

SOCIAL COMPARISON, PERFECTIONISM AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING AMONG ADULTS

Ashal Naeem^{1}, Shakeel Ijaz², Afia Irfan³, Saba Akmal⁴, Hareem Jamil⁵*

¹Community Counsellor, Active Help Organization, Okara, Pakistan

Email: ashalnaeem098@gmail.com

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0009-0004-0506-8765>

²MPhil Scholar, Department of Social Work, Quaid e Azam university, Okara, Pakistan

Email: shakeelijaz319@gmail.com

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0009-0007-9563-7432>

³Lecturer, Department of Psychology, International Institute of Science, Art and Technology (IISAT), Gujranwala, Pakistan

Email: afiaa1799@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3025-6414>

⁴Lecturer, Department of English, University of Kamalia, Kamalia, Toba Tek Singh, Pakistan.

Email: akmalsaba69@gmail.com

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-1821-3609>

⁵Clinical Psychologist at Counselling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Lahore University of Management Sciences, Lahore, Pakistan

hareemjamil23@gmail.com

Corresponding Author's Email: ashalnaeem098@gmail.com

Abstract

The current study aimed to discover the Relationship between Social Comparison Perfectionism and Psychological well-being among adults. The research study was quantitative in nature. Cross-sectional research design was used and sample was collected by using both method in- person and online. 300 participants within age range 19-40 completed three measures such as social comparison scale (Allan & Gilbert 1995), well-being index (WHO, 1998) and perfectionism scale (Frost, 1990). Data analysis into SPSS showed higher reliability and consistency of scales. Social comparison scale had a reliability of .89; Well-being index had reliability of .78 while Perfectionism scale showed reliability of .80. Demographics such as age, gender, marital status, socio- economic status and family system were included and Correlation was performed to discover association among variables. T-Test and Anova analysis were conducted to measure difference among different groups regarding age, gender, education, marital status, socio-economic status and family system. Finding of study indicated a significant positive correlation $p < .05$, $**p < .01$. Finding shows that Male reported more social comparison as compared to female. Present study would contribute to understand association between social comparison, perfectionism and psychological well-being among adults.

Keywords: Social Comparison, Perfectionism, Well-Being.

Introduction

Social comparison is the process of comparing oneself to others in order to judge one's beliefs, aptitudes, and social standing (Catherine, 2009). Recent developments in the idea of social comparison reveal that subjective social comparisons are still made even in the presence of factual evidence. In actuality, social comparisons are how learners understand regarding social expectations (Bailey et al., 2010). Social comparison is the act of evaluating or improving oneself via comparison to others (Stoeber et al., 2007). Numerous studies in psychology and related fields over the years have demonstrated how comparative processes impact a variety of cognitive functions, including the perception of physical objects, self-evaluation, language and problem-solving, classification, stereotyping, attitudes, person perception, decision-making, and emotion. Relationships are made with criteria unrelated to the activity at hand and even with stimuli given outside of conscious awareness since they are so effortless and spontaneous.

Been observed in this data implies that comparison is one of the core concepts underlying human cognition (Lange et al., 2015).

Perfectionism has a dual character, containing both healthy, illogical ideas and good intrinsic drive. Regular perfectionists may be adaptable in some circumstances, make objectives based on their skills and shortcomings, and feel good when they achieve their goals (Afshar et al., 2011).

Since the 1990s, one of the most popular subjects in clinical psychology and therapy has been perfectionism. Researchers are becoming more and more perfectionist, from the early stages of theoretical analysis to practical study. Its conceptual expansion and specification of basic functionality, however, remain to be heavily debated concerns. A rising number of experts feel that perfectionism, a personality trait that is strongly tied to mental health, may actually have a positive effect on mental well-being in addition to having a negative influence (PWB). Is characterized as a psychological health/well-being metric that takes life fulfillment and satisfaction into account (Ganske et al., 2015).

"Mental health" was originally intended to be interpreted literally. The organization's founders were driven largely by a desire to advance mental health and remove any barriers in the way of this objective (Bertolote, 2008).

