A Study on the Perfectionist Personality Traits and Empathic Tendencies of Working and Non-working Adolescents across Different Variables

Aysel KÖKSAL AKYOL[a]
Ankara University

Güneş SALI[b]
Bozok University

Abstract

This study was conducted with the goal of examining the perfectionist personality traits and empathic tendencies of adolescents between the ages of 15 and 17. The study group consisted of 531 children attending a vocational education center and two general high schools located in the city center of Kayseri, Turkey. Data for this study were collected by means of a "General Information Form," the "Child and Adolescent KA-SI Empathic Tendency Scale – Adolescent Form," and the "Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale". In analyzing the data, an analysis of variance (ANOVA), LSD test, Pearson correlation test, and progressive multiple regression analysis were conducted. The results of the study indicate that work status appears to be a factor behind the statistically significant differences in favor of non-working students in the order sub-dimension of perfectionism and in favor of working adolescents in the sub-dimensions of excessive concern over mistakes and family criticism, whereas difference in gender appeared to be factor behind the statistically significant difference observed in favor of females in the order sub-dimension of perfectionism (p<.01). It was also found that work status, gender, and age appeared to be behind the statistically significant differences in the following sub-dimensions, respectively: in favor of non-working adolescents for cognitive empathy, in favor of females in the sub-dimension of empathic tendency and total empathy score, and in favor of students aged 17 for cognitive empathy and in the total empathy score (p<.01). The results of the regression analysis show that the sub-dimension of order on the adolescents' perfectionism scale help to predict their emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, and total empathy tendencies both meaningfully and in a positive direction.

Key Words

Empathy, Empathic Tendency, Perfectionism, Perfectionist Personality Traits, Working Child.

Starting from birth, the behavior of individuals begins to be molded, continuing throughout their life by way of punishment, award, and criticism. Within this developmental process, individuals learn to determine standards befitting to the conditions of their environment. Such learning experiences instill in them an understanding that directs them toward certain ways of developing their workplace skills. If the environment in which an individual lives is overly demanding and perfectionist, one effect may be that he may, in turn, develop a perfectionist personality which then may hamper his interpersonal relationships when he expects it from others (Kırdök, 2004). When such an attitude is found becomes instilled in working adolescents, they may overemphasize failure and mistakes as

a Aysel KÖKSAL AKYOL, Ph.D., is currently a professor of Child Development. Contact: Ankara University, Faculty of Health Science, Department of Child Development, Istanbul, Turkey. Email: koksalaysel@gmail.com.

b **Güneş SALI, Ph.D.,** is currently an assistant professor of Child Development. Her research interests include child development, empathy, perfectionism, social support, peer relationships, creativity. *Correspondence:* Assist. Prof. Güneş SALI, Bozok University, Faculty of Education, Department of Education Science, Yozgat, Turkey. Email: gunes.sali@gmail.com, gunes.sali@bozok.edu.tr Phone: +90 354 242 1025/2656.

well as fear losing their current job and fear refusal by potention employers. The attitudes of employers intolerant of even the simplest of mistakes and who always expect perfectionism in their employee's work may breed serious feelings of anxiety for working teenagers, and these feelings may then lead to serious harmony problems in such adolescents.

Although there is no exact definition of perfectionism, the literature emphasizes its many important characteristics. Among these, the most prominent is understood to be setting excessively high standards of personal performance (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). Terry-Short, Glynn Owens, Slade, and Dewey (1995) define positive perfectionism as "a successful function of positive results," whereas they define negative perfectionism as "perfectionist behavior as a negative reinforcement function." Lynd-Stevenson and Hearne (1999) stressed a dichotomy of active and passive perfectionism while Burns and Fedewa (2005), Lynd-Stevenson and Hearne (1999), and Rice, Ashby, and Slaney (1998) introduced the two-factor concept of adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism.

