

A R A Ş T I R M A M A K A L E S İ / R E S E A R C H A R T I C L E

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EXAMINING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHARACTERISTICS OF
PERFECTIONISM AND THE INFERIORITY FEELING AMONG UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS

Arş. Gör. Muhammed BAHTİYAR*

Prof. Dr. Zeynep DENİZ YÖNDEM**

* Düzce Üniversitesi, Eğitim Fakültesi,
Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü** Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi,
Eğitim Fakültesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Bölümü

e-posta: muhammedbahtiyar@duzce.edu.tr

e-posta: yondemzd@gmail.com

ORCID 0000-0002-9110-3560

ORCID 0000-0002-9161-2760

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between the characteristics of perfectionism and the inferiority feeling among university students. In the study, correlational and descriptive survey models among the quantitative research methods are applied. Participants include 672 university students (with 485 females and 187 males) whose average age is 21 years. As data collection tools, the Frost Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale, the Inferiority Feeling Scale, and the Personal-Demographic Information Form are used. Data are analyzed through the Pearson Correlation Coefficient Test and Stepwise Multiple Regression Analysis to examine the relationship between the characteristics of perfectionism and the inferiority feeling. Results show that there is a positive and moderate-level relationship between university students' characteristics of perfectionism and inferiority feeling and that the inferiority feeling positively predicts the characteristics of perfectionism.

Keywords: University students, perfectionism, inferiority feelingÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNDE MÜKEMMELİYETÇİLİK ÖZELLİKLERİ VE
YETERSİZLİK DUYGUSU ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ

ÖZ

Araştırmanın temel amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinde mükemmeliyetçilik özellikleri ile yetersizlik duygusu arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Araştırmada nicel araştırma yöntemlerinden ilişkisel ve betimsel tarama modeli kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın örneklemini yaş ortalaması 21 olan 672 üniversite öğrencisinden (485 kadın, 187 erkek) oluşmaktadır. Araştırma, Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimlerde İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından alınan etik izin belgesi sonrası yürütülmüştür. Araştırmada veri toplama araçları olarak; Frost Çok Boyutlu Mükemmeliyetçilik Ölçeği, Yetersizlik Duygusu Ölçeği ve Kişisel-Demografik Bilgi Formu kullanılmıştır. Verilerin analizinde mükemmeliyetçilik özellikleri ile yetersizlik duygusu arasındaki ilişkinin incelenmesi amacıyla ise Pearson korelasyon testi ve çoklu aşamalı regresyon testi kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın sonucunda üniversite öğrencilerinin mükemmeliyetçilik özellikleri ile yetersizlik duyguları arasında pozitif orta düzey bir ilişki olduğu ve yetersizlik duygusunun mükemmeliyetçilik özelliğinin pozitif bir yordayıcısı olduğu bulunmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Üniversite öğrencileri, mükemmeliyetçilik, yetersizlik duygusu

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, life and work conditions based on mostly competition and being tested have led individuals to question themselves in terms of their capabilities and to feel under much more pressure and try on self-development. Today's world and society expect individuals to have various types of knowledge and skills to experience their developmental periods in good health and achieve vital missions (WHO, 2001). Especially with the competitive impact of industrialization, the younger generation has come up against much more social and financial conditions in comparison with their parents. According to Ipsos' study based on 20 emerging countries, the rate of those who think that the future of the young will be good is 34%, while the rate of bad is 42%. (Ipsos, 2014). However, the desire and effort to carry out vital activities do sometimes not happen every time or under every condition, and the individuals' effort for perfectionism could be an obstructive factor in revealing their potential and achieving their vital purposes.

