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PERFECTIONISM, SELF-CONTROL AND SELF-REGULATED LEARNING IN FUTURE PSYCHOLOGISTS

У наведеній статті висвітлюються шляхи і досвід реалізації міжнародних та вітчизняних психологічних досліджень, спрямованих на виявлення взаємозв'язку між такими концептуальними поняттями як перфекціонізм, самоконтроль та самокероване навчання студентів молодших курсів психологічного факультету. Психологічна грамотність студентів-початківців в широкому контексті професіоналізації, що має свою структуру та компоненти, є вельми актуальною та дискусійною проблемою як в закордонній, так і вітчизняній психології. Основні поняття, принципи теорії та підходи до дослідження, типи профілів самоконтролю та відмінності між ними визначені, прогнозовані результати визначених профілів самоконтролю досліджуваних як потенціалу самостійності надані, перспективи подальших досліджень окреслені.

Ключові слова: перфекціонізм, профілі самоконтролю, самокероване навчання, рання професіоналізація.

В данной статье освещаются пути и опыт реализации международных и отечественных психологических исследований, направленных на выявление взаимосвязи между такими концептуальными понятиями как перфекционизм, самоконтроль и самоуправляемое обучение студентов младших курсов психологического факультета. Психологическая грамотность студентов 1-2-х курсов в широком контексте профессионализации, которая имеет свою структуру и компоненты, является чрезвычайно актуальной и дискуссионной проблемой как в зарубежной, так и в отечественной психологии. Основные понятия, принципы теории и подходы определены, типы профилей самоконтроля студентов и их отличия между

собой выявлены и описаны, прогнозируемые результаты установленных профилей самоконтроля как потенциала самостоятельности обучаемого представлены, перспективы дальнейших исследований обозначены.

Ключевые слова: перфекционизм, профили самоконтроля, самоуправляемое обучение, ранняя профессионализация

The given article deals with the ways and contributions of foreign and Ukrainian psychology researchers, aimed at establishing interrelations between such notions as perfectionism, self-control and self-regulated learning of psychology students. Psychological literacy of students-starters in a wide sense of early professionalization, which has its own structure and components, is a vital and disputable problem both in western and current Ukrainian psychology. Major concepts, methods and principles of the given study, self-control profiles, their types, established differences between them are described, anticipated results of their efficacy are presented as a potential of self-regulated learning, further research trajectories are suggested.

Key words: perfectionism, self-control profiles, self-regulated learning, early professionalization.

Introduction. Recent discourse in the perfectionism studies literature suggests that there is a vital interest to the issues of high standards of performance implying healthy perfectionism, self-control both in educational and professional areas. These phenomena have indeed attached marked scholarly interest in the area of Educational Psychology in the last two decades (1; 4; 12; 13; 14; 16). The scope of these phenomena and the possible relationship between them in Ukrainian psychology students remains unclear, in our view. The power of life-long learning is based on basics of self-regulated (self-directed) learning which embraces personal autonomy, self-regulation, self-control, striving to learn in a non-formal social environment (5).

Published works of native and foreign academics produced between 2010-2016 and 2018-2019 on psychology of perfectionism are reviewed (1; 4; 12; 14; 16; 17; 19). A thematic analysis indicates that key topics of focus in modern research cover: distinctions between adaptive/healthy and maladaptive/unhealthy perfectionism (Gaudreau, 2019); comparison of healthy, unhealthy and non-perfectionists Piotrowski, 2019); perspectives on perfectionism Stoeber, 2018; perfectionism in special populations (Affrunti & Woodruff-Borden, 2018; Neumeister, 2018); Vulnerability and Resilience (Sherry & Mackinnon et al, 2018; Dunkley, 2018); prevention and treatment (Wade, 2018; Egan & Shafran, 2018).

This paper identifies the need for clarification of the construct of multidimensional perfectionism, expands on the theoretical perspectives used to examine levels of healthy/unhealthy perfectionism and self-control in Ukrainian students-starters, and offers a framework to facilitate coherence in the direction of further research on self-regulated learning and application of knowledge into practice in the field of Educational Psychology. But in the given article we limit ourselves to the analysis and description of self-control profiles in psychology students-starters.

