



Self-Compassion as a Mediator Between Perfectionism and Personal Growth Initiative

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Abstract Personal growth and positive change are areas of great interest in psychology. This study examined the mediating influence of self-compassion on the relationship between two types of perfectionism and personal growth initiative in a sample of Filipino adults ($N = 351$). Findings suggest that those high in conscientious perfectionism, considered as adaptive perfectionism, are more likely to have self-compassion; and through high levels of self-compassion, are more likely to develop personal growth initiative. On the other hand, those high in self-evaluative perfectionism, considered maladaptive, are far less likely to have self-compassion; and through lower levels of self-compassion, are less likely to develop personal growth initiative. Implications for theory and practice, as well as suggestions for further research, are discussed.

Keywords Self-compassion · Perfectionism · Personal growth initiative · Self-actualization · Adults

Introduction

Theorists and researchers (Maslow, 1967; Rogers, 1959; Ryan & Deci, 2000) posit that the aspiration for personal growth and development is a defining human characteristic.

Importance is placed on continuously furthering one's capacities, and there seems to be an imperative to better oneself, such that improvement strivings are viewed as inevitable (Sedikides & Hepper, 2009). This orientation sometimes cultivates the notion of perfection as an ideal, and tends to overlook humans as inherently flawed beings.

Though perfectionism has been linked to productivity (Corrie & Palmer, 2014), achievement (Stoeber & Rambow, 2007), and personal growth (Stoeber & Corr, 2016), uncompromising and exacting standards inherent in perfectionism may allow little space for missteps. Some assert that in perfectionism, the costs outweigh the benefits, given its links with psychopathology and impaired well-being (Flett & Hewitt, 2015b). Notably, self-compassion research has been flourishing. The construct has been linked to motivation (Williams, Stark, & Foster, 2008), achievement (Neff, Hsieh, & Dejjitterat, 2005), and personal growth (Neff, Kirkpatrick, & Rude, 2007). Self-compassion is important when one is faced with personal inadequacies and failures, or when one must contend with common life experiences that bring about physical or emotional pain (Neff & Vonk, 2009).

Personal Growth Initiative

Personal growth initiative is an individual's active, intentional, and continuous desire for positive self-change across different areas of life (Robitschek, 1998; Robitschek et al., 2012). It is composed of four areas: *readiness for change*, the preparedness for making personal changes; *planfulness*, one's ideas to grow as an individual; *using resources*, actively obtaining help from external sources; and *intentional behavior*, actions aimed at producing growth. The first two comprise the cognitive aspect of

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personal growth initiative while the latter two reflect its behavioral aspects, suggesting action-oriented growth.

Individuals with high levels in these four have a greater potential to identify or create opportunities that enable positive personal development (Robitschek & Kashubeck, 1999). They have higher levels of life satisfaction (Robitschek & Keyes, 2009), are better equipped to positively cope with daily challenges (Blackie, Jayawickreme, Forgeard, & Jayawickreme, 2015), experience more optimal functioning and adaptability (Weigold, Porfeli, & Weigold, 2013), are better problem solvers (Robitschek et al., 2012), and perceive more choices and resources when working to improve themselves (Thoen & Robitschek, 2013).

Perfectionism

Perfectionism refers to excessively high personal standards of performance accompanied by self-critical evaluation should one fail to meet these standards (Flett & Hewitt, 2015a; Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990). It has been associated with depression (Wang, Lin, & Pan, 2015), psychosomatic disorders (Deary & Chalder, 2010), psychological distress (Rice, Richardson, & Clark, 2012), and suicide (Flett, Hewitt, & Heisel, 2014), has been shown to reduce personal productivity and life satisfaction (Flett & Hewitt, 2015a), and to diminish relationship satisfaction (Mackinnon, Sherry, & Pratt, 2013). Some assert that perfectionism is not always detrimental, and can be positive (Stoeber & Damian, 2016). Adaptive perfectionism has been positively correlated with creativity (Nekoie-Moghadam, Beheshtifar, & Mazraesefidi, 2012), academic achievement (Bong, Hwang, Noh, & Kim, 2014), higher levels of motivation (Ward & Ashby, 2008), and the use of adaptive coping strategies (Stoeber & Janssen, 2011).

