Examining the Role of Motivation in Emotion Dysregulation Among Perfectionists.

DANAI ATHANASOULA, DR. ELENI ORFANIDOU

INTRODUCTION

Perfectionism is a clinical risk factor associated with increased risk for anxiety, depression, eating disorders, suicide ideation and attempts (Malivoire et al., 2019; Limburg et al., 2016; Flett et al., 2022). One key mechanism linking perfectionism and poor mental health outcomes is emotion dysregulation (Xie et al., 2019; Macedo et al., 2017). More specifically, when in distress, perfectionists tend to ruminate, self-blame, suppress their emotions and catastrophize; these regulation strategies are considered maladaptive and exacerbate distress (Rudolph et al., 2007).

Although several studies have explored the types of strategies that perfectionists use, less attention has been paid on why they choose these maladaptive strategies and whether these choices are motivated. This study aimed to address this gap; it aimed to explore the role of motivation in the emotion dysregulation of perfectionists, following methodological recommendations from the framework of Motivated Emotion Regulation by Tamir and Millgram (2017).

METHODOLOGY

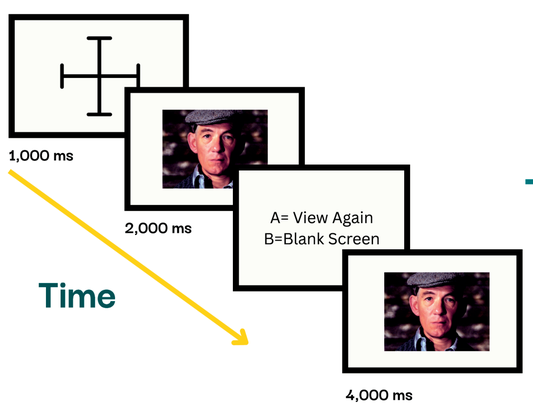
SAMPLE

92 young adults (18-30; M_{age}=22.10; SD_{age}= 2.48). 51% Female, 2% Gender-diverse.

MATERIALS & PROCEDURE

Demographic Questionnaire → Multi-dimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990) → Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (Garnefski & Kraaj, 2007) → Negative Mood Induction (Wood et al., 2009)

Implicit Positive and Negative Affect Test (Quirin et al., 2009) → Task to measure motivation to regulate emotion: 15 sad, 15 neutral and 15 happy images were displayed (Lang et al., 2005).



Explicit Mood Repair Survey (Wood et al., 2009) → Debriefing & Mood Repair

RESULTS

Hypothesis 1: Higher perfectionism will be associated with maladaptive emotion regulation strategies.

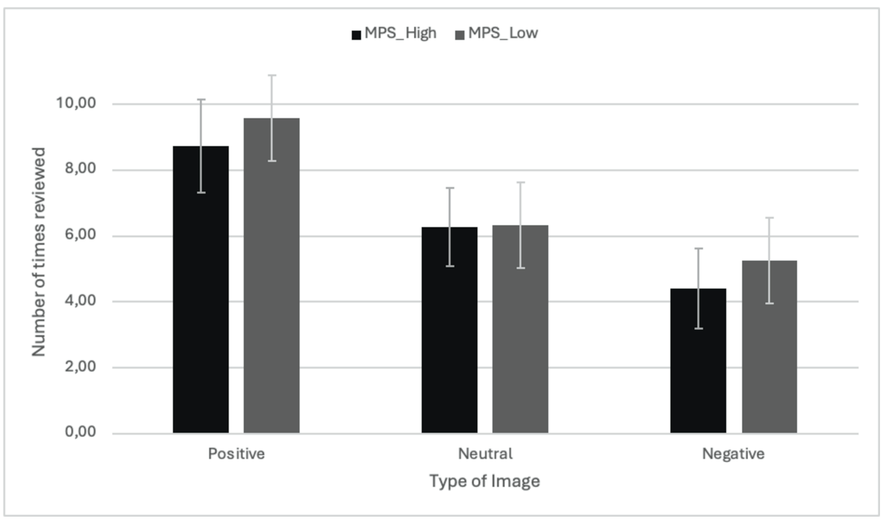
A simple linear regression analysis showed that perfectionism significantly predicts the use of maladaptive emotion regulation strategies. Results indicated that the model was statistically significant F(1,89)=26.50, p<.001. The R^2 was .229, indicating that perfectionism explained approximately 22.9% of the variance in maladaptive emotion regulation (beta=0.479, p<.001).

