

Research Article

The Moderating Role of Goal Orientation in the Relationship Between Perfectionism and Fear of Failure Among Filipino Student Nurses

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Abstract

Perfectionism is common among nursing students due to high academic and clinical demands, yet maladaptive perfectionism has been linked to negative psychological outcomes such as fear of failure. Guided by Achievement Goal Theory, this study examined the moderating role of goal orientation in the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure among Filipino student nurses. A quantitative correlational design was employed involving 200 undergraduate nursing students from Mindanao State University–Iligan Institute of Technology. Stratified random sampling ensured representation across academic year levels. Standardized measures were used to assess perfectionism, goal orientation, and fear of failure. Data were analyzed using Pearson correlation and moderation analysis through Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 1). Results revealed a significant positive relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure, indicating that students with higher perfectionistic tendencies experienced greater anxiety and fear related to mistakes and evaluation. Goal orientation was also significantly associated with fear of failure. Moderation analysis showed that mastery goal orientation weakened the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure, serving a protective function. In contrast, performance goal orientation strengthened this relationship, intensifying fear-driven responses. These findings highlight the importance of adaptive motivational orientations in reducing the emotional costs of perfectionism. Promoting mastery-oriented goals within nursing education may help foster resilience, emotional well-being, and healthier responses to academic and clinical challenges among student nurses.

Keywords

Perfectionism, Fear of Failure, Goal Orientation, Student Nurses, Moderation Analysis, Psychology

1. Introduction

Perfectionism is a multidimensional personality construct characterized by the setting of excessively high personal standards and critical self-evaluation [1]. While adaptive forms of

perfectionism can drive individuals toward achievement, maladaptive perfectionism often results in anxiety, avoidance, and diminished psychological well-being [2]. Among nursing stu-

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dents, the pursuit of academic and clinical excellence may intensify perfectionistic tendencies, especially in competitive and evaluative environments. This heightened pressure may increase students' vulnerability to fear of failure, a construct defined as the persistent apprehension about the negative consequences of failing or making mistakes [3].

According to Achievement Goal Theory, individuals' motivation and responses to success or failure depend largely on their goal orientations—whether they strive for mastery (self-improvement) or performance (demonstrating competence relative to others) [4]. Research has shown that students with mastery goal orientations display greater resilience and learning persistence, while those with performance goals tend to experience heightened anxiety and fear of failure [5].

Despite extensive studies on perfectionism and goal orientation separately, limited research has explored their interactive effects in predicting fear of failure among nursing students. This population faces both academic rigor and emotional demands. Understanding this dynamic is particularly relevant in the Philippine context, where cultural values such as *hiya* (shame) and social comparison further shape academic motivation and emotional regulation.

Therefore, this study aimed to examine the moderating role of goal orientation in the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure among Filipino student nurses. It hypothesizes that mastery orientation would weaken the positive association between perfectionism and fear of failure, while performance orientation would strengthen it. By identifying these moderating effects, the study seeks to contribute insights into developing motivational and psychological interventions for nursing education programs.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative-correlational research design to examine the moderating role of goal orientation in the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure among Filipino student nurses. The design was appropriate for determining both direct and interaction effects among psychological variables measured using standardized scales [6].

2.2. Participants

A total of 200 nursing students enrolled at Mindanao State University - Iligan Institute of Technology (MSU-IIT) participated in this study. Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation across academic year levels. Inclusion criteria required participants to be officially enrolled student nurses aged 18 and above. All participants provided informed consent, and confidentiality was maintained throughout the study.

2.3. Instruments

Three standardized psychological scales were utilized:

- 1). *Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS)* - developed by Frost et al. [1], consisting of 35 items measuring dimensions such as concern over mistakes, personal standards, and parental expectations. It demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$).
- 2). *Goal Orientation Scale (GOS)* - based on the framework of Elliot and McGregor [5], adapted to assess mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance orientations. Reported reliability coefficients in previous studies exceeded 0.80 [7].
- 3). *Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI)* - developed by Conroy [3], measuring cognitive appraisals related to fear of failure across five domains: shame, devaluing self-estimate, uncertain future, loss of interest of others, and upsetting important others. Cronbach's α for this study sample was 0.88.

2.4. Procedure

After securing approval from the Department of Psychology Ethics Committee, data collection was conducted via printed questionnaires distributed during class hours. The instruments were completed in approximately 25 minutes. Participants were informed that responses would be used solely for research purposes and would remain anonymous.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data were encoded and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26 with the PROCESS Macro by Hayes (Model 1) to test moderation effects [8].

Descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation) were computed to describe the participants' levels of perfectionism, goal orientation, and fear of failure.

Pearson correlation was used to assess relationships between variables, and moderation analysis tested whether goal orientation (mastery or performance) moderated the link between perfectionism and fear of failure. A significance level of $p < .05$ was adopted.

3. Results

3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1 presents the mean and standard deviation scores for perfectionism, goal orientation, and fear of failure among Filipino student nurses. Results indicate that participants generally exhibited moderate levels of perfectionism ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.65$) and goal orientation ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 0.54$), with a moderate to high level of fear of failure ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.68$). These findings suggest that while student nurses aim for high academic performance, they also experience considerable

anxiety about failure and evaluation.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Variables ($N = 200$).

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	Interpretation
Perfectionism	3.47	0.65	Moderate
Goal Orientation	3.59	0.54	Moderate
Fear of Failure	3.72	0.68	Moderate-High

3.2. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant associations among the three variables. Perfectionism was positively correlated with fear of failure ($r = .61$, $p < .01$), indicating that students with higher perfectionistic tendencies are more likely to experience fear of failure.

