

ASSOCIATION BETWEEN PERFECTIONISM AND MENTAL HEALTH IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

What is putting University Students with Perfectionist Personalities at an Additional Risk for Developing Mental Health Disorders?

A Literature Review on Depression, Eating Disorders and Anxiety Among the College

Population

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RESEARCH QUESTION:

What is putting University Students with Perfectionist Personalities at an Additional Risk for Developing Mental Health Disorders?

ABSTRACT

Mental Health is significant among today's University Population. Now more than ever, there is an increase in depression, anxiety, eating disorders, and suicidal ideations among students. Perfectionism was reported by most students or peers of students are the reason behind their sense of dissatisfaction. However, significant action has not been taken to identify the additional risk factors students with perfectionist personalities are facing when developing a mental health disorder. This literature review examines 12 different peer-reviewed articles from PubMed and APA Psych Net database. The results supported previous literature that perfectionism is a contributor to overall decrease in mental health. However, results additionally concluded that academic and career achievement's as well as several different demographics were putting students with these personalities at additive risk. As mental-health diagnosis increases among this youth population, further research can be conducted to understand the implications achievement's, demographics and perfectionism contributing.

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INTRODUCTION

Perfectionism is the tendency to place an exceeding number of demands, standards and expectations onto oneself or others in attempt to achieve flawlessness (APA, 2018). Perfectionism is a multidimensional personality trait, not a mental health diagnosis. Therefore, while research has shown that perfectionism has been associated with several mental health diagnosis' little is being done to address this "personality subtype." Anyone can adopt perfectionist personalities tendencies. These tendencies are known as multidimensional due to the two behaviors associated with this personality. Adaptive, or positive, perfectionism and Maladaptive, or negative, perfectionism. *Adaptive perfectionism* involves the setting of high goals and standards, striving for the goals associated with the achievement all while retaining the ability to still be satisfied with oneself and performance (Enns, et.al., 2002). Positive behaviors linked with this are higher motivation, pride, and a healthy pursuit of excellence (Josh Hillis, 2016). On the other hand, *maladaptive perfectionism* is characterized by setting unattainably high standards and the inability to take pleasure in one's performance while collectively being uncertain and anxious about one's capabilities (Enns, et.al., 2002). Behaviors associated with maladaptive perfectionism are negative self-talk, concern about mistakes/looking bad, desire for approval and pressure from others (Josh Hillis, 2016).

The population which this trait impacts is what makes it a universal issue. *Anyone* can adopt these perfectionist behaviors, and some personalities are more prone to it (Truity, 2023). Perfectionism can begin taking over several different aspects of people's lives. These include, but are not limited to athletic performance, academic achievements, career success, physical appearance, religious code, and lastly relationships and family. College students are likely facing one if not more of these challenges, due to the adjustments and life changes that come with

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starting university life. Therefore, this literature review will specifically target the college population.

The pervasiveness of mental-health issues on college campuses has reached an all-time high. Students are experiencing rates of depression, anxiety and suicidality that haven't been seen in nearly 15 years of United States History (National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments, 2023). Additionally, the risk of eating disorders in university students increased by 13% from 2013 to 2021 (Daly & Costigan, 2022). Bachelors and associate students are reporting that the second largest reason for withdrawing from college was due to decline in personal mental health (Gallup, 2024). While there are over 200 types of mental illness, the common ones affecting most populations, including university students, are depression, anxiety and eating disorders (CDC, 2022).

Depression is a mood disorder that affects how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities. Depression is typically characterized by persistent sadness, feelings of hopelessness, and worthlessness (NIH, 2024). In a survey from the 2021-2022 academic school year of 96,000 students, 44% reported symptoms of depression (National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments, 2023). Those experiencing symptoms of depression typically lack energy, lose interest in their hobbies and activities, and have changes in their weight (NIH, 2024). These affect all aspects of life from academic productivity to maintaining relations. People with depression begin to view any activities like sleeping, eating, and working as unattainable (NIH, 2024).

Anxiety comes in different forms. *Generalized anxiety disorder* is a persistent feeling of dread and worrisome that interferes with daily life (NIH, 2024). This is described as a chronic feeling rather than the occasional worry. In the same survey from the 2021-2022 academic

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school year of those students 37% reported experiencing anxiety (National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments, 2023). Someone with anxiety is likely to be constantly on-edge, have difficulty concentrating, difficulty controlling feelings or worry and difficulties with sleep (NIH, 2024). Lack of sleep and concentration can affect the ability to complete daily tasks, coupled with the constant worry associated with a chronic anxiety.

