

Review Article

The Effect of Parental Perfectionism on Academic Anxiety of Ninth Grade Female Students in Public Schools in Babol

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ABSTRACT

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Background and Objectives: The family, as the primary center of socialization, plays a determining role in shaping students' psychological characteristics. Considering this important fact, the present study investigated the effect of parental perfectionism on academic anxiety among ninth-grade female students in public schools of Babol.

Methodology: This applied research employed a descriptive-survey method. The statistical population consisted of all 897 ninth-grade female students in public schools of Babol. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan table (1970), 269 students were selected through simple random sampling. Data were collected using the Hewitt and Flett (1991) Perfectionism Questionnaire with 30 questions and the Alpert and Haber (1960) Academic Anxiety Questionnaire with 19 questions. The formal and content validity of the questionnaires were confirmed by relevant experts, and their reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient as 0.83 and 0.87, respectively. The collected data were analyzed using univariate and multivariate regression tests.

Results: The results of data analysis showed that parental perfectionism in general has a significant positive effect on academic anxiety of ninth-grade female students ($p < 0.05$). Additionally, all three dimensions of perfectionism, including self-oriented perfectionism ($\beta = 0.43$), other-oriented perfectionism ($\beta = 0.38$), and socially prescribed perfectionism ($\beta = 0.35$), individually had a significant positive effect on students' academic anxiety. Among the three dimensions, self-oriented perfectionism showed the highest share in predicting academic anxiety.

Conclusion: The findings of this research clearly demonstrate that parental perfectionism, as an important psychological factor, plays a significant role in creating and exacerbating academic anxiety among students. These results emphasize the necessity of designing and implementing educational programs for parents to moderate perfectionistic expectations and provide specialized guidance to students. It is suggested that awareness-raising workshops about the negative consequences of perfectionism be held for parents, and skill-training programs for coping with academic anxiety be organized for students.

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Introduction

Anxiety is a constant companion of education, and every student sometimes feels some anxiety at school. However, in some students, anxiety manifests seriously to the extent that it sometimes impedes learning or performance (Narraghi et al., 2023). One type of anxiety that many students struggle with is academic anxiety. Academic anxiety is one of the important emotional factors in education that is ambiguous and complex for many students (Fischester et al., 2022). Burelyg (2017) defines academic anxiety as a feeling of tension during exams and problem-solving that hinders the functioning of cognitive factors, and the result of this emotional interference is forgetting needed information and losing self-confidence. Also, academic anxiety refers to the feeling of an increasing need for knowledge and, simultaneously, the individual's perception of not having enough time to acquire that knowledge (Shokouri Moghaddam et al., 2022). Although anxiety is a positive competitive stimulus for students' progress, if this anxiety intensifies or continues, it can affect students' mental health and well-being (Zargar Natej et al., 2023). A survey of academic anxiety has shown that 67% of learners consider educational pressures as the greatest anxiety in their lives (Tan & Yates, 2011). Numerous factors affect students' academic anxiety. One of these factors can be the family. The family is one of the most important factors affecting the comprehensive development of children, and research shows that parents' behavior and expectations significantly impact their children's academic achievement (Rezaei et al., 2022). Hewitt (1991) believes that parental perfectionism creates serious problems for children. It destroys their self-esteem, creates a deep sense of failure, anger, and lack of self-assertion in them (Narraghi et al., 2023). Perfectionism, as a set of unrealistic personal standards and critical evaluation, can lead to increased dissatisfaction (Lee et al., 2023).

Perfectionist parents set strict standards for their children and have unrealistic expectations of them. If their children do not meet these standards, they are blamed and criticized, and these blame and humiliations cause their children to feel

worthless (Zendedel & Mohammadi Sarmi, 2020) and expose them to significant psychological pressure, including anxiety and academic procrastination.

Ziyouri Azhar et al. (2024), in a study titled "The Structural Relationship of Perfectionism on Academic Achievement Anxiety with the Mediating Role of Spiritual Intelligence and Happiness," achieved the following results: Perfectionism had a significant effect on spiritual intelligence, happiness, and academic achievement anxiety. Also, spiritual intelligence and happiness had a significant impact on academic achievement anxiety. Furthermore, spiritual intelligence and happiness played a mediating role in the relationship between perfectionism and academic achievement anxiety; Narraghi et al. (2023), in a study titled "The Relationship between the Level of Parents' Perfectionism and the Creation of Anxiety in Adolescents at Satudeh High School in Tehran," achieved the following results: There is a positive and significant relationship between parents' perfectionism and adolescents' anxiety. Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between the dimensions of parents' perfectionism (self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism, and socially prescribed perfectionism) and adolescents' anxiety; Moradi & Abdollahi (2023), in a study titled "Investigating the Relationship between Perfectionism and Test Anxiety among Second Period High School Students in Sarovabad," achieved the following results: There is a direct and significant relationship between perfectionism and students' test anxiety. Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between the components of perfectionism (concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, doubt about actions, organization) and test anxiety; and Safarnejad & Ghaderi (2023), in a study titled "Investigating the Role of Mothers' Perfectionism in Predicting Children's Behavioral Problems," achieved the following results: There is a negative and significant relationship between mothers' positive perfectionism and children's behavioral problems. Also, there is a positive and significant relationship between mothers' negative perfectionism and children's behavioral problems.

