

# ***Research on the Correlation Between Fear of Negative Evaluation and Perfectionism among College Students***

**Weizhen Xu<sup>1,a,\*</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>*Department of Japanese, Chengdu Jincheng College, Xiyuan Street, Chengdu, Sichuan, China  
a. 603844568@qq.com*

*\*corresponding author*

**Abstract:** A questionnaire based on the Chinese short version of the Negative Evaluation Terror Scale and Perfectionism Scale for College Students was used to study the psychological behavior of college students. The subjects of the study were 315 college students from different regions and grades in China. The questionnaire data based on the Negative Rating Terror Scale and Perfectionism Scale were counted and regression analysis was conducted using origin2021 to clarify the correlation between negative rating terror and perfectionism among college students. The study showed that the mean values of negative rating terror and perfectionism scores of college students gradually increased with increasing grades. The correlation between negative appraisal terror and perfectionism was positive, with a fit of 0.9959. The dimension of “fear of making mistakes” was the most critical factor affecting the mental health of college students. The influence of negative appraisal terror and perfectionism on college students’ mental health is synergistic.

**Keywords:** college students, mental health, negative evaluation horror, perfectionism, correlation

## **1. Introduction**

Mental health issues among college students are a cause for concern for parents, society, and schools. In the post-epidemic period, data from a survey conducted by the CDC and the Center for Prevention and Control showed that the incidence of suicidal ideation was significantly higher in the young adult population between the ages of 18 and 24, at 25.5% [1]. College students, generally between the ages of 18-22, are among the groups with the highest incidence of suicidal populations. Therefore, it is essential to strengthening the testing and investigation of the mental health of college students to effectively predict the mental health problems of college students and to prevent the occurrence of suicidal behaviors among college students. The common occurrence of suicidal ideation and behavior among college students is due to their lack of ability to prevent personal emotions, external social and objective external risks, and their failure to adopt the correct mental attitude in time. The increase in the probability of suicidal ideation among college students is often related to their psychological behavior of fear of negative evaluation and their own overly perfectionistic mental image.

Therefore, in-depth research on the influence of negative evaluation fear behavior of college students and perfectionist image of college students on college student’s mental health is important for cultivating healthy psychology of college students, promoting the development of college

student's mental health, and for the healthy development of college education [2]. However, in the process of research on the development of college students' mental health construction, there are many factors affecting college students' mental health, which mainly include intrinsic and extrinsic factors of college students [3]. The main internal factors are personal self-esteem, body imagery and personal characteristics. Among them, the perfectionist image, as one of the main elements of personal traits that most affect college students' mental health, plays an extremely important role in the construction of college student's mental health. Scholars have pointed out that perfectionists are more likely to be influenced by external evaluations in their lives and more likely to have negative emotions such as anxiety, anxiety, and fear because of negative evaluations by others. These emotions are important factors that lead to suicidal thoughts among college students, and how dialectically establishing the correct image and spirit of perfectionism in the trend of college students' perfectionism is extremely important for the development of college students' psychological health. Therefore, an in-depth study on the correlation between negative evaluation fear and perfectionism among college students is of great significance for the construction of college students' psychological health.

## 2. Literature Review

Regarding the research on the fear of negative evaluation and the mental health of college students, related scholars have made a lot of studies. Based on the Fear of Negative Appraisal Scale for College Students, Yuke Li analyzed the influence of fear of negative appraisal on college students' social anxiety and pointed out that fear of negative appraisal and social anxiety among college students showed a positive relationship [4]. Peng Shun et al. [5, 6] pointed out that negative evaluation fear was significantly and positively related to social anxiety and Internet overuse, and was significantly and negatively related to self-control. Thus, it can be seen that the fear of negative evaluation can lead to social anxiety among college students to a certain extent. This is an important reason why the fear of negative evaluation has a negative impact on college students' mental health. The main reason for the existence of serious negative evaluation fear among college students is the close relationship between their personal life environment and growth environment.