Conscientious Perfectionism and Self-Evaluative Perfectionism

Predominant conceptualizations have resulted in two widely used multidimensional perfectionism scales (MPS), the MPS-F (Frost et al., 1990) and the MPS-HF (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Hill and colleagues (2004) attempted to capture all significant constructs of the MPS-F and the MPS-HF, and other existing multidimensional perfectionism scales. Their research resulted in a model, composed of eight factors grouped into two domains, that addressed conceptual overlaps and included constructs not described by either. The more adaptive domain, conscientious perfectionism, includes: *high standards for others*, the tendency to hold others to one's own perfectionist ideals; *organization*, the tendency to be neat and orderly; *planfulness*, the tendency to plan and deliberate over decisions; and *striving for excellence*, the tendency to pursue perfect

results and high standards. The more maladaptive domain, self-evaluative perfectionism, includes: *concern over mistakes*, the tendency to experience distress over making a mistake; *need for approval*, the tendency to seek validation and to be sensitive to criticism; *perceived parental pressure*, the need to perform perfectly to obtain parental approval; and *rumination*, the tendency to obsessively worry about past errors, less than perfect performance, or future mistakes. These two have opposing associations with markers of psychological adjustment and maladjustment (Hill, Huelsman, & Araujo, 2010; Stoeber & Otto, 2006).

Perfectionism and Personal Growth Initiative

An early study found that self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed perfectionism were negatively associated with levels of self-actualization (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Mosher, 1991). This is supported by current empirical research suggesting that perfectionism is negatively associated with self-actualization, as most individuals cannot seem to reach their potential when there is an underlying fear of failure (Flett & Hewitt, 2015a). However, a study found that positive striving, linked to self-actualization, is related to adaptive forms of perfectionism using both the MPS-F and the MPS-HF (Bieling, Israeli, & Antony, 2004).

More recent literature highlights the importance of delving deeper into aspects of perfectionism to distinguish between what is helpful and what is not, in light of personal growth. Some studies found that perfectionism predicts individual differences in achievement goal orientations, but different forms of perfectionism are associated with different patterns of goal orientations. In one study on students, Damian, Stoeber, Negru, & Băban (2014) found that self-oriented perfectionism, considered as more adaptive, positively predicted an orientation toward self-improvement and task mastery. Such individuals aimed to both approach success and avoid failure. However, socially prescribed perfectionism, considered as more maladaptive, positively predicted only an orientation to performing well, as it was externally motivated, and is expected of these students. This is similar to findings by Luyckx, Soenens, Goossens, Beckx, and Wouters (2008), which suggested that adaptive perfectionists engage in proactive and effortful pursuit of identity goals, while maladaptive perfectionists struggle with their identity goals. While the former commit to their goals and explore ways in which to achieve these, the latter tend to engage in rumination and are unable to commit.

Adaptive perfectionism could produce self-improvement as perfectionists may put more effort into achieving their goals (Harper, Eddington, & Silvia, 2016). However,

researchers also noted that while having high standards may provide psychological benefit, concomitant high self-criticism, found in having higher perfectionistic concerns, could attenuate these benefits (Gilman, Rice, & Carboni, 2014).

In sum, findings from current literature suggest a distinction in the relationship between perfectionism and personal growth initiative. Specifically, while high adaptive perfectionism fosters personal growth initiative, high maladaptive perfectionism suppresses it. While the former has a positive relationship with growth, the latter has a negative relationship with such development. This distinction merits research that will concurrently evaluate both domains of perfectionism in relationship to other constructs.

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is directing care and understanding inwards, especially during instances of perceived inadequacy, failure, or general suffering (Neff, 2012). Its components are *self-kindness*, treating one's self with warmth and understanding, instead of being self-critical; *common humanity*, contextualizing one's positive and negative experiences as connected to the shared human experience, instead of feeling isolated; and *mindfulness*, having a realistic, non-judgmental assessment of one's present experiences, so one acknowledges feelings or emotions as they are, without fixating or over-identifying with them (Neff & Germer, 2013).

Self-compassion is gaining prominence as a healthier and more beneficial alternative to self-esteem (Neff & Vonk, 2009), is linked to adaptive psychological functioning (Neff et al., 2007), and as a skill, one that can be developed and taught (Neff & Germer, 2013). It has a strong influence on quality of life (Van Dam, Sheppard, Forsyth, & Earleywine, 2011), emotional resilience, and greater life satisfaction (Neff, 2012), and has positive associations with well-being outcomes such as learning goals, wisdom, curiosity, initiative, happiness, optimism, and positive affect (Germer & Neff, 2013; Neff, 2012). It is also related to social connectedness and healthier romantic relationships (Baker & McNulty, 2011; Neff & Beretvas, 2013). It has been found to be negatively associated with undesired outcomes, such as self-criticism, fear of failure, and neuroticism (Barnard & Curry, 2011). It was negatively related to psychopathology, such as depression, anxiety, and disordered eating behaviors (MacBeth & Gumley, 2012; Neff, 2012). In the Philippines, it has been linked to positive functioning and emotional well-being (Domingo, 2014), and to occupational well-being and happiness (Morga, 2015).

