



## The Effect of Perfectionism on Fear of Failure in Boarding School Students

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### ABSTRACT

Fear of failure is a motive to avoid failure and shame or humiliation caused by failure. Fear of failure has consequences in achieving goals or weakening efforts. In some cases, fear of failure impacts mental health and student achievement. One of the factors influencing the fear of failure is perfectionism. This study aimed to determine the influence of perfectionists on the fear of failure in boarding school students. The study participants comprised 338 boarding school students (185 boys; 135 girls) aged 14-17 years. The research instruments used are the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS-F) to measure perfectionists and the Fear of Failure in Learning Scale (FOFL) to measure fear of student failure. A simple linear regression analysis showed that perfectionists could predict fear of failure ( $R = 0,477$ ;  $R^2 = 0,277$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ). The practical contribution of perfectionists to fear of failure was 27,7%. This finding shows that fear of failure is a problem for students affected by perfectionists..

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Boarding schools are an alternative to the education system by providing 24-hour academic and non-academic services. During their stay in student dormitories, teachers and hostel managers live in the same environment so that students receive continuous education by following good practices from teachers and supervisors (Wawan et al., 2018). The boarding school environment is unique and provides opportunities for better self-development (Holden et al., 2010). Boarding schools can improve students' social, cultural, and educational spirit (Bass, 2014). The boarding school system can prevent students from harmful environmental influences (Curto & Frayer, 2014), have a structured study schedule and routine (Bass, 2014; Smith et al., 2004), and have a positive peer environment (Curto & Frayer, 2014). However, boarding education reduces comfort at school and agreeableness with peers (Behaghel et al., 2017); there is no significant academic improvement and social and emotional effects, especially in first-year students (de Janvry et al., 2012). The experience of being separated because of having to live in a hostel causes a change in identity, decreased attachment to the school, and feelings of alienation from the community of origin (Curto & Frayer, 2014).

X School is one of the boarding-based schools in the Malang Regency. School X has a specially designed curriculum that combines Islamic boarding schools and formal education. Students are required to memorize the Al-Quran and take part in quite solid academic activities. School X graduates have succeeded in continuing their favorite higher education at home and abroad. Based on the results of interviews, it is known that parents and educational institutions have great expectations of students. Schools place high academic demands to meet these expectations and make strict rules. The study's results found that academic demands, lots of rules, and high parental expectations impacted well-being and gave rise to a fear of failure (Behaghel et al., 2017; Curto & Frayer, 2014; Hidayah, 2012; Muhid & Mukarrohmah 2018).

Fear of failure is a motive to avoid failure and the shame or humiliation caused by failure (Atkinson, 1957; Conroy, 2001). Fear of failure represents the beliefs held by individuals about the potential for failure. Beliefs about failure stem from specific fears such as fear of experiencing shame, fear of losing self-esteem, fear of having an uncertain future, fear of losing the attention of others who are considered necessary, and fear of upsetting others. Fear of failure is also associated with feelings of shame (Mcgregor & Elliot, 2015). Another study found that high fear of failure is associated with lower metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies can help students evaluate the development of their academic achievements (Bartels & Magun-Jackson, 2009).

The fear of failing students in Indonesia in 2021 is illustrated by data from 146 schools in 22 provinces. The result is that 50.9% of students are in the high fear of failure category, and 49.1% have a low fear of failure. These results are related to academic self-efficacy and student academic cheating. When individuals have high academic self-efficacy and fear of failure, academic cheating is also high. When self-efficacy in the academic field is low and the fear of failure is high, academic cheating is categorized as high. This explains that even though self-efficacy in the academic field is high or low when the fear of failure is high, academic cheating behavior will also remain high. These results illustrate the role of fear of failure in academic cheating (Paulus & Septiana, 2021).

Fear of failure is negatively related to life satisfaction (Huang, 2021), satisfaction with school, and academic satisfaction (Deneault et al., 2020). Other studies have also explained the impact of fear of failure on entrepreneurial orientation (Kong et al., 2020; Martins et al., 2018) and academic achievement (Alkhazaleh & Mahasneh, 2016; Deneault et al., 2020).