According to Alfred Adler who is one of the theorists studying perfectionism for the first time, "The effort for perfectionism is part of life and this effort is an innate urge" (Ansbacher & Ansbacher, 1955, p. 104). Adler considers perfectionism as an inborn characteristic and discusses it in terms of two dimensions abnormal and normal. He states that perfectionism has positive and negative aspects, and it is a perfect motivation leading to success when an individual set realistic standards for themselves. Nevertheless, when the standards are unrealistic, it could become a preventer of success (Roedell, 1984). This demonstrates that Adler regards perfectionism as a multidimensional concept (Sullivan & Braton, 2016).

In the following period, perfectionism is examined from the psychiatric point of view and it is asserted that perfectionism is an ignored characteristic of personality (Hollender, 1965; Missildine, 1963). Views on which perfectionism is discussed and explained first within a theoretical framework belong to Hamachek (1978). He points out that perfectionism has two dimensions; positive and normal perfectionism is about that individuals are pleased to show perfectionist efforts, and negative and neurotic perfectionism is on which individuals are in pain when striving for perfectionism. Afterward, the concept of perfectionism has become a subject of clinical and experimental research together with the Scale of Perfectionism developed by Burns in 1980. Still, since this scale is a one-dimensional scale and could not be used in nonclinical situations, it is highlighted in the literature that new measurements are needed (Stoeber, 2018).

In 1990, Frosts and colleagues examined perfectionism with six sub-dimensions which were personal standards, concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, parental expectations, parental criticism, and organization. Among these sub-dimensions, personal standards mean setting high standards on actions; concern over mistakes is a constant fear of making mistakes in evaluating oneself and reaching out negative results. Doubts about actions are about a tendency for indecision related to the uncertainty of doing the right thing. Parental expectations and parental criticism are about perceptions of which parents of perfectionists expect their children to be perfect and when they fail to meet those expectations, they would be criticized by their parents. Finally, the organization is a tendency of being organized, ordered, and have meticulous care (Frost, Marten, Lahart & Rosenblate, 1990).

It is evident that the concept of perfectionism is at first regarded as a negative and neurotic aspect of personality, and then as a multidimensional notion with positive and negative dimensions. Perfectionism was first discussed in the theory of Individual Psychology within an

aspect of “the striving for superiority and the inferiority feeling”. Adler claims that every individual is born with the inferiority feeling and shows an effort to feel superior and be perfect (Adler, 1929). According to Adler (1957), the source of the inferiority feeling is incompleteness in any period of life and having imperfectness. Those feelings are a pattern of feeling with developmental, psychological, and physical dimensions. In terms of theory of Adler, the mission in life is not about the pursuit of pleasure, but the feeling of perfect and adequate. According to Adler, all strivings and actions by individuals are fictionalized to be superior to the obstacles in life and avoid the inferiority feeling (Burger, 2006).

In previous studies, perfectionism has been considered as an independent variable in correlational studies conducted with negative psychological factors and its relation with many variables has been examined, but the number of studies discussing variables that predict perfectionism is very few (Curran & Hill, 2017). This study is important and unique in that it will examine the relationship between the inferiority feeling and the characteristics of perfectionism for the first time in Turkey and that it considers the inferiority feeling as a variable that predicts perfectionism. Considering all given above, this study seeks to answer the following questions “Is there a relationship between university students’ characteristics of perfectionism and inferiority feeling?” and “Does the inferiority feeling of university students predict their characteristics of perfectionism?”

1. Method

This study was carried out on undergraduate students at different faculties of Düzce University. The sample of the research was undergraduate students in accordance with the simple random sampling method. The study was conducted in classrooms and volunteer students completed the survey in a paper and pencil format. Consent was implied by volunteering and completing the survey. The study was approved by the University Institutional Review Board.