Perfectionism and Self-Compassion

Most research relating perfectionism and self-compassion have focused on the former's negative facets, evidencing an inverse relationship. Few examine both adaptive and maladaptive aspects, a gap addressed in this study.

Self-compassion was negatively associated with traits of perfectionism, such as high standards, organization, concern over mistakes, and perceived pressure (Mosewich, Kowalski, Sabiston, Sedgwick, & Tracy, 2011). However, self-compassionate people seemed just as likely to have high standards for themselves as those with less self-compassion (Neff, 2012). Breines and Chen (2012) found that enhanced self-compassion results in improved motivation to change for the better, more effortful learning, and more resolve to avoid repeating past mistakes.

Self-Compassion and Personal Growth Initiative

While it was thought that too much could lead to self-indulgence, high levels of self-compassion have been shown to encourage personal growth by enhancing motivation (Germer & Neff, 2013; Neff, 2012). In a study that asked participants to recall their regret experiences, self-compassionate individuals reported greater personal improvement (Zhang & Chen, 2016). In the academic setting, high self-compassion is linked with more adaptive motivational patterns (Neff et al., 2005), less procrastination (Williams et al., 2008), and increased confidence in one's abilities (Iskender, 2009). In the corporate setting, self-compassion helped employees learn from failure and enabled them to try again (Shepherd & Cardon, 2009).

Self-compassion was also related to greater efforts to control behaviors that have implications for one's health (Terry & Leary, 2011). Self-compassionate individuals are more able to stick to their diets (Adams & Leary, 2007) and start a fitness regimen (Magnus, Kowalski, & McHugh, 2010). Individuals trained to feel compassionate about the difficulties of giving up smoking reduced this vice more, compared to those trained to simply reflect upon and monitor their smoking (Kelly, Zuroff, Foa, & Gilbert, 2009). Similar results were found in a study on reducing alcohol consumption (Brooks, Kay-Lambkin, Bowman, & Childs, 2012). These studies, across various areas of self-change, support that self-compassion is positively linked to personal growth.

Summary of the Related Literature

As explained in the review of literature, encouraging research supports the notion that self-compassion enables personal development (Neff & Dahm, 2014; Sharma & Davidson, 2015). There are also studies that link both

adaptive and maladaptive domains of perfectionism to growth and flourishing (Stoeber & Corr, 2016), wherein the former enables growth, while the other does not. Following logic, it makes sense to note that adaptive and maladaptive domains of perfectionism would have a similar relationship with personal growth initiative, a more distinct and specific conceptualization of growth.

Studies linking perfectionism and its aspects to self-compassion (Bayir & Lomas, 2016; Robinson, Mayer, Allen, Terry, Chilton, & Leary, 2016; Wang, Lin, & Pan, 2015) abound. However, most of these highlight the maladaptive aspects of perfectionism, and there is little research connecting self-compassion with adaptive perfectionism. Further, as mentioned earlier, few known studies zone in on how these three are related, and imaginably, fewer consider the roles of both adaptive and maladaptive domains of perfectionism.

Self-actualization theories may provide a framework to explain the complex relationship among these three. A perfectionist strives to self-actualize and to grow, and self-compassion may be an intermediary that could help explain how such growth could take place. This argument makes more sense when the distinction between maladaptive and adaptive aspects of perfectionism is considered, using Hill and colleagues' conceptualization of conscientious perfectionism as adaptive perfectionism, and self-evaluative perfectionism as maladaptive perfectionism. Conscientious perfectionism involves traits such as having high standards, organization, planfulness and striving for excellence. These could influence higher levels of self-compassion, which in turn could lead to personal growth initiative. On the other hand, self-evaluative perfectionism encompasses tendencies toward concern over mistakes, need for approval, perceived parental pressure and rumination. These could predict lower levels of self-compassion, which in turn could lead to lower levels of personal growth initiative. While most research looked at domains of perfectionism separately, this study considers them together, as both co-exist in every individual (Hill, Huelsman, & Araujo, 2010; Stoeber & Otto, 2006).

Hypotheses on the Mediating Effect of Self-Compassion

Based on the literature, the present study hypothesized that: (1) Self-compassion will mediate the relationship between conscientious perfectionism and personal growth initiative, such that conscientious perfectionism will be positively related to self-compassion, which in turn, will be positively related to personal growth initiative; (2) self-compassion will mediate the relationship between self-evaluative perfectionism and personal growth initiative, such that self-evaluative perfectionism will be negatively related to self-

compassion, which in turn, will be positively related to personal growth initiative; and (3) conscientious perfectionism and self-evaluative perfectionism will be positively related.

Methods

A structured survey using a cross-sectional quantitative design was employed for this study.

