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Effects of Perfectionistic Striving on Employee Goal Achievement: A Proposed Study

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Hewitt and Flett's Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale identifies different types of perfectionism: self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP), These may be divided into further facets, such as Campbell and Di Paula's perfectionism subscales. One of the SOP facets, Perfectionistic Striving, captures adaptive aspects of perfectionism. This facet may thus be the reason why SOP has been found to positively correlate with goal achievement. Little research has been conducted with these subscales, though, as well as with the relationship between SOP and goal achievement in the domain of work, despite many referring to work as the domain they are most perfectionistic in. The proposed study would therefore investigate the hypothesis that the Perfectionistic Striving subscale score would correlate higher with supervisor ratings of employee goal achievement in comparison to the correlations between the other subscales' scores and supervisor ratings.

Defining Perfectionism

Perfectionism has been most commonly characterized as a personality type defined by a striving for flawlessness, high standards for performance, and overcritical ratings of one's own performance (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). In the course of researching perfectionism, it has been conceptualized in different ways. The current dominant viewpoint is that perfectionism is multidimensional (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). One of the most well-known concepts of perfectionism stems from Hewitt and Flett's (2002) Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS). This scale measures different facets of perfectionism: self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and other-oriented perfectionism.

Self-oriented perfectionism (SOP) is the facet of perfectionism characterized by "high personal standards and motivation to attain perfection" (Hewitt & Flett, 2002, p. 14). Enns and Cox (2002) deemed it an ambivalent type of perfectionism. Socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) refers to others placing unrealistically high expectations on oneself (Hewitt & Flett, 2002). This facet has been described as maladaptive (Hamachek, 1978). The third type

of perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism (OOP), focuses on one placing expectations on others to be perfect. It has since been disregarded when it comes to conceptualizing perfectionism (Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Thus, this research will only be focusing on SOP and SPP.

SOP and SPP's Relationship with Performance in Different Domains

Perfectionism research has delved into the area of SOP and SPP's influence on performance. Stoeber and Stoeber (2009) demonstrated that perfectionism affects various domains of people's lives differently. They also found that SOP impacted the most domains, implying that motivation for doing well in these areas is intrinsic. Some domains where participants described themselves as being the most perfectionistic included work, studies and academics, bodily hygiene, spelling, and presentation of documents (Stoeber, & Stoeber, 2009).

One of the most prominent areas of research on the effects of perfectionism is that of academics. Bong, Hwang, Noh, and Kim (2014) discussed that SOP has been found to positively with academic achievement, with either no or

negative correlations to test anxiety and procrastination, both deemed negative aspects of academic achievement. Meanwhile, SPP correlates negatively with achievement and positively with anxiety and procrastination. A reason for SOP's positive association with academic achievement may be that SOP has been found to positively predict one's intrinsic motivation to do well academically (Miquelon, Vallerand, Grouzet, and Cardinal, 2005). Motivation may also be why SOP negatively correlates with procrastination, as motivation relates to self-efficacy, the "subjective convictions for successfully carrying out courses of action to achieve desired outcomes" (Bandura, 1977). Seo (2008) found that self-efficacy mediated between SOP and procrastination, as SOP positively correlated with self-efficacy while negatively correlated with procrastination. Thus, it may be seen that self-efficacy, in its relation to motivation, is why SOP leads to positive academic achievement.

The Relationship Between SOP and Goals

What is considered to link SOP to self-efficacy is how SOP includes goal-setting and self-evaluation (Hewitt & Flett, 2002). Locke and Latham (2002) discussed how the pursuit of higher goals leads to correlated improvement in the self-efficacy and performance of the individual attempting these goals. One's commitment to goals is also higher if the individuals participated in setting them, in comparison to when someone else set them (Locke & Latham, 2002). This implies that SOP individuals are more likely to make stronger goal commitments than SPP individuals (Bong, Hwang, Noh, & Kim, 2014). SOP and SPP individuals are also likely to choose different types of goals. It was seen that self-oriented perfectionists typically either adopted a mastery goal, focusing on learning new skills or improving on current skills, or performance-approach goals, where the focus was on

outperforming others. Meanwhile, socially prescribed perfectionists typically chose performance-avoidance goals with the focus being to validate one's ability or to not do worse than others (Speirs Neumeister, 2004). These findings show how SOP seems to positively influence academic achievement through influencing the motivation behind goals, goal commitment, and self-efficacy.

