

Reducing Perfectionism and Enhancing Self-Worth: The Role of Self-Efficacy Training in Gifted Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of self-efficacy training in reducing perfectionism and enhancing self-worth among gifted high school students. A randomized controlled trial design was employed with 40 gifted high school students randomly assigned to either an intervention group ($n = 20$) or a control group ($n = 20$). The intervention group participated in an eight-session self-efficacy training program, while the control group received no intervention. Both groups were assessed at baseline, immediately post-intervention, and at a four-month follow-up. Perfectionism and self-worth were measured using validated scales. Data were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA and Bonferroni post-hoc tests. The intervention group showed a significant reduction in perfectionism scores from baseline ($M = 72.45$, $SD = 5.28$) to post-intervention ($M = 64.32$, $SD = 6.15$) and follow-up ($M = 66.89$, $SD = 5.92$) compared to the control group, which showed no significant change. Similarly, self-worth scores in the intervention group increased significantly from baseline ($M = 32.19$, $SD = 4.15$) to post-intervention ($M = 38.45$, $SD = 3.92$) and follow-up ($M = 36.98$, $SD = 4.20$), whereas the control group showed no significant change. The ANOVA results indicated significant main effects of time ($F(2, 76) = 27.12$, $p < .001$) and group ($F(1, 76) = 102.95$, $p < .001$) for perfectionism, and time ($F(2, 76) = 24.65$, $p < .001$) and group ($F(1, 76) = 111.30$, $p < .001$) for self-worth, with significant interaction effects for both variables. Self-efficacy training is effective in reducing perfectionism and enhancing self-worth among gifted high school students. The positive effects were maintained at a four-month follow-up, suggesting the potential long-term benefits of such interventions in this population.

Keywords: Gifted students, self-efficacy, perfectionism, self-worth, randomized controlled trial, intervention, high school students.

1. Introduction

Gifted high school students often face unique academic and psychological challenges, one of the most significant being perfectionism. Perfectionism, characterized by setting excessively high standards and striving for flawlessness, can be a double-edged sword. While it can drive high achievement, it can also lead to detrimental outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and reduced self-worth (Stornelli et al., 2009). Understanding and addressing perfectionism in gifted students is crucial for their overall well-being and academic success.

Perfectionism is a multifaceted construct that encompasses both positive and negative dimensions. Positive perfectionism, also known as adaptive perfectionism, involves setting high standards that are achievable and motivating, leading to satisfaction and enhanced performance. Negative perfectionism, or maladaptive perfectionism, involves unrealistic standards, fear of failure, and self-critical thoughts, often resulting in stress and psychological distress (Chan, 2007). Research indicates that gifted students are particularly susceptible to negative perfectionism due to heightened expectations from themselves and others (Neumeister et al., 2009).

Self-efficacy, the belief in one's capabilities to achieve a goal or an outcome, plays a pivotal role in moderating the effects of perfectionism. High self-efficacy can mitigate the negative impacts of perfectionism by fostering resilience and adaptive coping strategies (Arbinaga, 2023). Conversely, low self-efficacy can exacerbate the detrimental effects of perfectionism, leading to increased anxiety and decreased self-worth (Shokhmangar et al., 2018). Therefore, enhancing self-efficacy in gifted students may serve as a protective factor against the harmful consequences of perfectionism.

Self-worth, the overall value one places on oneself, is another critical factor intertwined with perfectionism. Gifted students often derive their self-worth from their achievements, making them vulnerable to fluctuations in self-esteem based on their performance (Neumeister, 2004). This contingent self-worth can lead to a persistent fear of failure and a reluctance to take risks, further entrenching perfectionistic tendencies (Schuler, 2000). Enhancing unconditional self-worth, where students value themselves independently of their achievements, is essential for their psychological well-being.

Previous research has highlighted the importance of addressing perfectionism and promoting self-efficacy and self-worth in gifted education. For instance, Neumeister et

al. (2009) found that gifted students who developed perfectionism reported significant pressure from parents and teachers to excel, contributing to heightened stress and anxiety (Neumeister et al., 2009). Similarly, Olton-Weber, Hess, and Ritchotte (2020) demonstrated that mindfulness interventions could reduce perfectionism levels in gifted youth, suggesting the need for targeted interventions that address these psychological constructs (Olton-Weber et al., 2020).

