

## Perfectionism And Self-Efficacy among Indian Working Professionals

**Dr. Mousumi Sengupta**

Professor-OB & HRM, SDM Institute for Management and Development, Mysuru-570011, Karnataka, India

Email: [mousumi@sdmimd.ac.in](mailto:mousumi@sdmimd.ac.in)

**Ms. Aswathy K**

PGDM Student, SDM Institute for Management and Development, Mysuru-570011, Karnataka, India

### **Abstract**

Globally, a substantial amount of academic research is conducted on the ideas of perfectionism and self-efficacy. However, not many studies have investigated the same, with a more heterogeneous group of Indian working professionals, to test whether they vary in perfectionism and self-efficacy. To address the gap, the authors prepared a google form containing standardized questionnaires, related to measurement of perfectionism and self-efficacy and sent the same to the social media groups and websites, and professional groups. Based on the 108 responses gathered from the google form and the interviews conducted with the 12 respondents, significant difference was found among the respondents, in terms of the perfectionism, specifically between performance standard set at work vis a vis the standard set by the respondents for themselves. From interviews, it was felt that perfectionism is a relative term, based on the expectation from others about the achievement of goals in respondents' situation or context. The belief about perfectionism also depended on the self-det goals. In regard to self-efficacy, significant difference was found among the respondents' belief in their problem-solving ability vis a vis the ability to overcome opposition to get the job done and generating several options to solve the problem. There was no significant difference in the perfectionism of the respondents, based on the demographic factors. However, significant difference was found in the self-efficacy of the respondents, based on their family structure (and no other demographic factors) .

**Keywords:** Perfectionism, self-efficacy, Indian working professionals

JEL Classification: M54, M50, M59

### **1. Introduction**

Perfectionism is an obsession with striving for flawlessness and perfection, as well as self-critical evaluations and concerns about what other people might think of oneself (Stoeber & Childs, 2010). Perfectionists desire to fulfil unrealistic standards. Doing so, they may get fixated on their accomplishments and productivity (Parker & Adkins, 1995). Self-efficacy is the conviction that one can accomplish the actions necessary to reach specific objectives (<https://www.apa.org/pi/aids/resources/education/self-efficacy>). A person's degree of self-efficacy impacts on how they see their ability to change things and it influences their decision- making and problem-solving skills (Bandura, 2010). Globally, a substantial amount of academic research is conducted on the ideas of perfectionism and self-efficacy (for example: Vakilian & Khalatbari, 2019; Saraç, 2017; Stewart, & George-Walker, 2014; Lowe, 2013). However, the working population of India has not been extensively studied. The present paper aims to address the gap.

### **2. Literature review**

Self-efficacy and perfectionism, in their relationship, can have complex relations and that may vary based on different types of perfectionism. Several studies have been conducted in this regard, some of which are mentioned below.

2.1. Positive and negative perfectionism: Adaptive perfectionism is characterized by high standards for oneself and other people, a passion for success, and the capacity to accept oneself for the task completed. Maladaptive perfectionism is characterized by the establishment of strict and/or unachievable high standards, the inability to take pleasure in one's achievement, and uncertainty or concern about one's own talents (Murrey et al, 2002). Though they may have high expectations, positive perfectionists, also referred to as adaptable or healthy perfectionists, see failures as chances for personal development. Perfectionists believe own self-determined goals can be achieved and have higher self-efficacy (for example, Atilla & Arıkan 2023; Buliņa, 2014; Mehrnaz & Narjes, 2023; Deuling, & Burns, 2017). Excessive expectations for oneself and severe self-criticism are hallmarks of negative perfectionism, sometimes referred to as maladaptive or pathological perfectionism. Because they may erode confidence, severe self-criticism and the dread of failing have been linked to lower levels of self-efficacy (for example, Ibarzábal, 2023, Li, L. et. Al, 2023).