Lastly, eating disorders is a generalized category. The three most prevalent in all populations are *anorexia nervosa*, *bulimia nervosa*, and *binge eating* disorder. Eating- disorders are severe disturbances in a person's eating behaviors and their corresponding thoughts on behaviors with eating (NIH, 2024). In 2023, it was estimated that 10-20% of women and 4-10% of men in college, ages 18-21, were suffering from eating disorders (Jacobson, 2023). These disorders take a mental and physical toll on the body. They harm the heart, digestive systems, weaken the body, and affect sleep (Mayo Clinic, 2023). Additionally eating disorders are associated with having symptoms of depression and anxiety.

All these disorders are associated with decrease quality of life and have high mortality rates. Eating disorders have the highest mortality rate as the toll of being diagnosed with one is directly associated with a person's physical body health (Hynes, 2023). Every year in the United States, approximately 1,100 college students between the ages 18-24 commit suicide and nearly 24,000 attempt (Appelbaum, 2006). Research that has explored this topic has found perfectionism is heavily associated with why these numbers are so high. 70% of young people in college who died by suicide were reported having exceedingly high expectation on themselves and were described as perfectionist by their peers (Medical News Today, 2018)

With prevalence increasing, perfectionism must become better understood. Current measures are insufficient in addressing the complicated relationship between perfectionism and

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how it has become a risk factor for mental health disorders (NIH, 2022). This is likely due to the little funding put into mental health research and additionally the stigma surrounding these disorders. If this issue is not addressed, perfectionist personalities will continue being adopted and the young college population will continue to be misunderstood.

This literature review will explore the additional risks with having perfectionist personalities and how this further associated with the mental health in university students.

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METHODS

This literature review used two databases to acquire 12 peer-reviewed articles. The two selected were *PubMed* and *APA PsychNet*. *PubMed* is a database composed of literature on life science and biomedicine. It has an immense number of journals in dentistry, veterinary medicine, etc... This database was selected for its numerous reviews in medicine and the healthcare systems. *PubMed* is managed by the National Institute of Health. It is continuously updated allowing for current research. This database made peer-reviewed journals easily accessible and reliable which is ultimately why it was chosen. The other database selected was *APA PsychNet*. *APAP PsychNet* was developed by the American Psychological Association. It is an online site and database used for psychology and surrounding medical fields. The database specifically explored psychology and mental health in several different settings. This allowed for journals specific to the educational environment necessary for this review. Like *PubMed*, this database was also kept current and ensured journals were relevant and peer reviewed.

For *PubMed*, the first search was “Perfectionism.” This yielded 2,549 results. To limit the articles down the second search was “Perfectionism AND Mental Health.” This allowed there to at least be correlations between the two and yielded 386 articles. Lastly, “Perfectionism AND Mental Health AND College Students” was the final search and yielded 39 results. Seven articles would be chosen from *PubMed* after concluding with inclusion and exclusion criteria.

For *APA PsychNet*, the first search was (Anxiety OR Depression OR Eating Disorders). This yielded 26,795 results. After “AND (College Students)” was included into the next search and this yielded 2,519 results. Finally, the last search in *APA PsychNet* was (Anxiety OR Depression OR Eating Disorders) AND (College Students) AND (Perfectionism). This narrowed

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the results down to 40. After inclusion and exclusion criteria, 5 articles would be chosen from APA PsychNet.

These searches allowed for the resulting articles to be aligned with the research question at hand without having to include an abundant number of inclusions and exclusions. The results yielded 39 for PubMed and 40 for APA PsychNet which further shows the specific nature of this type of research and lack thereof on the perfectionism topic. Most of the articles selected were gathered based on key terms such as “perfectionism,” “depression,” and “anxiety,” being the majority. Most success was found after including “college students” in both searches. It was necessary to format searches in these manners to yield the most relevant results or any at all.

