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## Comparison Perfectionism and Self-Alienation in Working Women and Non-Working Women

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**Abstract:** The current study has been conducted in order to comparing of perfectionism and self alienation in employed women and unemployed women. Statistical society of this study comprised of whole employed women in Ardabil City and the total of housekeeper women that had any job at out of home comprised normal society. Thirty employed women were selected randomly as a study group and 30 unemployed women were selected by this way as a comparison group. They were tested individually by perfectionism and self alienation questionnaire. Collected data were analyzed by MANOVA and regression and Pearson correlation tests. The results of multivariate variance (MANOVA) showed that there was no significant difference in positive perfectionism and social isolation between two groups. But there were significant differences between two groups at negative perfectionism and normlessness and powerlessness. The result of regression analysis showed that self alienation can explained about 15% variance of positive perfectionism and 13% variance of negative perfectionism.

**Key words:** Antibiotics, susceptibility, bacteria, fermented milk

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, it is specified that perfectionism is a multi-dimensional construct. Earlier beliefs about perfectionism distinguished between neurotic and narcissistic perfectionism (Kohut, 1971), however recent researches differentiate its social aspects from personal aspects (Frost *et al.*, 1990).

Hewitt and Flett (1991) recognized three items for perfectionism; self-center, other-centered and society-centered. They stated that the discerning aspect of these three dimensions of perfectionism isn't the behavioral pattern, but rather it is the person or thing that perfectionism is directed to. Frost *et al.* (1993) discovered that there is significant overlap between scales of Frost *et al.* (1990) and Hewitt and Flett (1991).

In recent years two positive and negative aspects of perfectionism are being noticed by researchers. The first dimension is described as positive effort for achieving the perfection (positive perfectionism) (Frost *et al.*, 1993) and it includes some aspect of perfectionism like; trying to be perfect and establishing superior functional standards for oneself. This dimension of perfectionism has a positive correlation with good adaptation's indices like positive affect and good academic performance (Frost *et al.*, 1993; Stumpf and Parker, 2000; Beiling *et al.*, 2003). The second dimension of perfectionism has been described as self-

critical perfectionism (negative perfectionism) (Frost *et al.*, 1993; Dunkley *et al.*, 2003). It encompasses some dimensions of perfectionism that are related to negative assessment of action, being too preoccupied with mistakes and self-reproach for those mistakes. This dimension of perfectionism is positively correlated with indices of mental illness like depression, stress and anxiety (Beiling *et al.*, 2003). Blankenstein *et al.* (1993) found out that both dimensions of perfectionism have correlation with some sorts of fears like; fear of function assessment, fear of defeat and fear of making mistake. Antecedent studies also showed that perfectionism has relationship with insufficient relationships and cooperation (Epstein and Eidelson, 1982). This is also suggested that setting up high standards for functions make persons hesitated for showing their successes (Schlenker and Leary, 1985). These researchers noted that such persons are socially anxious and then they feel uncomfortable to embark on humanitarian behaviors.

Page *et al.* (2008) with an emphasis on importance of personality in vocational adjustment, showed that in comparison between 5 factors of personality, perfectionism predicts higher variance of doubt or career indecision. It was revealed in this study that self critical inclinations which are being evaluated by negative perfectionism, contribute to understand the role of personality in job selection. Also, a set of high personal



standards that are assessed by positive perfectionism seems that has relationship with high vocational self efficacy.

Miller (1996) concluded that perception of social level and place have relationship with perfectionism. As, perfectionist persons evaluate their social level lower than real and they try continuously to achieve higher rank and class in the society. Whereas, in our society having a career can be realized as a higher social rank, then the first point in our study is that whether working women and housekeepers are different in perfectionism or not.

Another variable studied here is self-alienation. This construct has been grown from religious educations, philosophical thoughts and social psychology since many years ago (Trusty and Dooley-Dickey, 1993) and it alludes to social estrangement and lack of support or considerable relationship with society. Alienation is the lack of association feeling, feeling of separation from family, friends and friends (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). In the work place, alienation is often accompanied with employees' negate behaviors like self-isolation in fulfillment of personal obligations, inexplicable absence from job, vacating the job or being expelled. In the house environment, alienation is presented as lack of association, feeling of separation from family, feeling of isolation and powerlessness in accomplishing the responsibilities (Mau, 1993). Seeman (1959) defined the alienation as discrepancy between personal expectations and received rewards in the advanced society's context. His conceptualization of alienation includes six dimensions; social isolation, cultural isolation, self-isolation, powerlessness, insignificance and normlessness. Social science surveys haven't been able to validate these six separate dimensions, yet. Dean (1961) following the method of Seeman, defined self alienation as a construct comprises three items; social isolation, powerlessness and normlessness.