There are different perspectives concerning how perfectionism is acquired and developed; one of them stating that not only physical, but also biological factors play a role in the development of particular personal traits. Therefore, it may be argued that both biological and psychological factors influence perfectionism. An individual genetically under the risk of developing such a personality may be encouraged to become actually manifest into a perfectionist when he is criticized for his mistakes (Ashby & Rice, 2002). A number of researchers advocate that perfectionism is a result of social learning acquired during childhood arguing that perfectionism is not genetically transferred, but that children of perfectionist parents may display tendencies of perfectionist behavior due to their families' high expectations of them. Family pressure, social pressure (peers, teachers, employers, etc.), media pressure, order of birth, and unrealistic role-models are among the factors that cause perfectionism (Adderholt-Elliott & Goldberg, 1999).

It is generally stated that perfectionism is a personal trait in connection with interpersonal relationships (Flett, Hewitt, Shapiro, & Rayman, 2001). Like many, perfectionists also need to make friends (Adderhold-Alliot, 1987). However, such people expect their friends, families, and others with whom they interact to themselves be perfect (Adderhold-Alliot, 1987). Therefore, they experience difficulty in making friends and in maintaining friendships (Gard, 1999). Since humans are social beings who need to relate to others in their life, there exists a need in them to establish and develop intimate relationships with others. These relationships, combined with their quality and the feedback received from them are references for an individual's perception of self, influencing their daily lives. One of the basic motives in human relations is the need for others to understand an individual's experiences, emotions, and thoughts. Empathy, which can be defined as an individual's potential to understand others, is considered to be an important trait that determines the quality of a relationship (Hortaçsu, 2003; Kaya & Siyez, 2010; Köksal Akyol, Salı, & Körükçü, 2011; Yüksel, 2004)

Many definitions of empathy have been conceived of to date (Eisenberg & Strayer, 1987; Hoffman, 1987; Palmeri-Sams & Truscott, 2004; Pecukonis, 1990; Smith, 2006) for the reason that empathy is multidimensional (Gini, Albiero, Benelli, & Altoe, 2007; Lawrence, Shaw, Baker, Baron-Cohen, & David, 2004). Empathy is not an automatic reaction, instead having both cognitive and emotional dimensions (Donahue, 1997). The cognitive dimension of empathy, meaning the ability to evaluate the perspective of another person, is influential on the social functionality of individuals (Smith, 2006). The emotional dimension of empathy denotes an ability to feel the other's emotion and to show the most appropriate reaction for the other's particular emotional situation (De Kemp, Overbeek, De Wied, Engels, & Scholte, 2007; De Wied, Goudena, & Matthys, 2005). Eisenberg and Strayer (1987) and Brems (1989) accept that empathy is composed of both cognitive and emotional elements and that the reactions stemming therefrom may entailing either a cognitive or emotional dimension depending on the situation. Today, one of the most accepted definitions of empathy is that by Rogers, who (1970; 1983) describes it as the process of "one's putting him in another's place and seeing things from his perspective, understanding and feeling his emotions and thoughts correctly and communicating this situation to him" (as cited in Dökmen, 1988).

Empathic understanding always occurs within an interpersonal domain. Interpersonal interaction involves the mutual flow of information and emotions, thereby reinforcing mutual feedback processes and understanding (Starcevic & Piontek, 1997). When people are empathized with, they feel that they are understood and considered important, which elicits both a feeling of comfort and happiness. The ability to empathize

inhibits communication conflicts, ensuring the establishment of more positive relationships. Thus, not only are stronger relationships established among people, individual using empathic skills assume a role model position for others so as to establish the necessary conditions for the wider dispersal of empathic communication (Dökmen, 1994; Kalliopuska, 1992; Köksal, 2000; Woolfolk, 1993; Yüksel, 2004). It has been established that the existence of empathy is beneficial on both attitudes and behavior, whereas, its lack entails negative effects. It has also been determined that empathy increases helping behavior amon(Batson et al., 1997; Dökmen, 1994). While empathy leads to positive social behavior, its lack engenders antisocial behavior (Stephan & Finlay, 1999). Thus, empathic skills can facilitate people with different personality traits, especially perfectionist individuals, to be understood, as well as facilitating their understanding of both themselves and of others, which may help them to start and maintain healthy lines of communication. In this way, the negative personal traits of perfectionism may be converted into positive ones.