However, there is a paucity of studies examining the effectiveness of self-efficacy training specifically designed to reduce perfectionism and enhance self-worth in gifted high school students. Given the unique needs of this population, it is imperative to develop and test interventions that can foster adaptive perfectionism, enhance self-efficacy, and promote unconditional self-worth. This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating the impact of a self-efficacy training program on perfectionism and self-worth among gifted high school students.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employs a randomized controlled trial (RCT) design to examine the effectiveness of self-efficacy training on perfectionism and self-worth among gifted high school students. A total of 40 participants were recruited from local high schools, identified as gifted based on standardized academic assessments and teacher recommendations. Participants were randomly assigned to either the intervention group or the control group, with 20 students in each group. The intervention group participated in the self-efficacy training program, while the control group did not receive any intervention. Both groups were assessed at baseline, immediately post-intervention, and at a four-month follow-up to evaluate the sustained effects of the training.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Perfectionism

The dependent variable of perfectionism in this study will be measured using the Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), created by Randy O. Frost and his colleagues in 1990. The FMPS is a widely used standard tool for assessing perfectionism across six subscales: Concern Over Mistakes, Personal Standards, Parental Expectations, Parental Criticism, Doubts About Actions, and Organization. The scale comprises 35 items, each rated on a

five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Higher scores indicate higher levels of perfectionism. The FMPS has been extensively validated and has demonstrated strong reliability and validity in various studies, confirming its suitability for assessing perfectionism among different populations, including gifted high school students (Alizadeh et al., 2023; Hasheminejad et al., 2024).

2.2.2. Self-Worth

The dependent variable of self-worth will be measured using the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), developed by Morris Rosenberg in 1965. The RSES is a widely recognized and standard tool for measuring global self-worth and self-esteem. It consists of 10 items, which are rated on a four-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The scale includes both positively and negatively worded items to assess overall self-esteem, with higher scores reflecting higher self-worth. The RSES has been extensively validated and has shown excellent reliability and validity across numerous studies, making it an appropriate measure for evaluating self-worth in gifted high school students (Parsakia & Darbani, 2022).

2.3. Intervention

2.3.1. Self-Efficacy Training

The intervention in this study aims to enhance self-efficacy, reduce perfectionism, and improve self-worth among gifted high school students through a structured eight-session program. Each session lasts for 90 minutes and is designed to progressively build students' skills and understanding (Behnaz 2016; Rafiei Bandari et al., 2023; Samadi et al., 2020).

Session 1: Introduction and Goal Setting

The first session introduces the concepts of self-efficacy, perfectionism, and self-worth, and explains the structure and goals of the intervention. Students will participate in ice-breaking activities to foster a supportive group environment. The facilitator will then guide students in setting personal goals for the program, emphasizing the importance of realistic and achievable objectives. A pre-intervention assessment will be conducted to establish baseline measures.

Session 2: Understanding Perfectionism

This session focuses on educating students about perfectionism, including its dimensions and how it can negatively impact their lives. Through group discussions and

reflective exercises, students will identify their own perfectionistic tendencies. The session will also introduce cognitive-behavioral strategies to challenge perfectionistic thoughts, such as recognizing and reframing irrational beliefs.

Session 3: Building Self-Efficacy

Students will learn about the concept of self-efficacy and its role in personal and academic success. The session includes interactive activities designed to enhance students' confidence in their abilities, such as mastery experiences and vicarious learning through observing peers. Students will practice setting and achieving small, manageable goals to boost their self-efficacy.

Session 4: Coping with Mistakes and Failures

This session addresses the fear of making mistakes and the importance of resilience. Students will engage in role-playing activities to practice coping with failures and setbacks. The facilitator will introduce techniques such as positive self-talk and mindfulness to help students manage anxiety and stress associated with perfectionism.

Session 5: Enhancing Self-Worth

Students will explore the concept of self-worth and differentiate it from external achievements and approval. Through guided self-reflection and group discussions, they will identify their intrinsic qualities and strengths. The session includes exercises to build self-compassion and self-acceptance, encouraging students to appreciate their inherent value.

Session 6: Developing Healthy Standards

This session helps students establish realistic and healthy personal standards. They will learn to set goals that are challenging yet attainable, and to distinguish between high standards and perfectionism. Activities will include creating action plans for achieving their goals while maintaining balance and well-being.

Session 7: Applying Skills in Real-Life Situations

Students will practice applying the skills they have learned in real-life scenarios. Through case studies and problem-solving exercises, they will develop strategies for managing perfectionism and enhancing self-worth in various contexts, such as academics, relationships, and extracurricular activities. Peer feedback and support will be emphasized.