Other studies have demonstrated that SOP positively influences achievement through goal progress. Powers, Koestener, Zuroff, Milyavskva, and Gorin (2011) conducted a study asking participants in dyads to fill out surveys about their own goal progress, as well as their friends'. They found that SOP, again, correlated with goal progress positively. It was also noted that this positive correlation was seen with both the self-reports and the reports made by others, implying interrater reliability (Powers, Koestener, Zuroff, Milyavskva, & Gorin, 2011).

Campbell & DiPaula's (2002) Subscales of Perfectionism

It has therefore been demonstrated that SOP influences achievement through its relation to motivation, goal commitment, goal-setting, and goal progress. However, since SOP has been discussed as an ambivalent type of perfectionism, why it is positive in this regard is a matter of interest. A possible reason for this was theorized by Jennifer Campbell and Adam Di Paula (2002) who perceived SOP and SPP as each being composed of two distinct beliefs. They determined that these perceptions were reflected in the factor structure (Campbell & Di Paula, 2002). This led to the creation of four subscales (Stoeber & Child, 2010). The two subscales of SPP are Conditional Acceptance, which is the belief that one must perform well in order to be accepted and loved by others, and Other's High Standards, the idea that one is held to the high expectations of others. The two subscales of SOP are the Importance of Being

Perfect, the self-belief that it is important for one to be perfect, and Perfectionistic Striving, the perception that one is actively aiming for success (Campbell & Di Paula, 2002).The reason for why SOP is seen as an ambivalent type of perfectionism may be due to these two subscales. Campbell and Di Paula (2002) found that the Importance of Being Perfect subscale captures both negative and positive aspects of perfectionism. Meanwhile, Perfectionistic Striving predominantly captures positive aspects of perfectionism (Campbell & Di Paula, 2002). Thus, SOP has been regarded as an ambivalent type of perfectionism due to its composition of an ambivalent facet and a positive facet of perfectionism (Stoeber & Childs, 2010).

Research Gaps

It may therefore be suggested that SOP has been shown to correlate positively with achievement through motivation, goal-setting, goal progress, and goal commitment due to the facet of Perfectionistic Striving. Researchers may further study this relationship using the measures created by Campbell and Di Paula, but very few studies have used these scales overall, despite the confirmation that these subscales differ from one another (Stoeber & Childs, 2010). One of these studies partially examined the type of goals one makes depending on the type of perfectionist they are. Results showed that those who scored high on the Perfectionistic Striving subscale were more likely to make mastery-approach and performance-approach goals. Meanwhile, those who scored high on the Importance of Being Perfect scale were less likely to make performance-approach goals, with no correlation having been found between those individuals and mastery-approach goals (Van Yperen, 2006). This implies that Perfectionistic Striving is the reason that SOP has been shown to correlate well with achievement through goal-setting. More research, nonetheless, needs to be conducted.

Another research gap is the effect of SOP on achievement in the domain of work. People reported being the most perfectionistic in work, yet there is limited research in this area (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). It has been found that SOP positively predicts job engagement (Childs & Stoeber, 2010). Job engagement is deemed a positive aspect in work, individuals high in job achievement being less likely to burnout (Bakker, Schaufeli, Leither, and Taris, 2008). Research has also discovered that work motivation serves as a mediating factor between SOP and workaholism (Stoeber, Davis, & Townley, 2013). These findings support the pattern of SOP positively influencing achievement through motivation, showing that results from academic samples generalize with employee samples. However, no research has examined SOP's effect on work achievement through goal pursuit, goal progress, or goal-setting.