As Parkhomenko (15) states, success in learning of a specific type of activity depends in many ways on the subject's ability to develop a style of self-control... and close correlation of regulatory processes implementing it.

In view of this, the **goal** of the current research was to assess the relationship between dimensions of perfectionism, self-control profiles and effective self-regulated learning in University students.

Methods. The methodology involved 156 psychology students (freshers and sophomores) who were asked to complete the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-28) and Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, Self-Control Inventory (6) (Derkach, Maksymenko, 1991).

Results and discussion. The empirical data were obtained in the experimental evaluation of the relationship between multidimensional perfectionism, profiles of self-control and the quality of self-regulated learning.

There were significant differences between students with high, average and low level of perfectionism on a measure of efficacy of self-regulated learning of psychological knowledge. We aimed to understand whether self-control profiles are a valuable way to understand multidimensional factors of a healthy perfectionism and self-regulated learning in the modern era, and if so, which profiles exist, and what differences exist across the profiles.

There are several controversies in the assessment of the benefit, value and sustainability of perfectionism in a person among native (15) and foreign (13;16;17) academics and scholars. First, there is a surprising disagreement on the impact of perfectionism on the overall outcome of a person's career, style of life and psychological well-being. Second, raising the bar of efficacy in utilizing perfectionism as a positive disposition for high standards of performance is claimed by many researchers of the problem. Third, there is no agreement among educationalists regarding the nature of the definition and structure of the construct. In our view, the reason for these controversies can be understood using concepts borrowed from Cognitive Psychology and interdisciplinary psychologies. Each psychologist has different perspectives belonging to different psychological paradigms, and this fact implies different priorities which make people conceptualize and frame the concept of perfectionism in a different way. Providing an

objective assessment of the benefit and value of multidimensional perfectionism makes sense only if the perspective adopted is clearly identified.

In terms of defining the problem under discussion we shall attempt to suggest a brief review of perfectionism theory and research and why it matters greatly for early professionalization and success in learning.

A well-known publication "Psychology of Perfectionism" edited by Joachim Stoeber in 2018 (16) presented a comprehensive overview of perfectionism theory, research and treatment from the past twenty five years. The worldwide leading researchers in the field profoundly contributed our understanding of perfectionism as a multidimensional, complex personality disposition. As previously noted, studies focused on perspectives of perfectionism, as well as perfectionism in special populations, vulnerability and resilience, prevention and treatment. It goes without saying, the framework and the shift in integration perspectives that has occurred over the last two decades in exploring perfectionism issues makes it possible to adopt important changes in how we approach development. In light of this it is relevant to review some of the major achievements and advances in the given area.

Looking back at the origins of perfectionism, its theory, research development, Stoeber states that two prominent psychoanalytic theorists A.Adler and K.Horney coined perfectionism as "the tyranny of the should". Moreover, they supported the notion that perfectionism is the marker of a highly neurotic disposition. According to Adler, "the striving for perfection is innate in the sense that it is a part of life, a striving, an urge, a something without which life would be unthinkable" (Ansbacher&Ansbacher, 1956:104). He also differentiated between a healthy and negative perfectionism. In the first case it is healthy when a person focuses on maximizing his/her potential or social concern for others. In the second case perfectionism can be negative when a person's behavior is accompanied by self-destructive tendencies. Similarly, publications by Dabrowski, 1964; Maslow, 1970; Helmreich, 1983; Parker, 1997 supported the idea that perfectionism is a healthy trait because it involves focusing on self-actualization and developing one's potential.

Contrary to the stated above, additional theorists Adkins& Parker, 1996, Blatt, 1995; Hewitt, Flett, & Turnbull-Donovan, 1992; Rasmussen & Eisen, 1992 resumed that the trait (perfectionism) is a destructive one. A widely accepted definition of negative perfectionism was suggested by Roedell, 1984 when it is accompanied by a self-punishing attitude toward one's efforts that can stymie the imagination, smother the creative spirit, and become a detriment to performance.

