

The Pursuit of Perfection in Relationships: A Review of Perfectionism and Romantic Relationships

İlişkilerde Kusursuzluk Arayışı: Mükemmeliyetçilik ve Romantik İlişkilere Dair Bir Gözden Geçirme

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ABSTRACT

Perfectionism is a personality trait characterized by individuals setting excessively high standards for themselves and those around them and avoiding making mistakes. In recent years, the effects of perfectionism on romantic relationships have received increasing academic interest. This study comprehensively reviews the current literature on the effects of perfectionism on interpersonal relationships and its relationship with various variables such as relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, forgiveness/unforgiveness, relationship adjustment, etc. in romantic relationships. In this context, the effects of perfectionism on both interpersonal and romantic relationships are discussed. In the reviewed studies, it has been stated that, in particular, other-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism are associated with interpersonal conflict, social disconnection, and hostility. In addition, there are many empirical studies that specifically maladaptive/negative perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and partner-focused and partner-determined perfectionism negatively affect relationship dynamics. It is recommended that future research examine the relationships between different dimensions of perfectionism and romantic relationship processes, examine intervention strategies to reduce the negative effects of perfectionism on romantic relationships, and provide evidence on how this factor can be addressed in therapy processes. In conclusion, balancing perfectionism plays a critical role in maintaining healthy relationship dynamics, and interdisciplinary approaches need to be developed in this area.

Keywords: Perfectionism, romantic relationships, interpersonal relations

ÖZ

Mükemmeliyetçilik, bireylerin kendilerine ve çevrelerindekiyle yönelik aşırı yüksek standartlar belirlemeleri ve hata yapmaktan kaçınmalarıyla karakterize edilen bir kişilik özelliğidir. Son yıllarda mükemmeliyetçiliğin romantik ilişkiler üzerindeki etkileri giderek artan bir akademik ilgiyle incelenmektedir. Bu çalışma, mükemmeliyetçiliğin kişilerarası ilişkilerdeki etkilerini ve romantik ilişkilerde ilişki doyumu, evlilik doyumu, cinsel doyum, affetme/affetmeme, ilişki uyumu vb. gibi çeşitli değişkenlerle ilişkisini ele alan güncel literatürü kapsamlı bir şekilde gözden geçirmektedir. Bu bağlamda, mükemmeliyetçiliğin hem kişilerarası hem de romantik ilişkilerdeki etkisi ele alınmıştır. Gözden geçirilen çalışmalarda, özellikle, başkalarına yönelik ve sosyal düzene yönelik mükemmeliyetçiliğin kişilerarası çatışma, sosyal kopukluk ve düşmanlıkla ilişkili olduğu belirtilmiştir. Ayrıca özellikle uyumsuz/olumsuz mükemmeliyetçiliğin, sosyal düzene yönelik mükemmeliyetçilik ve partner odaklı ve partner tarafından belirlenen mükemmeliyetçiliğin, ilişki dinamiklerini olumsuz yönde etkilediğini yönelik görgül çalışmalar yoğunluktadır. Gelecek araştırmaların, mükemmeliyetçiliğin farklı boyutları ile romantik ilişki süreçleri arasındaki ilişkileri incelemesi, mükemmeliyetçiliğin romantik ilişkilerdeki olumsuz etkilerini azaltmaya yönelik müdahale stratejilerini incelemesi ve terapi süreçlerinde bu faktörün nasıl ele alınabileceğine dair kanıt sunması önerilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, mükemmeliyetçiliğin dengelenmesi, sağlıklı ilişki dinamiklerinin korunmasında kritik bir rol oynamakta olup, bu alanda disiplinlerarası yaklaşımların geliştirilmesi gerekmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Mükemmeliyetçilik, romantik ilişkiler, kişilerarası ilişkiler

Introduction

The desire to seek and achieve perfection, which is characterized by the individual constantly aiming for the better and setting unattainable standards, has become one of the most striking psychological needs of recent years. In this context, it is thought that the tendency towards perfectionism has become more and more common in society in recent years and even continues to increase. A study conducted in the United States of America (USA) (Curran and Hill 2019) shows that the levels of perfectionism among US youth have steadily increased from 1989 to 2016. This finding leads to the conclusion that young people today feel pressure to "look perfect" or "be perfect" to meet the expectations of their friends, parents, or social media followers. As a matter of fact, the motto of being perfect and faultless has become a principle of the age and continues to influence individuals.

