Perfectionism

[Name of the Student:]

Name of the Institution:]

Perfectionism

**Introduction**

Perfectionism is to achieve success or reach a goal flawlessly. It is viewed differently by thinkers belonging to different schools of thought. Perfectionists demonstrate usually differentiated behaviors. Certain clinical situations arise based on negative aspects of perfectionism. The clinicians need information to identify patients with perfectionistic personality disorders. A qualitative study using interviews to assess the participants for their concepts about perfectionism and narratives of life can meet the needs of clinical practice. The current study was designed to understand perfectionism, different views about it, and related behaviors through insights gained by comments and reflections of selected perfectionists, based on certain themes.

**Summary of the Assigned Study**

**Research Question**

“To find out how do the adaptive and maladaptive perfectionists, high in their perfectionism, conceptualize perfectionism and describe their life events, such that the research findings could help the experts in identifying and understanding perfectionists in clinical practice, by developing themes in their descriptions about perfectionism and autobiographical narratives of the selected group of people.”

**Methodologies**

The qualitative research methodology was used to complete the study. Twenty university students were selected for the study by testing them on criteria based on the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R). These students qualified for further study being the most perfectionistic among other candidates. The participants had to complete an interview to fulfill the requirements of the study. The interview entailed two phases: the first assessing their standpoints about perfectionism, the second inquiring into the way the participants describe events of life. Thematic analysis was employed to get the related answers. For the first part of the interview, the participants were asked questions based on five themes that had been developed for assessing the participants’ conceptualization about perfectionism. The second part of the interview also entailed five themes to get insight into the way the perfectionistic students demonstrate their identity through autobiographies.

**Findings**

The assigned study for developing a critical review was conducted to study the concepts about perfectionism among a selected group of perfectionistic university students. Out of the twenty total students sampled for study, the APS-R determined six to be adaptive perfectionists, while fourteen students were considered as maladaptive perfectionists. Themes applied in interviewing perfectionistic students during the first part included: “higher personal standards and objectives, performance has never been good and sufficient, to be neat, clean, and organized, to feel oneself superior to others, and to get caught up in details of tasks undertaken". The results of interviewing participants through questions based on these five themes were not much different. The participants reveal that "higher personal standards and objectives were the most common of all five themes (Farmer, Mackinnon, & Cowie, 2017). The theme was related to higher standards and expectations related to a participant's performance. Perfectionists always try hard to give their best at any position of work or stage in their education. ‘Performance has never been good and sufficient’ categorized the participants into satisfied and dissatisfied, while mostly being dissatisfied about their performances. This caused them to have negative emotions, inferiority complex, retreat, and many similar effects. A participant disclosed that he had to drop many courses due to lack of confidence because he thought himself to not qualify for that study. He had associated his perfectionistic perception of himself to the decision-making process, entailing the notion that since his performance has never been satisfying, he is not eligible to opt for the course. The other three themes were relatively less common among the participants, disclosing their preference for order and disapproval for disorder, seeking praise for the agentic accomplishments, criticizing others due to failure of attaining high standards, and demonstrating behaviors similar to “obsessive-compulsive personality traits". The other five themes used in the second part of the interview included: "the academic success of a perfectionist, his or her agentic redemption, agentic contamination, relationship success, and relationship problems.” The adaptive and maladaptive students did not show any clear differences in their responses. ‘Relationship success’ was the most common theme among the participants that entailed a positive attitude and behavior toward those who are in a relationship with them. They also showed a tendency to accept aid from others. Among the other themes, the ‘relationship problems’ (i.e., involving in conflicts with others) were most common, and the agentic redemption (enhanced self-confidence in one’s ability), agentic contamination (accomplishments getting worsened by their after-effects), and academic success were less common respectively. The final assessment through this interview was to compare adaptive and maladaptive perfectionists regarding what opinion they have about their overall life theme. The common idea underlying their answers was “gratitude for good relationships”. They exclaimed that they had been fortunate to live among people who are good and supportive.

**Evaluation of the Methodologies Used for Research and Analysis**

The methodologies used for the research were qualitative and they involved interviews that were developed to assess the participants on different grounds. The sample consisted of students who were adaptive as well as maladaptive. The proportion of maladaptive students was more than that of their counterparts and this helped in assessing the difficulties and problems associated with the negative aspect of perfectionism more precisely. Interviews are a good method to assess the thoughts and views of participants and they help in generalizing some rule based on the answers obtained. Themes developed to assess interviewees were comprehensive for deducing accurately and reaching to a useful conclusion.

**Ethical Issues in Methodologies Adopted**

Seemingly, no ethical issues were associated with the methodologies involved. Interviews are a standard method to assess qualitative information in the research studies. The questions developed were only to find out a way of how to identify and treat patients with perfectionistic disorders. No rights or privacies were damaged during this research.

**Strengths, Weaknesses, and Limitations of Study**

The research is based on a thematic analysis that provides a comprehensive and valuable framework for interpreting qualitative data. The themes developed for determining views of participants proved to help create identities of adaptive and maladaptive perfectionistic students concerning perfectionism.

Qualitative analysis does not provide a clear cause and effect association of the variables involved in a study. The study uses a basic-level technique used in qualitative analysis. The study questions could have been developed in a more comprehensive way.

The study was conducted using a small sample of students. All students were studying in American universities. The discrepancies reflected while sampling the students could be higher in students belonging to other countries.

**Conclusion**

Perfectionism is admired by both adaptive and maladaptive perfectionistic students. Both share themes of 'high standards' and 'high-performance goals' at the most. Adaptive students tend to be more successful in maintaining relationships and achieving their goals. Maladaptive students have tendencies to get caught in, acquire personality disorders, and experience relationship problems.

**Recommendations for Follow-Up on the Topic**

The current study was made by selecting a sample of students who were adaptive or maladaptive. Another study on perfectionism can be made by considering the research question, “Do the perfectionist and non-perfectionist students agree in defining professionalism, and how their respective definitions influence their decisions?”

Further research should be done on professionalism using advanced qualitative methods like grounded theory or discourse analysis. Moreover, double-blind procedures need to be applied to the interview process to avoid biases.

Works Cited

Farmer, J. R., Mackinnon, S. P., & Cowie, M. (2017). Perfectionism and Life Narratives: A Qualitative Study. *SAGE Open*, *7*(3), 215824401772173. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017721733>