Participants

Participants were recruited online through convenience and snowball sampling. Invitations to participate were disseminated through e-mails and social media. Of the 432 total respondents, 351 were selected for data analyses. Excluded data did not meet the inclusion criterion of age, which was from 25 to 40 years old, or had inconsistent responses.

Mean age of participants was 33.68 years old while the modal age was 37 years old, showing that age distribution was negatively skewed. Respondents were predominantly female. Over half were single, others were married or in a domestic partnership, and a minority were either separated, annulled, or widowed. They have also attained higher levels of education, as majority are college graduates. In terms of employment status, majority are employed full-time.

Independent samples t-tests were conducted to find out if the sample differed on some demographic characteristics, such as age and gender. There were no significant gender differences on self-compassion and personal growth initiative. However, results indicate that self-compassion and personal growth initiative improve with age.

Measures

Personal Growth Initiative

The *Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II* (PGIS-II; Robitschek et al., 2012) was used to measure an individual's active engagement in the process of self-change. The updated 16-item scale yields a total score and four subscales: *readiness for change* ("I figure out what I need to change myself"), *planfulness* ("I know how to make a realistic plan in order to change myself"), *using resources* ("I ask for help when I try to change myself."), and *intentional behavior* ("I am constantly trying to grow as a person"). Items are measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of personal growth initiative. Developments on the scale provided exploratory and confirmatory evidence for a four-

factor structure. It reveals strong internal consistency for the subscales and overall score across samples, temporal stability, and concurrent and discriminant validity. The scale has been found to be a valid measure of personal growth initiative in other cultures (Shigemoto, Thoen, Robitschek, & Ashton, 2015; Tokuyoshi & Iwasaki, 2014; Yang & Chang, 2014). For this study, test of reliability for the whole scale using Cronbach's alpha was .94.

Perfectionism

The *Perfectionism Inventory* (PI; Hill et al., 2004) was used to assess levels of conscientious perfectionism (COP) and self-evaluative perfectionism (SEP). COP is composed of *high standards for others, organization, planfulness, and striving for excellence*, while SEP factors are *concern over mistakes, need for approval, perceived parental pressure, and rumination* (Hill et al., 2004). This is a 59-item questionnaire rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of perfectionism. Sample items are: “*I usually let people know when their work is not up to my standards*” (*high standard for others*), “*I am well organized*” (*organization*), “*I am over-sensitive to the comments of others*” (*need for approval*), and “*I often obsess over some of the things I have done*” (*rumination*). Internal consistency is high, ranging from .83 to .91 for all subscales, with test–retest reliability coefficients ranging from .71 to .91. For this study, means of the subscale scores for COP and SEP were used. Cronbach's alpha was .90 for COP and .95 for SEP.

Both the Perfectionism Inventory and the PGIS-II have planfulness subscales. As can be deduced from item phrasing, the PGIS-II planfulness subscale is more specific, relating to personal development (i.e., “*When I try to change myself, I make a realistic plan for my personal growth.*”), while the Perfectionism Inventory focuses more on making decisions and is generalized as a trait (i.e., “*I find myself planning many of my decisions*”).

Self-Compassion

The *Self-Compassion Scale* (SCS; Neff, 2003a) is the most widely used instrument for self-compassion, and measures three components: self-kindness (“*I’m tolerant of my own flaws and inadequacies*”), common humanity (“*I try to see my failings as part of the human condition*”), and mindfulness (“*When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance*”). It consists of 26 items rated on a Likert-type scale, from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*). The total scale provides the overall level of self-compassion, with higher scores reflecting higher levels of self-compassion. Internal consistency reliability estimates for the six subscales range from .77 to .81, and .92 for the

whole scale (Neff, 2003a). Studies with Filipino samples found the scale to possess high reliability, ranging from .85 to .91 (Domingo, 2014; Morga, 2015; Roxas, David, & Caligner, 2014). For the whole scale in this study, Cronbach's alpha was .93.

Ethical Issues

Approval to conduct the study was obtained from the University Research Ethics Office. Following protocol, permission was sought from respondents and they were provided full and informed consent regarding their participation in the study. No compensation was offered and measures were taken to ensure information was voluntarily provided, and that confidentiality and privacy were assured.

Data Collection and Analysis

A pilot study was conducted to improve the flow of self-administration and to ensure respondent understanding of the survey. The online survey proper was conducted over two-and-a-half weeks. Respondents were invited online, and informed that the study is geared toward a better understanding of personal development in Filipino adults.

Using SPSS 24, data were analyzed by using descriptive statistics and by running factor analysis to establish validity. Pearson correlation coefficient assessed whether the relationships of the variables are statistically significant while Cronbach's alpha measured the reliability of the scales. With EQS 6.3, structural equation modeling (SEM) was utilized to establish construct validity, and to investigate if domains of perfectionism influence levels of self-compassion, which in turn, influences personal growth initiative.