The fear of failure is influenced by several factors, namely overly controlling parenting (Deneault et al., 2020), low self-esteem (Zhang et al., 2018), self-efficacy (Tseng, 2020), and the influence of gender (Borgonovi & Han, 2021). Qualitative studies found that the fear of failure experienced by athletes is influenced by pressure to succeed, poor performance, match scores, and the opponent's reputation (Sagar et al., 2010). The teacher's teaching style that controls students affects the increase in fear of failure, but a teaching style that supports students can reduce the fear of failure (Hernández et al., 2020). Another factor that influences the fear of failure is perfectionism (Sederlund et al., 2020). It is known that perfectionism affects the fear of failure for individuals with anxiety disorders, hypertension and healthy individuals (Pervichko et al., 2020).

Perfectionism is a personality disposition characterized by setting work standards that are too high and accompanied by a tendency to overly critical self-evaluations (Frost et al., 1990). Several previous studies have explained the influence of perfectionism on the fear of failure. Athletes who strive for perfection during competition by keeping adverse reactions to imperfections at bay will have higher expectations of success and lower fear of failure. Conversely, athletes who respond negatively to imperfection tend to blame themselves and fear failure. This shows that perfectionism affects the fear of failure (Stoeber & Becker, 2008). Other research shows that individuals who experience failure at the first opportunity and have high perfectionism tend to feel more threatened and withdraw from subsequent opportunities (Hill et al., 2016).

The above explanation regarding the impact of fear of failure on students shows the importance of knowing the factors that influence this problem. Perfectionism is known as one of the factors that can increase the fear of failure in students. This research is expected to be a reference in designing interventions to overcome a fear of failure in students. In addition, the results of this study can be a source of other research related to students, especially in boarding schools. Based on the previous explanation, the research hypothesis is that perfectionism can predict the fear of failure in boarding school students.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

Participants were students at boarding school X in Malang Regency. Participants were obtained using a random sampling technique. In table 1, a total of 338 study participants consisted of 185 men (55%) and 153 women (45%). The age of the majority of participants was 102 (30%) 15 years, 96 (29%) 16 years, 82 (24%) 17 years, and 58 participants (17%) 14 years.

The research instrument used was the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPSF) developed by Correia et al. (2017), totaling 21 items. MPS-F has 6 aspects: concern over mistakes, personal standards, parental expectations, parental criticism, doubts about actions, and organization. Students answered on a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this study, the MPS-F has a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient of 0.87.

The Fear of Failure in Learning Scale (FOFL) developed by Choi (2020) measures students' fear of failure. This scale consists of 26 items of four aspects: the feeling of shame, performance avoidance, learned helplessness, and self-handicapping. Students were asked to provide answers with a five-point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The scale coefficient in this study is Cronbach's  $\alpha$  0.86.

All MPS-F and FOFL scale items were translated into Indonesian to be tested on 140 boarding school students aged 14-17 years. The test results on the MPS-F scale have an item-total correlation of 0.278 - 0.693 by removing 1 item that is not invalid. MPS-F has a reliability

coefficient alpha of 0.87. The FOFL scale has an item-total correlation of 0.273 - 0.650, and there is 1 item that is not valid. The FOFL scale has a reliability coefficient alpha of 0.86.

### 3. Results & Discussion

Table 2 describes the data on 338 boarding school students based on perfectionism and fear of failure. The mean and standard deviation of the perfectionist variable ( $M = 69.79$ ;  $SD = 11.05$ ) while the fear of failure variable ( $M = 81.83$ ;  $SD = 13.65$ ). In this study, it was known that most participant perfectionists were in the high category (49.4%) and the medium category (48.5%). While in the low category, there were only 7 participants (2.1%). Most of the participants' fear of failure was in the moderate category (74.6%). 86 participants (25.4%) were in the high category, and no fear of failure was found in the low category.