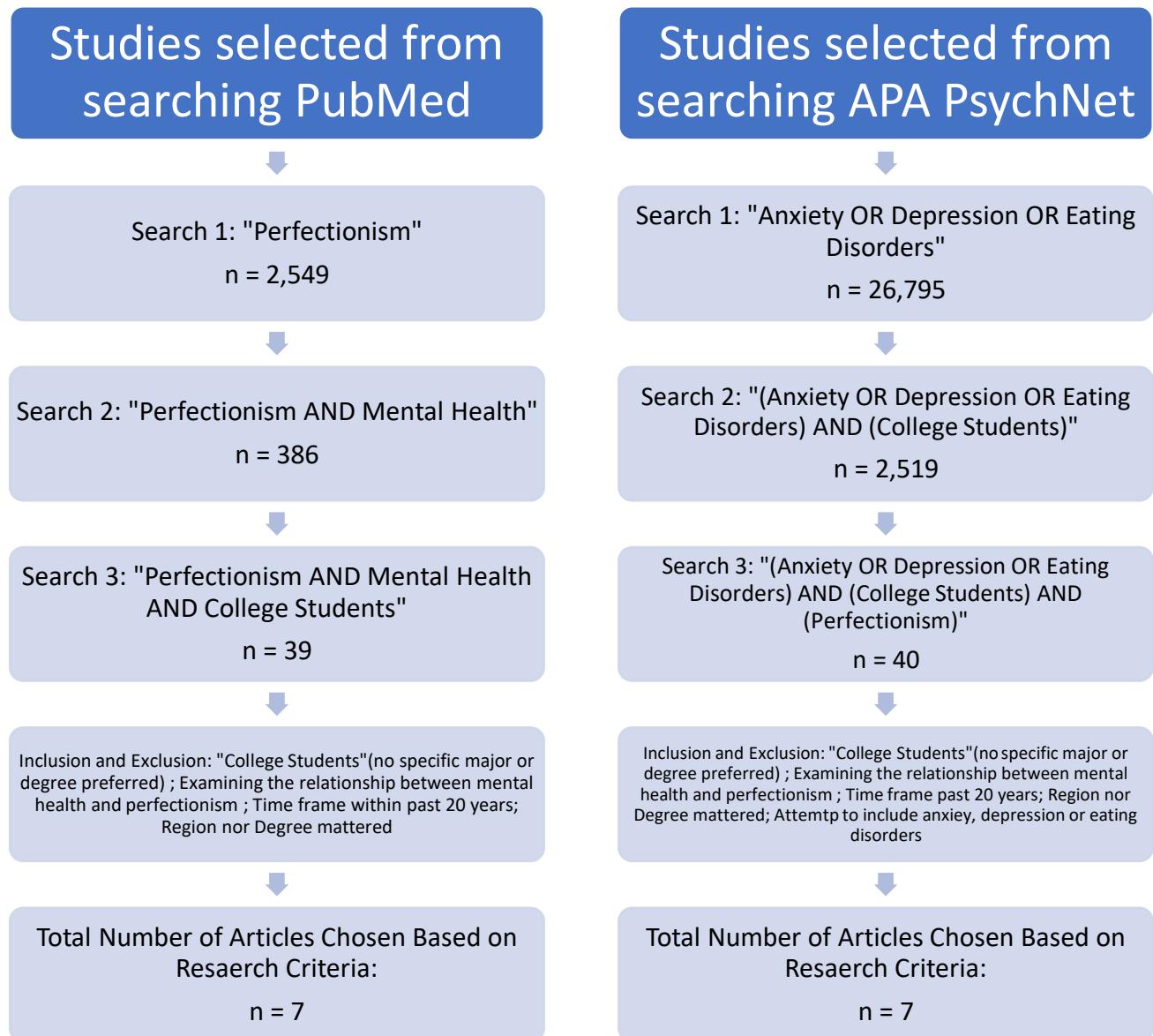
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Similar inclusion and exclusion criteria were used for both databases. To be included, the population in the articles had to be college students. Additionally, the article needed perfectionism being related to mental health in some form. Due to an already limited search, a relatively large time span for publishing was allowed. Articles had to be within the past 20 years. Lastly, articles using different demographics were used. This included some articles comparing different ethnicities and some that were revolving around specific degrees.

Anything not using the college population or having some reference to “perfectionism” was excluded. Articles published surrounding a time of a mental health boom, such as pandemic covid-19, were not included to avoid biased results. Location of these studies were not considered.

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Figure 1: Article Selection



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RESULTS

This review is meant to capture the impact perfectionist personalities have on university students' mental health. Additionally, what factors are putting students at a further risk for developing mental health disorders. Three overarching themes with different subscales were noteworthy after examining the literature. The first was the effect achievements has on perfectionism and mental health. The second was the role demographics was playing on perfectionism and mental health and lastly, the overall decrease in physical and mental well-being associated with perfectionist personalities. For a more detailed summary of the articles reviewed, see *Table 1. Detailed Summary of Peer-Reviewed Articles p.13.*

Perfectionism and Achievements and Mental Health

Unrealistic goal setting is a behavior of perfectionist personalities. These goals increase the amount of stress put onto a person (Rice, Leever et al. (2006). Both academic demands and (future) career stress are shown to be positively related to perfectionism and an increased risk of depression (You and Yoo 2021).

Academic Demands

Higher perfectionism scores reported among college students also showed that higher grades, academic pressures, and additionally higher demanding degrees were associated with higher suicidal ideations and lower well-being (Gao, Zhong et al. 2023). Students noted higher grades than non-perfectionist (Fernández-García, Gil-Llario et al. 2022). However, when goals were not attained, this interfered with students' relationships, self-acceptance, and overall mental health (Klugman, Cohen Ben Simon et al. 2024). Revealing these excessive ambitions, led to emotional exhaustion, and compromised both academic performance and psychological well-

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being. Two studies used medical students to examine the effects of a very rigorous degree. Results showed that high perfectionism created a negative relationship with the degree, increased loneliness and burnout but did not directly increase suicide ideation (Fernández-García, Gil-Llario et al. 2022).