Positive emotions are connected to happiness ideas like contentment and joy. There are many other emotions, such as zeal, commitment, assurance, and love. Realizing one's potential, having some measure of control over one's life, and having a sense of purpose are all aspects of functioning well (Huppert et al., 2008).

Many comparisons are made with various persons. People frequently compare themselves to others in a variety of contexts nowadays, which can lead to psychological distress and a loss in wellbeing. The relationship between beliefs and mental health seems to be in conflict. There is a clear connection between perfectionism and mental health, according to several researches. This study demonstrates the link between perfectionism, social comparison, and psychological health. The purpose of this study is to examine the link between the mentioned variables (Mussweiler et al., 2006). The object of study was to examine the connection between Social Comparison and Psychological well-being among adults. Another object was to examine the differences on the basis of demographic variables (age, gender, socio economic status, marital status and family system) with study variables.

In the literature, there were not enough researches that examined the links between variables social comparison, perfectionism and psychological well-being simultaneously.

Literature Review

Research that reveals persons with depression or poor self-esteem are more inclined to compare themselves to others supports Festinger's notion (van den Berg et al. 2007). According to Lee (2014), those who frequently compare their social lives on Facebook feel less connected to others and are more likely to think that others have better lives than they do (Chou & Edge, 2012). It's also important to note that those who fear isolation are more inclined to compare themselves to others online by keeping tabs on their friends' Facebook activity for self-evaluation, and they also tend to project favorable self-images (Lee & Cho, 2018). Social comparison thrives on features like Facebook's news feed and Instagram's daily stories, which offer a wealth of details about a friend's life, accomplishments, abilities, emotions, and personality (Gerson et al. 2021). Recent research reveals that worries about physical flaws might combine with beauty- biased upward comparisons on social media to predict more unhappiness with physical attractiveness (McComb & Mills, 2021).

In the context of social comparison and social media use, the study explores whether perfectionism contributes to depressive symptoms and sensitivity to physical harm. It is loaded with interpersonal and performance stresses. Upward social comparisons based on looks are a major cause of performance and interpersonal stress in this situation. Comparing oneself favorably to others based on appearance is known as an appearance-oriented comparison. Teenagers frequently report increased levels of positive social comparison centered on looks while using social media platforms, according to research, which are filled with possibilities to compare appearances (Meier & Gray, 2014). In longitudinal research, Gautreau et al. (2015) discovered that perfectionism did not predict a change in social anxiety, but rather that perfectionism predicted an increase in self-critical perfectionism. Socially prescribed perfectionism and self-oriented perfectionism were both positively linked with social anxiety, according to Newby et al. (2017) however the connection ceased to be significant after the effects of socially prescribed

perfectionism were taken into account.

Based on the aforementioned factors and research, psychological well-being primarily emphasizes finding a purpose in life, developing personally, and fostering meaningful connections with others (Choi & Lim, 2016). As a result, it concentrates on personal experiences of wellbeing, particularly those that are connected to happiness, life satisfaction, and positive affect (Henn et al., 2016). In contrast, the second approach views psychological health as an ongoing process of self-realization that allows people to develop through time. In light of this, it is connected to abilities rather than outcomes (Urquijo et al., 2016). In the transition to maturity, psychological well-being develops to the extent that the person is capable of successfully engaging with their surroundings and taking the crucial tasks inherent to the many periods of life. To this aim, it is suggested that creating situations where young people may have pleasant experiences that aid in their perception of their life's direction and purpose and enable them to define their own objectives will assist to enhance psychological well-being. But pinpointing the factors that obstruct or limit psychological well-being is necessary to promote it (Gómez-López et al., 2019).

Methodology

Study Design

Cross-sectional study design was used for this study design. Survey questionnaire were conducted in which the respondent filled the survey forms related to social comparison, perfectionism and psychological well-being.

