

## PERFECTIONISM, GOAL-ORIENTATION AND ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION IN COLLEGE STUDENTS

Sania Akbar, Muhammad Asad Javed

Riphah Institute of Clinical and Professional Psychology, Riphah International University,  
Lahore, Pakistan

### **Abstract**

**Aims.** The aim of the present research was to study the association between perfectionism, goal-orientation and achievement motivation in college students. **Methods.** Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, The Performance Goal-Orientation Scale and Achievement Motivation Scale were used to assess variables under study. Data was collected from (n=200) college students. Correlational research design was used in the present study. **Results.** Correlational analysis revealed there is a highly significant positive relationship between perfectionism and achievement motivation, as well as goal orientation has significant positive relationship with achievement motivation. Results also revealed that perfectionism was significant predictors of achievement motivation. **Conclusions.** It is evident from the present study and prior studies that college students who have high level of goal orientation led them towards higher level of achievement motivation. The present research offers valuable information for future generations of researchers and health care providers.

**Keywords:** Perfectionism, Goal Orientation, Achievement Motivation, College Students.

### **1.1 Introduction**

Everyone born in the society strive for excellence in one field or other. The journey for excellence gets accelerated with the internal drive of the individual to accomplish something i.e., unique. This mental state of the individual is considered as the motive to achieve or excel others. Achievement Motivation as a psychological construct is seen among all the individuals in different degrees. It is a sort of hidden desire or internal force which energizes the individual to move towards a specific goal. For example, the desire of an individual to attain extraordinary attainment in school or to get a good grade comes within the scope of achievement motive. Achievement Motivation is not confined to academic achievement alone rather it may be manifested in the personal, social or occupational field of one's life. The individuals having high achievement motivation tend to show their extraordinary talent in the above-mentioned fields and may like to take risks. They derive pleasure in facing the challenges or by completing a set target (Bhatnagar, 2014). This 'set target' completing behavior may be considered as a form of task completing behavior. There are some categories of persons who are very sensitive towards the set target or assignment before them. People having such a motive show comparatively speed or more accuracy in completing a defined task. This task completion behavior of the individual can be stimulated or generated because of the inner desire or motive to excel others or to come up successfully in one's endeavor. Therefore, an individual's task completing behavior may be conceived as a contributing factor towards his spirit of achievement motivation. In other words, the people those have a tendency to accomplish some specific tasks set before them may be considered as having some degree of achievement motivation.

### **1.1 Perfectionism**

"Perfectionism is a nature character categorized through struggling for perfection and setting exceptionally high values of performance conveyed through excessively dangerous assessments of action of someone". However, it has several facets and is finest framed as a multidimensional character trait. Furthermore, it has diverse varieties of perfectionism; all of them have diverse characteristics (Enns & Cox, 2002). Perfectionism can be delineated as motivation for

excellence (Flett & Hewitt, 2002) or the propensity to uphold or to attain irrationally sky-scraping standards (Hill, Zrull, & Turlington, 1997). Slaney et al. (2001) made a difference between normal and abnormal perfectionism in expression of person's distinctiveness by the scenery of elevated delicate principles for one's effort or conduct. Adaptive perfectionists recognized a low height of distress consequential from the divergence among their personal standards and their performance, while maladaptive perfectionists observe a high level of anguish, ensuing from inconsistency of the professed failure to meet high standards set for them.

### **1.2 Goal Orientation**

One of the utmost appropriate and prime concepts utilized to believe that learners' educational motivation comes under achievement aim model which speculates that individuals get into academic activities to accomplish diverse aspirations, while some students are provoked to give their best as they wish to receive an "A" in the module, consequently signifying to themselves, their friends, teachers, and even parents motivate them by saying that they are smart (performance method objective) (Neroni et al., 2016).

### **1.3 Achievement Motivation**

Achievement motivation being a psycho-social characteristic is more acquired than inherited. An environment which is sensitive to individuals' every tiny effort, permissive in nature and recognizes individual talent lay the foundation for the promotion of achievement motivation among the individuals. The type of environment i.e., rural, urban or tribal on the basis of their degree of opportunity provided to individual put differential impact upon the achievement motivation of the individual. Further the gender as well as the exposure of the individual to various courses of study and their future avenues also affect the degree of achievement motivation of the individual which may be categorized as arts, science or professional courses. Therefore, the gender, locale as well as stream of the students are expected to have their respective role in accelerating the process of achievement motivation of the individuals (Bhatnagar, 2014).