Therefore, this study proposes to fill these research gaps. This would be done through examining the relationship between incumbents' ratings on Hewitt and Flett's MPS and their goal achievement. It is hypothesized that the Perfectionistic Striving subscale score would correlate higher with supervisor ratings of employee goal achievement in comparison to the correlations between the other subscales' scores and supervisor ratings.

Proposed Methods

Participants

Approximately 120 employees will be recruited from a call centre in southern Ontario, Canada. This job setting would be chosen due to the type of work goals that may be made, such as closing a certain number of client cases, making it very easy for supervisors to later track. There would be a monetary incentive of $10, the amount chosen in order to encourage participation but not to be so substantial as to make a large difference in participants' income.

Materials

Multidimensional perfectionism scale (MPS) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). The 45-item MPS measures the Campbell and Di Paula subscales of Perfectionistic Striving (five items; e.g. "I strive to be as perfect as I can be"), Importance of Being Perfect (five items; e.g. "It is very important that I am perfect in everything I attempt"), Other's High Standards (six items; e.g. "People expect nothing less than perfection from me"), and Conditional Acceptance (five items; e.g., "Others will like me, even if I don't excel at everything"; p. 184 - 185). The subscales' definitions and compositions were described in the introduction. The items are composed of Likert scales, which employees would answer from a scale of one (disagree) to seven (agree). Some of these items will be reverse-coded. The MPS's will be administered as paper-and-pencil questionnaires at the beginning of this study.

Supervisor's ratings of goal achievement. A single-item questionnaire will be given to supervisors to report employees' goal achievement with a nine-point Likert scale, with one representing no progress and nine representing fully achieved. The decision to use supervisor ratings stems from an effort to avoid the limitations of previous research, self-reported measures used in the majority of previous studies around Campbell and Di Paula's four subscales (Stoeber & Childs, 2010). With the evidence that peer ratings have similar results to self-reports, researchers choose to use ratings from those other than the participants (Powers, et al., 2011).

Procedure

Before beginning the study, participants will be informed that from this study, researchers hope to learn about perfectionism's influence on work performance. Participants will not be informed of the hypothesis at this time. They will be told, however, that the results of this study will not impact their employment status.

The participants will receive the MPS, filling it in and returning it to their supervisor. Researchers will collect the MPS's, calculating the participants' subscale scores.

Participants will then be told to record a goal related to their work performance, which they would hope to accomplish within six months' time. These records are given to the supervisor as well. Participants are also told that their achievement of the goal did not affect their employment status.

After six months passed, the supervisors will rate each participant on their goal achievement. Researchers will collect these supervisor ratings. Participants will then be debriefed and informed of the study's true purpose.

Expected Results

This proposed study will examine the relationship between incumbents' ratings on Hewitt and Flett's MPS and their goal achievement. Means and standard deviations for the subscale scores of Perfectionistic Striving Importance of Being, Conditional Acceptance, and Other's High Standards, as well as the supervisor ratings of employee goal achievement, would be calculated to determine the correlations between the subscale scores and the supervisor rating. A hierarchal multiple regression would reveal the final model, demonstrating which of the Campbell and Di Paula subscale scores influence the supervisor rating of employee goal achievement the most, as well as incremental variance.

With regard to the correlations, it is predicted that the Perfectionism Striving subscale score will significantly positively, correlate with the supervisor's ratings while the Conditional Acceptance subscale score would significantly negatively correlate with the supervisor's ratings, the opposite direction in

these correlations being expected. This would be based off how past literature has discussed Conditional Acceptance as the opposite of Perfectionistic Strivings (Campbell & Di Paula, 2002). Meanwhile, it would be predicted that the Importance of Being Perfect subscale score would positively, yet not significantly, correlate with the supervisor's ratings. The Other's High Standards subscale would also be predicted as negatively correlating with supervisor's ratings, though not significantly.