Meng et al. (2024), in a study titled "Parental Perfectionistic Expectations and

Online Game Addiction in Chinese Undergraduate Students: A Serial Mediation Model of Trait Anxiety and Perceived Stress and the Moderating Role of Flow Experience," achieved the following results: Trait anxiety and perceived stress significantly mediated the relationship between parental perfectionistic expectations and online game addiction. Furthermore, flow experience moderated the effects of parental perfectionistic expectations and trait anxiety on online game addiction, and this relationship was stronger with higher flow experience; Ahmad et al. (2024), in a study titled "The Mediating Effect of Parental Control on Social Withdrawal, Academic Procrastination, and Maladaptive Perfectionism in Young Adults and Adolescents," achieved the following results: There was a significant relationship between social withdrawal, parental control, and academic procrastination. There was a significant relationship between social withdrawal, parental control, and maladaptive perfectionism. Also, parental control reduces the effect of social withdrawal on academic procrastination and maladaptive perfectionism; Yu & Wang (2024), in a study titled "The Impact of Family Parenting on Students' Test Anxiety: The Mediating Role of Perfectionism," achieved the following results: Paternal rejection had a positive and significant predictive effect on students' test anxiety. Paternal rejection had a positive and significant impact on students' test anxiety but was not associated with perfectionism. Maternal rejection was positively correlated with test anxiety and perfectionism. Parental overprotection has a positive and significant impact on students' test anxiety and perfectionism. Also, family parenting style and perfectionist personality have a significant impact on students' test anxiety; Ferber et al. (2024), in a study titled "Perfectionism and Social Anxiety: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," achieved the following results: There is a significant relationship between social anxiety and dimensions of perfectionism related to perfectionistic concerns, namely socially prescribed perfectionism, doubt about actions, concern over mistakes, and discrepancy, as well as perfectionism; and Baytmir (2023), in a study titled "Do Parents Also Have Academic Anxiety? The Predictive Role of Irrational Beliefs and Perfectionism with Parental Academic

Anxiety in Explaining Student Academic Anxiety," achieved the following result: Academic anxiety in students is predicted by irrational beliefs and dimensions of perfectionism (concern over mistakes, parental criticism, and doubt about actions).

By reviewing the conducted research, it can be claimed that so far, no research has been conducted on the impact of parental perfectionism on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools in Babol. Therefore, conducting the present research is necessary. Thus, the present research seeks to investigate the impact of parental perfectionism on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools in Babol; so that based on its findings, it can provide necessary and constructive strategies and guidelines to educational managers and officials to reduce students' academic anxiety, and also to parents to promote positive perfectionism, thereby improving students' academic performance and also providing the necessary ground for future research. Therefore, considering the presented materials, the present research seeks to answer this question: Does parental perfectionism affect the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools in Babol?

Methodology:

This research was an applied study in terms of its purpose and descriptive-survey in terms of its method. The statistical population of this research consisted of all 897 female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol. Based on the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, 269 individuals were selected as the statistical sample using simple random sampling. The data collection tools in this research were:

Hewitt and Flett's (1991) Perfectionism Questionnaire: This questionnaire has 30 questions and 3 dimensions (Self-Oriented Perfectionism, Other-Oriented Perfectionism, and Socially Prescribed Perfectionism). It is designed on a 5-point Likert scale (Completely Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, and Completely Agree), which are scored from 1 to 5 respectively.

Alpert and Haber's (1960) Academic Anxiety Questionnaire: This questionnaire has 19 questions and 2 dimensions (Debilitating Anxiety and Facilitating Anxiety).

It is designed on a 5-point Likert scale (Completely Disagree, Disagree, No Opinion, Agree, and Completely Agree), which are scored from 1 to 5 respectively.

The face and content validity of the instruments were confirmed by specialists. Their reliability was calculated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which was 0.83 for the Parents' Perfectionism questionnaire and 0.87 for the Academic Anxiety questionnaire. Since these values were calculated to be above 0.7, they are statistically confirmed. For data analysis, univariate and multivariate regression tests were used via SPSS23 software.

Results:

The research findings are presented in two sections: descriptive and inferential. The descriptive section presents the mean and standard deviation of the research variables in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Variables

Research Variables	Number	Mean	Standard Deviation
Parental Perfectionism	269	3.48	0.889
Self-Oriented Perfectionism	269	3.51	0.967
Other-Oriented Perfectionism	269	3.48	0.920
Socially Prescribed Perfectionism	269	3.45	0.947
Academic Anxiety	269	3.29	0.912
Debilitating Anxiety	269	3.44	0.968
Facilitating Anxiety	269	3.12	0.927

According to Table 1, the variable of parental perfectionism has a mean of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 0.889. Furthermore, among the dimensions of perfectionism, self-oriented perfectionism has the highest mean (3.51), while socially prescribed perfectionism has the lowest mean (3.45). The variable of academic anxiety has a mean of 3.29 and a standard deviation of 0.912. Among

the dimensions of academic anxiety, debilitating anxiety has the highest mean (3.44), while facilitating anxiety has the lowest mean (3.12).