Overall, the multidimensional psychological studies of perfectionism started in the 70-80s of the past century (3; 4). Cognitive psychologists following psychodynamic paradigm treated perfectionism as a negative disposition, as a construct

which is aimed at high standards of performance (4). In 1978 Hamachek (13) introduced the term “normal” perfectionism as opposed to a neurotic one. Ten years later Slade and Owens, 1988 explored a dual process model of perfectionism based on reinforcement. Simultaneously, such terms as “healthy” and “pathological” perfectionism came into a wide usage in psychological fields of research.

Nowadays, researchers (16;17) unanimously concluded that perfectionism has a multidimensional structure with the basic factor typical of all conceptual approaches, namely – high personal standards. At the same time, there is disagreement in psychology of perfectionism regarding its other structural components among psychologists.

So, evaluating development results on perfectionism in the period of 2010 – 2019, we concluded that the major disagreement in the current research base deals with definitions, dimensions, models and development of perfectionism as a healthy disposition in connection with learning environment and patterns of behavior. More importantly is its development and its link with individual self-control profiles, regulatory processes that can promote achievement of maximum results in psychological learning (9;11;18;19) *Why does perfectionism and self-control matter greatly for self-regulated learning of students-beginners? What things do they have in common that lead to the encouraging self-regulated learning in the classroom? Why is self-regulation important for University learning?*

So, if one attempts to compare facts in common, it is possible to note that considered commonalities are the matter of individual cognitive functions, their level of development, and skills, namely: a) functioning mechanism of self-control, that is, attention; b) processing based on metacognition against a standard; c) planning and mapping effective strategies right from the start; d) setting goals; e) monitoring intermediate stages outcomes and strategies of performance; f) time management through each step; g) reflecting on the effectiveness of strategies used; h) evaluating personal progress against a standard; i) error analysis (7).

As our data testify, all of these enlisted components of a healthy perfectionism and a high level of self-control profiles in acquiring new psychological knowledge were typical both of freshers (12%) and sophomores (18%). Empirical research made it possible for us to single out three self-control profiles in a sample of 165 psychology students. A subject's self-control profile is based on psychological assessment with the Self-Control Inventory (6) which has undergone extensive reliability and validity testing.

Self-Control Profile I – high level (19% of subjects) is characterized by: a) highly motivated desire for control (where and why?); b) current sense of control in specific domains and psychology learning leading to perfectionism; c) modes by which they seek control in self-regulated learning and behavior; d) use of different tools in developing the individual style of self-control with sufficiently shaped

regulatory processes at preparatory and action stage.

Self-Control Profile II – low level (32% of subjects) represents subjects with: a) low level of attention processes; b) emotional neglect of desire for control; c) levels of control are moderately low and limited; d) a low-level of self-efficacy and procrastination; e) a low readiness to change, avoidance and dependence at the action stage.

Self-Control Profile III – intermediate level (49% of subjects) - subjects are characterized by: a) a conscious awareness of one's own control both in self-regulated learning leading to good and excellent levels of perfectionism; b) motivated desire for control with subsequent error analysis; c) a balanced and integrated use of modes of control matched to situations, goals in self-regulated learning with readiness to change at the preparatory stage; d) good level of self-efficacy.

So, the distinguished self-control profiles in psychology students at the early stages of professionalization, their style characteristics, maturity of its integral system, correlation with levels of perfectionism makes it possible to single out the regulatory processes promoting professional success and development. It is common knowledge, that self-regulated learning consists of three components: cognition, Metacognition (thinking about one's thinking) and motivation. Cognitive Psychology treats the cognition as the component that includes skills and habits that are necessary to encode, memorize, and recall the information as well as think critically (10). One of the leading social psychologists Baumeister (2) explored psychology of self-regulation and arrived at the conclusion that the structure of self-regulation comprises four components: a) standards of desirable behavior; b) motivation to meet standards, monitoring of situations and thoughts that precede breaking said standards; c) and lastly, willpower.