Conceptually, perfectionism is defined as setting high standards for oneself and those around one in order to achieve perfection in general terms, making intense efforts for these high standards, excessive criticism of one's behaviors, and excessive anxiety about negative evaluation (Frost et al. 1990). In addition to the increasing trend in society, the current concept has become a subject of great interest in the scientific literature. In particular, there is increasing empirical evidence and review studies in the literature that the concept is a "transdiagnostic" risk factor (Egan et al. 2011, Başaran 2022, Uzun and Yorulmaz 2023). In this context, research has revealed that perfectionistic personality traits are associated with many psychological problems such as obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), depression, anxiety, and eating disorders (Kaçar-Başaran and Arkar 2023, Lunn et al. 2023, Stackpole et al. 2023).

Perfectionism is a tendency that affects individuals in many aspects today. However, perfectionist tendencies do not only affect the individuals themselves but also make their interpersonal relationships very difficult. There is empirical evidence that multidimensional perfectionism has negative effects on interpersonal relationships (Holm-Denoma et al. 2008, Mackinnon et al. 2012). Empirical studies reveal that different dimensions of perfectionism affect various interpersonal problems in different ways (Haring et al. 2003). In this context, one of the interpersonal domains affected by perfectionism is romantic relationships (Stoeber 2012, Totonchi and Hassan 2018). Perfectionistic individuals may expect an idealized "perfect" behavior or relationship dynamic from their partners. In this case, existing relationships can trigger a challenging process for both partners. In the literature, studies are addressing perfectionistic tendencies and romantic relationships. However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no review of these studies together. Therefore, this review article aims to comprehensively examine the effects of perfectionism on romantic relationships and to evaluate the findings in the literature. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the relationship between different dimensions of perfectionism and relational factors such as relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, forgiveness/unforgiveness, relationship adjustment, and relationship quality and its effect on these factors.

Perfectionism Concept Structure and Sub-Dimensions

Perfectionism is a concept that has been discussed in the field of psychology for a long time and significantly shapes the lives of individuals. While early studies defined this concept as a more basic and unidimensional trait, a more complex and multidimensional perspective was adopted in the following periods (Frost et al. 1990, Hewitt-Flett 1991). This change in approach made it possible to examine different aspects of perfectionism in more detail and contributed to a better understanding of its effects on individuals' emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. The 90s have been a breaking point in terms of addressing the structure of the concept of perfectionism. Perfectionism was no longer considered as a unidimensional but as a multidimensional structure (Başaran 2022). From this perspective, Frost and colleagues (1990) were the first researchers to address perfectionism as a multidimensional construct. In their Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, Frost et al. (1990) treated the concept of perfectionism as a six-dimensional structure. These dimensions are: concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about actions, and organization. The sub-dimension of concern over mistakes refers to the intense reactions in response to a small mistake, attributing this mistake to

failure and associating this failure with losing respect in the eyes of other people. The personal standards subscale is defined as setting very high standards for oneself and making intense efforts to achieve these goals. It is also mentioned that this sub-dimension is associated with healthy experiences. Parental expectations is the individual's perception of his/her parents as people with very high expectations, while the parental criticism subscale is the individual's tendency to perceive his/her parents as critical. The doubts about actions sub-dimension is defined as the individual's constant doubts about the things he/she does and the decisions he/she makes, while the organization sub-dimension includes the perception that order and control are important.

Hewitt and Flett (1991) are other researchers who handled perfectionism as multidimensional. In their Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, Hewitt and Flett (1991) treated the concept of perfectionism as a three-dimensional model. These three dimensions are self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism, and socially prescribed perfectionism. The self-oriented perfectionism sub-dimension is characterized by setting high standards for oneself, evaluating oneself strictly for these standards, and criticizing oneself. The other-oriented perfectionism sub-dimension is characterized by setting strict and high standards for others and expecting them to make efforts to achieve them. While this sub-dimension can be associated with negative emotions such as resentment, hostility, and distrust towards others, it is also associated with positive issues such as leadership traits and creating motivation for others. The socially prescribed perfectionism sub-dimension is defined as an individual's tendency to feel that there is pressure exerted on him/her by people who are important to him/her to reach unrealistic standards. Individuals with this sub-dimension of perfectionism are concerned about being evaluated negatively because they strive to achieve the standards of others and are in a constant search for approval. In the study conducted by the aforementioned researchers, it is shown that these sub-dimensions of perfectionism can be revealed in both individual and social areas (Hewitt and Flett 1991).