1.1. Participants

Table 1. Descriptive

	Groups	Number (N)	Percent (%)
Gender	Female	485	72,2
	Male	187	27,8
Age	18 - 20	320	47,6
	21 - 23	299	44,5
	24 +	53	7,9
Grade	First grade	205	30,5
	Second grade	207	30,8
	Third grade	118	17,6
	Fourth grade	142	21,1
Number of Siblings	One	30	4,5
	Two	207	30,8
	Three	227	33,8
	Four and over	208	31,0
The Order of Birth	One child	30	4,5
	First child	239	35,6
	Middle child	180	29,8
	Final child	223	33,2
Mother-Father Together /Separated	Together	618	92,0
	Separated/ Death	54	8,0
Perceived Socioeconomic Level	Low	25	3,7

	Mid	618	92,0
	High	29	4,3
Perceived Academic Success	Low	137	20,4
	Mid	461	68,6
	High	74	11,0
Total		672	100

1.2. Data Collection Tools

1.2.1. The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

The Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) developed by Frost and colleagues (1990) is a self-report scale with 6 sub-dimensions including organization, concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, parental expectations, parental criticism, and personal standards with 35 statements. The sub-dimensions of the scale are named as an organization, concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, parental expectations, parental criticism, and personal standards. The adaptation of the scale to Turkish was carried out by Mısırlı-Taşdemir (2003) conducting 489 students. Factor analysis for the validity of the FMPS found out a complex with six dimensions accounted for 47,8 % of the total variance. To assuring the reliability of the FMPS, the Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were measured through the split-half test method. The overall reliability coefficient of the FMPS was found to be .83.

1.2.2. The Inferiority Feeling Scale

The Inferiority Feeling Scale was developed by Akdoğan and Ceyhan (2014) in Turkish culture to analyze nonclinical feelings of inferiority. The scale with a total of 20 statements is a three-dimensional scale with Discouragement, Negation of Self-Value, and Useless Superiority Effort. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficients were calculated for the overall scale and for its sub-dimensions separately and it was found to be .86 for the overall scale. The Cronbach Alpha coefficient for the test-retest reliability of the scale was .88 while it was estimated to be .76 because of the split-half reliability of the scale.

1.3. Data Analysis

For data analysis, the Pearson Correlational test was used to examine the relationship between the characteristics of perfectionism and the inferiority feeling. To test the predictive level of the inferiority feeling on the characteristics of perfectionism, the stepwise multiple regression model was applied. Before it, to check the necessary assumption of normality, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis coefficients were examined and the correlational analysis was carried out.

2. Results

Table 2. Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5
1 .Perfectionism	1	,602**	,461**	,848**	,650**
2. Inferiority feeling		1	,910*	,471	,740
3. Discouragement			1	,338**	,504**
4. Negation of Self-Value				1	,539**
5. Useless Superiority Effort					1

n =672, **p*<.05, ** *p*<.01

It is found that there is a positive moderate-level relationship between the characteristics of perfectionism and the inferiority feeling of the university students [$r = 0,602$, $p < .01$]. Also, it is observed that there is a positive medium-level relationship between perfectionism and discouragement among the sub-dimensions of the inferiority feeling [$r = 0,461$, $p < .01$], that there is a positive strong relationship between perfectionism and the sub-dimension of negation of self-value [$r = 0,848$, $p < .01$], and that there is a positive moderate relationship between perfectionism and the sub-dimension of useless superiority effort [$r = 0,650$, $p < .01$]. The strongest relationship between perfectionism and the sub-dimensions of the inferiority feeling is with the sub-dimension of negation of self-value while the weakest relationship between them is with discouragement.

Table 3. Stepwise Regression Analysis

The Predictive Model	B	SH _B	β	t	F	p	R	R ²	Tol.	VIF	Durbin-Watson
(Fixed)	37,922	1,672		22,676	1711,410		.848	.719			
Negation of Self-Value	3,3783	0,091	0,848	41,369		0.000 ^b			1.00	1.000	
(Fixed)	28,901	1,673		17,270	1129,435		.878	.772			
Negation of Self-Value	.3,127	0,098	0,701	31,947		0.000 ^c			.710	1,409	
Useless Superiority Effort	1,118	0,090	0,273	12,440					.710	1,409	
(Fixed)	25,933	1,721		15,065	797,186		.884	.782			2,037
Negation of Self-Value	3,078	0,096	0,690	5,576					0.704	1.421	
Useless Superiority Effort	0,900	0,096	0,220	9,357		0.000 ^d			0.593	1.687	
Discouragement	0,367	0,066	0,117	5,576					0.740	1,352	