### **1.4 Rationale of the Study**

The aim of the present research was to study the relationship between perfectionism, goal-orientation and achievement motivation in college students. There are less studies conducted on college students with these variables in Pakistan, and that is why there is need to work on this domain to complete this gap. And the present research is an effort to fulfilling this gap. The present study was directed to assist college students to understand in what way perfectionism and goal orientation play a significant effect on the achievement motivation in college students. The main purpose of the current study was to provide insight to academic, societal and clinical setting about goal orientation and its effect on the achievement motivation of college students. Though, a positive sense of perfectionism the present study was crucial for personal's development in relations of communication, reduce stress, understandings and motivation for achievement. Therefore, the core aim of the current research is to provide insight to people, social workers and policy makers especially mental health professionals to understand that how perfectionism and goal orientation show a significant influence on the achievement motivation of college students. This insight information can be particularly useful for mental health professionals that provides mental health care services, as well as, for policy makers who make strategies and policies for better psychological wellbeing in the society.

## **2. Method**

### **2.1 Research Design**

Correlational research design was used in present study.

### **2.2 Sample and Sampling Strategy**

Purposive sampling strategy was utilized to recruit sample of (n=200) college students.

### 2.3 Procedure

Firstly, researcher got official ethical clearance letter from university. Consent was taken from the authors of scales. Researcher prepare the booklet comprising on the informed consent hold demographic sheet and scales, provided to the members and collect data then pilot study and main study was conducted.

### 2.4 Assessment Measures

#### 2.4.1 Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost, Marten, Lahart & Rosenblate, 1990)

Multidimensional perfectionism scale was originally developed (Frost, Marten, Lahart & Rosenblate, 1990). This scale has 35 items. This tool used 5-point likert scale. The reliability of this instrument was ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

#### 2.4.2 Performance Goal Orientation Scale (Button, Matheu, & Zajac, 1996)

The Performance Goal Orientation Scale was originally developed (Button, Matheu, & Zajac, 1996). This scale has 16 items. This tool used 7-point likert scale. The reliability of this scale was ( $\alpha = .73$ ).

#### 2.4.3 Achievement Motivation Scale (Ray, 2004)

Achievement Motivation scale was originally developed by Ray (2004). This scale has 20 items and this tool used 3point likert scale. The reliability of this tool was ( $\alpha = .70$ ).

## 3. Results

**Table 1**

*Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis between Study Variables in College Students (n=200)*

Variables	1	2	3
1. Perfectionism	-	.06	.31**
2. Goal Orientation	-	-	.05
3. Achievement Motivation	-	-	-

\*\*  $P < 0.01$ , \*  $P < 0.05$

Results showed that perfectionism has significant ( $p < .05$ ) positive relationship with achievement motivation in college students. However, goal orientation has significant ( $p < .05$ ) positive relationship with achievement motivation in college students.

**Table 2**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Used to Predicting Achievement Motivation (n=200)*

Predictors	Achievement Motivation College Students	
	$\Delta R^2$	$\beta$
Step 1	.37**	
Perfectionism		.30**
Step 2	.37	
Goal Orientation		.01
Total $R^2$	44%	

Note: \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

a. Dependent Variable: Achievement Motivation

b. Predictors in the Models: Perfectionism, Goal Orientation.

Results revealed goal orientation was significant ( $p < .05$ ) predictor  $F(20, 179) = 5.39$   $p < .05$ ,  $R^2 = .37$  and accounted for 37% of variance in achievement motivation.

## 4. Discussion

Results of the present research revealed perfectionism has significant positive relationship with achievement motivation in college students. Another research was directed by Farkas (2014) to examine the association between facets of perfectionism and assess emotive happiness, achievement motivation, and feelings. Findings showed significant negative association between negative perfectionism, emotions and achievement motivation. Moreover, a research was conducted to examine the association between perfectionism and coping styles with achievement motivation in students. Results indicated among three extents of perfectionism, two extents of self-oriented perfectionism and publicly set perfectionism have an important association with achievement motivation (Khazaei, Esmaeilpoor & Eslami, 2008).

In addition, results of the present research showed goal orientation has significant positive relationship with achievement motivation in college students. Another study was conducted by Park and Jeong (2015) to measure the relationship between goal orientation and achievement motivation among 200 South Korean students. Results revealed goal orientation was significantly correlated with achievement motivation among students.

