

## Perfectionism isn't perfect: study

New research suggests perfectionism might harm more than help

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The perfectionist. That person who's always focused, aces every test, and holds him or herself to the highest standard is someone many people idolize. But is perfectionism really a good thing?

A new scientific study suggests it might actually hinder more than it helps, at least in some circumstances. The study will be published in the *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science's* next issue.

According to the study, there have been studies that gave compelling evidence on the negative consequences of perfectionism, but they only looked at undergrad students and clinical patients.

The study looks at the effects of perfectionism in psychology professors.

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"Individuals who are high in perfectionism tend to fear failure, avoid criticism and react negatively to achievement setbacks," said Aislin Graham, a doctoral student at Dalhousie University and co-author of the study, in an email to UNews.

Graham said perfectionism should have a clear negative impact on psychology professors because rejection, review, and criticism are a major part of their research.

The professors' extensive knowledge of psychology could be seen as something that might skew the data, but Graham says the chance that a significant number of participants would change their responses after discovering the study's hypothesis is very low. She says this is because psychology covers a vast number of topics.

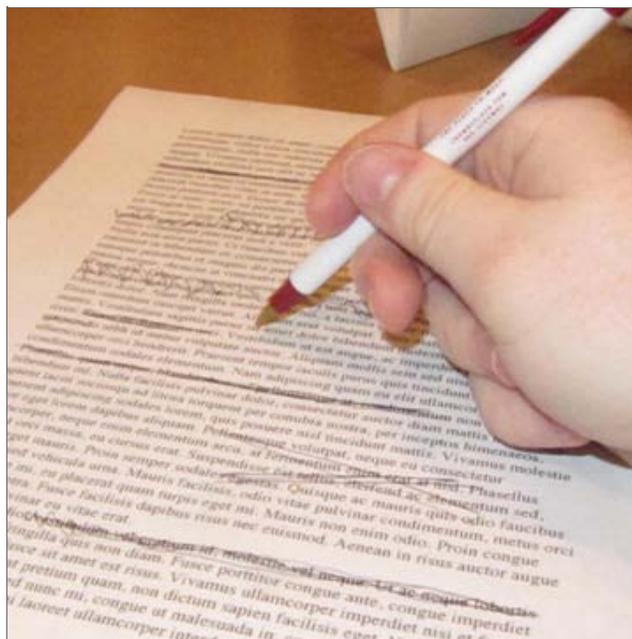
Researchers sent an online survey to about 10,000 psychology professors across North America. Of those, 1,258 participated. The survey aimed to get a measure of each participant's level of perfectionism.

The researchers measured neuroticism and conscientiousness as points of comparison. Neuroticism is defined as a person's tendency to experience negative emotions. Conscientiousness is defined as a person's tendency to be careful and diligent.

The researchers compared the scores they measured from the survey with numbers that reflect each participant's productivity in research. The researchers define productivity as the total number of scientific papers the participants have published, the number of citations they have received, and the number of times their work was published in prominent journals.

The survey's results showed that striving for perfection did negatively affect the participants'

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Over-striving to perfect your work might be counter-productive. (Photo: Lucas Newhook)

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productivity. Participants who were high in perfectionism tended to have fewer papers published, receive fewer citations, and were published less often.

The researchers concluded that perfectionism leads to over-striving towards goals and inflexibility, which are both problematic in academia and many other areas.

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