

## The study of simple and multiple relationships between the variables of perfectionism and imposture feeling with the mental health of MA students

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**Abstract:** The present research investigated the simple and multiple relationships between the variables of perfectionism and imposture feeling with the mental health of MA students of Science and Research University, Ahvaz Branch. In this research, perfectionism and imposture feeling are predictable variables and general mental health is the criterion variable. The examined sample consists of 131 male and 130 female students of Ahvaz Science and Research University who were selected through multi-stage random sampling method. In order to collect data, four questionnaires of Ahvaz reality distortion Scale, Clance's Imposture Feeling Scale, Ahvaz Perfectionism Scale and SCL 25 Scale were used. The present study is a fundamental research of correlation method and in order to analyze data, Pearson Correlation Coefficient and Multi-variable Correlation Coefficient were utilized. The results indicated that there was a significant relationship between perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health. Moreover, the correlation between perfectionism and imposture feeling was significantly positive.

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**Key words:** perfectionism, imposture feeling, mental health

### 1. Introduction

Man's mental health depends on the constructive components of his personality. The composition of these components may be different in various people and make different personal patterns. Many researchers believe that individual differences and various personal characteristics distinguish individual reactions in different situation and stressful factors. Perfectionism is one of the man's personal characteristics. It has been considered by many researchers in recent decades and each researcher has different definition about perfectionism according to his own viewpoint. The culture and the ground of perfectionism is a belief that indicates reforming moral perfectionism is the major goal of moral effort and perfectionism in divine wisdom means that being innocent is possible during life. In order to describe the concept of perfectionism, Freud believes that the main motive in these groups' life is not to achieve prosperity but reaching perfection and superiority. They should achieve perfectionism in each field and make their best; otherwise, they will not be pleased. Lack of reaching the accomplishments makes them stressful, depressed and gives them the feeling of sinful concerned with catching the goals (7).

Horney explains the concept in wider aspects as needs and perfectionism behaviors. Horney calls ten needs which can be almost seen in all these people. One of these needs is perfection while to be criticized. The people always afraid of to do wrong and being

deceived. They make their best to indicate no defect and try to remove their faults and conceal them; therefore, their personality runs into a mask.

Personality relates to different negative consequences like failure feeling, sin feeling, lack of decision making, shame feeling, slow working and low self-respect and some mental disorders like alcoholism, mental anorexia depression and personal disorders (2).

Hewitt and Genest (1990) believe that severe need to be successful and avoiding others' criticism and keeping away from indicating faults and defects make perfectionist people to perform continuous and hard activities in order to achieve success. But most of them are deeply sensitive against others' criticism and excessively evaluation. This conscience severity and superior entity make a kind of power to progress, on the hand it can be a reason to make these people a little happy about their accomplishments and cause sensitivity against criticism and failure.

The researchers (e.g., Najarian, Makvandi and Nikfar, 1995) believe that there is a relationship between high level of perfectionism and psychosis (6). Perfectionism can be normal or abnormal. In normal perfectionism, people enjoy hard and tiresome works and when they feel freedom to do works, try to do their best,

Being successful to do works bring a kind of pleasure and happiness (1). Burns (1980) believes

that average perfectionism is normal even if it has all perfectionism factors.

Five aspects have been suggested for perfectionism including excessively anxiety of wrong doing, personal criteria of high level performance, personal understanding about parents, expectations, excessive criticism about oneself and tendency to be doubtful (8).

Frost and Gross (1995) have divided perfectionism to three different kinds from other perspective: self-oriented perfectionism includes a person's attempts to achieve perfect entity. In this respect, perfectionist people show strong motivation to achieve perfectionism. They have unreal criteria or they have the idea of black and white criterion and just focus on their own defects (12).

Perfectionism for the sake of others, include biased beliefs and expectations about others' capabilities and tendency to have perfectionist criteria for people who are very important for this person. The third kind is social induced perfectionism which refers to people who apply exaggerating and unreal expectations although meeting these standards to be approved and accepted by other people (11 & 12). According to studies conducted by Shirzad, Mehrabi Zadeh, and Haghghi (1992), there is a positive relationship between perfectionism and migraine headache. Therefore, perfectionism can prepare the situation to cause psychosomatic disorders (3).

The other variable in this research is the phenomenon of imposture feeling. In dictionaries, imposture is defined as a person who is thinking to do a work based on lying or wants to deceive others with unreal and false information (Webster's1-1. Dictionary). This phenomenon is a kind of imposture feeling. This feeling is a kind of indecency experience and the feeling of deceiving other people.1-2. These people are working in high level fields or positions and others know them as successful persons, but they do not have such beliefs; they work harder than others and have control and wisely effects on other people (10).

