

Relationship between Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue Among Professionals in Managerial Positions

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ABSTRACT

Perfectionism is said to impact our mental health, physical health, relationships, and productivity. Another area of significance that's impaired by perfectionism is decision making among Professionals in Managerial positions. Decision making is especially hard when Professionals in Managerial positions are struggling with perfectionism. Perfectionism gets us guessing and apprehensive every single choice, paralyzed with fear about making the wrong decision and messing things up forever. As Professionals in Managerial positions who sets big goals and works hard to accomplish them turn to perfectionism, it can become a roadblock to attaining goals and may negatively impact academic success and personal well-being, too. The present study aims to explore the Relationship between Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions. The study hypothesized that There will be a significant relationship between Rigidity Perfectionism, Self Critical Perfectionism, Narcissistic Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions. The research was based on primary data collected from 65 participants – Professionals in Managerial positions. The present study used the “The Big Three Perfectionism Scale (BTPS) – Martin M Smith and Decisional Fatigue Scale (DFLS) – Hickman, Pignatiello & Sadia Tahir to study the relationship between the variables. Results indicated that there was a significant relationship between Rigidity Perfectionism, Self Critical Perfectionism, Narcissistic Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions. Additionally, results also indicated that there was a significant gender differences in Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue. Further, the paper also discusses the implications, limitations and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: *Perfectionism, Decisional Fatigue, Professionals, Managerial positions*

Perfectionism refers to a stable personality trait, where in the individual will consistently engage in similar or same patterns of thinking and behaviour (Melrose, 2011). Perfectionism is an attribute of the personality which is categorised by the strength with which a person struggles to attain or achieve exceedingly unrealistic standards in both performance and behaviour (Schiena et. al., 2012). It is a personality trait where the person is striving to achieve excessively high standards in their performance; this is accompanied by a tendency towards being highly critical in their evaluations of behaviour (Besharat, et al. 2010).

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Perfectionism is a formidable motivator for business leaders. It inspires them to set exacting standards for both themselves and their teams, instilling a relentless drive and ambition for improvement. Perfectionist leaders are characterized by their strong, firm determination for excellence. It is a prominent and significant motivator for businessmen, leaders, managers, and others in leadership positions. Perfectionism inspires people to set challenging standards for both themselves and their teams, which instils an uncompromising drive and an ambition for improvement.

Perfectionist people have a self-critical nature which puts them into a constant worry regarding the outcome of the decision which is failure. Failure is seen by perfectionist people as a scary prospect as failure is a contrary in their pursuit of perfection (Flaxman et al., 2012). As perfectionists always want to achieve high goals, in the area of their work which at times may lead to failure. The reasons for this failure could be:

- Individual has set unrealistic goals with respect to their abilities.
- Goal cannot be attained in the given time period.
- The individual sets reasonable goals, but progress is hindered by discrimination.

Perfectionism as a trait has many advantages and it is extremely important trait for people in the managerial positions. People who are in managerial positions need to possess traits like leadership, communication, organized, confidence, Adaptability etc. This trait is an important one as it strives for excellence. People high in perfectionism tend to exhibit high conscientiousness trait (Stoeber et al., 2009), which is an essential trait for people in managerial positions. Along with this people who are perfectionists, have a tendency to be overly analytical and indecisive which will delay or even halt the decision-making process, which is a major disadvantage for people who are in managerial positions as they need to be a quick and analytical decision maker. For perfectionists anything less than excellence is unacceptable. This philosophy runs in all aspects of their life like career, relationships, personal goals, or professional ones. When managers or any person is stuck with perfectionism on minute details, they can be exhausted which is termed as “Decisional fatigue.”