In the measurement of perfectionism, perfectionistic concerns and perfectionistic strivings, which are two high-level factors emerging from the combination of these two scales developed by Frost et al. (1990) and Hewitt and Flett (1991), and the subscales of these scales, are generally used (Stoeber and Otto 2006, Stoeber et al. 2020). However, the fact that these factors are formed with different subscales (Stoeber and Damian 2016, Limburg et al. 2017) may create uncertainty about how to measure perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns and how to interpret the total perfectionism score (Stoeber et al. 2020, Başaran 2022).

In this direction, Smith et al. (2016) developed the Big Three Perfectionism Scale (BTPS) by examining perfectionism scales comprehensively and addressed perfectionism under three high-level factors: self-critical perfectionism, Rigid perfectionism, and narcissistic perfectionism. Self-critical perfectionism includes the sub-dimensions of concern about mistakes, doubt about actions, perfectionism determined by others, and self-criticism, while Rigid perfectionism includes the sub-dimensions of self-oriented perfectionism and conditioned self-perception. Narcissistic perfectionism, which is a relatively new contribution of the Big Three Perfectionism Model to the literature, consists of subscales such as perfectionism towards others, hypercriticism, entitlement, and grandiosity (Smith et al. 2016).

In conclusion, when we look at the aforementioned studies, it is seen that perfectionism was initially considered a unidimensional construct. However, over time, the idea that different aspects of this concept should be examined has become widespread and perfectionism has started to be considered as a multidimensional construct. In addition, while some researchers considered perfectionism as a positive trait, some defined it as a negative trait, and some considered both aspects (Başaran 2022). In this context, although there are many studies and opinions on perfectionism, it is still difficult to establish a common definition of perfectionism.

Perfectionism and Interpersonal Relationships

Perfectionism is a personality trait in which individuals set high expectations both for themselves and others and are constantly self-critical for fear of making mistakes. This attitude not only leads to stress and pressure in the individual's inner world but can also deeply affect interpersonal relationships.

One of the pioneering publications addressing this issue is Hill et al.'s (1997) publication. In a study with 357 university students, the researchers examined the relationship between the subscales of Hewitt-Flett's (1991) Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale and interpersonal traits [Revised Interpersonal Adjective Scale (IAS-R)] and interpersonal problems [The Inventory of Interpersonal Problems-Circumplex (IIP-C)]. In the current study, canonical correlations calculated the explainable variance of the relationship of perfectionism subscales with interpersonal traits and problems. In addition, the geometric properties of the interpersonal traits and interpersonal problems scales (IAS-R and IIP-C, respectively) were used to determine the positions of the perfectionism subscales in these models. Vector length and angular placements were used to visualize this relationship.

The findings of the present study's vector analyses in terms of interpersonal problems show that self-oriented perfectionism sub-dimension is associated with excessive altruism in females, and dominance and vindictiveness/revengefulness in males. Other oriented perfectionism was associated with dominance in both males and females. Socially prescribed perfectionism was associated with dominance in males and intrusiveness in females. These findings suggest that perfectionism tendencies may be associated with different interpersonal dynamics depending on their type and that these relationships are gender-specific. It also suggests that only socially prescribed perfectionism was significantly associated with interpersonal distress when vector lengths were assessed (Hill et al. 1997). The current study was recently revised by Stoeber et al. (2021). In this study, self-oriented perfectionists tended to be confident-dominant, other-oriented perfectionists tended to be arrogant-accountant, and socially prescribed perfectionists tended to be hard-hearted. In terms of interpersonal problems, it was reported that self-oriented perfectionism was not associated with significant interpersonal problems, but other-oriented perfectionism had a significant interpersonal quality, and people in this group reported attitudes and behaviors representing a mixture of extreme dominance and extreme indifference, which is considered to be vindictive. On the other hand, socially prescribed perfectionism has positive and significant correlations with all interpersonal problems and is associated with the tendency to experience interpersonal distress.