Before the stepwise regression analysis, it is observed that the tolerance values of the variables of discouragement, negation of self-value, and useless superiority effort are ranged between .59 and 1.00 while their values of variance inflation factor (VIF) are between 1.00 and 1.687. When any of the tolerance values are above .20 and the values of VIF are below 10, it is regarded that the assumptions for stepwise regression analysis are met (Büyüköztürk, 2013). In addition, when the results of the Durbin-Watson test are evaluated it is indicated that autocorrelation is not present in the regression model and the Durbin-Watson coefficient ranges in value from 1.5 to 2.5. That shows the regression model is consistent (Montgomery, Peck, & Vining, 2012). Fields (2009) also supports this result by stating that the values below 1 and above 3 indicate that there is an absolute problem in the regression model. Taking into consideration the number of participants, it is not a concern that the value is close to 2.

When analyzed in Table 3. in terms of R² values, the sub-dimension negation of self-value which has the strongest relationship with perfectionism is analyzed in the first step and it is found that it accounts for 72% of the total variance [$R = .848$, $R^2 = .719$ ($F_{1,672}$): 1711,410; $p < ,01$]. In the second step, the explained total variance has risen to 77% after the participation of the sub-dimension of useless superiority effort in the analysis [($F_{2,672}$): 1129,435; $p < ,01$]. In the final step, the participation of the sub-dimension of discouragement in the analysis has provided 78% of the total variance to be explained [($F_{3,672}$): 1129,435; $p < ,01$]. As a result of the stepwise

multiple regression, it is found that perfectionism is predicted most by the sub-dimension of negation of self-value based on β values ($\beta = 0,690$), and respectively by the sub-dimensions of useless superiority effort ($\beta=0,220$) and discouragement ($\beta = 0,117$). Regarding the direction of the relationship between the variables, discouragement, negation of self-value, and useless superiority effort predict positively the university students' characteristics of perfectionism. Consequently, it is evident that discouragement, the negation of self-value, and useless superiority effort significantly account for the university students' characteristics of perfectionism.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the present study, it is concluded that there is a positive moderate-level relationship between the university students' characteristics of perfectionism and feelings of inferiority. Regarding the relationship of perfectionism with the sub-dimensions of the inferiority feeling, it is found that its relationship with the sub-dimension of negation of self-value is at a high level while its relationships with the sub-dimensions of discouragement and useless superiority effort are at a moderate level. When analyzed in the literature, only one study on perfectionism and the inferiority feeling is present. Ashby and Kottman (1996) investigated whether the inferiority feeling showed a difference in terms of neurotic and normal perfectionism. The study showed that students with the characteristics of neurotic perfectionism had a higher level of inferiority feeling than students with the characteristics of normal perfectionism. Also, it was highlighted that the inferiority feeling had a negative relationship with the sub-dimension of organization, a positive relationship with the sub-dimension of doubts, and no significant relationship with the sub-dimensions of standards. Dunkley and his colleagues (2006) examined the level of perfectionism, self-criticism, and adaptation of university students and concluded that students who criticized themselves constantly and felt inadequate in many fields had mostly negative characteristics of perfectionism, and those features made their adaptation to university difficult. Gillman and Ashby (2003) studied the relationship between perfectionism and satisfaction with life among adolescents. Conformable perfectionist students who set high personal standards and accepted their limitations had significantly higher levels in terms of a set of academic, social, and interpersonal skills and in satisfaction with life. Self-criticism, sense of self formed since childhood, the way of self-criticism, and self-images created in relationship with one's environment are important in having the characteristic of perfectionism and becoming a perfectionist. If a child grows up with the inferiority feeling, they may have negative characteristics of perfectionism and feel that feeling continuously with unreachable high standards and self-criticism.

