The Study on the Relations among Perfectionism & Coping Style & Interpersonal Relationship of University Students

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Abstract

The target of this thesis is to study the relations among the perfectionism, the coping style and the interpersonal relationship of university students. The main study methods are to make the use of Frost multi-dimensional perfectionism scale, coping style questionnaire and university student interpersonal relationship comprehensive diagnostic scale to measure 350 university students. The results of the study show that: (1) There is a significant negative correlation between the perfectionism and the mature coping style of university students, whereas there is a significant positive correlation between the perfectionism and the immature coping style. (2)There is a significant positive correlation between the perfectionism and the interpersonal relationship. (3)There is a significant positive correlation between the interpersonal relationship and immature/mixture coping style, whereas there is a significant negative correlation between the interpersonal relationship and mature coping style.(4)The concerning mistakes (CM), the action procrastination (AP), mixture and mature coping style can predict the perplexity of conversation distinctly.(5)The AP,personal standard (PS), immature and mature coping style can predict the perplexity of social intercourse & making friend distinctly.(6)The CM, parent criticism (PC) and mixture coping style can predict the perplexity of dealing with people distinctly.(7)The CM,AP, PS, parent expectation (PE), mixture and mature coping style can predict the perplexity of relating to the opposite sex distinctly. Therefore the conclusion of the thesis is as follows: there are close relations among perfectionism, coping style and interpersonal relationship; the perfectionism and coping style affect the interpersonal relationship of university students to a significant extent.

Keywords: Perfectionism, Coping style, Interpersonal relationship

The perfectionism refers to the tendency that a person cannot take the fact that he has not reached the high standard that is set himself or the perfect situation he expected (Frost, Marten, Lahart and Rosenblate, 1990, p. 449-468).The perfectionism is related with eating disorders, suicidal tendency and attempt, psychological health, depression, nervousness, self-esteem, procrastination and neuroticism (Blatt, 1995, p. 1003-1020.). The coping style refers to the cognitive and behavior style that the individual faces the setback and stress. The coping style is an important regulation factor in the process of psychological stress. The coping style of the individual affects the nature and strength of the stress response and hereafter adjusts the relations between the stress and the strength outcome (Zhang, Che and Li, 2005. p.36-41). The study shows that some dimensions of perfectionism is probably related with the coping style that can adjust well, while some dimensions is probably related with the coping style that adjusts badly. From three dimensions, such as self-oriented perfectionism, others-oriented perfectionism, society-prescribed perfectionism, O'Connor (2003)

studied the relationship between perfectionism and coping style. He finds that self-oriented perfectionism is positively correlated with task-oriented coping, and others-oriented perfectionism is correlated task-oriented coping for women, whereas society-prescribed perfectionism is correlated with emotion-oriented coping, task-oriented coping and society-deviation coping (O'Connor and O'Connor, 2003, p. 362-372). Dunkley studied the relationship between perfectionism and coping style from two dimensions, i.e. adaptive perfectionism and maladaptive perfectionism. He finds that maladaptive perfectionism tends to adopt more maladaptive and avoidance coping styles such as isolation and refusal (Dunkley, Zuroff and Blankstein, 2003, p. 234-252). Interpersonal relationship refers to the direct psychological relationship that is formed in the process of social exchange and interpersonal interaction (Zheng and Yu, 1995, p. 5-21). Perfectionists usually impose high requirements and high standards on others, require others' performance must be perfect, therefore perfectionists usually behave badly in interpersonal relationship. The study of Hill and others shows that others-oriented perfectionism and society-prescribed perfectionism will lead to interpersonal problems (Hill, Zrull and Turlington, 1997, p. 81-103). The studies of YU Ling on Taiwanese youth demonstrate that the stronger the tendency to the perfectionism is, the more problems of interpersonal relationship there are (Yu, 2001, p.18). The relations among the perfectionism, the coping style & interpersonal relationship are explored in this thesis.

1. Object and Method

1.1 Research Object

We got 324 valid questionnaires from a total of 350 university students whom are sampled from Qufu Normal University using stratified random sampling method. Among these students there are 93 males, 231 females and other 20 students who did not provide gender information. The ages of these sample students range from 18 to 25 and their average age is 20.64. Among them, 161 students are freshmen; 84 students are sophomore; 72 students are juniors; 6 students are seniors; other 6 students did not provide grade information.