Another theoretical framework that examines the interpersonal relationships of perfectionistic individuals is the Social Disconnection Model (SDM) of perfectionism (Hewitt et al. 2006), which emphasizes that the dimension of socially prescribed perfectionism is an interpersonal risk factor that deprives individuals of social ties and makes them prone to suicide. The Social Disconnection Model proposes a model by focusing on the relationship networks between socially prescribed perfectionism, subjective social disconnection, objective social disconnection, interpersonal hostility, and interpersonal sensitivity. As can be seen, researchers have considered social disconnection in two different dimensions: subjective social disconnection refers to how the individual experiences isolation, while objective social disconnection involves actual interruptions and disruptions in social relationships. The model posits four testable hypotheses: a) socially prescribed perfectionism may trigger suicidal behavior through objective social disconnection; b) socially prescribed perfectionism may trigger suicidal behavior through subjective social disconnection; c) socially prescribed perfectionism may trigger objective social disconnection through interpersonal hostility; d) socially prescribed perfectionism may trigger subjective social disconnection through interpersonal sensitivity. More specifically, the model suggests that socially prescribed perfectionism leads the individual to experience interpersonal problems such as increased hostility and hypersensitivity to criticism and rejection. Although the model essentially models the network of relationships between suicidal behavior and socially prescribed perfectionism, later empirical studies have attempted to explain the relationships between socially prescribed perfectionism and other psychopathologies within the model. Sherry et al. (2008) tested and supported the SDM by showing that perceived social support mediates the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and depressive symptoms. Cha (2016) found that the indirect effect of mattering was significant in the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and depressive symptoms. Although the model initially focused on socially prescribed perfectionism, it was later expanded by Sherry et al. (2016) to include other oriented perfectionism, perfectionistic striving, and perfectionistic concerns. In this context, the SDM has also received significant empirical evidence support. In addition, other studies extending the model have emphasized the importance of social factors in the relationship between different sub-dimensions of perfectionism and psychological distress. For example, a relatively recent study (Hewitt et

al. 2020) reported that other-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism were associated with lower reductions in depression after group therapy. Stoeber et al. (2017) stated that people with other-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism indicate social disconnection and hostility, but this is not the case for people with high self-oriented perfectionism and that self-oriented perfectionism does not fit the Social Disconnection Model. Therefore, the researchers emphasized that in the updated versions of the model, it should be stated that it may not be applicable to all types of perfectionism.

In summary, studies on perfectionism sub-dimensions and interpersonal problems show that different sub-dimensions of perfectionism have different effects on interpersonal relationships. In particular, it has been found that other-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism is associated with interpersonal conflict, social disconnection, and hostility, whereas self-oriented perfectionism does not always lead to such negative interpersonal outcomes.

Perfectionism and Romantic Relationships

In addition to the ongoing studies on the effects of perfectionism and its sub-dimensions on interpersonal relationships and problems, there is a growing body of research examining the link between perfectionism and romantic relationships. Since romantic relationships are one of the social ties in which individuals have the closest and most intense emotional interaction, the role of perfectionism in these relationships has become an important area of research. Accordingly, one of the interpersonal areas affected by perfectionism is romantic relationships (Stoeber 2012, Totonchi and Hassan 2018).

In the literature, studies examining the effects of perfectionist attitudes on intimate relationships have addressed the effects of different dimensions of perfectionism on romantic relationships. In this context, in addition to studies addressing different dimensions of general perfectionism (Dimitrovsky et al. 2002) and relational factors, studies that include perfectionist attitudes in relationships (Trub et al. 2018) are also included in the literature. Stoeber (2012) conceptualized the perfectionist attitudes of individuals towards their romantic partners as "dyadic perfectionism" and stated that the concept has two main aspects: partner-oriented perfectionism and partner-prescribed perfectionism. In addition, the concept of "sexual perfectionism" is also considered an important dimension in understanding the effects of perfectionism on close relationships. Conceptually, sexual perfectionism is a dimension of perfectionism characterized by individuals setting unattainable standards for their sexual lives, developing rigid expectations regarding their sexual performance, and excessively avoiding making mistakes (Stoeber et al. 2013).

In addition to the diversity of perfectionism, its dimensions, and sub-dimensions, it is seen that studies dealing with perfectionism and relational factors address quite comprehensive relationship factors. As a matter of fact, perfectionism is considered an important individual characteristic that can affect a wide range of relational variables such as relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, relationship quality, and forgiveness/unforgiveness tendencies in couples. For this reason, in the following sections, the effects of perfectionism on couple relationships will be discussed in detail, including factors such as relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, relationship quality, and tendencies to forgive/not forgive.

Relationships between Perfectionism and Relationship Satisfaction, Marital Satisfaction and Sexual Satisfaction

Perfectionism may negatively affect relationship satisfaction through factors such as having excessively high expectations from the partner, avoiding flexibility in the relationship, and perceiving making mistakes as a threat, or it may play a role in increasing satisfaction by providing order and goal orientation in the relationship. In this context, examining the relationship between perfectionism and relationship satisfaction/marital satisfaction constitutes an important research area in terms of maintaining healthy and satisfying relationships. Studies on the relationship between perfectionism and relationship satisfaction aim to understand the effects of different dimensions of perfectionism on the quality and

sustainability of romantic relationships and individuals' emotional well-being. However, unfortunately, the number of studies examining the relationship between perfectionism relationship satisfaction and marital satisfaction is lower than expected.