Research Instruments

Social Comparison Scale

Allan and Gilbert (1995) created this scale to assess individual views of social position and social rank. 11 elements make up this scale, which employs a semantic differential technique. It is expected of participants to score them on a scale of 1 to 10 and to provide a general comparison of themselves to others. The 11 criteria include assessments of status, beauty, and one's perception of how well they "fit in" with other members of society. Low scores are indicative of low rank self-perceptions and inferiority complexes. With Cronbach alphas for clinical populations' of .88 and .96 and for student populations' of .91 and .90, the scale has been determined to have high reliability (Allan & Gilbert, 1997).

Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS)

Initially measuring six sub-scales, the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale was created in 1990 by Dr. Randy Frost and his associates. Four sub-scales were determined to be better appropriate in a subsequent study utilizing main components (Randy, 1990).

With 35 questions and four subscales of perfectionism, the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS) is a self-report questionnaire

- i. Worry about errors and uncertainty regarding actions
- ii. A great deal of anxiety about what parents think and how they see you
- iii. Having too high of personal standards
- iv. Attention to detail, organization, and precision

Psychological well-Being Scale

A popular questionnaire for evaluating subjective psychological well-being in research and clinical settings is the 5-item World Health Organization Well-Being Index (WHO, 1998). The WHO is a sensitive and effective screening instrument for depression and has excellent clinometric validity. It may be used as an outcome measure to balance the desired and unintended consequences of therapies. According to some research, it has 83% specificity and 93% sensitivity for detecting depression. The (WHO, 1998) measures the subjective quality of life based on happiness (good spirits, relaxation), vitality (being active and waking up refreshed), and general interest (being interested in things).

A score below 50 might denote poor health, which may be caused by a depressive condition or another etiology, and is cause for further investigation (Bech et al., 1998).

Procedure

Sample was taken from different institutes of Pakistan. Firstly, authorities of different Institutes were approached and taken permission. After getting permission from institutes' heads, I personally approached for their consent of participation. Data was collected from both modes online and in-person. Informed consent was taken from all the participants and instructions were given to them regarding the questionnaire forms. 10- 15 minutes were given for each form and participants were guided about it.

Demographic sheet was given to participants to take their personal data. In case of difficulty in filling the questionnaires, researcher was orally present questions to participants and their response were recorded.

After data collection from all the participants' data analysis were performed and results were concluded.

Result

Table1

Mean comparison of males and females on Social Comparison, Perfectionism and Psychological Well-being (N=300)

	<u>Males</u>		<u>Females</u>		<i>t</i> (298)	<i>p</i>	<i>Cohen's d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
SCS	73.56	20.35	70.56	18.30	1.33	.18	0.15
WBI	15.35	5.52	13.92	5.02	2.3	.02	0.27
FMPS	122	19.59	117	17.78	2.08	.03	0.26
M&D	43.10	9.69	41.85	8.31	1.19	.23	0.13
PE&E	30.94	5.35	28.80	5.32	3.40	.00	0.40
HPS	25.54	6.77	23.9	4.25	2.44	.015	0.29
PO&O	22.86	3.74	23.30	5.76	-.73	.46	0.09

SCS= social comparison scale, WBI= well-being index, FMPS= frost multidimensional perfectionism scale, M&D= mistakes and doubts, PE&E= parent evaluation and expectations, HPS= high personal standards, PO&O= precise order and organization

Table 3 shows gender differences in social comparison scale, well -being index, frost multidimensional perfectionism scale among adults. Results showed that male scored significantly higher on Social comparison scale, $t(300) = 1.33$, $p > .05$; well-being index, $t(300) = 2.3$, $p < .05$; Perfectionism scale, $t(300) = 2.08$, $p < .05$ whereas females were significantly higher on precise order and organization, $t(300) = -.73$, $p > .05$. Cohen's *d* value indicated small size effect.