Negative appraisal fear is the basis for the negative psychological impact of appraisal of others' emotional and psychological development proposed by Watson and other scholars in 1969. The impact of negative appraisal fear on an individual's mental health is primarily related to personal growth experiences. Zou et al. [7] pointed out that college students with left-behind experiences are more likely to be affected by the fear of negative self-esteem evaluation and more likely to feel lonely, and are also the ones with a higher probability of their intention in the college student population. In addition, related scholars point out that the prevalence of negative terror evaluation among college students is largely related to a kind of unconfident psychological behavior arising from college students' personal over-focus on their own perfectionist image. Yang et al. [8] studied the relationship between college students' perfectionist personality and aggressive behavior by t-test and correlation analysis, and found that college students' perfectionist personality was significantly and positively correlated with negative body ego and aggressive behavior ( $r = 0.366$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ;  $r = 0.314$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ;  $r = 0.481$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). There was a significant correlation between college students' perfectionist personalities and negative body ego and aggressive behavior, and the negative body ego mediated between the two. The above study clarified the influence of college students' perfectionism on college students' negative psychological behaviors. Some scholars [9-] [10] [11] also pointed out that perfectionist personality traits in college students also lead to an increased incidence of depression, widespread procrastination, and a failure to balance personal emotional equilibrium.

In summary, the above studies on college students' fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism focused on the effects of college students' fear of negative evaluation on college students' personal mental health behaviors and personal growth. Studies on perfectionism among college students have mainly dealt with the effects of college students' perfectionism on students' depression, aggressive behaviors, personal self-esteem, and emotional problems. However, there is a lack of research on the correlation between negative appraisal fear and perfectionism among college students. Therefore, to clarify the correlation between college students' negative appraisal fear and perfectionism in-depth, the correlation between college students' negative appraisal fear and perfectionism was analyzed using the College Student Perfectionism Scale and the College Student Negative Appraisal Fear Scale. Based on the correlation analysis of negative appraisal fear and perfectionism among college students, the synergistic effects of negative appraisal fear and perfectionistic personality behaviors of college students on college students' mental health are discussed.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Evaluation Scales and Quantitative Scoring

The Chinese version of the Frost Perfectionism Inventory, revised by Zi Fei et al, was used in this study, rental expectations and organization. There are 27 questions, all of which are positively scored and scored on a 5-point scale. The higher the total score, the higher the degree of perfectionism. Perfectionism also classifies fear of error, organization, parental expectations, and personal standards as positive perfectionism and doubts about action as negative perfectionism. The Chinese version of the Perfectionism Scale is similar in structure to the original Frost Perfectionism Scale. However, the Chinese version of the Perfectionism Scale combines parental expectations and parental criticism into one factor. It is a relatively mature instrument in the field of perfectionism research in China. The research items in Table 1 are divided into five dimensions, namely, fear of error, hesitancy, personal standards, parental expectations, and organization. Fear of error includes numbers 6, 9, 10, 15, 16, and 18; behavioral hesitancy includes 11, 21, 25, and 26; "personal standards" includes 3, 8, 12, 13, 17, and 18. as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Perfectionism data scale.

NO.	Questionnaire items	Evaluation Dimension
1	My parents used to set very high standards for me	Parental expectations
2	I need to have an organized and systematic way of doing things.	Bar
3	If I do not set a very high standard for myself, I am likely to end up being difficulty to achieve great things	Personal Standards
4	I am a neat person	Bar
5	I try to be an organized person	Bar
6	If I fail at work or school, it means I'm a failure	Fear of error
7	My parents had wanted me to be the best in every way	Parental expectations
8	I set a higher goal than most people around me	Personal Standards
9	If someone is better than me in work or study, I feel like I have failed	Fear of error
10	When I do something or study, if I fail partially, I will feel like a complete failure	Fear of error

Table 1: (continued).

11	Despite being careful, I often feel like I'm not doing things right	Behavioral hesitation
12	I am sick of not being able to do the best job	Personal Standards
13	I have extremely high goals	Personal Standards
14	My parents used to expect me to do exceptionally well	Parental expectations
15	If I make a mistake, people are likely to look down on me for it	Fear of error
16	If I can't do as well as others, it means I'm an inferior person	Fear of error
17	Others seem to be more accepting of lower standards than I am	Personal Standards
18	If I don't always perform well, I will lose the respect of others	Fear of error
19	My parents have higher expectations for my future than I have for myself	Parental expectations
20	I try to be a neat person	Bar
21	I often hesitate to do even small daily things	Behavioral hesitation
22	For me, neatness is very important	Bar
23	I expect to have better results at work than most people	Personal Standards
24	I am a well-organized person	Bar
25	My work progress is slow because I often repeat some tasks	Behavioral hesitation
26	It takes me a long time to get something right	Behavioral hesitation
27	I always felt I couldn't live up to the standards my parents set for me	Parental expectations

All the statistical scoring methods are positive, with 5 points for very consistent, 4 points for consistent, 3 points for pending, 2 points for non-conforming, and 1 point for every non-conforming.