The literature review indicates that a number studies have been conducted with the goal of determining whether the relationship between commitment styles and perfectionism might differ by gender among high school students (Saya, 2006); among these, include the study to examine the effects of perfectionism, self-respect, success level, success motivation, and depression on mental health by Accordino, Accordino, & Slaney (2000), to develop a scale to measure the positive and negative perfectionism characteristics of adolescents by Kırdök (2004), to examine the relationship between perfectionism types and commitment styles by Rice & Mirzadeh (2000), and to determine peer relationships, social support perception and perfectionism levels of working and non-working children bySalı (2010). Further studies, such as regarding empathic skills, the impact of music education and identity status on empathic skills by Erlanger (1998) and Köksal (1997), empathic skills of adolescents by Hasdemir (2007), and the empathic tendencies, empathic skill levels, and self perception levels of vocational health school students byErgül (1995) are worthy of note. However, since the literature review yielded no findings referring to studies examining adolescents' perfectionist personality traits and empathic skills together, it was deemed necessary for this research project to study the perfectionist personality traits of working and non-working adolescents and their empathic tendencies as well as the relationship between these

two concepts according to different variables because it is generally adolescents from low income families who start working at early ages (secondary education ages). Furthermore, although economic factors greatly determine an adolescent's entering working life (Fidan, 2004, p. 32; Palley, 2002, p. 604), entering the workforce may an adolescent to become estranged from the educational process thereby harming his physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development development (Fidan, 2004; Hindman & Smith, 1999, p. 33). Removing oneself from the educational process and engaging in the activities of a work place may be dangerous for both the health of and the physical, mental, spiritual, moral, and social development of the adolescent (Fidan, 2004; Otis, Pasztor, & Mcfadden, 2001). Nonetheless, adolescent years are certainly a critical period in development with research indicating a high level positive correlation between the education and income levels of parents and the level of knowledge about raising a child (Hess, Teti, & Hussey-Gardner, 2004).

Factors, such as an expectation of job performance much higher than one's capacities, punishment in case of failure, and needing to exert an excessive amount of effort to remain employed may cause children to develop certain negative personality traits related to perfectionism (Köksal Akyol & Salı, 2009; Salı, 2010). Therefore, it is important to be cognizant of both the negative personal traits and empathy tendencies of adolescents that engender positive social behavior so as to maintain their healthy development. It is expected that the results of this study will draw the attention of parents and teachers who play a role in the development of adolescents, as well as employers who employ adolescents; and it is believed that it will be a guide for to be used at seminars and in-service trainings held for parents, teachers, and employers who employ adolescents.

Method

In this study, which has aimed to examine both the perfectionist personality traits and empathic tendencies of adolescents by different variables and to determine the relationship between them, a relational screening model has been used. While doing so, answers to the following questions were solicited.

Do the perfectionist personality traits of working and non-working adolescents differ in terms of their work status?

Do the perfectionist personality traits of working and non-working adolescents differ across gender?

Do the empathic tendencies of working and non-working adolescents differ in terms of their work status?

Do the empathic tendencies of working and non-working adolescents differ across gender?

Do the perfectionist personality traits of working and non-working adolescents differ across age?

Do the empathic tendencies of working and non-working adolescents differ across age?

Is there a correlation between the perfectionist personality traits and empathic tendencies of working and non-working adolescents?