According to theory of Dean (1961), social isolation is the feeling of loneliness even such moments one is in the society and among others. Persons who feel socially isolation, tend to separate from common social groups because of perceived insignificance feeling, lack of close relationship with others, family and broader society. They think that they don't have relationship with others and generally think that others don't notice them (Dean, 1961). Powerlessness is the second dimension of self alienation and is the feeling of powerlessness in affecting the personal choices. This dimension also encompasses this belief that person have lower level of control on what is happening for him/her. This dimension of self alienation has a strong relationship with external source of control. Persons, who feel powerlessness, often isolate

themselves from others during problems and frustration (Dean, 1961). Finally, normlessness consists of rejecting the majority rules, society's values and values of cultural majority. These people feel that they don't have link with popular norms, these people hardly conform to current norms. Their rules and goals conflict with others, other family members and workmates. Then, normlessness can occur in a situation in which one's value system conflicts with norms of majority group. In a family or work atmosphere, these feelings can inversely affect one's function, success and finally his/her living.

Study of Palosuo (2000) concluded that self-alienation have relationship with socioeconomic indices. In his study, it was revealed that among persons with low educational level, self-alienation and especially normlessness were frequently seen. In this study, there was an inverse relationship between despair and powerlessness with economic income and having a job. Another finding of this study showed that alienation feeling has a meaningful correlation with most of health variables. In men, especially, powerlessness and despair have relationship with unhealthy related habits. As it was expected, in this study those persons who don't feel alienation, inclined toward a healthy behavior. Furthermore, lack of exercise and overdrinking were correlated with powerlessness in men, however this correlation was seen in women only between lack of exercise and powerlessness.

Uitenbroek *et al.* (1996) deduced that self-alienation has a stronger correlation with discomfort and detachment related indices like loneliness, being single and dissatisfaction with different life territories.

Bobak *et al.* (1998) found out low perceived control on life and health, are concepts that have relationship with self-alienation. For this reason, self-alienation is more frequent in socialistic than capitalistic nations.

Researchers realized that social responsibility has negative relationship with powerlessness and normlessness. All three dimensions of self-alienation (social isolation, powerlessness and normlessness) have inverse relationship with self-respect.

Nicol (2007) found out that social dominance orientation had significant negative relationship with powerlessness dimension of self-alienation. These researchers concluded that powerlessness feeling can be a main element in person's powerlessness for changing the situation and condition.

Regarding the importance of women's working, second objective of this study is to compare the self-alienation between working and non-working women. According to above mentioned items following hypotheses are propounded in our study:



- There is difference between working and non-working women in the positive perfectionism
- There is difference between working and non-working women in the negative perfectionism
- There is difference between working and non-working women in the feeling of normlessness
- There is difference between working and non-working women in the feeling of powerlessness
- There is difference between working and non-working women in the social isolation feeling

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Participants:** All working women of Ardabil city at 2008 comprised the statistical population. And all housekeeper women without job were the normal statistical population. Of these statistical populations, 30 working and 30 housekeeper women were selected by cluster random sampling than sample size of this study includes 60 women who were surveyed by a causal-comparative method in a cross-sectional study.

**Measures**

**Perfectionism questionnaire:** This questionnaire was edited by Terry-Short *et al.* (1995). This scale measures the perfectionism from the functional and behavioral point of view. This scale has been edited to diagnose the positive and negative perfectionism. Two sub-scales of perfectionism scale (positive and negative) presents two kinds of rein forcer that person experiences them. This is believed that positive perfectionism is directly arisen from perfectionistic behavior-related positive rein forcer. Negative perfectionism, seems to be directly related with negative rein forcers. This scale has 40 questions and subjects respond the questions on a 5-option Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree). Twenty questions measure the positive perfectionism and 20 questions measure the negative perfectionism. Range of scores is 20-100.

**Self-alienation questionnaire:** This questionnaire is edited by Dean (1961) and has 24 items. Subjects respond the questions on a 5-option Likert scale (strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, and strongly disagree). Higher score in this scale is indicative of higher level of self-alienation. Minimal and maximal score of this questionnaire are 24 and 120, respectively. This questionnaire has three sub-scales; normlessness (6 items), feeling of powerlessness (9 items) and feeling of isolation (9 items). In the study of Dean (1961) reliability coefficients were 0.78, 0.78, 0.73 and 0.83 for scale as whole, powerlessness, normlessness and isolation,

respectively. Cronbach’s alpha coefficient has been reported from 0.75 to 0.95 and also its validity coefficient varies from 0.59-0.78.