In a study conducted in this context, Dimitrovsky et al. (2002) examined the relationship between dimensions of perfectionism, depression and marital satisfaction with 100 married women pregnant with their first child and 50 married women who had never experienced pregnancy. The findings showed that there were no differences in marital satisfaction and perfectionism in both groups. Correlation analyses provide some evidence for a relationship between certain dimensions of perfectionism and marital satisfaction. There was a significant and negative correlation between socially prescribed perfectionism and marital satisfaction in pregnant women and between perfectionism toward self and marital satisfaction in non-pregnant women. In both groups, no relationship was found between other-oriented perfectionism and marital satisfaction. Gingras et al. (2021), in a study conducted with 80 couples, found that maladaptive perfectionism was negatively related to each partner's own relationship satisfaction, while adaptive perfectionism was positively related to each partner's own relationship satisfaction. Falahzade and Sivandian (2025) examined the mediating role of emotion regulation and self-differentiation in the relationship between perfectionism and relationship satisfaction in dyadic relationships. According to the findings, it was found that there was a significant negative relationship between perfectionism in dyadic relationships and relationship satisfaction. In addition, the indirect effect of emotion regulation difficulties and self-differentiation in this relationship is also significant. Phillips et al. (2022), in their study on the relationship between positive and negative perfectionism and relationship satisfaction, hypothesized that participants with higher levels of positive perfectionism would report higher relationship satisfaction. However, the findings falsified this hypothesis and revealed that the relationship between negative perfectionism and relationship satisfaction was significant only in men. In addition, the relationships between perfectionistic self-presentation and relationship satisfaction have also been studied in the literature. In a study conducted by Casale et al. (2020) with 344 couples, it was reported that there were negative and significant relationships between perfectionistic self-presentation and relationship satisfaction in both male and female samples.

As can be seen, when the studies on perfectionism and relationship satisfaction in the international literature are examined, it is seen that perfectionism dimensions, especially other-oriented perfectionism, and socially prescribed perfectionism sub-dimensions, negatively affect romantic relationships. Studies examining the relationship between perfectionism and relationship satisfaction in Turkey also reveal similar findings. In the studies, the negative effects of both other oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism on relationship satisfaction are emphasized. According to a study conducted by Şensoy et al. in 2019, it was found that relationship satisfaction increased as a result of an increase in individuals' self-oriented perfectionism levels. In addition, it is stated that individuals with high levels of perfectionism towards others have lower relationship satisfaction. In the study conducted by Satıcı (2018), the relationships between perfectionism, emotional intelligence, mindfulness and romantic relationship satisfaction were examined. According to the findings of the study, it was found that there were significant negative relationships between young adults' perfectionism levels and emotional intelligence, mindfulness and relationship satisfaction. Similarly, Kol (2020) stated in a thesis study that there is a negative and significant relationship between positive and negative perfectionism and relationship satisfaction in dyadic relationships.

In the literature, there are also studies examining the relationship between perfectionism dimensions/subdimensions and relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships. For example, Trub et al. (2018) found that in a sample of 382 married and/or cohabiting US adults, partner-oriented perfectionism and partner-prescribed perfectionism were negatively related to relationship satisfaction, but self-oriented perfectionism was positively related to relationship satisfaction. In a study conducted with 58 couples, Stoeber (2012) examined the effect of dyadic perfectionism on relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships. In this study, partner-oriented perfectionism was found to have a positive effect on perfectionism perceived by the partner. In other words, the perfectionism expectations that individuals set for their partners lead their partners to perceive this perfectionism expectation. Individuals'

perfectionism expectations towards their partners negatively affect their satisfaction in the relationship and their long-term commitment. In addition, individuals with high perfectionism perceived by their partners were found to be less satisfied with the relationship.

In the literature, there are also studies that examine the relationship between perfectionism and marital satisfaction in different cultures. For example, Gol et al. (2013), in a study conducted in Iran, showed that there was a positive correlation between positive perfectionism and marital satisfaction and a negative correlation between negative perfectionism and marital satisfaction. In a study conducted in Malaysia, Mee et al. (2015) show that perfectionism in dyadic relationships is negatively and significantly related to marital satisfaction. Participants who showed high standards and high inconsistency towards their spouses tended to feel less satisfied in their marriages. Similarly, in a study conducted in Indonesia (Yovani and Rumondor 2021), both perfectionistic concerns and other-oriented perfectionism were found to be associated with lower marital satisfaction.