Career Stress

College students are being exposed to higher career stress, exerting negative mental health outcomes onto them (You and Yoo 2021). People with higher maladaptive perfectionism struggled more with fulfilling goals like job seeking (You and Yoo 2021). Additionally, these results were greater seen upon the female population. As female college students averaged higher scores for maladaptive perfectionism, they proportionally had higher scores for depression and inversely, has lower life satisfactions (You and Yoo 2021).

Perfectionism and Demographics and Mental Health

Different demographics were seen in nearly all of these

Ethnicity

Differences were found between the Latino, Asian, Caucasian, and African American ethnicities. Significant relationships between having perfectionism and depressive symptoms were found in all groups (Castro and Rice 2003). However, there were different dimensions of perfectionism found for each ethnicity. Asian Americans were reported to have significantly higher GPAs but also reported having higher maladaptive perfectionism behaviors like self-doubt and concern over mistakes (Castro and Rice 2003). Lastly, across 23 published studies the prevalence of depression and perfectionism in Latinos was significantly higher than for non-Latinos (Chang, Hirsch et al. 2011).

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Sex

The relationship between sex, perfectionism, and mental health is seen to be more advanced in the female population of college students. Maladaptive perfectionism was affecting overall life satisfaction in females, while only having effects of depression on males (You and Yoo 2021). Females overall showed more depression than their male peers. Seemingly so, the population of women with eating disorders reported were 10% higher than male college students (Hellberg, Ladis et al. 2019). Women with the tendency to be overcontrolling with their perfectionism were reported having the most elevated eating disorder symptoms (Hellberg, Ladis et al. 2019).

Parental Relations

Maladaptive perfectionism was a result of parental-driven and were associated with more depressive symptoms (Yoon and Lau 2008). However, it was no accurate in predicated depression. These expectations placed on students from parents did not predict symptoms of anxiousness (Chang, Hirsch et al. 2011). Additionally, different ethnicities reported different parent-driven perfectionism. Asian Americans and African Americans having the highest, however, unlike Asian Americans, Africans did not experience excessive criticism as reported like their Asian peers did (Castro and Rice 2003).

Perfectionism and. Overall Mental and Physical Health Outcomes

There was a dynamic relationship found between how perfectionism is overall affecting health. All articles associated higher perfectionism, specifically maladaptive perfectionism, with a decreased mental health status. Students reported perfectionism was associated with symptoms of anxiety and depression (Sherry, Hewitt et al. 2003) (Wang and Zhang 2017). Under these

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conditions students were also reporting difficulty concentrating and becoming overly pre-occupied with problems, specifically appearance in females (Gao, Zhong et al. 2023).

Additionally, coping has played a role on why perfectionism is negatively associated with overall mental health. People with high perfectionism are using poor coping mechanisms, causing psychological distress (Nelsen, Kayaalp et al. 2023). Maladaptive perfectionist reported excessive drinking as coping (Nelsen, Kayaalp et al. 2023). Other students reported praying and binge-eating as results of their mental state (Gao, Zhong et al. 2023).

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Table 1: Detailed Summary of Peer-Reviewed Articles

	Author	Year	Article Title and Journal	Purpose of Article	Sample Description	Type of Research	Research Findings	Limitations
1	Castro, J.R., & Rice, K.G.	2003	Perfectionism and Ethnicity: Implications for Depressive Symptoms and Self-Reported Academic Achievement Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology	Examine how different ethnicities are affected by perfectionism	N = 189 Asian American, African American and Caucasian Americans all participated Age ~ 20.69 yrs.	Regression analysis	<p>a. Scores on the concern over mistakes, parental criticism and doubts about actions subscales were higher for Asian American students when compared with other groups</p> <p>b. Asian Americans and African American student scored higher on the Parental Expectation subscale than did the Caucasian students</p> <p>c. Significant differences did emerge between GPA indicating that Asian American and Caucasian students reported significantly higher GPAs than African American students</p> <p>d. Only one significant correlation emerged between the maladaptive perfectionism subscale and GPA. MPS subscale combined to account for significant variation in GPA discord between Asian Americans and African Americans but not Caucasian Americans.</p> <p>e. Asian Americans reported more concerns about making mistakes, parental expectations and criticism and higher self-doubt on the perfectionism scale than Caucasian students. Although they reported more maladaptive perfectionism dimensions, it did not appear to increase risk for depression symptoms</p> <p>f. African American parents were reported as having higher expectations of their children because of their own</p>	<p>Smaller sample size</p> <p>All measures were of self-report</p>