**Table 1.** Data description

Variable	Mean	SD	Data Category			
			Category	Value	Frequency	Percentage
Perfectionist	69,79	11,05	Low	<58,4	7	2,1%
			Medium	58,4 – 91,6	164	48,5%
			High	>91,6	167	49,4%
Fear of failure	81,83	13,65	Low	< 50	-	-
			Medium	50-70	252	74,6%
			High	< 70	86	25,4%

The results of the normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov in table 3 show the significant value of the perfectionist variable ( $0.200 > 0.05$ ) and the fear of failure variable ( $0.091 > 0.05$ ). These results indicate that the data on perfectionism and fear of failure are typically distributed—furthermore, the results of the linearity test through test linearity. The significance value ( $0.000 < 0.05$ ) indicates a linear relationship between the fear of failure and perfectionist variables. Based on the results of the normality and linearity tests, the data can then be analyzed using parametric inferential statistical tests.

**Table 2.** Normally and Linearity Test Results

Variable	Normally	Linearity
Perfectionist	0,2000	0,000
Fear of failure	0,091	

The results of the hypothesis test in table 4 regarding the influence of perfectionism on the fear of failure of boarding school students. Based on the analysis results, it is known that the research hypothesis is accepted or that perfectionists can predict the fear of failure ( $R = 0.477$ ;  $R^2 = 0.277$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ). In this study, the variance explained, or the variation of fear of failure of 27.7%, can be explained by perfectionists.

**Table 3.** Results of simple linear regression analysis

	R	R <sup>2</sup>	F	p
Perfectionist	0,477	0,277	98,715	0,000

The study results show that perfectionism can predict fear of failure in boarding school students. Perfectionism in education is known to affect students' mental health. Excessive worry about mistakes made, parents' expectations, criticism given by parents, and doubts about the actions to be taken play a role in increasing student depression (Aditomo & Retnowati, 2004). Most students in this study had high perfectionists. Correa et al. (2017) explained that perfectionists usually try to achieve high-performance standards and avoid mistakes and negative evaluations. This condition will most likely trigger a fear of failure.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous evidence regarding the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure. The results of research conducted by Conroy et al. (2007) on 372 students found that perfectionism is associated with a fear of failure. Conceptually perfectionism and fear of failure are related to the failure-oriented experience of personal achievement. In addition, both relationships describe unconscious experiences and focus on highstandard performance targets. Perfectionism formed due to external demands impacts the individual's belief that unpleasant interpersonal consequences of failure are possible. Kaye et al. (2008) also found a correlation between perfectionism and fear of failure. Most maladaptive aspects of perfectionism contribute to concerns about the consequences of failure in the educational context.

A maladaptive perfectionist, by setting higher achievement standards so that it is difficult to achieve, can affect impeding cognition which reflects the fear of failure. Impeding cognition reflects a process that inhibits the motivation for physical activity (Longbottom et al., 2010). Perfectionism that comes from personal orientations, such as setting standards that are too high and exceeding one's capacity, can influence fear of failure. In addition, the fear of failure is also influenced by perfectionism which originates from social demands such as the fear of looking stupid and being criticized by others (Blankstein et al., 1993).

The findings of Sagar & Stoeber (2009) are also in line with the results of this study. All aspects of perfectionism influence the fear of failure in competing. Regretting protracted mistakes, personal standards, parental pressure, and coach pressure impact the fear of failure of athletes who will compete. Of all these aspects, the athlete's fear of failure is most influenced by excessive regret. However, other research states that perfectionism from the evaluation of parents and coaches can have a negative effect if individuals fear failure (Antonio et al., 2019). The results of this study which state that perfectionists can predict fear of failure, are supported by several previous studies.

The results showed that perfectionists could predict the fear of failure with an explained variance of 27.7% and 73.3% predicted by other factors outside this study. Several studies explain other factors that can influence the fear of failure. Coudevylle et al. (2021) explained that students who do not get the opportunity to reveal their deficiencies are associated with a higher fear of failure. Goal-setting interventions also influence the fear of failure (Wikman et al., 2014).

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the study's results, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is accepted that perfectionism can predict fear of failure in students. Perfectionists can explain the 27.7% variation in fear of failure. These results explain the critical role of perfectionists in fear of embarrassing themselves, facing future changes, losing social influence, disappointing others, and fears that lead to feelings of inadequacy and inadequacy.

Future research on perfectionism and fear of failure needs to consider gender roles. In addition, the views of parents and teachers need to be revealed to determine the effect on the relationship between the two variables. Qualitative studies also need to be carried out to see the deeper meaning of perfectionism and fear of failure in students.

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