study are limited the findings could not be generalized.
- As the study was time bound and had to be completed within a specified time, the sample size and the area had to be restricted.
- The differentiation of musicians according to their experience in the field, into novice and experienced is specific to this study and cannot not be generalized.
- As self-report measures for variables are used, participants may provide answers that they perceive as more socially acceptable rather than reflecting their true experiences.

### *Suggestions for future studies*

- Large areas of the population can be considered for future study as the field of music is very broad.
- The study can be conducted with a great number of variables.
- The study can be conducted based on the type of music or instruments they play that provide more characteristics about the population.

### *Conclusion*

From this study it is found that there is positive correlation between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among experienced musicians and also positive correlation between perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation among novice musicians. There is no significant difference seen between experienced and novice musicians on the variable perfectionism and fear of negative evaluation.

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### **Conflict of Interest**

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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