Table 2 shows the questionnaire parameters of the short version of the Negative Evaluation Fear Scale, which was scored using positive scoring 8 questions and negative scoring 4 questions: 2, 4, 7, 10. The correlation between negative evaluation fear and perfectionism among college students was analyzed through the statistical data of the Negative Evaluation Fear Scale. Fear of negative evaluation refers to the fear of negative evaluation by others, worrying over negative evaluation, and the expectation that others may give a negative evaluation of oneself. In this study, a short version of the Negative Appraisal Fear Scale, consisting of 12 questions, which was streamlined by Leary in 1983, will be used. Eight positive scoring questions and four negative scoring questions are scored on a 5-point scale, and the scale score is taken as the total score of the 12 questions after reverse scoring. The scale had good internal consistency, content validity, and structural validity in the college student population and clinical sample, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Short version of the negative evaluation error scale.

Number	Questionnaire items
1	Even though I know that other people's opinions don't matter, I still care about what they think of me
2	Even knowing that people are forming an impression of me, I don't care
3	I am often afraid that people will notice my shortcomings

Table 2: (continued).

4	I rarely worry about the impression I will make on others
5	I am worried about not being recognized by others
6	I worry that people will pick on me.
7	What people think of me doesn't bother me
8	When I talk to people, I worry about what they will think of me
9	I often worry about the impression I've made on others
10	I know someone is evaluating me, and I do not care
11	Sometimes I think I care too much about what people think of me
12	I often worry if I said or did the wrong thing

The scores were: not at all consistent with me-1, somewhat inconsistent with me-2, unsure-3, very consistent with me-4, and extremely consistent with me-5.

### 3.2. Research Subjects

The subjects of the study were college students from different regions as the subjects of the study. The total number of participants in the questionnaire was 315, of which 18 were invalid questionnaires. The number of male students in the valid questionnaire was 128 and the number of female students was 169. Among the participants, 52 were freshmen, 96 were sophomores, 103 were juniors, and 46 were seniors. The statistics of the number of valid questionnaires are shown in Table 3.

The main purpose of choosing different grades of college students as the research subjects are to investigate the changes in the characteristics of college students' psychological problems as their grades increase by using the perfectionism scale and the fear of negative evaluation scale in the questionnaire.

Table 3: Number of respondents to the questionnaire.

Grade Level	Number of questionnaires	Total
Freshman	52	297
Sophomore	96	
Junior	103	
Senior	46	

### 3.3. Research Methodology

The research process used regression analysis to clarify the correlation between fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism among college students and used origin2021 to analyze the mean scores of questionnaires for different grades of college students to clarify the correlation between fear of negative evaluation and perfectionism evaluation situation and college students' grades, and based on this, to analyze the correlation between perfectionism evaluation and negative evaluation terror.

## 4. Result and Discussion

### 4.1. Negative Evaluation Terror and Perfectionism Questionnaire for College Students

Table 4 shows the homogeneity of the score statistics of negative evaluation fear and perfectionism statistics of college students in different grades based on the research data scores. The higher the negative evaluation terror score, the more pronounced the sensitivity in college students to the negative evaluation of others.

Table 4: Statistic of perfectionism scale and fear of negative evaluation scale for college students.

Grade	Negative Rating	Perfectionism Rating
Freshman	49.83	85.23
Sophomore	52.66	87.44
Junior	53.20	87.95
Senior	54.24	89.11

The change in negative evaluation error scores from freshmen to seniors in Table 4 shows that an increase in grade level leads to a gradual increase in negative evaluation error and perfectionism scores among college students. This indicates that as the grade increases college students' sensitivity to negative evaluation error and perfectionism ratings related to their negative evaluation gradually increases. This is mainly because the sensitivity of college students' perceptions to the external world increases with the increase in grade level. On the other hand, it is related to the simplicity of college students and the change in their roles. When they first enter their freshman year, most of them have little contact with the outside world and live in a simpler environment, so they are less sensitive to the importance of their image and the evaluation of others.