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							struggles to obtain and maintain status; however, their children did not experience them as excessively critical on the parental subscale of the MPS g. Significant relationships were found between some of the characteristics of perfectionism and depressive symptoms for all three groups of college students. h. Positive correlations with depression were significant between the subscales: concern over mistakes, parental criticism, and doubts about actions for all ethnic groups i. The prediction of GPA with perfectionism was more prominent for the minority groups than the Caucasian j. Personal standards were only significant for the Asian group as a predictor for GPA	
2	Change, E.C., Hirsch, J.K., Sanna, L.J., Jeglic, E.L., & Fabian, C.G.	2011	A preliminary Study of Perfectionism and Loneliness as Predictors of Depressive and Anxious Symptoms in Latins: A Top-Down Test of a Model Journal of Counseling Psychology	The purpose of this article was to examine perfectionism and loneliness as sociocognitive predictors of depression and anxious Latino college students	N = 160 Latinos, 121 after inclusion and exclusion College students in New York	Regression analysis	a. Perfectionism and loneliness were associated with both depression and anxious symptoms b. Latino/as are currently making up the nation's largest minority group c. Across 23 published studies involving depression among Latinos/as the prevalence rate for depressive symptoms was significantly higher for Latinos/as than non-Latinos/as d. There is a greater history of depression among young adults during critical socio developmental periods (attending college) and treatment must be most accessible during this time e. Multidimensional perfectionism accounted for a medium to large amount of the variance in depressive and anxious symptoms	Only female Latinas Self-reported Study Small sample size

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							f. Parental expectations were found to be significant unique predictor to depressive symptoms but not anxious symptoms g. Parental criticism, however, did not represent a predictor of depressive or anxious symptoms h. Perhaps there are different developmental periods in which parental behaviors play a greater or lesser role in the mental health of students (Latinas).	
3	Fernandez-Garcia, O., Gil-Llario, M.D., Castro-Calvo, J., Morell-Mengual, V., Ballester-Arnal, R., & Estruch-Garcia, V.	2022	Academic Perfectionism, Psychological Well-Being, and Suicidal Ideation in College Students Int J Environ Res Public Health	How the high levels of perfectionism compromise academic performance and psychological wellbeing (mental health)	1,287 students from different degrees Recruited online during the 2019-2020 academic school year University in Valencia	Regression Analysis	<p>a. High levels of perfectionism in college students compromise their academic performance and their psychological well-being</p> <p>b. Perfectionism correlated positively with academic performance and negatively with psychological well-being dimensions (self-acceptance, positive relationships with others, autonomy, and self-growth)</p> <p>c. Perfectionism did not show a significant relationship with the level of demand from the degree</p> <p>d. When standards cannot be achieved there is a tendency to self-isolate, which would explain the low levels of satisfaction towards building quality interpersonal relationships and the feeling of self-improvement and personal growth</p> <p>e. Students reported higher grades than not perfectionists, being more highly motivated and ambitious completing their tasks. Excessive levels of this can lead to emotional exhaustion and can lead to emotional exhaustion and increased vulnerability towards psychological disorders</p>	<p>Self-reports involve certain biases</p> <p>The sample was collected following the COVID-19 emergency pandemic</p>

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							f. For women all levels of psychological well-being are compromised g. Students may experience shame and rejection towards themselves due to not meeting the academic standards set for themselves h. Higher levels of suicidal ideation for female perfectionists i. Unrealistic goal setting increases distress and discomfort j. In higher demanding degrees, well-being lowers are lower, and perfectionism is increased creating a negative relationship (example was medical students) while in degrees with less pressure there is a positive relationship between perfectionism and life satisfaction	
4	Gao, X., Zhong, J., Li, H., Pei, Y., Li, X. Zhang, S., Yue, Y., & Xiong, X.	2023	The relationship between perfectionism, self-perception of orofacial appearance, and mental health in college students Front Public Health	To examine the relationship between appearance and perfectionism and how this affects mental health	Ages 17-28 510 responses, 75 excluded for a total of 435 responses West China School University	Cross-sectional study Online questionnaire that included demographic data, a measure of	a. Higher perfectionism predicted higher self-perception of body image, and lower mental health and self-esteem in college students b. Orofacial aesthetics is a type of aesthetics that is focused on one's appearance and has been found to correlate with some mental health problems c. Students in higher grades are under more academic pressure, and excessive pressure may increase people's self-demands, resulting in higher perfectionism scores d. Perfectionism is negatively correlated with self-esteem meaning the higher a perfectionist you are the lower self-esteem you likely have. This may be because people with high perfectionism have higher standards for themselves, resulting in lower self-esteem and more appearance concerns e. People with high perfectionism tend to use poor	Cross-sectional study just provides a snapshot of the constructs measure as opposed to long-lasting relationships The PHQ-4 scale only consists of 4 questions All participant criteria for self-evaluation are different, so a