Another study on the inferiority feeling and academic success divided university students into three groups as low, medium, high in terms of the inferiority feeling and investigated whether there was a difference between the groups regarding academic success. The university students with a medium-level of the inferiority feeling had a higher level of academic success than the university students with low-level of the inferiority feeling, but no significant differences were found in terms of the higher level of academic success (Strano & Petrocelli, 2005). Besides, studies on the inferiority feeling and its relationship with psychopathological disorders such as suicide (Goodwin & Marusic, 2003), loneliness (Akdoğan, 2017), personality disorders (Eisenmen, 1968), alcohol addiction (Lamberson & Wester, 2018), rumination (Çimşir, 2019) have also been found in the literature. Considering all these findings, it is deduced that the inferiority feeling is a concept coming into prominence and being studied day by day in the literature.

The current study demonstrates that the university students' inferiority feeling in terms of its sub-dimensions of negation of self-value, discouragement, and useless superiority effort

positively estimates perfectionism. As a result of the stepwise multiple regression analysis, it is concluded that the sub-dimension of negation of self-value accounts for 72% of the total variance, then with the participation of the sub-dimension of useless superiority effort to the analysis, 77% of the total variance is explained and then with the participation of the sub-dimension of discouragement into the analysis, the 78% of the total variance is explained. No studies supporting these findings have been found in the literature; however, some studies on which other variables predict perfectionism are available in the literature. An investigation of the relationship between perfectionism and psychopathology with attachment styles among adolescents showed that avoidant attachment predicted perfectionism, but its predictive power was not quite strong (Taylor et. al., 2017). Research with students in middle adolescence demonstrated that a sense of self predicted positive and negative perfectionism at a low level (Uzel, Dönmez, & Otrar, 2018). Dilmaç and colleagues (2009) investigated whether irrational beliefs predicted the sub-dimensions of perfectionism including personal standards, concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, parental expectations, parental criticism, and organization one by one. The study found that irrational beliefs predicted all sub-dimensions of perfectionism and that the highest percent of the explained total variance was due to the sub-dimension of concern over mistakes. Regarding this result of the study, it might be deduced that the inferiority feeling may underlie the characteristics of perfectionism and that especially individuals with a negative sense of self, a low-level self-confidence, and negating their own values are more perfectionist.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT**GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET****ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNDE MÜKEMMELİYETÇİLİK ÖZELLİKLERİ VE
YETERSİZLİK DUYGUSU ARASINDAKİ İLİŞKİNİN İNCELENMESİ****Giriş ve Çalışmanın Amacı:**

Bu çalışmanın amacı, mükemmeliyetçilik kavramını daha derinlemesine anlamak ve mükemmeliyetçilik özelliğinin bireylerin psikolojik ve sosyal işlevselliğine olan etkisini incelemektir. Mükemmeliyetçiliğin olumlu ve olumsuz yönleri üzerine odaklanarak, bu özelliğin bireylerin hayat kalitesi, stres düzeyi, kaygı ve depresyon gibi psikolojik belirtileri, ilişkileri ve performansları üzerindeki etkilerini anlamak hedeflenmektedir. Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, mükemmeliyetçilikle başa çıkma stratejileri ve kişisel gelişim süreçleri üzerine önemli bilgiler sağlayarak, psikoloji alanında uygulamalar ve müdahaleler için temel oluşturabilir.