Meanwhile, goal orientation was negatively correlated with fear of failure ($r = -.34$, $p < .01$), suggesting that students with

higher adaptive goal orientation experience lower levels of fear.

These results support earlier findings that perfectionism and fear of failure share a strong motivational and emotional link [9].

3.3. Moderation Analysis

Moderation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 1) revealed that goal orientation significantly moderated the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure ($\beta = -0.21$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = .014$).

Specifically, students with high mastery orientation demonstrated a weaker relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure, while those with high performance orientation showed a stronger relationship.

Table 1 illustrates the moderation pattern, where the slope for high mastery orientation indicates a buffering effect, consistent with theoretical expectations from Achievement Goal Theory [4, 5].

Table 2. Moderation Analysis Summary.

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
Perfectionism	0.58	0.06	9.67	.000	[0.46, 0.70]
Goal Orientation	-0.25	0.07	-3.56	.001	[-0.38, -0.11]
Perfectionism $\times$ Goal Orientation	-0.21	0.08	-2.49	.014	[-0.36, -0.05]

3.4. Summary of Findings

The results confirmed that:

- 1) Perfectionism positively predicts fear of failure.
- 2) Goal orientation negatively correlates with fear of failure.
- 3) Goal orientation moderates the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure, mastery goals weaken the link, while performance goals strengthen it.

These findings empirically support prior theoretical claims that adaptive motivational styles mitigate the emotional costs of perfectionism in achievement contexts [10].

4. Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the moderating role of goal orientation in the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure among Filipino student nurses. Consistent with prior research, the findings revealed that perfectionism posi-

tively predicts fear of failure [1, 2, 9]. Students with heightened perfectionistic tendencies often set excessively high personal standards, and when faced with the possibility of not meeting them, they experience distress and avoidance behaviors. This pattern aligns with the conceptualization of maladaptive perfectionism, which is linked to increased anxiety, reduced self-efficacy, and emotional exhaustion [11].

The significant moderating effect of goal orientation provides insight into how motivational factors influence the emotional outcomes of perfectionism. Specifically, mastery orientation, characterized by a focus on learning and self-improvement, appeared to buffer the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure. This suggests that students who strive for mastery view challenges as opportunities to grow, thereby reducing the negative emotional impact of perfectionistic concerns [4, 7]. Conversely, performance orientation, which emphasizes demonstrating ability and avoiding negative judgment, intensified the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure. This finding supports the assertion that performance-based motives can heighten evaluative anxiety and dependency on external validation [5, 10].

The study's results resonate with Dweck and Leggett's social-cognitive theory of motivation, which posits that learners' goal structures shape their emotional and behavioral responses to achievement situations [4]. Filipino nursing students who adopt mastery-oriented goals may internalize more adaptive attitudes toward errors, viewing them as part of the learning process rather than indicators of inadequacy. Meanwhile, those driven by performance goals may experience heightened pressure, consistent with the cultural emphasis on maintaining social image and avoiding shame (*hiya*) within collectivist societies [12].

The implications of these findings are twofold. First, the data highlight the importance of fostering adaptive motivational climates within nursing programs. Educators and clinical instructors can help students adopt mastery goals by emphasizing learning progress and personal competence rather than comparative success. Second, psychological support services may benefit from integrating perfectionism management and self-compassion training to mitigate the emotional costs of performance pressure [13].

Furthermore, these results contribute to a growing body of evidence suggesting that the interaction between perfectionism and motivational constructs is critical in predicting emotional well-being and academic outcomes. In a demanding field like nursing, where precision, empathy, and accountability are vital, understanding and addressing these dynamics can promote resilience and professional growth among future healthcare providers.

5. Conclusion

This study investigated how goal orientation moderates the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure among Filipino student nurses. Findings revealed that perfectionism significantly predicts fear of failure, suggesting that students who set unrealistically high standards tend to experience greater anxiety and apprehension toward mistakes. However, goal orientation plays a crucial role in shaping this relationship. Specifically, mastery orientation was found to weaken the association between perfectionism and fear of failure, while performance orientation strengthened it.

These results underscore the importance of motivational factors in understanding the emotional and cognitive patterns of nursing students. Encouraging mastery-oriented goals in academic and clinical settings may promote resilience, self-efficacy, and healthy coping mechanisms, while reducing maladaptive perfectionism.

Educational programs are therefore encouraged to integrate psychological and motivational interventions, such as growth mindset workshops and self-compassion training, to help students balance high achievement standards with emotional well-being.

Future research may explore longitudinal or qualitative approaches to capture the developmental aspects of perfectionism and goal orientation, providing a deeper understanding of

how these constructs evolve in healthcare education.

Abbreviations

MPS	Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale
GOS	Goal Orientation Scale
PFAI	Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
β	Standardized Regression Coefficient
SD	Standard Deviation
CI	Confidence Interval

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Author Contributions

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Trishalyn Sagaral: Resources, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Validation, Visualization, Supervision

Patricia Nicole Arpon: Resources, Conceptualization, Writing – review & editing

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, *Erika D. Barretto*, upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest related to the conduct, authorship, or publication of this research.

Appendix

The appendix includes excerpts from the standardized tools used in this study:

- 1) Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS)
- 2) Goal Orientation Scale (GOS)
- 3) Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI)

Items were adapted and administered with permission for educational and research purposes only. Descriptive item samples and scoring guidelines were referenced for internal use in the analysis.

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Research Field

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