After sampling and collecting demographic data, perfectionism and self-alienation questionnaires were consecutively completed individually by non-working women in the house and by working women in their work place. Collected data were analyzed by Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), correlation coefficient tests and multivariate regression analysis tests.

**RESULTS**

Results shows that mean age of working and non-working women were 32.16 and 32.50, respectively. Standard deviation of the age of working and non-working women was 1.57 and 1.79, respectively. Level of education of working and non-working women varied from high school diploma to Bachelor of Science.

Results of Table 1 shows that mean and standard deviation of working women in the normlessness, was 23.26 and 4.61, respectively. This values for non-working women, was 26.60 and 3.39, respectively. In the powerlessness mean and standard deviation of working women, were 22.46 and 4.32, respectively. Non-working women have mean and standard deviation of 27.73 and 3.66, for powerlessness, respectively. In the social isolation, mean and standard deviation were 31.16 for and 3.77 for working women, respectively and 32.46 and 10.92 for non-working women, respectively. Working women had respectively following mean and standard deviation for positive perfectionism; 78.33 and 10.25. Mean and standard deviation of positive perfectionism for non-working women, were 76.56 and 10.57, respectively. Negative perfectionism had following mean and standard deviation in the working women; 61.66 and 9.81,

Table 1: Mean and Standard deviation of subjects’ scores in self-alienation and perfectionism

Items	Groups	Mean	SD
Positive perfectionism	Working women	78/33	10/25
	Non-working women	76/56	10/57
	Total	77/45	10/36
Negative perfectionism	Working women	61/66	9/81
	Non-working women	66/80	10/43
	Total	64/23	10/37
Normlessness	Working women	23/26	4/61
	Non-working women	26/60	3/39
	Total	24/93	4/35
Powerlessness	Working women	22/46	4/32
	Non-working women	27/73	3/66
	Total	25/10	4/78
Social isolation	Working women	31/16	3/77
	Non-working women	32/46	10/92
	Total	31/81	8/13



Table 2: Results of multivariate analysis of variance on scores of two groups in dependent variables

Variables	SS	df	MS	F-value	p-value
<b>Perfectionism</b>					
Positive	46/81	1	46/81	0.43	0.510
Negative	395/26	1	395/26	3/85	0.050
<b>Self-alienation</b>					
Normlessness	166/66	1	166/66	10/16	0.002
Powerlessness	416/06	1	416/06	25/85	0.000
Social isolation	25/35	1	25/35	0.38	0.540

Table 3: Intercorrelations among study variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
Positive perfectionism	-	0.35**	0.28*	-0.17	0.04
Negative perfectionism		-	0.28*	-0.13	-0.06
Normlessness			-	0.27*	0.26*
Powerlessness				-	0.41**
Social isolation					-

\*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.001. 1: Positive perfectionism, 2: Negative perfectionism, 3: Normlessness, 4: Powerlessness, 5: Social isolation

respectively. Non-working women had 66.80 and 10.43 mean and standard deviation in negative perfectionism variable.

As it is observed in the Table 2 there is no difference between two groups in the positive perfectionism however there is significant difference between two groups in the negative perfectionism (p<0.05, F = 3.85) then the first hypothesis is rejected and second is proved. It means that in the non-working women negative perfectionism is higher than working women. There is significant difference between two groups in two of three items of self-alienation. Normlessness and powerlessness are significantly different and social isolation is not significantly different between two groups. Then third and fourth hypotheses are approved and fifth hypothesis is rejected. It means that normlessness and powerlessness are higher among non-working than working women.

Results of Table 3 shows that positive perfectionism has significant positive correlation with negative perfectionism and normlessness. Negative perfectionism, also, has significant positive relationship with normlessness. High normlessness is associated with high powerlessness and high social isolation. Powerlessness has significant positive relationship with social isolation.

Table 4 shows that approximately 15% of total variance of positive perfectionism is explained by self-alienation. Results of regression coefficients, also, show that of self-alienation's items, normlessness and powerlessness related t-test is statistically significant. It means that normlessness and powerlessness can predict the positive perfectionism positively and negatively, respectively.

Results of Table 5 shows that approximately 13% of total variance of negative perfectionism is explained by self-alienation. Results of regression coefficients, also, show that of self-alienation's items, the t of normlessness

Table 4: Multiple regression self-alienations on positive perfectionism

Predictor variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R	B	Beta	t-value	p-value
Positive perfectionism	0.38	0.15	0.10				
Normlessness				0.80	0.34	2/59	0.01
Powerlessness				-0.61	-0.29	-2.11	0.04
Social isolation				0.09	0.07	0.54	0.58

Table 5: Multiple regression self-alienations on negative perfectionism

Predictor variables	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R	B	Beta	t-value	p-value
Negative perfectionism	0.36	0.13	0.08				
Normlessness				0.84	0.35	2.69	0.009
Powerlessness				-0.44	-0.20	-1.45	0.15
Social isolation				-0.08	0.06	-0.47	0.64

is statistically significant. It means that normlessness can predict the negative perfectionism positively. Powerlessness and social isolation couldn't significantly predict the negative perfectionism.