1.2 Research Method

(1) Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, MPS-F, 1990

In the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale compiled by Frost, there are 35 items in total, including concerning mistakes (CM), action procrastination (AP), personal standard (PS), parent expectation (PE), parent criticism (PC) and orderliness (OR). Among them, AP is taken from Mocl questionnaire of Muadsely. PS and OR measure the adaptive (positive) perfectionism while the other 4 items measure the maladaptive (negative) perfectionism. 5 points scoring is used in this scale. The correlation coefficient between this scale and other perfectionism scale is above 0.91, and the coefficient of internal factors consistency is 0.78 – 0.92. This scale is a comparably mature measurement tool in the field of perfectionism studies. At present it is mainly applied in adult groups.

(2) Coping Style Questionnaire

"The Coping Style Questionnaire" compiled by XIAO Jihua and others is adopted in this thesis. There are 62 items altogether, including 6 branch scales, i.e., problem-solving, self-reproach, seeking help, fantasy, avoidance and rationalizing. Among them, problem-solving and seeking help are classified into mature coping style; avoidance, fantasy and self-reproach are classified into immature coping style; rationalizing is classified into mixture coping style (Xiao and Xu, 1996, p. 164-168.).

(3) University Student Interpersonal Relationship Comprehensive Diagnostic Scale

This study adopts Interpersonal Relationship Comprehensive Diagnostic Scale compiled by Professor ZHENG Richang, Beijing Normal University. This questionnaire is used to measure test subjects whether distress exists and the degree of distress in the process of social exchanges. In total there are 28 items, 28 scores in full and 4 categories, i.e., no/little distress (0-8 scores), distress to some extent (9-14 scores), serious distress (15-20 scores), very serious distress (20-28 scores). The scale is divided into 4 branches, i.e. , conversation, social intercourse and making friends, dealing with people, relating to the opposite sex, which measure distress specifics in the above 4 aspects and corresponding degrees. It is tested that its Cronbach a reliability coefficient is 0.86, and its reliability coefficient of spit-half is 0.78. Moreover, it is also possessed of fairly good internal factors consistency and construct validity (Zheng, 1999, p.339-340).

1.3 Research Procedure

Under the guidance of the test supervisor, university students fill in the above questionnaires on the spot in the form of group testing. The questionnaires are collected on the spot. The demographic information of tested students, including major, grade and gender is acquired in the process of testing.

1.4 Statistics Method

The correlation analysis and the regression analysis are given with the use of SPSS 17.0.

2. Result

2.1 The relations among the perfectionism, the coping style and the interpersonal relationship

2.1.1 The correlation analysis on the perfectionism and the coping style

The results of correlation analysis on the perfectionism and the coping style of university students are given in table 1.

According to the results of correlation analysis, the total scores of the perfectionism are correlated distinctly negatively with mature coping styles, whereas they are correlated distinctly positively with immature coping styles; the CM is correlated distinctly negatively with mature coping styles, whereas it is correlated distinctly positively with immature coping styles; the PC is correlated distinctly negatively with mature coping styles; the OR is correlated distinctly positively with mature coping styles, whereas it is correlated distinctly negatively with immature and mixture coping styles; the AP is correlated distinctly negatively with mature coping styles, whereas it is correlated distinctly positively with immature coping styles.

Insert Table 1 Here

2.1.2 The correlation analysis on the perfectionism and the interpersonal relationship

The results are given in table 2.

According to the table 2, the total scores of the perfectionism, the AP, the CM, the PS are correlated distinctly positively with all four dimensions of interpersonal relationship including conversation, social intercourse & making friends, dealing with people and relating to the opposite sex; the PC is correlated distinctly positively with three dimensions including conversation, dealing with people and relating to the opposite sex.

Insert Table 2 Here

2.1.3 The correlation analysis on the interpersonal relationship and the coping style

The results are given in table 3.

According to the table 3, all four dimensions of interpersonal relationship including conversation, social intercourse & making friends, dealing with people and relating to the opposite sex are correlated distinctly negatively with mature coping style, whereas they are correlated distinctly positively with immature coping style; three dimensions including conversation, dealing with people and relating to the opposite sex are correlated distinctly positively with mixture coping style.

