

The Moderating Effect of Trait Anxiety on the Relationship between Self-Oriented Perfectionism and Task Performance

The present study will examine the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and performance on a math test, and how an individual's level of trait anxiety influences the nature of that relationship. Self-oriented perfectionism is characterized by striving for flawless performance on a given task, setting excessively high standards for oneself, and stringently evaluating own performance. The current study expects to find that higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism in individuals will be related to higher levels of performance on a math test. Previous studies have found that higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism related to higher levels of performance because of the motivation that these individuals have to reach his or her own expectations. However, additional results are needed on self-oriented perfectionism's relationship with performance because most of the research has focused on its relationship with clinical outcomes such as depression and anxiety. The current study will add results on self-oriented perfectionism to the industrial/organizational psychology literature relating to job performance.

In addition, the current study expects to find that higher individual levels of trait anxiety are related to lower levels of performance. Previous studies have found anxiety to be related to lower performance because at higher levels of anxiety, individuals shift their attention away from the task and towards their anxiety about the task. Furthermore, higher levels of anxiety have been found to raise heart rate and give individuals "butterflies", which takes his or her focus and energy away from the task. The current study expects to replicate previous findings that higher anxiety is related to lower performance.

Most importantly, the present study proposes that higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism along with higher levels of trait anxiety relate to lower math test performance. The interaction among the study variables has not been adequately explored in research. Due to the concern that one may not reach personal expectations and the added pressure that is associated with higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism, the current study expects that higher levels of self-oriented perfectionism along with higher levels of trait anxiety will cause individuals to become overwhelmed with anxiety and perform poorly on the math test. Furthermore, the current study expects to find that individuals will perform best when they are high in self-oriented perfectionism and low in trait anxiety. Individuals who are high in self-oriented perfectionism and low in trait anxiety strive to perform at a high level, but do not become overwhelmed with concern over the task and therefore perform at a higher level. Findings on the interaction between self-oriented perfectionism and trait anxiety as related to performance will provide needed understanding on the nature of these dispositions' relationship with performance, and help organizations better predict higher job performance

This study is part of a larger study on trait interaction and performance. Participants are undergraduate students from UNC Charlotte. Performance is measured using modular arithmetic problems. Demographic variables and perceived math competency will be controlled for in statistical analyses.