Longitudinal studies examining the relationship between perfectionism and relationship satisfaction are also included in the literature. For example, Lopez et al. (2006) examined the nature and effect of perfectionism in dyadic relationships in a sample of 116 university students in heterosexual relationships over a 3-month interval. The findings revealed that perfectionism in dyadic relationships was significantly related to relationship satisfaction in concurrent measures. Moreover, dyadic perfectionism scores significantly predicted relationship persistence 3 months later.

Perfectionist tendencies between couples also have an impact on sexual life. It is important to understand the effects of perfectionist tendencies on sexuality in order to develop a healthy relationship dynamic between couples. In this context, in a study by Dibartolo and Barlow (1996) examining the relationships between perfectionism, marital satisfaction and sexual dysfunctions, it was stated that setting high standards and fear of making mistakes increase the partner's performance anxiety and lead to negative emotions. In this context, it is stated that men who report high levels of perfectionism may be more likely to experience sexual dysfunction. In the aforementioned study, it was found that high perfectionism levels of women affected the marital satisfaction of both partners. In addition to marital and relationship satisfaction, perfectionism also shows significant relationships with sexual satisfaction. Studies reveal that sub-dimensions of perfectionism may affect different aspects of sexual life. In a study conducted by Habke et al. (1999), 74 married or cohabiting couples participated. Participants completed scales assessing perfectionism, perfectionistic self-presentation, sexual satisfaction, marital adjustment and depression. After controlling for the effects of marital satisfaction and depression, the man's sexual satisfaction was significantly negatively correlated with his own socially prescribed perfectionism and his wife's other oriented perfectionism. On the other hand, the woman's sexual satisfaction was significantly negatively correlated with both her husband's socially prescribed perfectionism and her own socially prescribed perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism and perfectionistic self-presentation. In a study conducted in Portugal (Palha-Fernandes et al. 2019), researchers stated that there was a negative and significant relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and sexual satisfaction and that socially prescribed perfectionism significantly predicted sexual satisfaction. A study examining sexual perfectionism and relationship satisfaction, which is a different measure of perfectionism (Vangeel et al. 2020), found that there was a negative and significant relationship between sexual perfectionism and relationship satisfaction.

In general, the present findings support previous views that other oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism are related to interpersonal relationship problems. In this context, it can be said that perfectionism is also significantly related to relationship and marital satisfaction. Other-oriented perfectionism may negatively affect relationship/marital satisfaction by leading to disappointment when the partner does not meet expectations. On the other hand, socially prescribed perfectionism may cause the individual to constantly feel inadequate towards his/her partner, to act with rejection anxiety and to feel under pressure in the relationship. This can lead to a decrease in relationship satisfaction.

Relationships between Perfectionism and Other Relational Factors

As mentioned in the previous sections, perfectionism is a personality trait characterized by setting high standards for oneself and one's environment and a tendency to avoid making mistakes. In the literature, perfectionism has been shown to have significant effects on psychological well-being and interpersonal relationships. However, perfectionism's rigid standards and low fault tolerance may affect individuals' tendency to forgive/not forgive, relationship quality, relationship adjustment/marital adjustment, and even violent tendencies. Therefore, in this section, the relationships between perfectionism and relational factors such as tendencies to forgive/unforgive, relationship quality, relationship adjustment/marital adjustment, etc. will be reviewed.

The tendency of perfectionist individuals to be intolerant in the face of mistakes may cause them to magnify the mistakes of the other person in romantic relationships and to exhibit a punitive or distant attitude instead of forgiveness. In this context, Kurt and Demir (2022) examined the relationship between perfectionism levels and forgiveness levels in individuals in romantic relationships. Discrepancy and order dimensions significantly predicted the tendency to forgive. Furman et al. (2017) examined the mediating role of conflict in the relationship between perfectionistic tendencies and forgiveness. The findings of the study indicate that there is a negative and significant relationship between partner-oriented and partner-prescribed perfectionism and forgiveness behavior. Perfectionist individuals may interpret their partners' behaviors towards them in a way that encourages conflict and this causes them to exhibit less forgiving behaviors in their relationships. In a study conducted by Kaya (2015), it was aimed to examine the mediating role of emotional intelligence in the relationship between forgiveness and perfectionism in university students. Considering the findings obtained from the study, it was found that there was a negative relationship between students' forgiveness levels and perfectionism levels. It is stated that perfectionist individuals experience a decrease in the level of forgiveness of the event, person, and self due to situations such as excessive worrying in the face of mistakes, performing below the standards set by themselves, and criticism from the family.