Insert Table 3 Here

2.2 The regression analysis of the perfectionism and the coping style to the interpersonal relationship

2.2.1 The stepwise regression analysis with conversation as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

The results are given in table 4.

According to the table 4, after submitting the regression equation with the CM, the AP of the perfectionism, and mixture coping style and mature coping style as independent variables, we finds that the result of the R-square is 0.226. That is to say, these four variables can predict 22.6% variance on the perplexity of conversation. Among them, the CM has the best prediction and its R-square result is 13.5%.

Insert Table 4 Here

2.2.2 The stepwise regression analysis with social intercourse & making friends as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

The results are given in table 5.

According to the table 5, after submitting the regression equation with the AP, the PS of the perfectionism, and immature coping style and mature coping style as independent variables, we finds that the result of the R-square is 0.152. That is to say, these four variables can predict 15.2% variance on the perplexity of social intercourse & making friends. Among them, the AP has the best prediction and its R-square result is 11.4%.

Insert Table 5 Here

2.2.3 The stepwise regression analysis with dealing with people as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

The results are given in table 6.

According to the table 6, after submitting the regression equation with the CM, the PC of the perfectionism, and mixture coping style as independent variables, we finds that the result of the R-square is 0.216. That is to say, these three variables can predict 21.6% variance on the perplexity of dealing with people. Among them, the CM has the best

prediction and its R-square result is 18%.

Insert Table 6 Here

2.2.4 The stepwise regression analysis with relating to the opposite sex as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

The results are given in table 7.

According to the table 7, after submitting the regression equation with the CM, the AP, the PE, the PS of the perfectionism, and mature coping style and mixture coping style as independent variables, we finds that the result of the R-square is 0.162. That is to say, these five variables can predict 16.2% variance on the perplexity of relating to the opposite sex. Among them, the CM has the best prediction and its R-square result is 8.8%.

Insert Table 7 Here

3. Discussion

This research shows that to university students the perfectionism is correlated to the coping style to some extents. The more serious perfectionism problems a university student has, the more possibly he will deal with kinds of problems immaturely rather than maturely in his studies and life.   As to specific dimensions of the perfectionism, the CM and the AP are correlated distinctly positively with immature coping styles such as self-reproach, fantasy and avoidance. That is to say, when a university student doubts his ability to deal with all kinds of things well, he tends to adopt the immature coping style to avoid making mistakes. Furthermore, the OR is correlated positively with the mature coping style. The more orderly university students tend to be, the more possibly they will adopt practical ways to deal with problems.

Moreover, the perfectionism of university students is correlated distinctly positively with their interpersonal relationship. It is indicated that the more serious perfectionism problems a university student has, the more interpersonal problems he will have too. The interpersonal relationship is distinctly negatively correlated with mature coping styles whereas it is distinctly positively correlated with mature coping styles. This conclusion indicates that those students perplexed by interpersonal relationship problems usually adopt immature coping styles. That is to say, it is the immature coping style that exactly causes interpersonal relationship problems. Therefore only after university students are guided to change coping styles and adopt mature coping styles, can they change their situation of interpersonal relationship.

The regression analysis further reveals that the CM, AP, mixture and mature coping style can predict the perplexity of conversation. Among these four above-mentioned dimensions the CM has the highest predication and can explain 13.8% variance on the perplexity of conversation. Those university students who score high on the dimension of CM usually want to achieve the goal but meantime worry about making mistakes. Their personality is characterized by less self-esteem and confidence (Zi, 2003, 35). This leads to their obstacle on the conversation and expressing themselves, and thus the perplexity of the conversation is caused. Therefore more attention should be paid to the dimension CM of perfectionism so that university student perplexity on the conversation could be relieved. The AP,PS, immature and mature coping style can predict the perplexity of social intercourse & making friend. Among these four above-mentioned dimensions the CM has the highest predication and can explain 15.2% variance on the perplexity of social intercourse & making friend. That is to say, those university students who score high on the dimension of AP usually doubt that they can deal with all kinds of things well, so they feel uneasy in the interpersonal relationship and become more nervous in the unfamiliar circumstance. Their interpersonal relationship gradually turns out to be worse. The CM,PC and mixture coping style can predict the perplexity of dealing with people; the CM,AP, PE, PS, mixture and mature coping style can predict the perplexity of relating to the opposite sex.   The CM has the highest predication in these two regression analysis and it can explain the variance of 18% and 8.8% respectively. Therefore, more attention should be paid to the dimension CM of perfectionism so that university student perplexity on the interpersonal relationship could be relieved.