2.2. Fear of failure: Perfectionists with negative tendencies in particular, could be deeply afraid of making mistakes. Because they may mistrust their capacity to live up to the high self-determined expectations, those who experience this anxiety may have lower levels of self-efficacy (example: Encarnacion, et al., 2021; Pietrantonio, et al, 2009).

2.3. Impact on goal striving : Higher self-efficacy may be linked to positive perfectionism, which encourages people to aim high and views failures as chances to do better. Also, negative perfectionism lowers self-efficacy and can result in enduring feelings of inadequacy and the conviction that objectives are unachievable (example: Jaworski, et. Al. 2022; Kohli & Prabhu, 2022; Goel, & Singh, 2019; Stoeber & Eismann, 2007)

2.4. Coping mechanism: Perfectionists have a wide range of coping mechanisms at their disposal. Positive perfectionists can increase their sense of self-efficacy by utilizing adaptive methods such as asking for help and making mistakes. Maladaptive behaviors like avoidance, procrastination, or excessive self-criticism are all displayed by negative perfectionists and can lower self-efficacy (Khadija & Azim, 2023; Ukpere & Adekanmbi, 2021; Myrseth, et al., 2018; Catano et al, 2015; Kazemi & Ziaaddini 2014; Beauregard, 2012).

2.5. Contextual factors: Perfectionism and self-efficacy can be impacted by a range of contextual factors, including the type of work at hand, personal experiences, and an individual's general psychological health, and demographic factors (for example, Kruger et. al, 2023; Seçgin et al , 2023; Thakre & Sebastian 2021).

To summarize, one may expect a complicated relationship between perfectionism and self-efficacy, depending on the type of perfectionism. Positive perfectionism can raise self-efficacy while negative perfectionism can diminish it due to severe self-criticism and a fear of failing.

### **3. Objective of the study**

Though a considerable number of studies have been conducted to study perfectionism and self-efficacy among the children, students, and for professionals in certain work specializations (for example, nursing, teaching), not many studies have investigated the same, with a more heterogeneous group of Indian working professionals, to test whether they vary in perfectionism and self-efficacy, based on the demographic and occupation and work-related factors. To address the gap, the paper aims to :

- investigate whether the perfectionism and self-efficacy vary among Indian working professionals, in general
- investigate whether the perfectionism and self-efficacy among Indian working professionals are correlated
- investigate whether the perfectionism and self-efficacy vary among Indian working professionals, based on certain demographic factors

### **4. Research methodology**

4.1. Research design and instruments - A questionnaire was prepared containing standardized questionnaires, related to measurement of perfectionism and self-efficacy. The items no. 1, 5, 8, 12, 14, 18, 22, designated to measure perfectionism (i.e.; high standard) of the “Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R)” [developed by Slaney et al (1996, 2001)] have been used to collect data on perfectionism:

Perfectionism items (high standard) :

Item codes used for the study	Items
P.Q1.	I have high standards for my performance at work or at school
P.Q5.	If you don't expect much out of yourself, you will never succeed.
P.Q8.	I have high expectations for myself.
P.Q12.	I set very high standards for myself.
P.Q14.	I expect the best from myself.
P.Q18.	I try to do my best at everything I do
P.Q22.	I have a strong need to strive for excellence.

The 10 items of the established scale “The General Self-Efficacy Scale” have been used (developed by Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) to collect data on self-efficacy (Annexure 2).

Item codes used for the study	Items
SE.Q1.	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough
SE.Q2.	If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.
SE.Q3.	It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
SE.Q4.	I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.
SE.Q5.	Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
SE.Q6.	I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.
SE.Q7.	I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
SE.Q8.	When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.
SE.Q9.	If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution
SE.Q10.	I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

All the above items (perfectionism and self-efficacy) were included in the questionnaire for the present study, along with the multiple-choice questions, related to the demographic factors of the respondents.