On the other hand, perfectionistic tendencies may also affect beliefs about the relationship and relationship adjustment. One of the pioneering publications examining the relationship between perfectionism and romantic relationships is the study published by Hewitt et al. in 1995. In this study, the researchers examined the relationship between perfectionism and relationship adjustment and family adjustment with 83 participants with chronic pain and their partners. The findings revealed that there was no relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and marital adjustment. In addition, it was found that pain patients with spouses who had high levels of other-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism tended to report significantly lower levels of family adjustment. Flett et al. (2001) examined the relationship between the dimensions of perfectionism and relationship beliefs, relationship behaviors, and relationship adjustment. In this study conducted with university students in dating relationships, it was found that individuals with higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism and other-oriented perfectionism had stronger relationship beliefs. High levels of socially prescribed perfectionism were associated with destructive relationship reactions and low relationship adjustment. In a study conducted with 290 married individuals, Bıyıkoglu and Egeci (2017) showed that individuals with self-oriented perfectionism and individuals who used problem-focused coping strategies more frequently reported higher levels of marital adjustment. In particular, socially prescribed perfectionism in men and self-oriented perfectionism in women were found to be determinants of marital adjustment. In a study conducted by Tuncay (2006), the relationship between marital adjustment and perfectionism was examined. It was found that socially prescribed perfectionism was an important predictor of marital adjustment for both men and women. It is stated that individuals with high socially prescribed perfectionism may have low marital adjustment. In other words, when individuals think that their partners demand perfection from them, their level of marital adjustment may decrease. In a study conducted by Kızılöz-Başsayın in 2018, the relationship between perfectionism and marital adjustment was examined. It was stated that there was a positive relationship between self-oriented perfectionism levels and marital adjustment and a negative relationship between other oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism and marital adjustment.

One of the factors determining the effect of perfectionism on marital adjustment is coping strategies. For this reason, some studies in the literature have examined the relationships between the concepts of perfectionism, marital adjustment, and coping strategies in relationships. Haring et al. (2003) examined the relationship between perfectionism, maladaptive coping strategies in marriage and marital adjustment in a study conducted with 76 couples. In this study, high levels of socially prescribed perfectionism were associated with low marital adjustment and high levels of maladaptive coping strategies for both the individual and his/her spouse. Moreover, the use of negative coping strategies mediated the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and poorer marital functioning. This indirect effect was significant for both the individuals themselves and their spouses.

Perfectionist expectations have also been found to be significantly correlated with relationship quality. Tosun and Yazıcı (2021), in a study conducted with university students, found that dyadic perfectionism in romantic relationships was positively correlated with some sub-dimensions of relationship quality. The current finding showed that high expectations for the partner and the view that partners are inadequate negatively affect relationships. In addition, the findings were interpreted that individuals with high levels of perfectionism have low perceptions of social support and depth in relationships, which increases the potential for conflict. In addition, Ashby et al. (2008), in a study conducted with 197 engaged couples, found that the presence of maladaptive perfectionism in only one of the couples tended to decrease relationship quality.

Perfectionistic tendencies not only affect the quality of individuals' romantic relationships but also have an impact on the likelihood of being in a relationship or establishing intimacy. Martin and Ashby (2004) reported that maladaptive perfectionists reported significantly more fear of intimacy than non-perfectionists among university students. In addition, perfectionistic tendencies may also affect long-term relationship commitment, relationship stress, and the tendency to betray. Stoeber et al. (2012), in a study conducted with 58 university students and their partners, reported that partner-oriented perfectionism significantly predicted long-term relationship commitment. In addition, comparative analyses revealed that participants with high levels of partner-oriented perfectionism reported lower levels of long-term commitment compared to participants with low levels of partner-oriented perfectionism. In addition, Piotrowski (2020) stated that "discrepancy" tendencies, a sub-dimension of perfectionism in romantic relationships, significantly predicted both relationship stress and relational conflict. Therefore, the researchers stated that this difference/inconsistency between the individual's expectations and the partner's level of meeting these expectations can lead to conflicts and become a source of stress in the relationship. Soltanzadeh Rezamahalleh (2021) suggested that perfectionism is related to marital infidelity. The researcher found that there were positive and significant relationships between marital infidelity/betrayal tendency and negative perfectionism, and 25% of the variance of positive attitudes towards marital infidelity was explained by perfectionism.