Decision fatigue is a phenomenon where a person has made many decisions over a period of time, depleting their mental energy and stamina. As the cognitive resources for making choices diminish, the quality of subsequent decisions tends to suffer, leading to poor reliance on simpler, often less optimal options. It describes a phenomenon in which the limited reserve of stamina for making decisions becomes drained, which leads to poor self-control subsequently (Vohs et al., 2008). It is a mental exhaustion which can be seen in a person when many choices are made in the day. This leads to a diminished ability in making appropriate and sound decisions, feeling overwhelmed, and constantly doubting the decisions made or a tendency to procrastinate the decisions (Twanna, 2024). Some of the symptoms of decisional fatigue are Irritable, Exhaustion, Procrastination and impulsiveness. The uncertainty and volatility in the work place make the managers to make increased number of decisions in the day which can lead to exhaustion, and if this is accompanied by perfectionism the decision-making process will be mentally and physically draining to the managers which lead to decisional fatigue.

People with Perfectionism tend to be stuck and are unable to commit to a choice because of uncertainty. They are in a constant pressure to select the one option which is right, fuelling stress and overwhelm. These people have a continuous worry about making the "wrong

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decision” and the fear of being subjected to judgment from society or others which can intensify their feelings of anxiety (Smith 2024). These extreme levels of importance or strive for perfectionism in every minute work can lead to anxiety, stress, overly critical, self-doubt, worry, fatigue and can influence decision making process, ultimately leading to fatigue. These outcomes can be detrimental for people in managerial positions, as they must make decisions or choices, big or small day to day basis. Managers who are overly focused on achieving perfectionism, invest huge amounts of time on repairing the negatives which creates a barrier in perceiving beyond those weakness and identify or build strengths. These hinder a person in progressing towards creativity, innovation and often end up in stress, exhaustion, and fatigue. This not only affects the managers, but also the employees and organization.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Xu et al., (2022) in their study found that leaders who are perfectionist influence on two regulatory states of perfectionism, that is engagement and emotional exhaustion among employees. Their study found that leaders who are perfectionists lead to emotional exhaustion among employees, with no influence on engagement and thereby reducing their creativity.

Study by Esra Gurel et al., (2021) investigated the relationship between perfectionist personality traits and burnout. This study was conducted on a sample of 158 employees. A significant relationship was found sub dimension of perfectionism with burnout. Specifically, the self-oriented perfectionism was related with emotional exhaustion, desensitization of burnout inventory.

Babapour Kheirodin et al. (2015) conducted a study that assessed the role of perfectionism in predicting feelings of cognitive, social, and physical fatigue. This research found that perfectionism, both adaptive and maladaptive, significantly predicts general fatigue and feelings of cognitive, social, and physical fatigue. They predicted 29% to 39% variance in fatigue dimensions. The study suggests that focusing on personality traits, including perfectionism, in the treatment of patients with chronic fatigue syndrome can be crucial.

Ryan Ross (2012) in their research mentioned that a perfectionist’s meticulous nature is extremely beneficial as they give a thorough check on every detail, strive to uphold the professional standards at workplace, extremely orderly in nature, show traits on fastidious which can benefit the organization. But these people can also be difficult to please sort of managers or leaders as they have trouble prioritizing work and delegating responsibilities. They are always in a quest for perfection for work which is not important or need not be done equally well. Perfectionist managers inability to delegate work will deprive the opportunity for the subordinates to learn and grow. These managers with perfectionism can be fussy, rob the right to choice or control in work for the employees (Ryan Ross, 2012). This intention to complete every work in perfection of managers can be emotionally and mentally draining leading to decisional fatigue.

A study by Hurley & Ryman (2003) found that perfectionist people often perform better until they get promoted to a leadership position which demands trust, loyalty, efficiency and other managing people. This happens as the person struggles to meet the high standard, seeking perfection to equate with success which is time, energy, and cost consuming. In

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another study, it was found that perfectionist people in managerial positions do not make good leaders (McMahon & Rosen, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Aim: The present study aims to examine the Relationship between Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions

Objectives of the study

- To examine the significant Relationship between Rigidity Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions.
- To examine the significant Relationship between Self Critical Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions.
- To examine the significant Relationship between Narcissistic Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions.

Hypotheses

- There will be a significant relationship between Rigidity Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions
- There will be a significant relationship between Self Critical Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions
- There will be a significant relationship between Narcissistic Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions.

Research design

The research design that was used for the present study was a non- experimental correlational method. A correlational research design aims at observing two or more variables and determining what relationship exists between the two (Bordens & Abbott, 2011). In such a research design, the variables are not manipulated, instead they are simply observed.