In conclusion, there exists close relations among perfectionism, coping style and interpersonal relationship. What extent the perfectionism of a university student has come to affects his corresponding coping style. There is significant positive correlation existed between the perfectionism and the interpersonal relationship. The coping style has close relations with the interpersonal relationship too. When university educators carry out psychological health education, they should bring the positive effects of the perfectionism into full pay and meanwhile avoid the negative effects of the perfectionism; furthermore they should take corresponding measures to strengthen training and cultivating the mature coping compatibility of university students, and improve their interpersonal interaction ability; and thus the overall metal health level of university students should be improved greatly.

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Table 1. The correlation analysis on the perfectionism and the coping style

	PE	OR	PC	PS	CM	AP	Total Scores of Perfectionism
Mature	-0.041	0.110*	-0.183**	-0.105	-0.251**	-0.214**	-0.205**
Immature	0.000	-0.193**	0.101	0.099	0.146**	0.145**	0.135**
Mixture	-0.009	-0.203**	0.082	0.025	0.092	0.081	0.064

Note:*P<0.05   **P<0.01   ***P<0.001

Table 2. The correlation analysis on the perfectionism and the interpersonal relationship

	PE	OR	PC	PS	CM	AP	Total Scores of Perfectionism
Conversation	-0.012	-0.048	0.162**	0.257**	0.371**	0.360**	0.329**
Social Intercourse & Making Friends	0.050	0.050	0.083	0.261**	0.239**	0.342**	0.297**
Dealing with People	0.000	-0.006	0.286**	0.344**	0.424**	0.287**	0.387**
Relating to Opposite Sex	-0.103	-0.007	0.120*	0.249**	0.301**	0.296**	0.261**

Note: *P<0.05   **P<0.01   ***P<0.001

Table 3. The correlation analysis on the interpersonal relationship and the coping style

	Conversation	Social Intercourse & Making Friends	Dealing with People	Relating to Opposite Sex
Mature	-0.240**	-0.192**	-0.115*	-0.205**
Immature	0.177**	0.141*	0.195**	0.132*
Mixture	0.178**	0.056	0.190**	0.127*

Note:*P<0.05   **P<0.01

Table 4. The regression analysis with conversation as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R-Square	Bata	F	t
Conversation	CM	0.371	0.135	.025	51.465	3.608***
	CM AP	0.427	0.177	.203	35.715	3.616***
	CM AP Mixture	0.448	0.193	.206	26.731	3.919***
	CM AP Mixture Mature	0.485	0.226	-.207	24.540	-3.817***

Note: ***P<0.001

Table 5. The regression analysis with social intercourse & making friends as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R Square	Bata	F	t
Social Intercourse & Making Friends	AP	0.342	0.114	0.225	42.648	3.692***
	AP Mature	0.363	0.126	-0.176	24.340	-3.147**
	AP Mature Immature	0.390	0.144	0.149	19.109	2.706**
	AP Mature Immature PS	0.403	0.152	0.117	15.459	1.994*

Note:*P<0.05   **P<0.01   ***P<0.001

Table 6. The regression analysis with dealing with people as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R Square	Bata	F	t
Dealing with People	CM	0.424	0.180	0.359	70.728	6.569***
	CM Mixture	0.451	0.203	0.147	40.941	2.960**
	CM Mixture PC	0.464	0.216	0.123	29.342	2.258*

Note:*P<0.05   **P<0.01   ***P<0.001

Table 7. The analysis with relating to the opposite sex as dependent variable, dimensions of perfectionism and coping style as independent variable

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R	R Square	Bata	F	t
Relating to the Opposite Sex	CM	0.301	0.088	0.091	32.153	1.285**
	CM AP	0.349	0.116	0.149	22.190	2.440**
	CM AP PE	0.378	0.135	-0.178	17.733	-3.311**
	CM AP PE Mature	0.395	0.145	-0.191	14.747	-3.354**
	CM AP PE Mature Mixture	0.418	0.162	0.159	13.495	2.911**
	CM AP PE Mature Mixture PS	0.430	0.170	0.146	12.015	1.996*

Note:*P<0.05   **P<0.01