According to the researchers (i.e., Clence et al.), the signs of this abnormal phenomenon are as follows:

1. People affected by imposture feeling believe that others may discover their weaknesses and disabilities as soon as possible. They do not have enough recognition about themselves while others know them better and all facts and realities will be uncovered in short term period.
2. People affected by this phenomenon get high scores in internalization tests.
3. These people are afraid of shame and humiliation.
4. They feel sin when reaching success.

5. They captured by continuity manner and vicious circle. In fact, when these people focus on test or duty, experiences severe hesitation, fear, and stress. They face nightmares and psychosomatic problems but work hard although they are unhappy about their success.

6. People affected by internalizing positive feedback face difficulty. Because they have never any experience of happiness and delight after reaching success and avoid indicating their excitement.

7. They have excessive stress. They neglect themselves but consider others as powerful, able and effective people.

According to Webster (2004), this phenomenon relates to some personality constructive components, for example there is a meaningful positive correlation between flexibility in interpersonal relations and imposture feeling phenomenon (14).

Cheek (2003) indicated that the level of imposture feeling in women with high level of changeability and severe need to change has high correlation. Therefore, it seems that imposture feeling may be seen differently among male and female students with different levels. But researchers scarcely dealt with this area (9).

The purpose of the present study was to discover the simple and multiple relationships between male and female MA students of Ahvaz Science and Research University. According to this aim and the relate literature, the following hypotheses were suggested:

1. There is a negative relationship between perfectionism and mental health among the MA students.

There is negative relationship between perfectionism and mental health among male MA students.

There is negative relationship between perfectionism and mental health among female MA students.

2. There is negative relationship between imposture feeling and mental health among MA students.

- 2-1. There is negative relationship between imposture feeling and mental health among MA male students.

- 2-2. There is negative relationship between imposture feeling and mental health among MA female students.

3. There is negative relationship between imposture feeling and perfectionism among MA students.

- 3-1. There is negative relationship between imposture feeling and perfectionism among MA male students.

- 3-2. There is negative relationship between imposture feeling and perfectionism among MA female students.

4. There are multiple relationships between perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health among MA students.

4-1. There are multiple relationship between perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health among MA male students.

4-2. There are multiple relationship between perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health among MA female students.

## 2. Research sample

Statistical population of this research included the MA students of Ahvaz Science and Research University. The research sample comprised of 261 male and female students selected through multistage random sampling method.

## 3. Research instrument

In this research, Ahvaz Perfectionism Scale (APS) was used to measure perfectionism. This questionnaire is a self-report scale consists of 27 items prepared by Najarian, Atari, and Zargar (1989). The items of this scale have 4 alternatives ranging from Never, Seldom, Sometimes, and Often. Except for items 11, 16, 17, and 23 which get scores in reverse method, the rest of items are scored according to 1,2,3,4 amounts. Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient for this scale is 0.90. Najarian et al. (1989) used the mentioned scale with the scales of behavioral patterns (TA1) type A and (TA2), SCL-90-R physical objection micro scale and Copper-Smith's self-respect scale simultaneously in order to evaluate the validity of perfectionism scale. The validation analysis showed the degree of validity except for APS correlation coefficient with Type A behavioral pattern while other final coefficients were significant at the level of ( $p < .05$ ).

The reliability coefficient of perfectionism scale in the present research was ( $r = 0.83$ ).

In order to evaluate the imposture feeling of the participants, Clance's 20 items Scale was used. Clance's Imposture Feeling Scale (CIS) was developed by Clance in 1980; and this research was translated into Persian by researchers. The reliability coefficient of this scale was calculated through Kuder Richardson Formula based on test-retesting method. The items in this scale include five alternatives of Completely False, Seldom, Sometimes, Often and Completely True. These alternatives are scored based on 0,1,2,3, and 4 amounts. In order to define the rate of validity, SCL 25 was used and the obtained correlation coefficient was 0.46 that was significant. In order to rate the mental health, the SCL25 was used. This scale is a short list with 90 signs and 25 items. It has been validated in Ahvaz Shahid Chamran University and gained high validity and reliability scores. This scale was used to measure general mental damage. The items of this scale have five choices including Severely, High, Partly, Low,

and Nothing. These items were scored 2, 3, 4, 1, and 0 respectively. The high score in this scale shows low mental health. Its correlation coefficient was 0.87 between enmity factor and SCL25. The overall correlation of this test with Depression Scale was 0.49 for all samples. The correlation among females was 0.56 and among males was 0.47.

## 4. Findings

### 1. Descriptive findings

The mean and standard deviation (SD) of all variables have been indicated in Table 1 which shows that the mean score of mental health scores among female students was higher than male students. Since higher mean score in SCL 25 scale indicated lower mental health; therefore, it seems that female students have lower mental health in comparison with male students. Moreover, female students got higher scores in perfectionism which indicated that the rate of perfectionism was higher among females rather than males. But the difference of imposture feeling scores was not significant between male and female students.