Study Group

The study group for the research was composed of 553 adolescents aged between 15 and 17, 269 of whom were working at various industries while at the same time attending the Ayşe Baldöktü Vocational Training Center affiliated with the Ministry of Education and located in the central Anatolian city of Kayseri, Turkey. The remaining 284 were non-working students from two other high schools who represented the sub-SED. Some of the data collecting instruments (22 of them) were invalid for various reasons. The analyses were conducted using data collecting instruments from 531 candidates – 255 working (48.0%) and 276 non-working (52.0%). Fifty-six of the 255 working participants (22.0%) were females and 199 (78.0%) were males while 159 of the 276 non-working participants (57.6%) were females and 117 (43.4%) were males. Sixty-one of the working adolescents (23.9%) were 15 years old, 96 (37.6%) were 16 years old, 98 (38.4%) were 17; and 107 of the non-working adolescents (38.8%) were 15 years old, 84 (30.4%) were 16 years old, and 85 (30.8%) were 17 years old.

Data Collecting Instruments

As for data collecting instruments, the study used a General Information Form developed by the researchers, the Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale (MDPS) which was adapted into Turkish by Mısırlı-Taşdemir and Özbay (2004), and the KA-Sİ Child and Adolescent Empathic Tendency Scale - Adolescent Form developed by Kaya and Siyez (2010).

General Information Form: The General Information Form developed by the researchers was used to determine the demographic characteristics of the participating adolescents which included their work status, gender, age, and family dynamics.

Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale: Developed by Frost et al. in 1990 to determine the perfectionism tendencies of students, this scale is stated to have a total internal reliability of .90 whereas the reliability of sub-scales varied between .77 and .93. The existing six factors of the scale accounted for 54% of the total variance (Frost et al., 1990). The scale was adapted into Turkish by Mısırlı-Taşdemir and Özbay (2004) based on their study on 489 students studying in science high schools. As a result of the factor analysis, a structure containing six factors (*Order, Excessive Concern over Mistakes, Doubt for Behavior, Family Expectations, Family Criticism, and Personal Standards*), which accounted for 47.8% of the total variance, was obtained. Regarding the internal consistency between the factors, similar correlational links with the original scale were found as expected theoretically. In addition to the factor structure, they examined similar sub-scales reviewing the Pearson's Product-Moment correlations between them. Similar to the original scale, with the exception of Order, they found meaningful correlations between Excessive Concern over Mistakes, Doubt for Behavior, Family Expectations, Family Criticism, and Personal Standards. They observed that the Order dimension was not related to Doubt for Behavior or Family Expectations. The general Cronbach Alpha (a) internal consistency coefficient was calculated as .83, and the (a)values were .87, .77, .61, .71, .65, and .63 for Order, Excessive Concern over Mistakes, Doubt for Behavior, Family Expectations, Family Criticism and Personal Standards, respectively. The reliability coefficient calculated by dividing into halves was .80 (Mısırlı-Taşdemir & Özbay, 2004). The scale was prepared in the Likert type with 5 grades: (1) I strongly disagree, (2) I disagree, (3) I cannot decide, (4) I agree, and (5) I totally agree. The lowest and the highest scores possible to be earned from the factors are as follows: Order 6-30 points, Excessive Concern over Mistakes 9-45 points, Doubt for Behavior 5-25 points, Family Expectations 5-25 points, Family Criticism 4-20 points, Personal Standards 6-30 points, and Total Perfectionism 35-175 points. High scores indicate a tendency toward perfectionist personality traits (Mısırlı-Taşdemir & Özbay (2004).

KA-Sİ Child and Adolescent Empathic Tendency Scale - Adolescent Form: In the structural validity studies of the KA-Sİ Child and Adolescent Empathic Tendency Scale - Adolescent Form, which was developed by Kaya and Siyez (2010) in order to determine the empathic tendencies of children attending grades 6 to 12, first, separate factor