Results

Means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and intercorrelations of all the manifest variables are presented in Table 1. Significant weak to strong interrelationships were found among most variables ($p < .05$), with no overlapping constructs (Cohen, 1992). Reliability coefficients demonstrated very good internal consistency, with values nearing .80.

Assumptions for statistical procedures were evaluated. Some manifest variables appeared non-normal and were negatively skewed. Mardia's normalized coefficient of 15.99 was sufficiently large and violated multivariate normality. Hence, the maximum likelihood procedure and robust method were utilized to adjust for normality of the variables (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). Initial run of

Table 1 Summary of means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients and intercorrelations of manifest variables ($N = 351$)

Variables	1 HS	2 OG	3 PL	4 SE	5 CM	6 NA	7 PP	8 RU	9 SK	10 CH	11 MI	12 RC	13 PF	14 UR	15 IB
<i>Conscientious perfectionism</i>															
High standards for others	1.00														
Organization	.15**	1.00													
Planfulness	.18**	.36**	1.00												
Striving for excellence	.44**	.44**	.41**	1.00											
<i>Self-evaluative perfectionism</i>															
Concern over mistakes	.30**	-.03	.13*	.31**	1.00										
Need for approval	.25**	-.02	.20**	.28**	.81**	1.00									
Perceived parental pressure	.32**	.00	.11*	.23**	.40**	.34**	1.00								
Rumination	.37**	.03	.23**	.44**	.81**	.81**	.41**	1.00							
<i>Self-compassion</i>															
Self-kindness	-.17**	.16**	.06	-.12*	-.61**	-.55**	-.33**	-.57**	1.00						
Common humanity	-.14*	.13*	.02	-.06	-.61**	-.54**	-.23**	-.54**	.75**	1.00					
Mindfulness	-.20**	.15**	.06	-.06	-.66**	-.60**	-.21**	-.63**	.74**	.74**	1.00				
<i>Personal growth initiative</i>															
Readiness for change	.07	.31**	.27**	.31**	-.19**	-.19**	-.06	-.14**	.36**	.34**	.39**	1.00			
Planfulness	.11*	.33**	.27**	.29**	-.31**	-.26**	-.08	-.22**	.39**	.39**	.45**	.83**	1.00		
Using resources	.13*	.21**	.20**	.20**	-.14*	-.16**	.04	-.10	.26**	.31**	.27**	.51**	.57**	1.00	
Intentional behavior	.04	.32**	.28**	.30**	-.23**	-.22**	-.02	-.18**	.33**	.37**	.41**	.71**	.75**	.61**	1.00
Mean	3.39	3.37	3.81	3.62	2.82	3.20	2.93	3.23	3.18	3.39	3.29	3.72	3.62	3.43	3.97
Standard deviation	.78	.82	.62	.74	.90	.87	1.01	.89	.69	.69	.73	.88	.97	1.03	.86
Reliability coefficient	.85	.89	.81	.83	.90	.89	.92	.88	.85	.76	.85	.86	.91	.79	.88

** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

goodness-of-fit tests suggested good fit. Through SEM, analysis of the conceptual model obtained marginal support based on Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi square χ^2 (84, $N = 351$) = 222.20, $p = 0.01$, CFI = 0.95 (> 0.90) and RMSEA = 0.07 [CI = .06,.08] (< 0.08). These indices imply that the model is adequately consistent with the actual data. Figure 1 shows all paths as significant. Post hoc model modifications (i.e., Wald test, Lagrange multiplier test) were considered, but model fit only marginally improved, so the proposed model was retained. The probability value for the Satorra-Bentler Scaled Chi square indicated significance, suggesting discrepancy between the best-fit model and the test model, though significance may have been due to sample size sensitivity and the large number of indicators (Kline, 2015). Table 2 presents relevant model fit indices.

As presented in Fig. 1, standardized factor loadings show that indicators for all constructs are significant

($p < .05$), with paths ranging from *moderate* to *very strong* (.43 to .93). The reliability estimate for the whole model is adequate with Cronbach's $\alpha = .70$. Results confirm the validity of the hypothesized model. Also in Fig. 1 are the structural parameter estimates and effect sizes (R^2) for the model. Higher levels of personal growth initiative were predicted by higher levels of conscientious perfectionism ($\beta = .56$, $p < .05$) and self-compassion ($\beta = .37$, $p < .05$), and lower levels of self-evaluative perfectionism ($\beta = -.24$, $p < .05$). Together, conscientious perfectionism, self-evaluative perfectionism and self-compassion accounted for 49% of the variance in personal growth initiative.