In the final model, though, it is expected that the predictors of Perfectionistic Striving and Conditional Acceptance would be included. The subscale score of Conditional Acceptance would add incremental variance to the supervisor rating. Nonetheless, the Perfectionistic Striving score would be expected to influence the supervisor rating of employee goal achievement the most in comparison to the other Campbell and Di Paula subscales.

Discussion

While previous research has examined the effect of SOP on achievement due to goal-setting and goal commitment, as well as the subscales of SOP and SPP, this study would examine how the Campbell and Di Paula (2002) subscales of perfectionism correlated with goal achievement in the workplace. It is hypothesized that the Perfectionistic Striving subscale score would correlate higher with supervisor ratings of employee goal achievement in comparison to the correlations between the other subscales' scores and supervisor ratings.

Were the results of this study to support the hypothesis, this would lead to many implications. One is that the pattern of SOP positively correlating with academic achievement, due to goal-setting, goal progress, and goal commitment, may be generalized to the workplace (Bong, et al., 2014). While previous research has predominantly focused on SOP's link to achievement in academics, this study

demonstrates how similar results may be found in other domains of life.

Another implication is based off previous literature stating that the subscale of Perfectionistic Striving captures positive aspects of perfectionism. The results therefore support the Perfectionistic Striving subscale as causing SOP's positive correlation with goal achievement (Campbell & Di Paula, 2002). This demonstrates the importance of further research using Campbell and Di Paula's MPS subscales in order to further investigate how the facets of perfectionism influence different aspects of life, as very few studies have used these scales since they were proposed (Stoeber & Childs, 2010).

Several limitations would possibly exist in this study, many due to the proposed sample for the study. One would be participant attrition, due to employees having left their term of employment at the call centre, affecting the sample size. The smaller number of participants may lead to the validity of the results being questioned.

Therefore, in future research, this limitation should be addressed. One way to accomplish this would be to direct future studies to use samples consisting of employees in different work environments, such as other industries and levels of management. This would hopefully include workplaces where turnover rates are lower, with the length of time employees stay being longer. The issue of participant attrition in these workplaces may then be lower. It would also demonstrate whether the pattern of SOP significantly positively correlating to achievement through goal progress, due to the Perfectionistic Striving subscale, continues or differs within other work environments.

Another area for future direction, related to the suggested samples of employees from different work environments, is to examine how the scores for different facets of perfectionism change as employees age in different work environments. Previous research has shown that

age correlates with the tendency to display perfectionism within certain domains of life (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). Therefore, investigating the correlations between scores for Campbell and Di Paula's subscales, employee age, and the type of work environment may extend this research.

A similar future direction would be to study how the gender of employees in different workplaces is related to the scores they receive on the perfectionism facet subscales, as well as their level of work achievement. Though gender differences have not typically been seen, they were witnessed in the results of a study that investigated how perfectionistic one was in different domains of life. How perfectionistic one tends to behave in different domains differed by gender; women were typically found to be more perfectionistic in areas such as orderliness and time management while men tended to be more perfectionistic in investments/purchases (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). Therefore, this research may be extended through examining perfectionism subscales and their correlations with work achievement by gender in different work environments, where work duties may differ.

Other directions for future research includes the different type of goals made by the employees. As discussed earlier, one's higher score in SOP or SPP was associated with the types of goals they would make (Speirs Neumeister, 2004). Van Yperen (2006) found that individuals who scored high on the Perfectionistic Striving subscale in an academic setting tended to make mastery-approach and performance-approach goals. Vn Yperen's study, however, was the only one to examine the Campbell and Di Paula subscales with goal approach. Therefore, future studies could look at a possible association between the types of goals employees make with these perfectionism subscales.

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