The mean and SD of participants' scores in the questionnaires of mental health, perfectionism and imposture feeling are presented in Table 1.

### 2. The findings relate to hypotheses

Statistical analysis of data concerned with the hypotheses indicated the following results in Tables 2 to 6. The correlation coefficients of participants' scores in the questionnaires of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health are presented in Table 2.

As Table 2 shows, there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and mental health in all the male/female participants ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Since getting higher scores in mental health questionnaire means lower mental health, there was a negative correlation between perfectionism and mental health. On the other hand, with the increase of perfectionism scores, mental health decreases. Thus the hypotheses 1, 1-1, and 1-2 of the research approved. The results also indicated that there was a significant relationship between imposture feeling and male/female participants ( $p < 0.0001$ ). Since getting higher scores in mental health scale showed the lower mental health; therefore, there was a negative correlation between imposture feeling and mental health. On the other hand, with increase of imposture feeling scores, mental health was decreased. Therefore, hypotheses 2, 2-1, and 2-2 were approved ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

The correlation coefficients between the participants' scores in the questionnaires of perfectionism and imposture feeling are presented in Table 3.

As Table 3 shows, there is significant positive correlation between perfectionism and imposture

feeling among male/female participants ( $p < 0.0001$ ). This correlation was relatively higher than male students (0.60 vs. 0.39). It means that the more correlation rate among female students can be due to different genders and getting higher scores in perfectionism. Since the rate of SD among males and females was not significant concerned with the two variables of perfectionism and imposture feelings. In other words, the error level in correlation analysis was very low (4).

Multi-stage correlation coefficient of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health among university students is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 indicates that the multi-stage correlation coefficient for linear composition of perfectionism and imposture feeling variables with students' mental health equals 0.64, the defining coefficient equals 0.41, and F ratio equals 89.52 ( $p < 0.001$ ). In other words, hypothesis 4 was approved. Since regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) analysis of perfectionism was more than imposture feeling regression coefficient; therefore, perfectionism variable showed more predictable power.

Multi-stage correlation coefficient of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health among male students is shown in Table 5.

Findings indicated that multi-stage correlation coefficient for linear composition of perfectionism variables and imposture feeling with mental health of male students equals 0.62, the defining coefficient equals 0.38, and F ratio equals 39.57 ( $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the correlation coefficients were significantly correlated. In other words, hypothesis 4-1 was approved. Moreover, the rate of regression coefficient in perfectionism variable was higher than the coefficient of imposture variable. Thus perfectionism variable in male group can predict mental health better than the imposture feeling variable.

Multi-stage correlation coefficient of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health among female students is presented in Table 6. In Table 6, multi-stage correlation coefficient for linear composition of perfectionism and imposture feeling variables with mental health of female students equals 0.65, the defining coefficient equals 0.42, and F ratio equals 45.36 ( $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, the hypothesis 4-2 was approved. On the other hand, regression coefficient ( $\beta$ ) indicated that between the two predictable variables, the perfectionism variable showed more predictable power for mental health. Comparing the results of Table 5, it can be concluded that the rate of multi-stage relation of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health among females was more than males.

## 5. Discussion and conclusion

Findings of the present study revealed that the correlation between perfectionism and mental health was negative since high score in SCL 25 test showed low mental health. Therefore, higher perfectionism scores indicate lower mental health. The result of this research is consistent with the study of Najarian, Verdi and Mehrabizadeh. It may be concluded that when perfectionism is high in a person, the negative aspects of perfectionism component cause that person's mental health will be decreased and he is ready to be affected by mental diseases. But if the rate of this component is high, mental pressures around him can help the person to be mentally ill. The researchers (e.g., Hewitt & Flett) showed that the people with high level of perfectionism have weak mental system and it makes them very sensitive against the problems and pressures around them. Depression is one of the hazards that threaten perfectionists; therefore, most depressed students are in high level of perfectionism. Moreover, the studies conducted by Najarian and his co workers indicated that there is significant relationship between perfectionism and migraine headache that is a psychosomatic disease, so it seems that perfectionism can predict some mental or psychosomatic diseases.

The perfectionists have excessive motivations and if they do not achieve their desirable progress, they will be affected by contempt feeling which could be the sign of mental diseases. Table 3 shows that the correlation coefficient of perfectionism and mental health variables in female students is equal to 0.63 and in male ones is equal to 0.57. This difference reveals that female students seem to be more sensitive than male ones against mental diseases.

