

UNIVERSITY OF SZEGED
DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
HEALTH EDUCATION RESEARCH PROGRAMME

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Perfectionism
and its relationship with personality characteristics
among young adults

Theses of Ph.D. Dissertation

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Szeged, 2022

Objectives and hypotheses of the studies presented in the dissertation

In this thesis we were building upon the literature of multidimensional perfectionism and its relationship with health state. Previous research has highlighted that maladaptive perfectionists tend to have increased stress reactivity, which has been prior linked to numerous anxiety disorders and health problems. However, it is also known from earlier studies, that the positive and adaptive aspect of perfectionism is associated with less anxiety, more positive emotions and overall better health. Our primary point of interest was to explore some of the factors that may contribute to the development of perfectionism; to explore those emotional states and anxiety disorders, that may be connected to a higher levels of perfectionism; and identify protective factors that can moderate the adverse health risks of perfectionism in Hungarian samples.

This thesis had five major aims:

1. to demonstrate connection between perfectionism and anxiety (trait anxiety, debilitating test anxiety, symptoms of social phobia, music performance anxiety); and explore if there is a difference between adaptive and maladaptive dimension in terms of anxiety.
2. to explore the relationship between negative emotional states (loneliness, hopelessness, fear of happiness, burnout) and both types of perfectionism; and investigate the differences for adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism.
3. to explore two factors, – childhood traumatic experiences and difficulties in emotion regulation – that can possibly maintain maladaptive perfectionism and play a role in its development (according to certain studies).
4. for the prevention and treatment, to identify the possible protective factors, that can moderate the health risks associated with maladaptive perfectionism.
5. to provide support, that the maladaptive form of perfectionism is a risk factor for mental health, and it has a negative impact on the well-being of young adults.

CONCLUSION

Our findings provided support for the theory, that distinguishes an adaptive and maladaptive form of perfectionism. In our studies, higher level of maladaptive perfectionism was related to stronger anxiety, more negative emotions and difficulty regulating emotions, lower level of protective factors and more frequent medication use. Higher level of adaptive perfectionism was associated with lower levels of anxiety, greater level of protective factors and fewer medication.

We found no significant association between adaptive perfectionism and negative emotions, however, there was a positive relationship with happiness aversion. Although adaptive perfectionism is more frequently associated to positive emotions, in some cases it seems that a positive feeling can induce fear.