4.2. Data collection – The questionnaire was sent to all the contacts of the authors and their friends, via Google Form. It was also shared in social media groups and websites, as well as professional groups. The respondents were requested to assign scores for each item, which they perceived would best describe their own perfectionism and self-efficacy. From October 2023 to March 2024, 108 responses were gathered from across India. Additionally, on a random basis, 25 respondents were personally contacted and finally 12 agreed to share their insight further (anonymously) on the research questions and their views were taken into consideration for the data interpretation.

The following hypotheses have been tested in the paper :

Hypothesis 1 :

H1 0 : There is no significant differences among the Indian working professionals in terms of the perfectionism and/or self-efficacy.

H1 a : There is a significant differences among the Indian working professionals in terms of the perfectionism and/or self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2 :

H2 0 : There is no correlation of perfectionism and self-efficacy among the Indian working professionals.

H1 a : There is a positive correlation of perfectionism and self-efficacy among the Indian working professionals.

Hypothesis 3 :

H3 0 : Indian working professionals, , do not differ significantly in perfectionism and/or self-efficacy, based on demographic factors, such as -----

H3 1: Indian working professionals differ significantly in perfectionism and/or self-efficacy, based on at least one of the demographic factors, such as -----

## **5. Data analysis**

5.1. The demographic data of the respondents is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic data**

Parameters	Groups/ categories	N = 108	Percentage
Age	21-30	35	32.41%
	31-40	16	14.81%
	41-50	16	14.81%
	51-60	36	33.33%
	61 and above	5	4.63%

Gender	Male	58	53.70%
	Female	50	46.30%
Education	Graduate	40	37.04%
	Post-Graduate	61	56.48%
	Professional Degree	7	6.48%
Industry Working in	BFSI	33	30.56%
	Education	7	6.48%
	Healthcare	14	12.96%
	Hospitality	4	3.70%
	IT and ITES	22	20.37%
	Manufacturing	9	8.33%
	Professional and Advisory Services	19	17.59%
Total Work Experience	1-5 years	31	28.70%
	6-10 years	15	13.89%
	11-15 years	8	7.41%
	16-20 years	13	12.04%
	21-25 years	5	4.63%
	26 years and more	36	33.33%
Tenure in Present Company	1-3 years	42	38.89%
	4-6 years	16	14.81%
	7-9 years	7	6.48%
	10 years and more	43	39.82%
Marital Status	Married	75	69.44%
	Unmarried	33	30.55%
Family structure	Joint	17	15.74%
	Nuclear	91	84.26%

5.2. The scores for each item for perfectionism was aggregated to obtain the score for final perfectionism score for each respondent. Similarly, the scores for each item for self-efficacy was aggregated to obtain the score for final self-efficacy score for each respondent.

5.3. To investigate the Hypothesis 1, ANOVA Test was conducted by comparing the mean scores of the respondents' perception about each item of perfectionism and self-efficacy. The result revealed that, there is a significant difference among the Indian working professionals in terms of the perfectionism ( $p$  value = 0.00000,  $\alpha$  = 0.05). and self-efficacy ( $p$  value = 0.00000,  $\alpha$  = 0.05). **Therefore, null Hypothesis H1<sub>0</sub> has been rejected.** Further, TUKEY HSD/KRAMER post-hoc test was conducted to compare all possible pairs of means. Significant difference was found in several groups' means for the items for perfectionism and self-efficacy (Table 2).