A post hoc power analysis was conducted utilizing G*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Buchner, & Lang, 2009). With $\alpha = .05$, $N = 351$, and a moderate effect size of .49 (Cohen, 1992), achieved power for the study was 1.00. Higher conscientious perfectionism ($\beta = .33$, $p < .05$) and lower

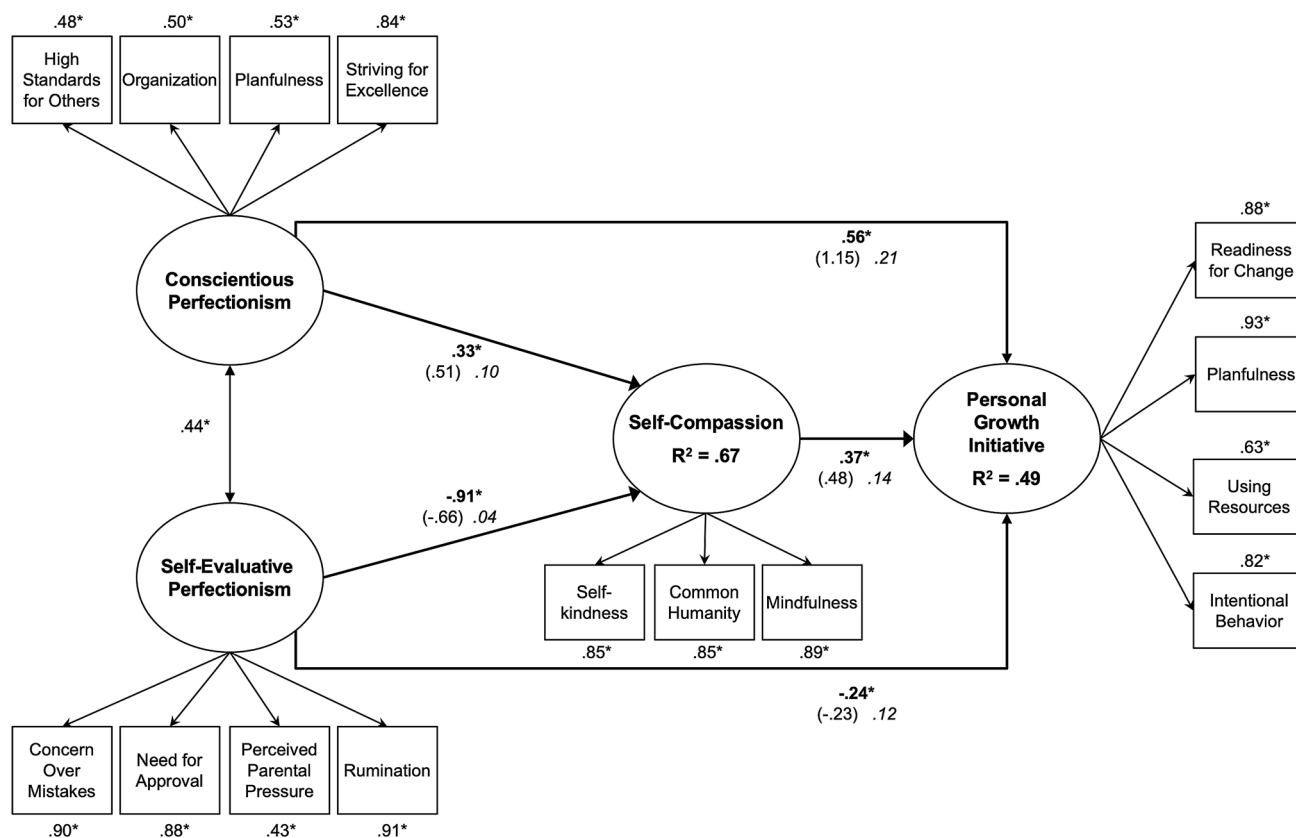


Fig. 1 The results of the proposed model, with self-compassion as a mediator between conscientious perfectionism and personal growth initiative, and between self-evaluative perfectionism and personal growth initiative, using SEM ML Robust Method (* $p < .05$). Path estimates are indicated with standardized coefficients in bold,

(unstandardized coefficients in parentheses) and standard errors in italics

Table 2 Model fit indices

Fit index		Proposed model
Comparative fit index	CFI	.95
Normed fit index	NFI	.92
Non-normed fit index	NNFI	.93
Standardized root mean-based residual	SRMR	.08
Root mean-squared error of approximation	RMSEA	.07, 90% CI [.06, .08]

self-evaluative perfectionism ($\beta = -.91$, $p < .05$) predicted greater levels of self-compassion. Conscientious perfectionism had a moderate, positive influence on self-compassion, while self-evaluative perfectionism had a very strong, negative influence on self-compassion. Both conscientious perfectionism and self-evaluative perfectionism accounted for 67% of the variance in self-compassion. Conscientious perfectionism, self-evaluative perfectionism, and self-compassion, together, accounted for 49% of the variance in personal growth initiative. Finally,

conscientious perfectionism and self-evaluative perfectionism have a significant, positive, and moderate correlation ($r = .44$, $p < .05$).