analyses were conducted for each class level. Then, the data from 6th to 12th grades were combined and the factor analysis was repeated. The KA-Sİ ETS Adolescent Form consists of 17 items, 10 of which measure emotional empathy and 7 of which measure cognitive empathy. The factor loads of the 10 items at the *emotional empathy* sub-dimension range between .49 and .66; their correlations with the total score of the sub-dimension in which they are contained range between .51 and .83; and the correlations with the total scores range between .52 and .79. The factor loads of the 7 items in the *cognitive empathy* sub-dimension range between .56 and .76; their correlations with the total score of the sub-dimension in which they are contained vary between .52 and .81, and the correlations with the total scores range between .47 and .70. As a result of the studies performed to measure reliability levels for the Empathic Tendency Scale Adolescent Form, the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, which depicts internal consistency, was found to be .87 for the total scale, .82 for emotional empathy, and .82 for the *cognitive empathy* sub-dimension. The test-retest reliability coefficient was .75 for the total scale, .73 for *emotional empathy*, and .69 for the *cognitive empathy* sub-dimension. The calculations made using the data from the test-retest reliability study group yielded the following results for the scale altogether: a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of .91, for emotional empathy .89, and for cognitive empathy.81. The correlations were .95, .87, and .68 between the scores of the *emotional empathy* sub-dimension and the total score; between the scores of the *cognitive empathy* sub-dimension and the total score; and between the *emotional empathy* and *cognitive empathy* sub-dimension scores, respectively. The KA-Sİ ETS Adolescent Form is made up of 17 items, 10 of which measure emotional empathy and 7 of which measure cognitive empathy. The reply form is organized into a four-grade structure: "(1) Not suitable for me at all, (2) Can be suitable for me a little, (3) Quite suitable for me, (4) Completely suitable for me." A higher the score reveals a higher the level of empathic tendency, and vice versa (Kaya & Siyez, 2010).

Procedure and Application

The required permission for the study was received from the Province National Education Directorate of Kayseri Governorship. The research was administered at the end of the first and at the beginning of the second term during the 2009-2010 academic year at the Ayşe Baldöktü Vocational Training Center and two general high schools assumed to represent low socio-economic levels (Hacı Ahmet Arısoy High School and Şehit Hava Pilot Üsteğmen Vedat Evliya High School). In the study, before administering the instruments, school administrators and teachers were provided with information about the aim and applications of the research. The General Information Form, the Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale (MDPS), and the KA-Sİ Child and Adolescent Empathic Tendency Scale – Adolescent Form were filled in by the participating adolescents. At the Vocational Training Center, students attend school once a week and during the other days, they work at their work place. Thus, every week day different adolescents who work at different vocation groups are present at school. For this reason, the application was conducted every week day for a week so that adolescents from different vocation groups had an opportunity to participate in the research project. In the two general high schools, two days at each school were adequate for the administration of the scales. They were administered to students present at school that day. In the general high schools, the duration of completing the scales required approximately 40-45 minutes whereas at the vocational training centers, it took roughly two class hours, depending on the reading speed of the working adolescents.

Analysis of the Data

After applying the data collecting instruments, the data were reviewed, classified, arranged, and coded in compliance with the entry format and then finally entered as data. In analyzing the data, the program SPSS 16 (Statistical Packet of Social Science) was used. The analyses were carried out by means of two factor analysis of variance (ANOVA). In the cases where the ANOVA results were significant, the LSD test of multiple comparisons was applied to assess which groups presented the differences. Furthermore, the Correlation Coefficient Significance Test was conducted to determine whether any statistical correlation existed between the scores received from the Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale and the KA-SI Empathic Tendency Scale for Children and Adolescents – Adolescent Form (Büyüköztürk, 2002). A Progressive Multiple Regression Analysis was also conducted. The upper limit of error margin for all results was accepted as 0.05 and 0.01.