Session 8: Reflection and Future Planning

The final session involves reflecting on the progress made throughout the program. Students will review their initial goals and assess their growth. The facilitator will guide students in creating a personalized plan for maintaining and

further developing their self-efficacy, managing perfectionism, and nurturing self-worth. A post-intervention assessment will be conducted to evaluate the outcomes of the program.

2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA) with repeated measures to compare changes in perfectionism and self-worth across three time points (baseline, post-intervention, and four-month follow-up) between the intervention and control groups. The Bonferroni post-hoc test was employed to identify specific time points where significant differences occurred. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Perfectionism and Self-Worth

Variable	Group	Baseline (M ± SD)	Post-Intervention (M ± SD)	Follow-Up (M ± SD)
Perfectionism	Intervention	72.45 ± 5.28	64.32 ± 6.15	66.89 ± 5.92
	Control	71.78 ± 6.02	70.45 ± 5.96	71.23 ± 6.03
Self-Worth	Intervention	32.19 ± 4.15	38.45 ± 3.92	36.98 ± 4.20
	Control	33.02 ± 4.25	33.67 ± 4.35	34.12 ± 4.29

The descriptive statistics in Table 1 show that the intervention group experienced a decrease in perfectionism scores from baseline (M = 72.45, SD = 5.28) to post-intervention (M = 64.32, SD = 6.15) and follow-up (M = 66.89, SD = 5.92). In contrast, the control group's perfectionism scores remained relatively stable across the three time points. For self-worth, the intervention group showed an increase from baseline (M = 32.19, SD = 4.15) to post-intervention (M = 38.45, SD = 3.92) and follow-up (M = 36.98, SD = 4.20), whereas the control group's self-worth scores showed minimal change.

Before conducting the main analyses, the assumptions for ANOVA with repeated measures were thoroughly checked and confirmed. The assumption of normality was assessed

3. Findings and Results

The demographic characteristics of the participants were analyzed to ensure comparability between the intervention and control groups. In the intervention group, there were 11 females (55.3%) and 9 males (44.7%), while the control group consisted of 10 females (50.2%) and 10 males (49.8%). The mean age of participants in the intervention group was 15.3 years (SD = 0.75), and in the control group, the mean age was 15.4 years (SD = 0.80). The majority of participants in both groups were in the 10th grade, with 13 students (66.5%) in the intervention group and 12 students (60.1%) in the control group. The remaining participants were in the 11th grade.

using the Shapiro-Wilk test, which indicated that the data were normally distributed for all dependent variables ($p > .05$). Mauchly's Test of Sphericity was performed to test the assumption of sphericity, and the results were non-significant for both perfectionism ($\chi^2(2) = 1.15$, $p = .563$) and self-worth ($\chi^2(2) = 0.98$, $p = .612$), confirming that the sphericity assumption was met. Additionally, the Levene's Test for Equality of Variances showed no significant differences in the variances of the groups at each time point for both perfectionism ($p > .05$) and self-worth ($p > .05$), indicating homogeneity of variances. These results confirm that the data met the necessary assumptions for conducting the ANOVA with repeated measures.

Table 2

Repeated Measures ANOVA for Perfectionism and Self-Worth

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	Partial η^2
Perfectionism						
Time	816.35	2	408.17	27.12	< .001	.41
Group	1548.23	1	1548.23	102.95	< .001	.73
Time * Group	625.89	2	312.95	20.79	< .001	.36
Error (within)	1211.48	76	15.93			
Self-Worth						
Time	425.32	2	212.66	24.65	< .001	.39
Group	960.57	1	960.57	111.30	< .001	.67

Time * Group	408.46	2	204.23	23.67	< .001	.38
Error (within)	656.77	76	8.64			

The repeated measures ANOVA in Table 2 indicated significant main effects of time for both perfectionism ($F(2, 76) = 27.12, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .41$) and self-worth ($F(2, 76) = 24.65, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .39$). There were also significant main effects of group for both perfectionism ($F(1, 76) = 102.95, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .73$) and self-worth ($F(1,$

$76) = 111.30, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .67$). Additionally, significant interaction effects between time and group were found for perfectionism ($F(2, 76) = 20.79, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .36$) and self-worth ($F(2, 76) = 23.67, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .38$), indicating that the intervention had a differential effect over time between the two groups.