#### 4.2. Correlation Between Negative Evaluation Error and Perfectionism among College Students

Figure 1 shows the fitting analysis of negative evaluation error and perfectionism evaluation scores of college students through the research data. It can be seen from Figure 1 that as the negative evaluation error score of college students increased, the perfectionism evaluation score of college students also increased gradually. The intercept of college students' perfectionism rating based on their negative evaluation and perfectionism ratings was found to be 43.37, the slope was 0.86, the fit was 0.9959, and the sum of squared residuals was 0.06472. It can be seen that the fitted correlation between college students' perfectionism ratings and negative evaluation error ratings is high and the error rate present is small. This indicates that there is consistency between the sensitivity of perfectionism and the sensitivity of negative evaluation error in the testing process of psychological problems of college students. There is a high correlation between negative evaluation error and perfectionism among college students.

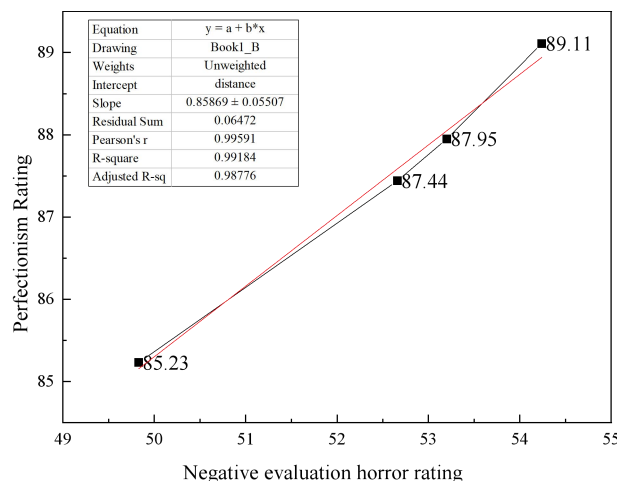


Figure 1: Fitting analysis of correlation between negative evaluation fear and perfectionism among college students.

In the statistical analysis of negative appraisal terror among college students, it was found that negative appraisal terror among college students showed a positive correlation with perfectionism scores, mainly because college students' sensitivity to negative appraisal terror and the image of perfectionism have similar responses in college students' minds. College students' perfectionism is a complex personality structure in terms of dimensions, and college students' perfectionism is closely related to adaptability, maladaptive behavior, and mental health. The increase in college students' perfectionism scores and sensitivity to their perfectionism is caused by the poor well-being related to college students [12].

Based on the questionnaire, it can be found that the increase of negative evaluation terror among college students is showing a concerted increase from freshman to senior academic years, mainly because the sensitivity of college students to personal aesthetics and negative evaluation of others gradually increases with age. This trend of gradual increase with increasing grade is related to the evolutionary process of social relations on the one hand. In particular, the negative evaluation terror scores and perfectionism scores of fourth-year college students are higher than those of other grades, which is to some extent related to the transition of college students from student to sound employment stage. The employment anxiety of graduates due to the yearly expansion of college students is a vital conflict faced by all college students nationwide in their senior year.

#### 4.3. Analysis of College Students' Perfectionism Questionnaire Scores

Figure 2 shows the overall ratings of college students' intentions in different items. As can be seen from Figure 2, "I need to be organized and systematic in doing things" has the highest score, which indicates that the requirements for individuals in the process of perfectionism evaluation of college students are high, and college students generally place a high degree of importance on the personal organization in handling things. The lowest score of "My parents used to expect me to do exceptionally well" highlights that in the psychological anxiety of college students, the influence of parents' expectation on college students' anxiety is more negligible, and the increase of college students' anxiety is more closely related to the increase of personal awareness of society, personal sense of social responsibility, employment, and study.

