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Measuring Maladaptive Perfectionism

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Introduction

Perfectionism is a personality trait in which individuals set high standards for themselves that are in line with an ideal image of how they should look, act, and perform (Aldea, Rice & Rojas, 2010). Perfectionism can be both adaptive and maladaptive. Setting high standards and monitoring one's behavior can be beneficial (adaptive perfectionism) (Gnilka, Ashby, & Noble 2012). Yet, when perfectionists focus more on errors rather than their success, psychological disorders can result (maladaptive perfectionism) (Gnilka, Ashby, & Noble). Identifying maladaptive perfectionism may aid individuals in consciously overcoming the negative side effects associated with maladaptive perfectionism and help individuals practice an adaptive perfectionism (Aldea, Rice, Gormley, & Rojas, 2010). We hypothesized that our measure, the Maladaptive or Adaptive Personality Scale (MAPS) would reliably and validly indicate and measure the presence of maladaptive perfectionism through emotional and behavioral manifestations.

Methods

Participants

MAPS was administered to a convenience sample. Of the 165 participants, 65 % were female and 35% were male. Ethnicity of our participants included 91% Caucasian/ White, 5% Hispanic, 2% Asian/ Pacific Islander, 1% African American/ Black, and 1% Other. In addition, 98% of study participants were members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day-Saints and 2% affiliated with another religion. One hundred and forty-six of participants were between 18-23 years old.

Item Construction

Ten out of 43 items were selected after receiving a Content Validity Response (CVR) which scores ranged from .28 to .68. A 4-point Likert scale was used for all ten questions ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*, every test item was positively worded to measure emotional and behavioral manifestations of maladaptive perfection. Additional questions were asked for basic demographics and one face validity question was included.

Test Administration

MAPS was administered online using www.qualtrics.com. Participants were recruited through www.facebook.com and e-mail during the time period of two weeks.

Data Analysis

SPSS 19 was used to analyze data. Reliability was determined through Cronbach's alpha (α) and Pearson bivariate correlations. As a data reduction tool, factor analysis was utilized to detect variance among factors. Validity was measured using face validity and CVR.

Results

Factor Structure

A principle component analysis shows three eigenvalues greater than 1 (eigenvalues = 3.72, 1.11, and 1.07) denoting that three factors accounted for 59.10% of the variance explained. All items primarily loaded on factor one except for the accomplishments, relationships, and hard work item (see Component Matrix table). Therefore, the main primary factor accounts for 37.23% of the variance in MAPS which we believe to be measuring behavioral manifestations of perfectionism.

Reliability

Shown by Cronbach's alpha, the test's internal consistency was good ($\alpha = .80$). Supporting a strong linear relationship between the majority of test items, a Pearson bivariate analysis resulted in 40 out of 45 significant correlations ($p < .05$).

Validity

Content Validity Ratio (CVR) indicated that one item had superior content validity (.68). Five items had high validity (.52), one item had moderate validity (.44), and three items had adequate content validity (.28). Eleven percent of participants correctly stated the MAPS measure was testing perfectionism. Therefore, the measure had low face validity.

MAPS Questions

1. I am more likely to notice my own mistakes compared to successes.
2. I often compare myself to others.
3. My goals affect my relationships with others in a negative way.
4. When I make a mistake, I focus on my imperfections.
5. I define myself by my accomplishments.
6. I feel sad when I do not reach perfection.
7. I often do not obtain pleasure from my own hard work.
8. I do not handle failure well.
9. I often dwell on the mistakes I have made.
10. I often feel unhappy due to the mistakes I've made.

Component Matrix			
Item	Component	Component	Component
	1	2	3
Notice mistakes	.76		
Compare to others	.71		
Goals affect relationships			.73
Focus on imperfections	.73		
Define by accomplishments		.89	
Sad when not perfect		.68	
No pleasure from hard work			.80
Don't handle failure well	.67		
Dwell on mistakes	.79		
Unhappy due to mistakes	.53	.32	

Discussion

Our measure, Maladaptive or Adaptive Perfectionism Scale (MAPS) had high reliability and internal consistency. Most items significantly correlated with each other. Although three factors were detected by factor analysis, the majority of variance can be attributed to one factor (behavioral manifestations of perfectionism).

It was intended for half of our items to measure behavioral manifestations of perfectionism, and half to measure emotional manifestations of perfectionism. Some items may not have properly measured the correct domain due to the social or cognitive factors that influence perfection (which were not intended to be measured as part of our two domains). Two items (goals affect relationships, and no pleasure from hard work) loaded onto factor three (social influences of perfectionism) and had low content validity. Our study would support our hypothesis and two domains more closely if these items were removed.

Limitations of our study include a lack of valid measurement for emotional manifestations of maladaptive perfectionism. This lack of emotional manifestations measurement was indicated by factor analysis; the last five items were intended to load onto factor 2. Future validity tests are needed to verify validity for the emotional manifestations portion of our study. Also, our study lacked external validity due to the use of a convenience sampling. Strengths of our study include using a large sample size. In addition, MAPS statistically showed high reliability indicated by a good Cronbach's alpha and a significant correlation as displayed by the Pearson bivariate analysis.

Overall, MAPS reliably and validly showed behavioral manifestations of maladaptive perfectionism. Future research is needed to understand how emotional, social, cognitive factors may influence perfectionism.

Due to high psychometrics, MAPS is worth pursuing because it may help individuals with maladaptive perfectionism identify negative behavioral tendencies.

References

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