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Theoretical aspects of studying perfectionism in the process of professional training

Abstract: The article discusses the perfectionism concept in various aspects of human activity, which is of great interest to both foreign and domestic scholars. This interest can be explained by the high pace of life, social changes, growing competition, the cult of rationality and the desire for perfection that prevails in modern society. Modern psychologists interpret the term "эperfectionism" as an individual's desire to improve himself or herself and achieve perfection in all areas of activity. Perfectionism manifests in setting excessively high-performance standards, accompanying this practice with critical self-evaluations and anxiety about the judgements of others. In the context of professional activities, it can contribute to success and lead to burnout and reduced productivity. Research on this topic helps to understand how perfectionistic tendencies shape personality and professional strategies, like their impact on mental health. Perfectionism has a significant effect on the efficiency and effectiveness of professional activities. Most researchers believe it hurts professional performance, leading to decreased productivity, chronic fatigue, self-dissatisfaction, procrastination, burnout syndrome, and fear of failure. However, some scholars point to positive aspects of perfectionism that contribute to personal development. Prospects for further research focus on an empirical analysis of the impact of perfectionism on professional activities, which may help to identify new ways to support mental health and work performance.

Keywords: perfectionism, normal perfectionism, destructive perfectionism, perfective personality, professional identification.

Introduction

Modernity is characterised by complex and contradictory realities that affect the development of a young democratic Ukraine and global changes in all spheres of its life. These factors form a social order for the professional training of future specialists in socio-economic

professions, emphasising the need to create a personally mature and professionally competent specialist. Constant work on self-improvement requires considerable energy and high requirements for motivational and dispositional factors of future specialists' behaviour. In this regard, developing perfectionist attitudes in students is becoming a significant area of psychological and pedagogical research on future professional and personal growth.

The study aims to analyse the existing approaches to studying personal perfectionism in professional training.

For a long time, perfectionism has been studied by many scientists such as D. Burns, N. Garanyan, O. Loza, J. Ashby, R. Slaney and D. Johnson, M. Smith, D. Saklofsky, H. Stober, S. Sherry, R. Frost, P. Marten, K. Lahart, R. Rosembler, P. Hewitt and G. Flett, R. Hill, T. Hulsman, R. Furr, J. Kibler, B. Wickent, K. Kennedy (*Grisenko & Smoliarova, 2012*; *Diachenko et al., 2020*; *Zakharenko, 2021*; *Karamushka et al., 2018*; *Kononenko & Kononenko, 2017*; *Kuzina, 2018*), etc. However, the available research leaves the question of the role of perfectionism in professional training.

Material and results

The term "perfectionism" came to European languages from the Latin "perfectus", i.e., absolute perfection. In psychological science, perfectionism is interpreted as the belief that improvement, both of oneself and others, is the goal for which a person should strive.

In psychological science, perfectionism is viewed as a desire for self-improvement, a personality trait. At the everyday level, perfectionism is understood as an excessive desire for perfection, a person's high demands on himself or herself and everyone around him or her. We can find the following synonyms for the term "perfectionism": "perfect", "complete", "flawless", "ideal", "unsurpassed", "exemplary", etc. Sometimes perfectionism is called the "excellent student syndrome" because of the desire to do everything with "excellent" marks.

K. Horney, who made the first scientific theoretical studies in this area, believed that in striving to get as close as possible to the "true ideal", a person is born with a "healthy" goal and values of life are formed. At the same time, the researcher warned that one should distinguish between the concepts of a "true ideal' and a 'neurotically idealised self-image". A. Adler, in his concepts, considers the "striving for perfection" or "striving for superiority", which, in our opinion, is the basis of perfectionism (*Loza, 2015*).

M. Hollender was among the first to define perfectionism as "the everyday practice of demanding a higher quality of performance than the circumstances require". The scientist assigned this character trait a leading role in overcoming depression and various psychological diseases (*Kononenko, 2016*; *Kuzina, 2018*). D. Burns performed an in-depth analysis of the concept. They defined perfectionism as a particular "network of cognitions" that includes expectations, interpretations of events, and assessments of oneself and others. According to his description, individuals suffering from perfectionism "tend to set unrealistically high standards, strive for impossible goals, and define their value solely in terms of achievement and productivity" (*Loza, 2015*).

According to A. Pakht, perfectionism is a widespread and complicated problem associated with many psychological and physical disorders (alcoholism, personality disorders, neuroses,

depression, etc.). It has clinical, psychological, sociological, socio-psychological, and cultural significance (*Loza, 2015*).

O. Loza was among the Ukrainian researchers who made the first attempts to classify all the theories of perfectionism, identifying three approaches to defining this phenomenon: as a desire for self-improvement (self-improvement motive), as an attitude (setting), as a personality trait (*Loza, 2015*).

L. Karamushka and T. Hruby consider it appropriate to distinguish between two main groups regarding the perfectionism construct. Namely, perfectionism with a positive orientation is characterised by a constructive desire to achieve positive self-esteem; a person enjoys the work he or she does, strives for self-development and improvement of results, considering his or her capabilities, while remaining able to accept the fact that there is a limit to his or her perfection. Negative perfectionism arises from an incorrect ratio of "perfectionist" tendencies and their disproportionate development, which causes no result to seem perfect enough to a person. It is characterised by irrational thinking, a tendency to self-criticism, self-blame and blaming others, procrastination, and maladaptive coping strategies (*Karamushka et al., 2018*).