Furthermore, findings also revealed perfectionism was significant predictor of achievement motivation in college students. Another study was conducted by Kristie and Neumeister (2004) to considerate the association between perfectionism and achievement motivation in gifted college learners. Findings revealed perfectionism was considerably influence achievement motivation of students. One more research was conducted by Fletcher (2012) to assess prediction between perfectionism and achievement motivation in non-gifted students. Consequences revealed perfectionism was the significant predictor of achievement motivation in students.

### 4.1 Limitations and Recommendations

The sample size of current study was 200. And the sample of current research was short for better understanding. A huge sample size would permit researchers to have more data to evaluate which would provide a better understanding of the topic. It will also improve the validity and reliability of study. When a research is directed with a small sample size there is more margin of error which decreases the validity.

### 4.2 Conclusions

It is evident from the present study and prior studies that college students who have high level of goal orientation leaded towards them to higher achievement motivation. It is important to understand how these college students are able to adapt to various changes in their lives, and how environmental, physiological, and psychological factors may affect student's perfectionism and achievement motivation. My hope is that the present research will offer valuable information for future generations of researchers and health care providers.

## Acknowledgement

Working on this research has been both a wonderful and overwhelming experience. We are grateful to so many good people for ensuring the time we have spent working on this project has been an unforgettable experience. First of all, we would like to thank our supervisor and our family for the exceptional support, care and encouragement they have given us during these past months. Without their guidance and constant feedback, this project would not have been achievable. We are really gratefully acknowledging the support which we received from the Riphah International University, Lahore, Pakistan that has ensured the completion of this project. We are thankful to the participants who by agreeing to participate in this research and made this project possible.

## References

1. Aarushi Bhatnagar. (2014). Determinants of Motivation and Job Satisfaction among Primary Health Workers: Care Studies from Nigeria and India.
2. Cox BJ, Enns MW, Clara IP. The multidimensional structure of perfectionism in clinically distressed and college student samples. *Psychol Assess.* 2002 Sep;14(3):365-73. PMID: 12214443.
3. Button, Scott & Mathieu, John & Zajac, Dennis. (1996). Goal Orientation in Organizational Research: A Conceptual and Empirical Foundation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes.* 67. 26-48. 10.1006/obhd.1996.0063.
4. Flett, G. L., & Hewitt, P. L. (2002). Perfectionism and maladjustment: An overview of theoretical, definitional, and treatment issues. In G. L. Flett & P. L. Hewitt (Eds.), *Perfectionism: Theory, research, and treatment* (pp. 5–31). American Psychological Association. <https://doi.org/10.1037/10458-001>
5. Hill, Robert & Zrull, Mark & Turlington, Shelly. (1997). Perfectionism and Interpersonal Problems. *Journal of Personality Assessment - J PERSONAL ASSESS.* 69. 81-103. 10.1207/s15327752jpa6901\_5.
6. Kathryn L. Fletcher, Kristie L. Speirs Neumeister (2012). Research on perfectionism and achievement motivation: implications for gifted students. *Psychology in the School.*
7. Khazaei, K., Esmaeilpoor, M., & Eslami, N. (2012). The determination of achievement motivation on the basis of perfectionism dimensions and coping styles of principals of pre-schools centers of Mazandaran province. *Middle-East Journal of Scientific Research,* 11(11), 1491-1499.
8. Neumeister KLS. Factors Influencing the Development of Perfectionism in Gifted College Students. *Gifted Child Quarterly.* 2004;48(4):259-274. doi:10.1177/001698620404800402
9. Neroni, Joyce & Meijs, Celeste & Leontjevas, Roeslan & Kirschner, Paul & Groot, Renate. (2018). Goal Orientation and Academic Performance in Adult Distance Education. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning.* 19. 10.19173/irrodl.v19i2.3440.
10. Ray, John. (1981). Measuring Achievement Motivation by Immediate Emotional Reactions. *Journal of Social Psychology - J SOC PSYCHOL.* 113. 85-93. 10.1080/00224545.1981.9924352.
11. Slaney, Robert & Rice, Kenneth & Mobley, Michael & Trippi, Joseph & Ashby, Jeffrey. (2001). The Revised Almost Perfect Scale. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development.* 34. 130-145. 10.1080/07481756.2002.12069030.
12. Frost, R. O., Marten, P., Lahart, C., & Rosenblate, R. (1990). The dimensions of perfectionism. *Cognitive Therapy and Research,* 14(5), 449-468. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01172967>.

---

**Article received 2021-06-22**