In the inferential section, a univariate regression test was used to investigate the impact of parental perfectionism on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of the Univariate Regression Test

Independent Variable	F	Sig	R	R ²	β	T	Sig
Constant	545.483	.0001	0.827	0.684	-	2.586	.010
Parental Perfectionism					0.827	23.356	.0001

According to Table 2, since the significance level (Sig) of the F-statistic is less than 0.05 (Sig = .0001), it indicates the validity of the regression model. Based on the findings in this table, and considering a 95% confidence level and an error rate of 0.05, the significance level for parental perfectionism is less than 0.05 (Sig < 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that: "Parental perfectionism has a positive and significant impact on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol." This means that the higher the level of parental perfectionism, the higher the level of students' academic anxiety. Furthermore, the R² value indicates that approximately 68% of the changes in students' academic anxiety can be explained by parental perfectionism.

To investigate the impact of the dimensions of parental perfectionism on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol, a multivariate regression test was used. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of the Multivariate Regression Test

Independent Variables	F	Sig	R	R ²	β	T	Sig
Constant	105.210	.0001	0.601	0.361	-	7.235	.0001
Self-Oriented Perfectionism					0.475	8.223	.0001
Other-Oriented Perfectionism					0.371	6.951	.0001
Socially Prescribed Perfectionism					0.398	7.198	.0001

According to Table 3, since the significance level (Sig) of the F-statistic is less than 0.05 (Sig = .0001), it indicates the validity of the regression model. Based on the findings in this table, and considering a 95% confidence level and an error rate of 0.05, the significance levels for all dimensions of parental perfectionism are less than 0.05 (Sig < 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that: "The dimensions of parental perfectionism (self-oriented, other-oriented, socially prescribed) have a positive and significant impact on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol". Furthermore, the R² value indicates that approximately 36% of the changes in students' academic anxiety can be explained by the dimensions of parental perfectionism. The regression test results also show that among the dimensions, self-oriented parental perfectionism ($\beta = 0.475$) has the greatest impact on students' academic anxiety.

Discussion and Conclusion:

The present study was conducted with the aim of investigating the impact of parental perfectionism on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol. The results of the study indicated that parental perfectionism has a positive and significant impact on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol. This means that the higher the level of parental perfectionism, the higher the level of students' academic anxiety. Furthermore, the R² value indicates that approximately 68% of the variation in students' academic anxiety can be explained and accounted for by parental perfectionism. This finding is consistent with the results of studies by

Ziyouri Azhar et al. (2024), Narraghi et al. (2023), Yu and Wang (2024), and Baytmir (2023).

In explaining this finding, it can be said that perfectionist parents set strict criteria for their children, and failure to meet these criteria leads to negative evaluations and humiliation of the children. This factor causes children to feel valued only when they gain their parents' approval, which itself creates a fear of failure and, consequently, academic anxiety. On the other hand, as Hewitt (1991) believes, parental perfectionism creates serious problems for children. It destroys their self-esteem and creates a deep sense of failure, anger, anxiety, and lack of self-assertion in them, which will lead to academic anxiety in children.

Another finding of the present study is that the dimensions of parental perfectionism (self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed) have a positive and significant impact on the academic anxiety of female ninth-grade students in public schools of Babol. In explaining this finding, it can be said that parental perfectionism, whether self-oriented, other-oriented, or socially prescribed, has varying impacts on students' academic anxiety. While some aspects of perfectionism can act as positive stimuli, increasing motivation and effort, they may also involve excessive pressure and unrealistic expectations, leading to increased anxiety and stress in students. Therefore, parents should carefully strive for a balance between encouragement and their expectations to provide a healthy and positive environment for their children's growth.

Furthermore, self-oriented perfectionism refers to an individual's effort to achieve high personal standards and internal expectations. If children are unable to meet the set high standards, they may feel frustrated, and their academic anxiety may increase. Other-oriented perfectionism refers to parents' expectations for their children to achieve high standards in the eyes of others. This type of perfectionism is often accompanied by social comparisons. Children may feel immense pressure to meet the expectations of their parents and others, which can lead to academic anxiety and stress. This type of perfectionism can also create a competitive environment that leads to increased anxiety and psychological tension in students.

On the other hand, socially prescribed perfectionism refers to the social expectations and standards that parents hold for their children. This type of perfectionism is influenced by culture and society. Therefore, if students are unable to meet social expectations, they may feel anxious and inadequate.

In conclusion, based on the study's findings, it is recommended that school administrators and educational officials organize educational workshops for parents on proper child-rearing methods and the sensitive role of parents in shaping students' personalities, thereby helping to reduce students' academic anxiety.

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Conflict of Interest

No financial, scientific, or personal conflicts of interest were involved in the conduct of the present research.

Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of scientific research. Participants took part in the study with full awareness, and their information was considered confidential. The results were used solely within the framework of the research's scientific objectives, and the names or personal details of participants were omitted.

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