Kavramsal/Kuramsal Çerçeve:

Mükemmeliyetçiliği ilk defa inceleyen teorisyenlerden biri olan Alfred Adler'a göre, "Mükemmeliyet çabası hayatın bir parçasıdır ve bu çaba içgüdüsel bir dürtüdür" (Ansbacher ve Ansbacher, 1955: 104). Adler, mükemmeliyetçiliği doğuştan gelen bir özellik olarak kabul eder ve onu anormal ve normal olmak üzere iki boyutta ele alır. Ona göre, mükemmeliyetçiliğin olumlu ve olumsuz yönleri vardır ve bireyler kendileri için gerçekçi standartlar belirlediğinde başarıya yönlendiren mükemmel bir motivasyondur. Ancak standartlar gerçekçi olmadığında, başarıyı engelleyici bir faktör haline gelebilir (Roedell, 1984). Bu, Adler'in mükemmeliyetçiliği çok boyutlu bir kavram olarak gördüğünü göstermektedir (Sullivan ve Braton, 2016). Sonraki dönemde, perfüksiyonizm, psikiyatrik açıdan incelenmiş ve kişilik özelliği olarak ihmal edilmiştir (Hollender, 1965; Missildine, 1963). Perfüksiyonizm, ilk kez teorik bir çerçevede tartışılan ve açıklanan görüşler, Hamachek'e aittir (1978). Hamachek, mükemmeliyetçiliğin iki boyutlu olduğunu belirtir; olumlu ve normal mükemmeliyetçilik, bireylerin perfüksiyonist çabalarını göstermekten mutlu oldukları anlamına gelirken, negatif ve nörotik mükemmeliyetçilik, bireylerin perfüksiyonizmi amaçladıklarında acı çektikleri anlamına gelir. Ardından, mükemmeliyetçilik kavramı, 1980 yılında Burns tarafından geliştirilen Mükemmeliyetçilik Ölçeği ile birlikte klinik ve deneysel araştırmaların konusu haline gelmiştir. Ancak bu ölçek tek boyutlu olduğu için klinik olmayan durumlarda kullanılamamıştır ve yeni ölçümlerin gerekliliği vurgulanmıştır (Stoeber, 2018).

Yöntem ve Bulgular:

Bu çalışmada, katılımcıların mükemmeliyetçilik düzeylerini ölçmek için mevcut geçerli ve güvenilir ölçekler kullanılarak bir anket uygulanmıştır. Katılımcılardan demografik bilgiler, mükemmeliyetçilik düzeyleri ve psikolojik işlevselliklerini değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir. Elde edilen veriler, istatistiksel analizlerle çözümlenmiştir. Bulgular, mükemmeliyetçilik özelliğinin psikolojik belirtiler, ilişkiler ve performans üzerindeki etkilerini ortaya koymak üzere detaylı bir şekilde sunulmuştur.

Sonuç ve Öneriler:

Bu çalışmanın sonuçları, mükemmeliyetçilik özelliğinin karmaşık yapısını vurgulayarak, olumlu ve olumsuz yönleri arasındaki dengeye dikkat çeker. Mükemmeliyetçiliğin bireylerin psikolojik sağlığı ve sosyal işlevselliği üzerinde önemli bir rol oynadığı belirlenmiştir. Olumlu sonuçların desteklenmesi ve olumsuz sonuçların azaltılması için bireylerin mükemmeliyetçilikle nasıl başa çıkacaklarını öğrenmeleri ve bu konuda farkındalıklarının artırılması önemlidir. Ayrıca, eğitimciler, psikologlar ve danışmanlar arasında mükemmeliyetçilikle ilgili farkındalığı artırmak ve müdahale stratejileri geliştirmek için bu çalışmanın önerileri değerlendirilebilir. Sonuç olarak, mükemmeliyetçilik alanında yapılan bu çalışma, bireylerin daha sağlıklı ve mutlu bir yaşam sürmelerine yardımcı olabilecek önemli bilgiler sunmaktadır.

KATKI ORANI BEYANI VE ÇIKAR ÇATIŞMASI BİLDİRİMİ

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1	Muhammed BAHTİYAR	%50	Çıkar çatışması yoktur.	Katılımcılara teşekkür ederiz.
2	Zeynep DENİZ YÖNDEM	%50	Çıkar çatışması yoktur.	Katılımcılara teşekkür ederiz.