Sample

- **Sampling Techniques:** Sampling Method: The methods used to obtain the sample were snowball and purposive sampling. Since the purpose of this study demands a rather specific sample, the sampling methods used were non- probabilistic snowball and purposive sampling.
- **Sample Description:** The population chosen for this study consisted of Professionals in Managerial positions in the sectors of IT, Operations, Production & Manufacturing. The professionals have had an experience between 2 years to 12 years in the managerial positions.
- **Sampling Size:** Sample size consisted of 65 participants who are working in managerial positions.

Inclusion criteria:

- Professionals in managerial positions
- Both male and female
- Married and unmarried professionals

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Exclusion criteria:

- Participants with less than 2 years of experience in managerial position
- Participants suffering from any chronic physical or psychological illness

Tools of assessment:

1. **The Big Three Perfectionism Scale:** This scale was developed by Martin M Smith (2016). It consists of 45 items with three dimensions. They are Rigidity Perfectionism, Self-Critical Perfectionism, and Narcissistic Perfectionism. The reliability coefficient of this scale is 0.93.
2. **Decisional Fatigue Scale:** This scale was developed by Hickman, Pignatiello & Sadia Tahir (2008). It consists of 10 items. The reliability coefficient of this scale is 0.87.

Procedure of data collection

First, the informed consent form was given to participants to take their consent for participation, fully informing them about the purpose of the study, their role as participants and what the study aimed to find. The further filling of data sheets was done only after obtaining the participants' consent. Questionnaire method was employed to collect information and data from the participants. The questionnaires were filled by the participants using the Google Form link that was sent to them via email. Participants were also asked to forward these questionnaires to other individuals who they think fit into the sample.

Data Analysis

The filled-in questionnaires were scored and interpreted using the norms provided in the respective manuals of the questionnaires. Descriptive analysis of the socio demographic details in terms of mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis were done. To examine the relationships between variables of interest, Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis was conducted.

ANALYSIS

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the correlation variables: Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions

Descriptive Statistics									
	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis		
	Statis	Statis	Statis	Statis	Statis	Statis	Std.Er	Statis	StdEr
	tic	tic	tic	tic	tic	tic	ror	tic	ror
Decisional Fatigue	65	10	42	23.65	8.44	.483	.297	-.501	.586
Rigid Perfectionism	65	10	46	27.80	8.37	.034	.297	-.141	.586
Self Critical Perfectionism	65	18	85	48.50	16.37	.350	.297	-.364	.586
Narcissistic Perfectionism	65	17	67	42.40	13.02	.140	.297	-.793	.586
N	65								

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The table shows the descriptive statistics for the variables Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions. The maximum and minimum for Decisional Fatigue (N= 65) is 10 and 42, respectively. The mean and standard deviation for Decisional Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions is M= 23.65 and SD= 8.44. The table shows that the standard error values for skewness and kurtosis in Decisional Fatigue are .297 and .586, respectively. Since both the values are within ± 1.96 , it can be said that the data collected is normally distributed. The maximum and minimum for Rigid Perfectionism (N= 65) is 10 and 46, respectively. The mean and standard deviation for Rigid Perfectionism among Professionals in Managerial positions is M= 27.80 and SD= 8.37. The table shows that the standard error values for skewness and kurtosis in Rigid Perfectionism are .297 and .586, respectively. Since both the values are within ± 1.96 , it can be said that the data collected is normally distributed. The maximum and minimum for Self-Critical Perfectionism (N= 65) is 18 and 85, respectively. The mean and standard deviation for Self-Critical Perfectionism among Professionals in Managerial positions is M= 48.50 and SD= 16.37. The table shows that the standard error values for skewness and kurtosis in Self-Critical Perfectionism are .297 and .586, respectively. Since both the values are within ± 1.96 , it can be said that the data collected is normally distributed. The maximum and minimum for Narcissistic Perfectionism (N= 65) is 17 and 67, respectively. The mean and standard deviation for Narcissistic Perfectionism among Professionals in Managerial positions is M= 42.40 and SD= 13.02. The table shows that the standard error values for skewness and kurtosis in Narcissistic Perfectionism are .297 and .586, respectively. Since both the values are within ± 1.96 , it can be said that the data collected is normally distributed.