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							coping mechanisms rather than active problem solving, which are unhelpful and may cause psychological distress f. The healthier (adaptive) the perfectionism was, the more body image appreciation was felt, which reduced body-related shame g. High perfectionism predicted high PHQ-4 scores, suggesting that college students with high perfectionism are more likely to suffer from anxiety and depression h. It was revealed that more anxiety and depression could decrease the important participants attached to their body image i. Under conditions of extreme anxiety and depression, college students may have difficulty concentrating and become more preoccupied with problems j. College students may resort to behaviors such as praying, overeating, and seeking social support to cope, thereby neglecting their excessive attention to their appearance	set standard needs to be on the first page of the questionnaire
5	Hellberg, S.N., Ladis, I.E., & Shepard C.B.,	2018	Pilot Study of a personality-based approach to assessing eating disorder and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder symptom risk in college	Investigate the relationship between perfectionism and ED symptoms as well as OCD symptoms	N = 169 Small, private university	Cross-sectional study	a. Eating disorders are one such as mental health concern that are highly prevalent among college students and represent a particular area of concern given that these disorders are associated with significant impairments in functioning and confer the highest mortality risk of any psychiatric illness b. In a 2,822-college study 13.5% of women and 3.6% of men reported at least one ED symptom, demonstrating a strikingly high prevalence of eating concerns in college populations	Reliance on self-report Sample was predominantly white Lacked the sample size and the power to conduct secondary

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			men and women J Am Coll Health				c. Eating disorders typically onset in late adolescents, around the beginning of one's collegiate career d. There was a significant main effect for sex overall on perfectionism, with higher levels reported in women e. Perfectionism is highest in the OC subtype (overcontrolling) f. Results were significant that ED symptoms were elevated the most in the OC (perfectionist) subtype g. Reported elevated ED symptoms	analyses pertaining to ethnicity and sex
6	Klugman, M., Simon, C.B., Hamdan, S.	2024	Suicide Risk Among Medical Students Associated With Loneliness, Burnout, and Depressive Symptoms Omega (Westport)	The purpose of this article was to examine the risks medial students and non-medical students were in developing depression with perfectionism as a risk factor	N = 337 students	Regression analysis	a. Compared to students in other fields, medical students are at higher risk for suicide and depressive symptoms b. It was discovered that Maladaptive perfectionism as the most prevalent among medical students, while it did not directly increase suicide risk it did affect students' mental health the most when reported. This was in a study measuring loneliness, burnout, and internet addiction	Self-report Predominantly non-medical student sample
7	Nelsen, S.K., Kayaalp, A., & Page, K.J.	2023	Perfectionism, substance use, and mental health in college students: A longitudinal analysis	To examine the relationship perfectionism has on substance abuse and mental health in college students	College students N = 841 Average age = 16.6 Recruited through SONA at a Midwester	Longitudinal analysis	a. 40% of students suffered from moderate to severe psychological distress in the past 12 months" b. Perfectionism has received increasing attention from both schools and practitioners during the last two decades c. Two subtypes have been formed: Adaptive and Maladaptive d. Maladaptive perfectionism is associated with high personal standards, excessive	Measures within the study were single-source and self-reported. Introducing bias.

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			J Am Coll Health		n University in the US		self-criticism, worries about perceived mistakes and failures, and dissatisfaction with one's performance. e. Adaptive perfectionism is one's failure to meet high personal standards can be endured without excessive self-criticism and feelings of dissatisfaction f. People with more or better coping resources tend to be adaptive perfectionist g. While substance abuse was not significant relationship between perfectionism and mental health, coping was h. Adaptive perfectionist has lower levels of alcohol use i. Maladaptive perfectionists were drinking too much j. Students cope with stress differently based on their perfectionist type	The study contained 16 different measures which may have caused fatigue during survey completion. Lack of diversity within the student sample. Particularly age.
8	Rice, K.G., Leever, B.A., Christopher, J., & Porter, J.D.	2006	Perfectionism, Stress, and Social (Dis)Connection: A Short-Term Study of Hopelessness, Depression, and Academic Adjustment Among Honor Students	Used the models of perfectionism to predict psychological distress in university students	N = 499 “Honor Students”	Regression Analysis	a. Perfectionism was a predictor of concurrent and prospective adjustment, stress, and social connection b. Stronger concurrent effects were observed between perfectionism and various outcomes later in the semester than were evident earlier in the semester c. For high-achieving students in particular, the end of the semester and its corresponding intensified emphasis on performance might exacerbate perfectionism adjustment associations that were not as evident at the beginning of the semester d. Perfectionism was stable over time in the maladaptive from e. Provide resources early in the semester for those	Self-reports; shared method variance; generalized to honor students