To analyze the obtained mediation effects, the size and significance of direct and indirect effects were evaluated, as summarized in Table 3. Self-compassion had a small mediating effect (18%) in the relationship between conscientious perfectionism and personal growth initiative, and a strong mediating effect (58%) in the relationship between self-evaluative perfectionism and personal growth initiative. The Monte Carlo simulation method, appropriate for structural equation models (Falk & Biesanz, 2016), was used to construct confidence intervals for indirect effects. Mediation is significant if the 95% bias corrected and accelerated confidence intervals for the indirect effect do not include 0. Results indicate that self-compassion mediated the relationship between conscientious perfectionism and personal growth initiative [LL 0.026, UL 0.241], and that self-compassion mediated the relationship between self-evaluative perfectionism and personal growth initiative [LL = 0.582, UL = 0.088].

Table 3 Direct and indirect effects and percentage of mediating effects

Path	Direct effect (Path c)	Indirect effect (Path ab)	Ratio of indirect to total effect	% of mediating effect
Conscientious perfectionism to self-compassion to personal growth initiative	.56*	.12*	.18*	18
Self-evaluative perfectionism to self-compassion to personal growth initiative	– .24*	– .33*	.58*	58

* $p < .05$

Discussion

As predicted, this study found that self-compassion could be a means through which adaptive and maladaptive domains of perfectionism could facilitate personal growth initiative in Filipino adults. The distinction is that, while self-compassion serves as an enhancer for conscientious perfectionists, as it further allows them to develop and grow, self-compassion may be a remedy for self-evaluative perfectionism, as it balances its negative aspects. Conscientious perfectionism leads to personal growth initiative, consistent with research demonstrating that aspects of adaptive perfectionism are related to higher levels of personal growth initiative (Luyckx et al., 2008), while self-evaluative perfectionism hampers personal growth initiative, which was hinted at in studies relating forms of perfectionism to goal orientation (Damian, Stoeber, Negru, & Băban 2014).

Also evident is that conscientious perfectionism leads to self-compassion, which was not clearly supported in previous studies, while the negative relationship between self-evaluative perfectionism and self-compassion is well-supported in research (Germer & Neff, 2013; Neff, 2003b). Study findings also suggest that self-compassion influences personal growth initiative, corresponding to research linking self-compassion to growth (Sharma & Davidson, 2015) and self-improvement (Zhang & Chen, 2016). Finally, results further suggest that self-compassion may be more beneficial for those higher in self-evaluative perfectionism. The following discussion elaborates on these assertions.

Perfectionism Enables Personal Growth Initiative through Self-Compassion

Results suggest that those already high in conscientious perfectionism tend to possess greater self-compassion,

which enables them to make necessary changes in their lives to reach their potential. This is consistent with studies claiming that positive perfectionism can be advantageous for certain individuals (Andrews, Burns, & Dueling, 2014). On the contrary, those high in self-evaluative perfectionism tend to have less self-compassion, which leads to thoughts and behaviors that prevent growth and development. Individuals with this type of perfectionism tend to focus on mistakes, are sensitive to criticism, tend to feel pressure, and overanalyze. This is consistent with research viewing perfectionism as an impediment to self-compassion (Bayir & Lomas, 2016) and personal growth (Luyckx et al., 2008).

On one hand, personal growth initiative is enabled because conscientious perfectionism and its adaptive aspects allow individuals to derive a sense of pleasure from their diligence and efforts. This enhances levels of self-compassion and determination to succeed. Because self-compassion comes with positive regard, and is also positively related to development and intrinsic motivation (Neff, Rude, & Kirkpatrick, 2007), positive gratification from accomplishments encourages one to maintain, and even improve performance. Conversely, individuals higher in self-evaluative perfectionism may derive less pleasure from their labors, and tend to focus on the weak points of their output, which makes them more self-critical. This leads to lower levels of self-compassion, so instead of self-encouragement, there is self-judgment. As Neff (2009) suggested, the motivation to change stems from a fear of failure, embarrassment, and shame, which holds them back. This keeps individuals from sustaining intentional thoughts and behaviors that enable personal growth initiative.

Individuals with high levels of conscientious perfectionism hold high standards, are organized and planful, and strive for excellence. Compounded with self-compassion, which comes with positive self-regard and equanimity, one could engage in thoughts and actions that help correct maladaptive behaviors, which then enables self-improvement. This is in contrast to self-evaluative perfectionism, which may have more in common with self-focused constructs. For example, self-pity involves a tendency to ruminate and to over-identify with negative emotions. This tendency to fixate on the self becomes a self-defeating cycle, which keeps one from engaging in helpful thoughts and behaviors, which then inhibits positive change.