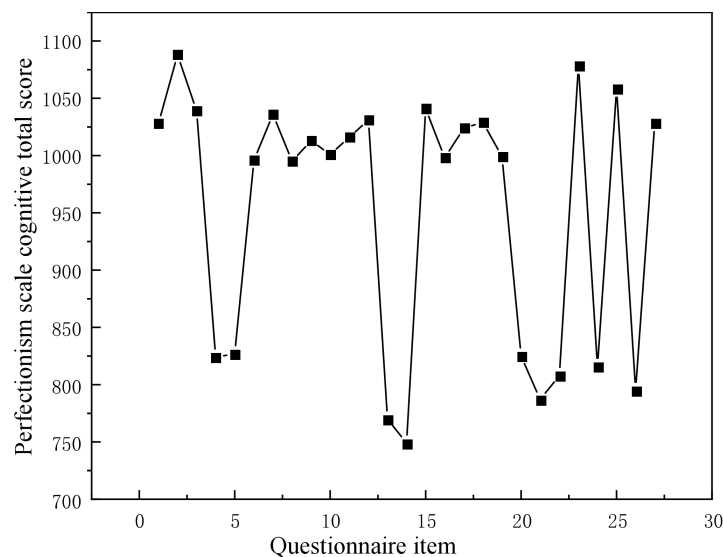


Figure 2: Perception scores of different questionnaire items among college students.

Figure 3 shows the analysis of the homogeneity of questionnaire cores on different dimensions of the perfectionism scale questionnaire data of college students by using origin. From Figure 3, it can



be seen that in the perfectionism scale data of college students, college students have the highest rating on the dimension of “worrying about mistakes”, which indicates that the influence of “worrying about mistakes” in college student’s psychological anxiety behavior is the greatest. The mean score of “behavioral hesitancy” is 914, the mean score of “personal standards” is 989.5, the mean score of “parental expectations” is 968, and the mean score of “Bar” is 964.47. As shown in Figure 3, “personal standards” ranked second, which indicates that the increase in anxiety sensitivity among college students is mainly due to personal “fear of being wrong” and “personal standards”. This indicates that the increase in anxiety sensitivity of college students is mainly due to the excessive pressure caused by the high personal “fear of mistakes” and “personal standards”, which makes the perfectionism rating of college students tend to increase gradually with the increase of grades.

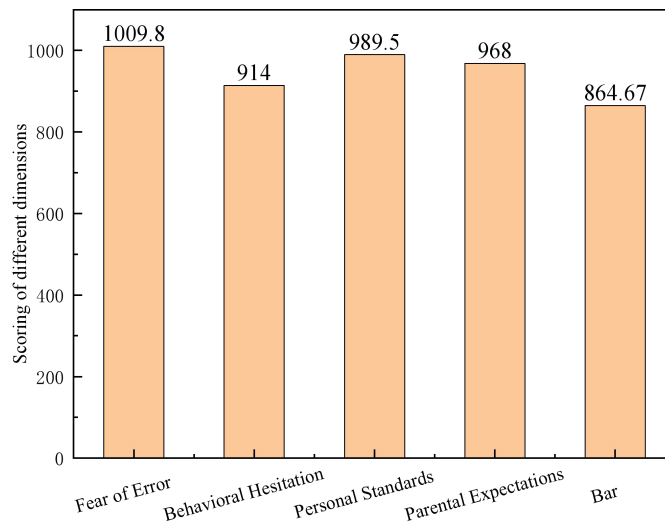


Figure 3: Homogeneous statistics of different dimensional perfectionism scale scores.

## 5. Conclusions

Excessive anxiety among college students is closely related to individuals’ psychological behaviors regarding negative evaluation error and perfectionist evaluation of others, and an in-depth analysis of the effects of perfectionism and negative evaluation error on college students’ mental health can guide college students’ mental health prediction. However, there are relatively few studies on the synergistic effects of the correlation between negative evaluation error and perfectionism on college students’ mental health. Therefore, based on the short version of the Negative Appraisal Error Scale and Perfectionism Scale to study the correlation between negative appraisal error and perfectionism, the influence of negative appraisal error and perfectionism of college students on college students’ mental health was clarified. The conclusions based on the above study were obtained as follows.

(1) The higher the homogeneity of negative evaluation error and perfectionism questionnaire scores among college students with increasing grades, the higher the psychological perfectionism requirement of college students also increases negative evaluation error sensitivity.

(2) Negative evaluation error scores of college students were positively correlated with the mean of perfectionism scores of college students with a goodness of fit of 0.9959, demonstrating a synergistic effect of negative evaluation error and perfectionism ratings of college students on college mental health.



The highest mean score of 1009.8 was obtained in the questionnaire on “fear of mistakes”, and the percentage of “fear of mistakes” in the personal behavior of college students has increased due to the improvement of their perception.

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Passion begets persistence. No matter what happens, I have enough love for psychology to be convinced that I am doing the right thing. I came across psychology at a time when I was at my most lost and I found what I love. Just like loving someone, love takes time to test.

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