More risky effects of perfectionism on relationships have also been examined. Lafontaine et al. (2021) found that socially prescribed perfectionism was significantly associated with psychological and physical intimate partner violence victimization. In this context, it has been shown that especially maladaptive forms of perfectionism may pave the way for violent behaviors such as control over the partner and abuse. Punitive attitudes may emerge when the partner fails to meet expectations, which may trigger psychological or even physical violence behaviors.

In sum, these findings suggest that perfectionistic tendencies may have a wide range of negative consequences in couple relationships. Perfectionism's rigid standards, high expectations for oneself and others, and low fault tolerance may negatively affect individuals' tendency to forgive/not forgive, relationship quality, and relationship/marital adjustment. The current findings suggest that the challenges posed by perfectionism in relationships affect individuals' emotional and behavioral responses, which may harm the overall dynamics in the relationship.

Conclusion

Perfectionism is defined as setting high standards for oneself and others around oneself in order to

achieve perfection, making intense efforts for these high standards, making excessive criticism of one's own behavior, and feeling excessive anxiety about being evaluated negatively (Frost et al. 1990). Perfectionism is a tendency that affects individuals in different ways today. However, these tendencies make not only the individual himself/herself but also the interpersonal relationships of individuals quite difficult (Holm-Denoma et al. 2008, Mackinnon et al. 2012). In addition to the diversity of perfectionism, its dimensions, and sub-dimensions, studies on perfectionism and relational factors have addressed quite comprehensive relationship factors. The aim of this study is to examine the effects of perfectionism on romantic relationships in a comprehensive manner and to examine the effects of different dimensions of the concept on relationship dynamics.

In the current review, firstly, the multidimensional nature of the concept and studies aimed at defining its structure were included. Then, models and studies on the effects of perfectionism on interpersonal relationships and problems were mentioned. In this context, especially the Social Disconnection Model of Perfectionism and its extended versions underline that different sub-dimensions of the concept do not have the same effect on interpersonal relationships. Two sub-dimensions that draw attention in this context are other-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism. The model and the empirical evidence supporting it suggest that other-oriented perfectionism and socially prescribed perfectionism is associated with social disconnection and hostility, whereas self-oriented perfectionism does not always produce such negative interpersonal outcomes.

In studies examining the effects of perfectionism in romantic relationships, it is seen that perfectionist tendencies affect relationship dynamics in different ways. In the literature, it was reported that relationship and marital satisfaction increased with an increase in the level of self-oriented perfectionism (Trub et al. 2018, Şensoy et al. 2019). In addition, socially prescribed perfectionism was found to be directly proportional to the tendency to experience problems, which stands out as an important risk factor for romantic relationships. Individuals with high socially prescribed perfectionism perceive that others demand perfection from them and may think that it would be impossible to achieve perfection. It is stated that they experience stress and anxiety in their relationships by feeling the obligation to be a "perfect partner" (Haring et al. 2003, Tuncay 2006). As a matter of fact, there are many studies suggesting that socially prescribed perfectionism is associated with psychological well-being, physical health and poor interpersonal adjustment (Flett et al. 2022). The Social Disconnection Model (Hewitt et al. 2006) also stated that perfectionistic tendencies towards social order is an interpersonal risk factor that makes individuals more vulnerable to suicidal behavior by detaching them from their social ties. Therefore, socially prescribed perfectionism, in one context, represents a rigid and challenging aspect of perfectionism that harms both psychological health and relationships. Similarly, the relationship between maladaptive/negative perfectionism, partner-oriented and partner-prescribed perfectionism and negative factors in relationships has been supported in the literature. However, even though there are studies addressing narcissistic perfectionism, which is considered as a relatively new and interpersonal dimension of perfectionism, and interpersonal problems (Nealis et al. 2015), there is no study on relational factors such as relationship satisfaction, marital satisfaction, and relationship quality. It is important for future studies to contribute to the literature in this regard.

When the existing literature is examined, it is seen that the studies on the effects of perfectionism in couple therapies are quite limited. In this context, the effects of perfectionism on romantic relationships should be addressed in couple therapies and this issue should be focused on more. In this context, addressing perfectionist attitudes in couple therapies may contribute to the partners bringing their expectations for each other to a more realistic level and developing more tolerance for making mistakes and being imperfect. In the literature, the number of studies examining the effect of perfectionism in couple and family therapies is limited (Afghari et al. 2021, Jafari et al. 2025). Jafari et al. (2025) reported that cognitive behavioral family therapy is an effective therapy method that reduces anxiety and perfectionism levels in individuals with marital conflict. Therefore, in future research, it is recommended to design studies examining perfectionist tendencies in couple therapies to understand the effect of perfectionism on romantic relationships in more detail.

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