Table 2

Correlation among Social Comparison, Perfectionism and Psychological Well-being (N=300)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>
SCS	300	71.7	19.18	-	.321**	.345**	.164**	.353**	.273**	.307**
WBI	300	14.5	5.27		-	.107	.041	.116*	.080	.112
FMPS	299	119.7	18.64			-	.829**	.807**	.707**	.595**

M&D	300	42.3	8.90	-	.588**	.373**	.258**
PE&E	300	29.6	5.43	-		.484**	.340**
HPS	299	24.6	5.45			-	.349**
PO&O	300	23.12	5.03				-

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

SCS= social comparison scale, WBI= well-being index, FMPS= frost multidimensional perfectionism scale, M&D= mistakes and doubts, PE&E= parent evaluation and expectations, HPS= high personal standards, PO&O= precise order and organization

Table 5 Results showed that Social comparison scale has significant positive correlation with well-being index ($r = .321$, $p < .01$), perfectionism scale ($r = .34$, $p < .01$). Well-being index has positive correlation with perfectionism scale ($r = .10$, $p < .01$). Perfectionism scale has significant positive correlation with mistakes and doubts ($r = .82$, $p < .01$) parent evaluation and expectation ($r = .80$, $p < .01$), high personal standards ($r = .70$, $p < .01$) and Precise order and organization ($r = .59$, $p < .01$). Correlations indicate that the relationships among variables are in theoretically consistent directions.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to expand knowledge about the relationship between social comparison, perfectionism and psychological well-being among adults. The chapter of results provides a discussion of key study findings, conclusion, limitations and implications.

Findings of study and related evidences:

It was hypothesized that there will be a positive relationship between social comparison and perfectionism among adults. Findings of Pearson correlation showed positive significant relationship between social comparison and perfectionism (0.34) i.e., social comparison increased as perfectionism increase and vice versa. This finding was in line with those of Van den Berg (2007). This finding was also parallel with another study conducted by (Omit et al., 2017) that as social comparison increase perfectionism also increase.

Secondly It was hypothesized that there will be a negative relationship between social comparison and psychological well-being among adults. Findings of Pearson correlation showed positive significant relationship between social comparison and psychological well-being (0.32) i.e., social comparison increased as psychological well-being increase and vice versa. This finding was in line with the study of (Baek, 2018) their results indicated that the effect of social comparison on psychological well-being become positive or negative depending on whether the user's social comparison emphasized ability or opinion and the type of emotions triggered by the comparison. This study concluded that social comparison refers to individual differences in the preference to compare oneself with others.

Then it was hypothesized that there will be a negative relationship between perfectionism and psychological well-being among adults. Findings of Pearson correlation showed positive significant relationship between perfectionism (.10) and psychological well-being i.e., perfectionism increased as psychological well-being increase and vice versa. But a recent study (kalaimathi, 2021) showed that there was negative significant relationship existed between perfectionism and psychological well-being. This study result contradicted with recent researches due to possible reason that it depends on individual's type of perfectionism that findings of (Besharat, 2010) indicated that positive perfectionism was positively correlated and negative perfectionism was negatively correlated with psychological distress. Lastly it was hypothesized that Females will score high on social comparison as compared to males. Gender differences were found using t test analysis which shows us that males score more higher on social comparison as compare to females ($M=70.56$). The findings were consistent with the study results of (Ilham Mundzir et al., 2022) indicate that male adolescents make more social comparisons than female adolescents and the other possible reason is that adolescent's age range has higher number in filling this questionnaire.

Conclusion

It was examined that social comparison and perfectionism had a significant relationship. Social comparison is also positively correlated with psychological well-being. It is concluded that perfectionism is positively correlated with psychological well-being. Male have high tendency of social comparison than female. Findings also showed that participants belong to lower class have higher social comparison in contrast to middle and upper class.

Limitations and Recommendations

- i. The current study has some limitations. Its sample has large diversity in education, age and departments but the sample size is low comparatively. That's why the generalizability of the results on the targeted large population is questionable. So, same study on the larger sample is highly recommended for new researches.
- ii. This study was based on a sample from few universities which limits its generalizability. Based on this, further research from other universities needs to be conducted to confirm these findings.
- iii. This study examines the relationship between social comparison and it lack the explanation of causes that helps to understand the causes better. Therefore, qualitative and experimental studies are required to further validate the present research.
- iv. This study does not examine the impact of social comparison among different departments. Further researchers can do research to find the differences of social comparison and perfectionism among different departments.
- v. Further studies can examine the impact of social comparison with other variables related to physical health.

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