Results

As observed from the results of the study, statistically significant differences were observed across

work status, gender, and age at the following sub-dimensions of perfectionism: work status – in favor of non-working adolescents in the *order* sub-dimension and in favor of working adolescents at the sub-divisions of *excessive concern over mistakes* and of *family criticism*, and in gender – in favor of girls in the *order* sub-dimension (*p*<.01). It was also observed that work status, gender, and age are factors which appear to contribute to statistically significant differences in empathy as follows: work status – in favor of non-working adolescents in the sub-dimension of *cognitive empathy*; gender – in favor of females in the sub-dimensions of *empathic tendency* and total empathy score; age – in favor of 17 age group in the sub-dimension of *cognitive empathy* and total empathy scores (*p*<.01). The correlation test also indicated there to be a meaningful and positive relationship between emotional and total empathy and the sub-dimension of *order*, *excessive concern over mistakes*, *family expectations*, and *personal standards* as well as total perfectionism; as well as a relationship between cognitive empathy and the sub-dimensions of *order*, *family expectations*, and *personal standards* as well as total perfectionism (*p*<.01). The results of the progressive regression analysis showed that the *order* sub-dimension scores that adolescents received from the perfectionism scale predicted the emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, and total empathy tendencies of adolescents meaningfully and positively.

Discussion

The findings of this research, which studied the perfectionist personality traits and empathy tendencies of working and non-working adolescents, are discussed below within the frame of research problems:

There exists statistically significant differences in favor of non-working adolescents in the *order* sub-dimension of the Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale, and in favor of working adolescents in the sub-dimensions of *excessive concern over mistakes* and *family criticism*. However, no meaningful differences were observed by work status in the sub-dimension of *doubt for behavior, family expectations*, and *personal standards* as well as in total perfectionism. Other studies have found similar results. In Salı's study conducted on peer relations, social support perceptions and perfectionism of working and non-working children (2010), for instance, she found that the scores of non-working children from the *order* sub-dimension and the scores of working children from the sub-dimensions of *excessive concern over mistakes*, *doubt for behavior, family expectations* and

family criticism to be significantly high, and that there were not any meaningful differences between the scores received from the *personal standards* sub-dimension and the total score. It can be observed that working children display a higher tendency for excessive concern over mistakes and that they perceive more family criticism, whereas non-working children tend to be more ordered than working children do.

The work environment for an adolescent, as a social circle, may support the development of perfectionism since he may have to set higher personal standards depending on the expectations, forces, pressures, and criticism of his employer or head trainer. Working adolescents may believe that their own values can be sustained by making an effort to meet expectations from them. The employer may act in an excessively critical and demanding manner becoming role models for perfectionist attitudes and behavior. Then, working adolescents may experience a higher level of anxiety for not being approved by others. They may need to openly display more effort in order to receive the approval and good favor of others. For all such reasons, the perfectionist tendencies of working adolescents can develop more than those of their non-working peers not involved in such environments. Similarly, since families of working adolescents may place higher expectations on their children, perfectionist tendencies may also exist within the family environment. An adolescent aware of such expectations may experience more anxiety and be more critical of his own behavior (Köksal Akyol & Salı, 2009; Salı, 2010).

It is asserted that perfectionism stems from family interaction and that it is manifested in children/adolescents as a result of parents' insistence based on their own expectations from their children. Similarly, in the relevant literature, many theorists (Burns, 1980; Frost, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1991; Hamachek, 1978) and researchers (Frost et al., 1990, Frost et al., 1991) have mentioned the role of parents and environmental factors in the development of perfectionism. Working adolescents may feel anxious for not being able to meet both their employer's and school's expectations adequately, and thus they may develop a tendency towards thinking that mistakes equate to failure and that as a result of failure, one will lose respect from others. The combination of these three factors (school-family-job) may be the reason for higher scores from more than one sub-dimension of perfectionism among working adolescents.

While the gender of adolescents appears to be a factor behind the meaningful difference in the order sub-dimension of *perfectionism* in favor of females, no significant difference was seen in the other sub-dimension scores and total score. In the literature, there are studies both that are parallel and that are not parallel with the results of this study. In Salı's (2010) study, whose findings are similar with this research, it was determined that working female adolescents had a significantly higher score in the *order* sub-dimension , but that there was no meaningful difference in the other sub-dimension in terms of gender (Salı, 2010). In a study conducted by Yaoar (2008), it was found that the scores students received in the *order* and *doubt for behavior* sub-dimension of perfectionism differed significantly by gender, and that the *order* scores of female students were higher than those of male students. The score for *doubt for behavior* was, on the other hand, higher among males than females. Students' scores from the *excessive concern over mistakes*, *family expectations*, and *personal standards* sub-dimension of perfectionism did not differ by gender (Yaoar, 2008). It can be seen that the research results of Yaoar's study involve findings that are both parallel and not parallel with the present research project.