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			Journal of Counseling Psychology				who might be expected to have perfectionist-related difficulties later in the semester f. Social connection emerged as a significant moderator in lessening the effects of maladaptive perfectionism on concurrent hopelessness (suicidal ideations) g. Higher performance was associated with more social connection h. Maladaptive perfectionist has less of a social safety net than their peers i. Maladaptive perfectionists tend to feel more stress and less connected to others, perhaps because of insufficient affect regulation and coping skills	
9	Sherry, S.B., & Hewitt, P.L.	2003	Perfectionism Dimensions, Perfectionist Attitudes, Dependent Attitudes, and Depression in Psychiatric Patients and University Students Journal of Counseling Psychology	The purpose of this article was to examine psychiatric patient and compare them to university students' mental health based on the dimensions of perfectionism	70 psychiatric patients and 280 university students	Multi-dimensional Model	a. Self-oriented perfectionism was significantly associated with perfectionist attitudes in psychiatric patients and female university students b. Perfectionist attitudes were moderately associated with depression in male university students and female university students c. It is unclear whether the association between perfectionist attitudes and depression is due to the independent contribution of the self-related features of perfectionism, the independent contribution of the socially based features of perfectionism or both d. After dimensions were controlled for, perfectionist attitudes uniquely predicted depression in female university students	Study had few psychiatric patients to compare to Self-reported answers
10	Wang, Y., & Zhang, B.	2017	The dual model of perfectionism	To explore the influence of AP and MP on	236 participants at Central	Cross-sectional regression	a. Maladaptive perfectionism was related to psychopathology and adaptive perfectionism was more closely	Study was a convenient,

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			and depression among Chinese University students South African Journal of Psychiatry	depression in college students	South University	n analyses	correlated with positive features of mental health b. Maladaptive perfectionism significantly predicted baseline depressive symptoms c. Both adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism were positively correlated with state anxiety and depression, although maladaptive perfectionism shows a stronger correlation than adaptive d. Maladaptive aspects of perfectionism could significantly predict the depressive symptoms whereas adaptive aspects of perfectionism did not e. Maladaptive perfectionist viewed temporary failure as a failure forever and were not satisfied with the discrepancy between the goals they set and the performance they attained f. Counseling needs to help young clients discern between their goals and reality, and between their expectations and those of their parents, may be helpful	non-clinical sample Data was self-reported 4-month timespan lag in the study
11	Yoon, J. & Lau, A.S.	2008	Maladaptive Perfectionism and Depressive Symptoms Among Asian American College Students: Contributions of Interdependence and	Maladaptive perfectionism associated with depressive symptoms	N = 140 Asian American College Students	Regression Analysis	a. Perfectionism linked to negative psychological outcomes, including low self-esteem, depression, and suicidality b. Correlations revealed significant associations between interdependence and maladaptive perfectionism c. Interdependence was positively associated with maladaptive and parent driver perfectionism d. Interdependence was not associated with adaptive perfectionism e. Depressive symptoms were significantly correlated with interdependence, maladaptive	Self-reported Specific demographic Small sample size

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			Parental Relations Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology				perfectionism, and parent driven perfectionism f. Maladaptive perfectionism was significantly associated with depression symptoms g. Maladaptive perfectionism and interdependence together explained 33% of the variance in depression symptoms h. Parent-driven perfectionism was associated with depression however it did not predict depression i. The interaction between parent-driven perfectionism was significant in predicting depression. Parent-driven perfectionism significantly predicted depression among those who reported low perceived parental support, but not among those who received high levels of parental support j. These findings help illuminate the cultural basis underlying reports of higher levels of maladaptive perfectionism among Asian American college students relative to their non-asian peers	
12	You, S. & Yoo, J.	2021	Relations among Socially Prescribed Perfectionism, Career Stress, Mental Health, and Mindfulness in Korean	The effects of high career stress on mental health outcomes To examine the relationship between socially prescribed	420 university students in Seoul, Korea Mean age was 21.63 years	Cross-sectional	a. Young adults are exposed to higher career stress than ever before, such stress exerts negative impacts on mental health outcomes b. Career stress significantly mediates the relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and depression and life satisfaction for only females c. Mindfulness was more remarkable for female students rather than for male students d. Maladaptive perfectionism has significant direct effects on depression	Limited the generalizability of the research findings Based on self-report surveys

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			College Students Int J Environ Res Public Health	perfectionism and mental health			among male undergraduate students e. Maladaptive perfectionism has significant direct effects on life satisfaction for females f. Female college students appeared to have higher average scores of maladaptive perfectionism, depression, and mindfulness and lower average scores of career stress and life satisfaction compared to male students g. Female students showed more depression than male students h. Correlations found maladaptive perfectionism was positively correlated to career stress and depression i. Maladaptive perfectionism is negatively correlated to life satisfaction and mindfulness in both female and male college students j. People with a high level of maladaptive perfectionism tend to struggle against what they cannot fulfill their goal, such as job seeking. k. The emphasis on job preparation for female college students today has strengthened the belief in perfectionism to advance oneself or others l. To reduce career stress, related to depression and life satisfaction, it is necessary to seek active counseling interventions m. It might help students in college if teachers and parents also share their failure experiences and coping strategies to tackle these situations	
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DISCUSSION

The purpose of this literature review was to highlight what additional risks college students with perfectionist personalities are facing in developing mental health disorders. There is a greater history of depression among the young adult population during critical socio-developmental periods, such as attending college (Chang, Hirsch et al. 2011). With 40% of students suffering from moderate to severe psychological distress, understanding and treatment must be most accessible during this time for change for students (Nelsen, Kayaalp et al. 2023). Results concluded that perfectionism personalities pose a significant risk on student's mental well-being. However, several different components played a role in why this is occurring. The three overarching themes and additional risks identified were: achievements, demographics, and overall health.