Λ. Zakharenko, depending on the level of perfectionism, distinguishes the following types of perfectionist personalities: hyper-perfectionists – excessively perfect, set too high goals and are not satisfied with the results obtained; constructive perfectionists – formulate achievable goals, can adjust them depending on the situation, allowing for the possibility of both success and failure; destructive perfectionists – have polarised thinking and an undemanding system of standards that levels the likelihood of achieving it, and any result is recognised as imperfect; hypo-perfectionists – with very weakly expressed perfectionist claims, are light-hearted about work and mistakes, but tolerant of themselves and others, fully satisfied with themselves, have high self-esteem and a positive perception of life (*Zakharenko, 2021*).

Different studies in the psychological literature reflect different understandings of the definition of perfectionism. We understand perfectionism as a personality trait that manifests itself in daily practice as a requirement for oneself to perform activities at a higher level of quality than required by the circumstances.

Thus, perfectionism undoubtedly forms a certain rhythm in a modern person's life, determining their social activity's style, quality, and speed. It serves as the basis for success and professional self-realisation, positively impacting productivity in the professional sphere. This is manifested in increased activity in achieving socially approved goals, conscientiousness, flexibility in behaviour and a high level of self-regulation.

Professional perfectionism can be defined as an individual's desire for excellence, setting high personal standards and trying to achieve results that meet the highest moral, ethical and intellectual standards. This approach promotes personal development and improves the overall quality of professional performance, creating the conditions for achieving significant career success.

In our opinion, it is crucial to focus on the study of professional perfectionism in the context of professional identification, focusing on its positive aspects, such as an active desire for achievement, high personal performance standards, organisation, and efficiency.

T. Grubi notes that the analysis of scientific sources by both foreign and domestic scholars has revealed the positive impact of perfectionism on the productivity of an individual's professional activity. The main aspects are as follows:

- the key to success and professional self-realisation;
- the dominance of the motivation to avoid failure;
- conscientiousness and constructive striving for achievement;
- high results in various areas of professional activity;
- altruistic social attitudes;
- activity in achieving socially approved goals;
- increased self-respect, self-confidence and positive self-esteem;
- self-efficacy and self-actualisation;
- effective learning strategies and good academic performance (e.g., for postgraduate teachers);
- development of adaptive coping strategies;
- positive interpersonal qualities;
- high level of responsibility (including external and internal control over the performance of own activities);
- flexibility in behaviour, developed ability to model the conditions of own activities, like a high level of general self-regulation (*Gruby, 2016*).

Perfectionism is a powerful motivator for professional development, as it encourages professionals to set high standards and strive to achieve the best results in their work. This desire can increase their productivity by enabling them to learn new skills, improve their existing knowledge and search for innovative approaches to performing tasks. In addition, perfectionism promotes a thorough analysis of one's achievements and mistakes, allowing professionals to understand their strengths and weaknesses better. However, perfectionism can also pose challenges and risks for a future professional, as it can lead to psychological stress, overwork and overload, and negatively affect the self-esteem of professional skills, motivation and attitude toward mistakes and own achievements (*Gruby, 2016*; *Karamushka et al., 2018*; *Zakharenko, 2021*).

The psychological factors of professional perfectionism are constant dissatisfaction with oneself and achievements, a "stupor" in activities where there is no confidence in the high quality of performance, and competitive relationships with others through constant comparison of oneself. Perfectionistic traits in professionals' future manifest in the desire to meet high standards of professional activity, functional efficiency, and continuous personal and professional self-improvement.

One aspect of perfectionism in professional training is self-judgement and fear. This is manifested in a critical attitude to one's achievements and failures, which can lead to a constant feeling of dissatisfaction. Fear of making mistakes or being judged negatively by others can interfere with practical learning and professional development by blocking creativity and initiative. Thus, it is significant to identify these aspects of perfectionism to find a healthy balance between striving for excellence and accepting one's shortcomings.

Thus, the role of perfectionism in the professional training process of future specialists affects motivation, self-esteem and attitude towards the future profession. The significance of

self-acceptance, flexibility and awareness of one's values are highlighted as crucial strategies for overcoming perfectionistic tendencies and forming a professional identity. These elements help to create a healthier approach to professional development, allowing professionals to focus on growth and learning rather than just achieving perfection. Thus, balancing the pursuit of excellence and self-acceptance becomes an important aspect that supports psychological well-being and professional effectiveness, contributing to a successful career.

Conclusions

Thus, the analysis of different views on the problem of perfectionism has shown that there is currently no single, generally accepted answer to the question of its phenomenological nature since perfectionism is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon. Studies by foreign and domestic authors reveal this construct's positive and negative aspects.

Perfectionism is characterised by the pursuit of high standards, impeccability, and achievements in all areas of life. It can be viewed as a special style of thinking, emotional reaction, and behaviour focused on achieving excessively high expectations. It manifests in a constant desire for perfection, a critical attitude to one's results, and perfectionistic demands on oneself and others. This formulation is generally accepted and widely used in the psychological literature.

Studies have also shown that perfectionism can significantly impact professional motivation, self-esteem, and attitudes towards the future profession. Self-acceptance, flexibility, and awareness of one's own values are highlighted as key strategies for overcoming perfectionistic tendencies and forming a professional identity, which emphasises the importance of psychological well-being in professional activities.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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