In the research, statistically significant differences were found in the scores of both the sub-dimensions of *emotional* and *cognitive empathy* as well as total empathy in favor of non-working adolescents. Non-working students have a richer social life and thus they have an opportunity to be in a wide variety of social environments, such as private training classes, private schools, and hobby courses, all of which may contribute to be involved in different peer groups and develop better relationships. Thus, their communication skills can be supported better.

The results of the analysis of variance on the empathic tendency scores by gender indicated that there is a statistically significant difference in all sub-dimension scores of the Empathic Tendency Scale and the total empathy score in favor of females. In other research studies, similar findings were obtained. Çetin (2008) conducted a study on the relationship between the levels of empathic skills and gender, birth order, parents' education level, family income level, parents' attitudes, and self-respect, comparing empathy scores by gender. As a result, a meaningful difference between girls and boys was found in which female students received higher mean scores from the empathy scores than did male students. Yüksel (2009) asserted that the empathy level of females is higher than that of males in

her research on the relationship between the empathy levels, family functions, and self-concept of elementary school students. Garaigordobil (2009) conducted research on a group of adolescents aging between 10 and 14 and found the empathy level of females to be higher than that of males. It can be asserted that the way female children are raised in Turkish society may also play a role in their being more empathic. They are directed by their environment to be more coherent, kind, and understanding, which can be part of the positive influences on females' empathy levels.

It was determined in this study that the age of adolescents did not make manifest any difference in any of the sub-dimension scores of perfectionism or in the total score. Salı (2010) conducted another study on peer relations, social support perceptions and perfectionism of working and non-working children, in which she found that age did not lead to any significant difference in any sub-dimension score of perfectionism or in the total score. This result can be interpreted as follows: an age difference in working and non-working adolescents does not influence perfectionism and that there may be other and more complicated factors affecting perfectionism. Barrow and Moore (1983) specified four conditions for the development of perfectionist thought. First, perfectionism occurs when families are excessively critical and demanding. Second, no direct criticism is made; however, the standards of family expectations and performance have been clearly defined. The third condition is not having any standards. The fourth condition is the behavior of perfectionist families who set a role model for perfectionist behavior. According to Barrow and Moore (1983), the combination of excessive family demands placed on the child by the family and perfectionist models provide a proper medium for the development of perfectionism. Perfectionist families are excessively critical, demanding, and generally very little supporting (as cited in Frost et al., 1991). It is seen that interactions in the family, family expectations, and criticism all have a very important role in the development of perfectionism. From this aspect, it can be established that it is not the age of children that is effective on perfectionism, but that both the family and other environments in which they live and with which they interact might.

According to the results of the analysis of variance on the evaluation scores of empathic tendencies of adolescents by their age, a statistically significant difference was observed in age in both the *cognitive empathy* sub-dimension and in the total empathy

scores, and that this difference is in favor of adolescents aged 17 between both the 17 and 15 age groups and between the 17 and 16 age groups. However, some studies dissimilar to these results were found in the literature. In his research project conducted to examine the perfectionist personality traits and empathy levels of university students across different variables and to find the relationship between them, Yaoar (2008) determined that there were not any significant differences between the *perspective taking* and *imagination* sub-scores of empathy by age.