Table: 2 *Correlation between Perfectionism and Decision Fatigue among Professionals in Managerial positions using Pearson’s correlation*

Correlations		Decisional Fatigue	Rigid Perfectionism	Self Critical Perfectionism	Narcissistic Perfectionism
Decisional Fatigue	Pearson Correlation	1	.530**	.736**	.565**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
Rigid Perfectionism	Pearson Correlation	.50**	1	.799**	.802**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
Self Critical Perfectionism	Pearson Correlation	.73**	.799**	1	.761**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
Narcissistic Perfectionism	Pearson Correlation	.56**	.802**	.717**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	

This table shows Pearson’s correlation coefficient and the significance value for the chosen sample of college students N (65). As per the table, the correlation value between Decisional Fatigue and Rigid Perfectionism, dimension of Perfectionism is $r = .530^{**}$, the significance value, $p = .000$, showing that a significant relationship exists between the two variables at 0.01 level.

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The correlation value between Decisional Fatigue and Self – Critical Perfectionism, dimension of Perfectionism is $r = .736^{**}$, the significance value, $p = .000$, showing that a significant relationship exists between the two variables at 0.01 level.

The correlation value between Decisional Fatigue and Narcissistic Perfectionism, dimension of Perfectionism is $r = .565^{**}$, the significance value, $p = .000$, showing that a significant relationship exists between the two variables at 0.01 level.

Therefore, the three hypotheses that states “There will be significant relationship between Rigidity Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among professionals in managerial position”. “There will be significant relationship between Self Critical Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among professionals in managerial position”. “There will be significant relationship between Narcissistic Perfectionism and Decisional Fatigue among professionals in managerial position” are accepted.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In explaining the findings of this study, it can be seen that the results have indicated that the high scores on the three domains of Perfectionism tend to impact decisional fatigue of professionals in managerial position as perfectionism sets high and unrealistic goals and engage in very critical self-evaluations. Also, the effects of decision fatigue can vary, potentially leading to difficulty making the right decisions, or other avoidance behaviors or fatigue or limit the decisions a person needs to make to reduce the stress associated with decision making among professionals in managerial position. The results are in consistent with the findings of Potter. W in his study “Perfectionism, Decision-Maing, and Post-error Slowing”. Managing Decisional Fatigue is inevitable for effective decision-making process. The results of the present study further draw implications that developing decision making skills and techniques, along with techniques to overcome perfectionism could be adopted to manage decision fatigue and make effective decisions. So that better manifestation of life and the world is possible, through which academic, interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of perfectionism and decision fatigue could be regulated efficiently. It is proved from the present study that there is a relationship between perfectionism and decision fatigue among professionals in managerial position which makes this study a reference to conduct further research to identify the influencing factors that affects perfectionism and decision fatigue.

Implications

- Managing Decisional Fatigue is inevitable for effective decision-making process.
- Developing decision making skills and techniques, along with techniques to overcome perfectionism could be adopted to manage decision fatigue and make effective decisions.
- So that better manifestation of life, efficient decision making, enhanced creativity, improves self-esteem and productivity can be developed, through which professional, interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships can be built.
- It is proved from the present study that there is a relationship between perfectionism and decision fatigue among professionals in managerial positions which makes this study a reference to conduct further research to identify the influencing factors that affects perfectionism and decision fatigue.

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Limitations

- The current research study has a limited sample size
- The relationship between the variables can be studied among people in different work set ups.

Suggestions for further research

- An intervention based pre – posttest design to study the effectiveness of Perfectionism training and decision-making skills training
- Studies that focus on other socio-demographic variables, employment in different work set up can be studied in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the variables.
- The study could be extended by choosing a different sample such as individuals working in different positions in different areas of work.
- The sample could also be collected from managers in government and private sector.
- Further studies could be conducted on Decision Fatigue to determine the influencing or moderating factors.
- Gender differences studies in Perfectionism and Decision Fatigue could also be considered.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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