This finding matches with other researchers who worked on the large number of female students in depression and stress. Since high scores in both variables are accompanied by decrease of mental health including depression, positive and significant relationship between them seems to be acceptable. A matter that may probably common between them is dissatisfaction about one's deeds. The perfectionists are less pleased about themselves and evaluate themselves with difficult tests; therefore, people with imposture feeling have partly these characteristics. For example, people with imposture feeling know themselves as unable people and others as wise and capable persons. Thus it is not surprising that in female students who get higher scores concerned with imposture feeling the rate of correlation is 0.60.

According to Table 2, there is negative and significant relationship between the phenomenon of imposture feeling and general mental health. On the other hand, the imposture feeling is accompanied

with mental health decrease. The phenomenon of imposture feeling is an unpleasant phenomenon and a kind of disease that can make a person depressed. Since the sample of the research is students of the university, their feeling was more sensitive than the overall population of the society. Clance has indicated a significant relationship between mental health and depression. Thus this study agrees with Clance's findings. The obtained correlation coefficients indicate that there is greater relationship between the above variables among female students. Perhaps it is due to the female sensitivity against the mental diseases. Finally, it was apparent that imposture feeling and mental health have meaningful relationship.

Tables 4, 5, and 6 indicate multi-stage relationship between perfectionism and imposture feeling variables with mental health since multi-stage correlation coefficients for male and female students were 0.62 and 0.65 respectively. These coefficients are almost higher than the other two variables. Moreover, regression coefficients are different in the two variables of perfectionism and imposture feeling concerned with the mental health variable. This indicates that ( $\beta$ ) in perfectionism variable is relatively higher than ( $\beta$ ) in imposture feeling variable; therefore, perfectionism variable has more effect on mental health.

**Table1. Mean and SD of mental health, perfectionism and imposture feeling**

N	SD	Mean	Participants	
			Variables	
261	17/27	27/20	Total	Mental Health
131	15/07	23/91	Male	
130	18/68	30/63	Female	
261	12/51	38/44	Total	Perfectionism
131	11/81	36/68	Male	
130	13/08	40/39	Female	
261	13/26	48/62	Total	Imposture Feeling
131	13/49	48/15	Male	
130	13/22	49/31	Female	

**Table2. Participants' scores of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health**

N	p	r <sup>2</sup>	r	Participants	
				Variables	
261	P<0001	%37	%61	Total	Perfectionism
131	P<0001	%32	%57	Male	
130	P<0001	%40	%63	Female	
261	P<0001	%21	%46	Total	Imposture Feeling
131	P<0001	%19	%44	Male	
130	P<0001	%24	%49	Female	

**Table3. Correlation coefficients between perfectionism and imposture feeling**

W	p	r <sup>2</sup>	r	Participants	
				Variables	
261	P<0001	%24	%49	Total	Perfectionism
131	P<0001	%15	%39	Male	
130	P<0001	%36	%60	Female	

**Table4. Correlation coefficient of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health**

Regression Coefficient		& Ratio(F) P	Defining Coefficient (RS)	Multi-stage Correlation Coefficient (MR)	Predictable Variable	Criterion Variable
Imposture Feeling	Perfectionism					
	<b><math>\beta=0.70</math> <math>t = 9.27</math> <math>p= 0.001</math></b>	<b>89.52</b> <b>P&lt;0001</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>0.64</b>	Perfectionism	Mental Health
$\beta = 0.24$ $t = 3.83$ $P= 0.001$					Imposture Feeling	

**Table5. Correlation of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health (Males)**

Regression Coefficient		& Ratio(F) P	Defining Coefficient (RS)	Multi-stage Correlation Coefficient (MR)	Predictable Variable	Criterion Variable
Imposture Feeling	Perfectionism					
	<b><math>\beta=0.61</math> <math>t =2. 96</math> <math>p= 0.001</math></b>	<b>39.57</b> <b>P&lt;0.001</b>	<b>0.38</b>	<b>0.62</b>	Perfectionism	Mental Health
<b><math>\beta=0/28</math> <math>t = 3/33</math> <math>P= 0/001</math></b>					Imposture Feeling	

**Table6. Multi-stage correlation of perfectionism and imposture feeling with mental health (Females)**

Regression Coefficient		& Ratio(F) P	Defining Coefficient (RS)	Multi-stage Correlation Coefficient (MR)	Predictable Variable	Criterion Variable
Imposture Feeling	Perfectionism					
	<b><math>\beta=0.74</math> <math>t =6.13</math> <math>p= 0.001</math></b>	<b>45.36</b> <b>P&lt;0.001</b>	<b>0.42</b>	<b>0.65</b>	Perfectionism	Mental Health
<b><math>\beta=0.26</math> <math>t = 2.16</math> <math>P= 0.03</math></b>					Imposture Feeling	

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