Furthermore, his study indicated a statistically significant and positive relationship between the following: (1) between the sub- dimension of *order*, *excessive concern over mistakes*, *family expectations*, and *personal standards* of the Multi-Dimensional Perfectionism Scale and total perfectionism between the *emotional empathy* sub-dimension and total empathy; (2) between the sub-factors of *order*, *family expectations*, *personal standards* and total perfectionism and the *cognitive empathy* sub-dimension. The higher the emotional empathy scores and the total empathy scores of the adolescents are, the higher the scores are for the sub-dimensions of *order*, *excessive concern over mistakes*, *family expectations*, and *personal standards* as well as total perfectionism; and the higher the cognitive empathy score is, the higher the scores are for the sub-dimensions of *order*, *family expectations*, and *personal standards* as well as total perfectionism. In general, there is a meaningful and positive relationship between all sub-dimension scores and the total score of the empathic tendency scale and the positively considered sub-dimensions of perfectionism (order, personal standards, etc.) in working and non-working adolescents.

Rice et al. (1998) conceptualized perfectionism in two factors; that is, as adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism. Adaptive perfectionists are defined as those who have high personal standards, who are in need of cleanliness and order, and who are unwilling to procrastinate. Maladaptive perfectionists are defined as those who feel excessive concerns over making and dealing with mistakes, doubts in behavior, tendency to procrastinate, feelings of tension and worry, and who have highly critical parents with unrealistic expectations from their children (Rice et al., 1998). It is notable that there is a meaningful and positive relationship between all sub-dimension scores and the total score of the empathic tendency scale and the positively considered sub-dimensionsof perfectionism (order, personal standards, etc.) in both working

and non-working adolescents, whereas there does not exist a meaningful relationship between these and the negatively considered sub-dimensions of perfectionism (doubt for behavior, family criticism, etc.). This result can be interpreted as follows: (1) empathy may influence perfectionism in a positive direction, (2) play a role in preventing perfectionism to develop in the negative direction and reach unhealthy dimensions, and (3) if perfectionist individuals develop empathy skills, their interpersonal relationships will become healthier. This correlation between empathic tendencies and perfectionism of both working and non-working adolescents may be due to facts such that their positive perfectionist attitudes are supported by their environment (school, family, peers, and job), they are appreciated, they receive positive feedback, and they can better understand what is expected from them because of their empathic skills.

While a meaningful relationship was found between the sub-dimensions of perfectionism considered to be positive, such as *order*, *personal standards*, and *cognitive empathy*, no meaningful relationship was found between the negatively considered sub-dimensions of perfectionism, such as *excessive concern over mistakes*, *doubt for behavior*, *family criticism*, and *cognitive empathy*. From these results, it may be argued that cognitive empathy decreases the negative aspects of perfectionism. Thus, it can be asserted that adolescents with high empathic skills are positive perfectionists, who may be considered to be more empathic in the cognitive aspect.

As a result of the progressive regression analysis, it was determined that the sub-dimension of *order* on the perfectionism scale had a positive correlation with *emotional empathy*, *cognitive empathy*, and the total empathy tendencies of adolescents.

Recommendations

The following recommendations can be made in light of the findings of this research, whose aim was to examine the perfectionist personal traits and empathic tendencies of working and non-working adolescents by different variables and to determine the level of the relationship:

Working adolescents spend most of their time in the working environment. Therefore, employers can be just as influential as their families in forming their personality, if not more. Seminars on effective communication skills and empathy training can be arranged for employers and employees so that healthy communication can be established between

them at the workplace. In the training programs, plans to develop empathy levels can be prepared.

Seminars to develop positive perfectionism in female and male adolescents can be arranged. Seminar programs for children, parents and educators can be prepared to develop the empathic tendency observed in females in male children, too.

Based on the fact that the attitudes and approaches of families are influential in the development of perfectionist personality traits in children, seminars and training programs to raise awareness on this issue can be organized. At parent meetings at schools, the effects of perfectionism on adolescents and its importance can be explained.

This study has examined the perfectionist personality traits and empathic tendencies of working and non-working children. In further research, the perfectionist personality traits and empathic tendencies of parents, and the relationship between the perfectionist personality traits and empathic tendencies of parents and adolescents can be examined. Research can be planned to determine the characteristics of children at different development areas and to ascertain the levels of perfectionism and empathic skills of adolescents working in different vocational areas.

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