## DISCUSSION

Researches related to employment and unemployment and their impacts on mental health go back to surveys performed during 1930's about depression disorder. Eisenberg and Lazarsfeld reviewed the findings of more than 100 studies about this subject and concluded unemployment cause emotional instability among unemployed persons. Regarding the importance of subject, current study was performed to compare the perfectionism and self-alienation between working and non-working women. The first hypothesis was saying that there is significant difference between these two groups of women. Results of multivariate analysis of variance showed that there isn't significant difference between two groups in the positive perfectionism (F = 0.43, p<0.51). These results conflict with Miller's findings (1996) suggesting that people who establish high standard for themselves try to reach a high social class. Since, there are stereotypical beliefs and attitudes about women's employment in our country and regarding the viewpoint of researchers that perfectionist persons may show their perfectionism only in some dimensions of their life, therefore it seems that these people set up their life high standards not in employment but also other values may be considered by them.

Second hypothesis is related to the difference between working and non-working women in the negative perfectionism. Results of survey showed that two groups are significantly different in the negative perfectionism (F = 3.85, p<0.05). Non-working women showed more negative perfectionism than working women. These results nearly accord with findings of Page *et al.* (2008). They discovered that self-critical inclinations presented in negative perfectionism, play role in the doubt about



vocational decision making and job selection. Doubt about job selection and resignation from job due to fear of making mistake and being criticized suspect these persons more to unemployment.

Third hypothesis is that there is significant difference between working and non-working women in the feeling of normlessness and our findings was showing this significant difference ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $F = 10.16$ ). Non-working women have a lower level of education than working women and also they may have lower perceived life control due to lack of economic independence. Low educational level (Palosuo, 2000) and low perceived life control (Bobak *et al.*, 1998) are of variables that have relationship with normlessness and then it can be concluded that these causes can lead into rejection of the majority rules, society's values and values of cultural majority.

Forth hypothesis is that there is significant difference between working and non-working women in the feeling of powerlessness and our findings was also showing this significant difference ( $p < 0.002$ ,  $F = 10.16$ ). Non-working women had a higher level of powerlessness feeling than working women. These results accord with findings of Palosuo (2000) that have demonstrated economic income and having a job have inverse relationship with despair and powerlessness. These results, also, accord with findings of Nicol (2007) that say there is negative relationship between social dominance orientation and powerlessness. Non-working women may have a weaker independent role in catching their goals, also in changing the situation and condition of their life, compared to working women. Regarding the fact that these people are dependent to their life partner in most situations of life, their powerlessness can be explained by this dependency.

The last hypothesis was saying that there is significant difference between working and non-working women in the feeling of social isolation and our findings was showing that there isn't significant difference between them ( $p < 0.54$ ,  $F = 0.38$ ). Firstly, since, women whether working or not, are supported by their family members especially their husband, then it is less probable to feel loneliness. Secondarily, non-working women are members of other unofficial groups like friends group and sport group just as working women who are communicating and cooperating with others in their job environment. Then, membership of both working and non-working women in various groups, results in equal cooperation with others for both of them and then culminates in equal feeling of social isolation.

Results of Pearson correlation showed that positive perfectionism has a significant positive correlation with

negative perfectionism and normlessness. However, positive perfectionism has no meaningful correlation with powerlessness and isolation. It seems that, persons who set up high standards for themselves, to some extent, have self-critical inclinations and deviation from accepted values.

There is, also, significant positive relationship between negative perfectionism and normlessness ( $r = 0.28$ ). However, this type of perfectionism wasn't related with powerlessness and isolation. A significant positive relationship was observed between items of self-alienation in the range of 0.27-0.41.

Results of regression analysis showed that approximately 15% of total variance of positive perfectionism is explained by self-alienation that of its items only powerlessness and normlessness could explain and feeling of isolation has no role in the positive perfectionism. Results, also, revealed that approximately 13% of total variance of negative perfectionism is explained by self-alienation that of its items only normlessness could explain this variance. This results accords with conclusion of Miller (1996) who, is saying that persons may establish their perfectionistic standards only as a compensation for their feeling of powerlessness.

## CONCLUSION

There was no significant difference in positive perfectionism and social isolation between two groups. But there were significant differences between two groups at negative perfectionism and normlessness and powerlessness.

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