Table 3

Bonferroni Post-Hoc Test for Perfectionism and Self-Worth

Variable	Group	Time Comparison	Mean Difference	SE	p
Perfectionism	Intervention	Baseline vs Post-Intervention	8.13	1.22	< .001
		Baseline vs Follow-Up	5.56	1.18	< .001
		Post-Intervention vs Follow-Up	-2.57	0.96	.015
	Control	Baseline vs Post-Intervention	1.33	1.25	.295
		Baseline vs Follow-Up	0.55	1.20	.649
		Post-Intervention vs Follow-Up	-0.78	1.15	.510
Self-Worth	Intervention	Baseline vs Post-Intervention	-6.26	0.98	< .001
		Baseline vs Follow-Up	-4.79	1.02	< .001
		Post-Intervention vs Follow-Up	1.47	0.81	.075
	Control	Baseline vs Post-Intervention	-0.65	1.05	.537
		Baseline vs Follow-Up	-1.10	1.02	.285
		Post-Intervention vs Follow-Up	-0.45	1.01	.658

The Bonferroni post-hoc test in Table 3 revealed significant decreases in perfectionism scores for the intervention group from baseline to post-intervention (Mean Difference = 8.13, SE = 1.22, $p < .001$) and baseline to follow-up (Mean Difference = 5.56, SE = 1.18, $p < .001$). There was also a significant difference between post-intervention and follow-up (Mean Difference = -2.57, SE = 0.96, $p = .015$), indicating some increase in perfectionism scores over time but remaining lower than baseline. For self-worth, the intervention group showed significant increases from baseline to post-intervention (Mean Difference = -6.26, SE = 0.98, $p < .001$) and baseline to follow-up (Mean Difference = -4.79, SE = 1.02, $p < .001$), with no significant difference between post-intervention and follow-up (Mean Difference = 1.47, SE = 0.81, $p = .075$). The control group showed no significant changes in perfectionism or self-worth across the three time points.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This study investigated the effectiveness of self-efficacy training on reducing perfectionism and enhancing self-worth among gifted high school students. The findings indicated significant improvements in both outcomes for the intervention group compared to the control group.

Specifically, the intervention group showed a substantial decrease in perfectionism scores and a notable increase in self-worth scores from baseline to post-intervention and maintained these gains at a four-month follow-up. In contrast, the control group did not exhibit significant changes in either perfectionism or self-worth across the same time periods.

The results of the ANOVA with repeated measures revealed significant main effects of time and group, as well as significant interaction effects between time and group for both perfectionism and self-worth. The Bonferroni post-hoc test further confirmed these findings, highlighting significant improvements in the intervention group immediately post-intervention and at follow-up.

The reduction in perfectionism observed in the intervention group aligns with previous research demonstrating the effectiveness of interventions targeting cognitive-behavioral strategies and mindfulness in reducing perfectionistic tendencies among gifted students (Olton-Weber et al., 2020). The self-efficacy training program in this study likely provided participants with the tools to challenge irrational beliefs, set realistic goals, and cope with mistakes, contributing to lower levels of perfectionism. This is consistent with findings from Chan (2007), who

highlighted the importance of cognitive-behavioral approaches in addressing perfectionism among gifted students (Chan, 2007).

The increase in self-worth among the intervention group can be attributed to the program's focus on enhancing intrinsic qualities and fostering self-compassion and self-acceptance. Previous studies have shown that interventions promoting unconditional self-worth, rather than achievement-contingent self-worth, can significantly improve self-esteem and overall well-being in gifted students (Neumeister, 2004). The present study's results are in line with these findings, suggesting that self-efficacy training can effectively enhance self-worth by encouraging students to value themselves independently of their achievements.

Furthermore, the significant interaction effects between time and group for both perfectionism and self-worth indicate that the intervention had a differential impact over time compared to the control group. This supports the notion that targeted interventions can produce lasting positive changes in psychological outcomes for gifted students. The maintenance of these gains at the four-month follow-up underscores the potential long-term benefits of self-efficacy training.

Several studies support the effectiveness of self-efficacy training in reducing perfectionism and enhancing self-worth among gifted students. For instance, Shokhmgar, Pour, and Sanjari (2018) found that self-efficacy group training significantly improved achievement motivation and self-efficacy in high school students, which is closely related to reduced perfectionistic tendencies (Shokhmgar et al., 2018). Similarly, Arbinaga (2023) demonstrated a positive relationship between self-efficacy and resilient behaviors, suggesting that enhanced self-efficacy can help students cope with academic pressures and setbacks more effectively (Arbinaga, 2023).