In view of this, it is noteworthy that self-regulated learners are successful because they profoundly control their cyclic process of self-regulated learning. Similar point of view is supported by Vanderstoep (20) who concludes that self-regulated learning is an overarching term that addresses how students approach their learning, work toward goals, and evaluate their performance. The topic of self-regulated learning intertwines cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and motivational beliefs (9;11). Becoming a self-regulated learner, according to Zimmerman, (21) and encouraging it in the classroom (22) means to utilize self-regulated strategies which can be especially profound for those students who touch on unfamiliar topics, who come to educational establishment underprepared, or de-motivated or frustrated by setbacks. As Zumbrunn (2011) notes, it seems as though self-regulated learning can make the difference between academic success and failure for many students. As we have already mentioned earlier, our research has focused on identifying the mediators of the link between collaborative perfectionism, self-control and self-regulated learning. We also hypothesized that

a high level of one's self-control in a sample of University students serves as a mediator between perfectionism and competent self-regulated learning. Additionally, self-control was treated as the psychological mechanism of attention which monitors the progress towards the goal, success in educational performance.

And finally, the cognitive skills that enable self-control, badly need some other motives (f.e. regulate one's emotional self-control and behavior) to activate and use a high level of perfectionism at various stages of activities. In psychology to regulate means to change in order to achieve some standard. Self-regulation means changing one's reactions based either on the rule or idea how something could or should (not must) be. As Baumeister (2) explains most self-regulation occurs in one of four spheres. People regulate thought, emotion and mood, impulse and performance. In educational space self-regulated learning, promoting healthy perfectionism, requires: a) a high level of self-discipline; b) motivation oriented for success in performance and achievement; c) willpower to overcome cognitive difficulties and problems while processing psychological knowledge; d) active initiative in planning task-performance while acquiring knowledge and skills; e) self-regulated learning at the university educational space relies on diligence, depletion and disdain.

Furthermore, as our article is aimed at providing University students a conceptual framework that may serve as a guide at the beginning of educational training as a future psychologist it is desirable to inform students on the ways and means of self-control formation. In an influential article Duckworth and Seligman (10), resume that university students high in self-control achieve higher grade – point averages, and experience less stress (1).

The question needs to be asked, however: what way does a high level of self-control impact the individual level of perfectionism, and consequently, standards of self-regulated learning of psychological literacy? It is noteworthy that self-control underlies both:

- academic achievements;
- predictors of career progression;
- protean career;
- consequently, work-life balance of future psychologists.
- career success which is grounded on a well-defined competency map for the psychological jobs.

Conclusions. Thus, there are many reasons to believe that the relationship between the collaborative perfectionism, self-control and self-regulated learning in University students specializing Psychology promotes knowledge on how students-starters with different self-control profiles should achieve:

- excellence in skills, knowledge and cognitive functions development necessary for creative thinking development, decision-making under

- complex circumstances and tackling future skills mismatches;
- mainstreaming innovation and digital skills in Psychology course;
- gain skills they need in the workplace and to create their own knowledge more than learning from the textbooks and lectures;
- psychological literacy through the curriculum to develop students as scientists and students-practioners with the aim to bridge the gaps between in educating highly qualified psychologists for a better world;
- adaptability to economic, political changes and outcomes in order to prepare students accommodate to the needs of tomorrow's society and the changing demands of the labour market; promoting lifelong learning for learning and living in the real world; enhancing the quality and relevance of learning; European standards, approaches and recommendations; realization of one's own creative and intellectual potential

Further research. All the mentioned issues above, offer ample opportunities for scholarly investigation of the innovative power of the paradigm which is founded in the integrated approach that combines four aspects of the training – both psychologists-scientists and psychologists-practioners (8). Another unanswered question concerns the career guidance and planning of University students and graduates in the European and global educational contexts in the framework of collaborative perfectionism, self-reflection, self-presentation and self-balance.

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