**Table 2: TUKEY HSD/KRAMER post hoc test**

perfectionism	group 1	group 2	p-value	significance ( $\alpha$ = 0.05)
	P.Q1	P.Q12	0.004388	yes
	P.Q5	P.Q12	0.008763	yes
	P.Q8	P.Q18	0.0074	yes
	P.Q12	P.Q14	0.000287	yes
	P.Q12	P.Q18	3.37E-07	yes
self-efficacy	SE.Q1	SE.Q2	1.62E-06	yes
	SE.Q1	SE.Q8	0.013801	yes
	SE.Q2	SE.Q3	0.019399	yes
	SE.Q2	SE.Q6	9.97E-12	yes

	SE.Q2	SE.Q7	0.006742	yes
	SE.Q2	SE.Q9	9.32E-07	yes
	SE.Q2	SE.Q10	0.002114	yes
	SE.Q3	SE.Q6	0.003146	yes
	SE.Q4	SE.Q6	0.000387	yes
	SE.Q5	SE.Q6	9.76E-05	yes
	SE.Q6	SE.Q7	0.009702	yes
	SE.Q6	SE.Q8	2.79E-06	yes
	SE.Q8	SE.Q9	0.009702	yes

5.4. To investigate the Hypothesis 2, the aggregated score of perfectionism and the aggregated score of self-efficacy, as perceived by the respondents, have been tested with Pearson Correlation test. It was found that the Pearson correlation coefficient is .302, which proved that the perfectionism and self-efficacy of the respondents were positively correlated, though the correlation is not very strong. **Therefore, null Hypothesis H2<sub>0</sub> has been rejected.**

5.5. To investigate the null Hypothesis 3, further ANOVA was conducted. There was no significant difference in the perfectionism of the respondents, based on the demographic factors, such as, age, gender, tenure on the present company, total work experience, sectors presently working, marital status, family structure, and level of education. However, significant difference was found in the self-efficacy of the respondents, based on their family structure (and no other demographic factors) [Table 3]. **Therefore, null Hypothesis H3<sub>0</sub> has been rejected.**

**Table 3: ANOVA for the demographic factors**

	demographic factors	p value	significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )
Perfectionism	age	0.135	no
	gender	0.285	no
	tenure on the present company	0.06	no
	total work experience	0.166	no
	sectors presently working	0.08	no
	marital status	0.08	no
	family structure	0.09	no
	education	0.32	no
self-efficacy	age	0.108	no
	gender	0.87	no
	tenure on the present company	0.108	no
	total work experience	0.31	no
	sectors presently working	0.605	no
	marital status	0.67	no
	<b>family structure</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>yes</b>
	education	0.096	no

## **6. Discussion**

Based on the 108 responses gathered from the google form and the interviews conducted with the 12 respondents, data analysis was done. Respondents were found to have significant in terms of the perfectionism and self-efficacy, both. Regarding perfectionism, difference was found specifically between performance standard set at work vis a vis the standard set by the respondents for themselves. They also differed in the belief that they need to set high standard for themselves, to propel towards success vis a vis the standards which they set for themselves. Difference was also found in terms of performance standards set by themselves vis a vis their own effort and expectation to achieve the performance standard. The interviews generated more insight into the above findings. It was felt that perfectionism is a relative term, based on the expectation from others about the achievement of goals in respondents' situation or context. The belief about perfectionism also depended on the self-det goals.

In regard to self-efficacy, significant difference was found among the respondents' belief in their problem-solving ability vis a vis the ability to overcome opposition to get the job done and generating several options to solve the problem. Respondents differed significantly in terms of their perception the ability to overcome opposition to get the job done vis a vis their ability no to move away from the set goal, their ability to make enough effort for the same without losing calm, and, if needed, ability to take contingent actions. The respondents also showed significant differences in their belief that they could solve problems if they made necessary effort vis a vis the ability to remain calm in trying situations. During the interview, the respondents expressed that the situation-specific expectation, the people involved in the situation and the ability to remain calm, were the possible reasons for differences about the self-efficacy.

There was no significant difference in the perfectionism of the respondents, based on the demographic factors. However, significant difference was found in the self-efficacy of the respondents, based on their family structure (and no other demographic factors). This was a very interesting finding, since the demographic factors could have been the possible causes, due to which the perfectionism and self-efficacy differed among the respondents. Therefore, further studies are needed to substantiate this finding.

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