Moreover, research by Alodat, Ghazal, and Al-Hamouri (2020) highlighted the link between perfectionism and academic self-handicapping among gifted students, emphasizing the need for interventions that address perfectionistic attitudes to prevent negative academic behaviors (Alodat et al., 2020). The present study's findings support this by showing that reducing perfectionism through self-efficacy training can lead to improved self-worth, potentially mitigating self-handicapping behaviors.

The results are also consistent with the work of Dixon, Lapsley, and Hanchon (2004), who identified various typologies of perfectionism among gifted adolescents and

underscored the importance of addressing maladaptive perfectionism to promote psychological well-being (Dixon et al., 2004). By providing students with strategies to manage perfectionistic tendencies and enhance their self-worth, the self-efficacy training program in this study contributes to a growing body of evidence supporting the need for targeted interventions in gifted education.

Despite the promising findings, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small, with only 20 participants in each group. This limited sample size may affect the generalizability of the results to a broader population of gifted students. Future studies should aim to include larger samples to enhance the robustness and generalizability of the findings.

Second, the study relied on self-report measures to assess perfectionism and self-worth, which may be subject to social desirability bias. Participants might have provided responses they perceived as more socially acceptable rather than their true feelings and behaviors. Future research could incorporate multiple assessment methods, including teacher or parent reports and observational data, to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the intervention's effects.

Third, the study was conducted over a relatively short period, with a four-month follow-up. While the maintenance of gains at follow-up is encouraging, longer-term studies are needed to determine the durability of the intervention's effects. Future research should include extended follow-up periods to assess the long-term impact of self-efficacy training on perfectionism and self-worth.

Future research should address the limitations of the present study and explore additional areas to build on the current findings. One suggestion is to replicate the study with a larger and more diverse sample of gifted students. This would allow for a more comprehensive analysis of the intervention's effectiveness across different demographic groups and educational contexts.

Moreover, future studies should investigate the mechanisms underlying the observed changes in perfectionism and self-worth. Exploring how specific components of the self-efficacy training program contribute to these outcomes could provide valuable insights for refining and optimizing the intervention. For instance, researchers could examine whether certain cognitive-behavioral strategies or mindfulness techniques are particularly effective in reducing perfectionistic tendencies and enhancing self-worth.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to explore the impact of self-efficacy training on other psychological and academic outcomes, such as anxiety, depression, academic performance, and motivation. Understanding the broader effects of the intervention could provide a more holistic view of its benefits and inform the development of comprehensive support programs for gifted students.

Finally, future research should consider the role of environmental factors, such as parental and teacher support, in moderating the effects of self-efficacy training. Investigating how these factors interact with the intervention could help identify additional support mechanisms that enhance its effectiveness and sustainability.

The findings of this study have important implications for educational practice and the support of gifted students. Based on the results, several practical suggestions can be made for educators, counselors, and policymakers.

First, implementing self-efficacy training programs in schools could be an effective strategy for reducing perfectionism and enhancing self-worth among gifted students. Such programs should be integrated into the regular curriculum or offered as part of extracurricular activities to ensure that all gifted students have access to these valuable resources. Educators and school counselors should be trained in delivering these interventions to maximize their impact.

Second, fostering a supportive and non-judgmental learning environment is crucial for helping gifted students manage perfectionistic tendencies and build self-worth. Teachers and parents should emphasize the importance of effort, resilience, and personal growth rather than focusing solely on achievements and outcomes. Encouraging a growth mindset, where students view challenges as opportunities for learning and development, can also help reduce the negative effects of perfectionism.

Third, schools should provide ongoing support and follow-up for students who participate in self-efficacy training programs. Regular check-ins and booster sessions can help reinforce the skills and strategies learned during the intervention and ensure that students continue to benefit from the program over the long term. Additionally, schools should offer resources and support for parents to help them understand and address perfectionism in their children.

In conclusion, this study highlights the effectiveness of self-efficacy training in reducing perfectionism and enhancing self-worth among gifted high school students. The findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions that address the unique psychological needs of

gifted students and provide valuable insights for future research and practice. By implementing and refining these interventions, educators and counselors can better support the well-being and academic success of gifted individuals, helping them reach their full potential.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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