Hypothesis 2: Individuals high in perfectionism will show reduced motivation to alter negative emotion.

1. An Independent Samples T-Test tested differences in reported motivation between high and low perfectionists. No significant difference was found, t(25)=.027, p=.979.

2. A 2x3 Mixed ANOVA with perfectionism (high, low) as a between-subjects variable and type of image (positive, neutral, negative) as within-subjects variable showed no interaction effect between perfectionism and type of image. F(2,50)=0.11, p=.893.

A main effect for type of image was found. At group level, positive images were chosen significantly more (M=9.16, SD=.95) than both neutral (M=6.30, SD=.81, p=.005) and sad images (M=4.83, SD=.81, p=.001), which did not differ from each other.



CONCLUSION

Although the established relationship between perfectionism and maladaptive emotion regulation was confirmed in the current study, no difference in motivation to regulate negative emotion was identified between individuals high and low in perfectionism. These results provide initial evidence against the hypothesis of motivated emotion dysregulation in this population.

As the relationship between perfectionism, emotion regulation and motivation is complex and likely dependant on interactions between trait and situational variables, further research is required to explore these findings in more depth.

REFERENCES

Flett, G. L., Hewitt, P. L., Nepon, T., Sherry, S. B., & Smith, M. (2022). The destructiveness and public health significance of socially prescribed perfectionism: A review, analysis, and conceptual extension. Clinical Psychology Review, 93, 102130.

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

Garnefski, N., & Kraaij, V. (2007). The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire: Psychometric features and prospective relationships with depression and anxiety in adults. European Journal of Psychological Assessment, 23(3), 141–149. https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759.23.3.141

Lang, P. J., Bradley, M. M., & Cuthbert, B. N. (2005). International Affective Picture System (IAPS) [Database record]. APA PsycTests.

Limburg, K., Watson, H. J., Hagger, M. S., & Egan, S. J. (2017). The relationship between perfectionism and psychopathology: A meta-analysis. Journal of Clinical Psychology, 73(10), 1301–1326.

Macedo, A., Marques, C., Quaresma, V., Soares, M. J., Amaral, A. P., Araújo, A. I., & Pereira, A. T. (2017). Are perfectionism cognitions and cognitive emotion regulation strategies mediators between perfectionism and psychological distress?. Personality and Individual Differences, 119, 46–51.

Malivoire, B. L., Kuo, J. R., & Antony, M. M. (2019). An examination of emotion dysregulation in maladaptive perfectionism. Clinical Psychology Review, 71, 39–50. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpr.2019.04.006

Quirin, M., Kazén, M., & Kuhl, J. (2009). When nonsense sounds happy or helpless: The Implicit Positive and Negative Affect Test (IPANAT). Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 97(3), 500–516. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016063

Rudolph, S. G., Flett, G. L., & Hewitt, P. L. (2007). Perfectionism and deficits in cognitive emotion regulation. Journal of Rational-Emotive & Cognitive-Behavior Therapy, 25(4), 343–357. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10942-007-0056-3

Tamir, M., & Millgram, Y. (2017). Motivated emotion regulation: Principles, lessons, and implications of a motivational analysis of emotion regulation. In A. J. Elliot (Ed.), Advances in motivation science (pp. 207–247). Elsevier Academic Press. https://doi.org/10.1016/bs.adms.2016.12.001

Wood, J. V., Heimpel, S. A., Manwell, L. A., & Whittington, E. J. (2009). This mood is familiar and I don't deserve to feel better anyway: mechanisms underlying self-esteem differences in motivation to repair sad moods. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 96(2), 363.

Xie, Y., Kong, Y., Yang, J., & Chen, F. (2019). Perfectionism, worry, rumination, and distress: A meta-analysis of the evidence for the perfectionism cognition theory. Personality and Individual Differences, 139, 301–312.