Unrealistic goals are an effect associated with perfectionist personalities. Academic standards and pressures of career success were two settings in which unrealistic goals were most prevalent in the articles. While, initial motivation and satisfaction may be present, the overall outcome led to negative relationships with school and work once goals became or were not attainable. The pursuit of perfectionism leads to a cycle of dissatisfaction and decreased mental health. Specific challenges also highlighted that in more rigorous environments there was an increased prevalence of maladaptive perfectionism (Klugman, Cohen Ben Simon et al. 2024). Additionally, students reported decreased mental health as the semester progress (Fernández-García, Gil-Llario et al. 2022). This is likely due to the increased isolation as self-esteem and demands placed on oneself increased (Rice, Leever et al. 2006).

Demographic factors such as- ethnicity, sex, and parental relations- played different roles in increased perfectionism and therefore decreased mental health in university students.

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Disparities between ethnicities and parental driven perfectionism ended up sharing similar results. Minority students, specifically Asian American students, reported the highest maladaptive perfectionist behaviors and the most parental expectation placed onto them (Castro and Rice 2003). This suggests that different cultural expectations are playing a role in the development in perfectionism in students. The heightened prevalence of depression and anxiety among Latinos emphasizes the need for mental health support tailored to demographic contexts. Additionally, differences between prevalence among perfectionism in females and males was reoccurring in the articles. Females reported heightened levels of perfectionism. This was associated with heightened depression and decreased life satisfaction, but more importantly, put them at increased risk for eating disorders (Hellberg, Ladis et al. 2019). This makes sense as eating disorders are 10% more prevalent in the female population (Hellberg, Ladis et al. 2019). Societal pressures being placed on women and how the role of technology and social media are likely contributing to this, not just perfectionism alone.

Overall decrease in mental health in college students was having perfectionist personalities. Maladaptive perfectionist reported the highest symptoms of depression and anxiety when compared to non-perfectionist university students (Wang and Zhang 2017) (Sherry, Hewitt et al. 2003). Unhealthy coping mechanisms was likely a result of this. Maladaptive perfectionism coping strategies including excessive drinking and binge-eating (Gao, Zhong et al. 2023) (Nelsen, Kayaalp et al. 2023). Additionally, this decrease in mental health cannot be overlooked as it contributes to the overall decrease in physical health too.

Limitations

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This literature review provides valuable insight on the risks university students with perfectionism are facing with mental health. However, several limitations are noteworthy when considering these results. This review contained only 12 peer-reviewed articles expanding over a relatively long-time frame. Therefore, results are likely subject to change and be more precise when more data is included. Another limitation of this review, that nearly all the articles used self-reported measures. While anonymity was promised to participants, this does not stop from false reports in the data. Additionally, some review highlighted demographics while others did not. This does not fully capture the complexity of the demographic's ethnicity, gender, and parental relations described. Lastly this review addresses more of the negative implications of maladaptive perfectionism, without considering the protentional positives that come from adaptive perfectionism. Again, this is likely due to the lack of articles used in the review.

Implications

Further research needs to address the long-term impacts perfectionism is having on student's post-graduation. Is perfectionism decreasing and mental health increasing once job stability is found? And how did youth environmental factors influence this trait to begin with. What methods mediated this relationship? For now, universities need to be implementing support programs for their students. Emphasis on positive body image, grades not being defining, and acceptance will go a long way on college campuses. Combating parental-driven perfectionism is not something university can necessarily embark on. Additionally, policy changes are crucial for any of this to occur since mental health is not prioritized. Increased funding for research and campus materials can foster a healthier environment.

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Conclusions

In conclusion, this literature review was to provide insight on why students with perfectionist personalities are at additional risk in developing mental-health disorders. With a substantial number of students reporting psychological distress and prevalence increasing every year, mental health resources need to be more readily available for intervention. Overall, perfectionist personalities increase the risk of developing a mental health disorder. However, sex, ethnicity, parental relations, academics and (future) career all contributed to additional risk. Universities must take proactive steps in implementing programs to create a more positive environment for their students. By addressing these additional risk factors for students with perfectionist personalities, a healthier environment can be fostered based on equity.

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