While perfectionism initially allows individuals to strive and excel, the tendency to negatively self-evaluate eventually tires them. Over time, the constant striving could lead to burnout, perhaps more so with daily stresses. On the other hand, self-compassion can enhance personal development through an honest recognition of failure with an encouragement to overcome challenges. In self-evaluative perfectionism, self-criticism is used to shame oneself into

action when faced with personal inadequacies or weaknesses (Neff et al., 2007). Although those higher in conscientious perfectionism may be self-critical in light of personal weaknesses, they are less so compared to those higher in self-evaluative perfectionism.

Given this, regardless of whether one has higher levels of conscientious perfectionism or self-evaluative perfectionism, it is important to develop self-compassion to enable personal growth and well-being. Genuinely self-compassionate individuals are disinclined to suffer unnecessarily, so they tend to engage in thoughts and behaviors that are more helpful. Since self-compassion provides the safety needed to acknowledge personal shortcomings, individuals are more equipped to act on desired changes, as they are in a better position and frame of mind. As such, they are more optimistic about outcomes and could build on their strengths.

Conscientious Perfectionism Contributes to Growth

Interestingly, study findings suggest that in certain circumstances, perfectionism could contribute to positive outcomes. Results indicate that among conscientious perfectionism, self-evaluative perfectionism and self-compassion, the first was the strongest positive predictor of personal growth initiative. This is a significant finding as the relationship between adaptive perfectionism and personal growth initiative was only intimated in previous research (Bieling et al., 2004; Slade & Owens, 1998). This may be because perfectionists in general tend to fuse self-worth and achievement. However, aspects of conscientious perfectionism are composed of more positive traits which lead to more helpful thoughts and behaviors, while the aspects of self-evaluative perfectionism are less helpful, which lead to maladaptive thoughts and behaviors. As such, self-worth and achievement may be heightened in conscientious perfectionism, while they are undermined in self-evaluative perfectionism.

The Contrary Nature of Perfectionism

As previously noted, a caveat in this study is that both domains of perfectionism were studied in the same individual. Also mentioned is that while they have opposing effects on self-compassion and personal growth initiative, they are also positively associated. In certain areas of this study, they were treated separately to highlight differences. In reality, while an individual's conscientious perfectionism traits enable self-compassion and personal growth initiative, his or her self-evaluative perfectionism traits simultaneously dampen self-compassion and personal growth initiative.

It must be highlighted that while one can choose to enhance conscientious perfectionism traits, and to lessen self-evaluative perfectionism traits, an increase in one still invariably leads to an increase in the other. Such seems to be the nature of perfectionism, as seen in this study, and suggested in previous studies (Stoeber & Otto, 2006; Hill et al., 2010). Given that self-evaluative perfectionism could only be minimized to a small extent, as this will also reduce conscientious perfectionism, the benefits and values of developing self-compassion become more apparent.

To expound, cultivating self-compassion, especially during challenging times, may allow perfectionists to grow from the experience. Self-kindness may provide the encouragement needed for one to persevere and to try harder, instead of focusing on mistakes or blaming others. At the same time, a sense of common humanity may allow one to view challenges and failures constructively. Instead of feeling pressured and isolated, one could perceive significant others as sources of support to achieve desired goals. Also, mindfulness could allow them to assess the challenge realistically. Instead of being overwhelmed by the number of things that did not go as planned, one could carefully deliberate on next steps, and organize resources to get back on track.

Implications on Theory, Research, and Practice

Findings supplement the growing body of research on the importance of enhancing self-compassion, confirming that it enables personal growth and positive change. Findings also corroborate recommendations (Hill et al., 2010; Stoeber & Otto, 2006), suggesting that it is important to conceptualize perfectionism as having both adaptive and maladaptive dimensions, and to simultaneously consider both when studying relationships between perfectionism and other variables.

Results may be useful in the development of intervention programs that correct habitual and detrimental ways of relating to the self. Compassion-focused therapy (CFT; Gilbert, 2009) and mindful self-compassion training (MSC; Neff & Germer, 2013) combine mindfulness techniques with exercises to teach individuals to direct their attention inward, to be aware of imperfections and acknowledge painful thoughts and emotions with curiosity, tenderness, and even humor (Neff & Germer, 2013). Clients can be taught and encouraged to cognitively evaluate and self-regulate negative and self-deprecating automatic thoughts and emotions, and amend these to responses that are more nurturing.

In counseling, self-compassion training can be used for clients high in perfectionism. Self-compassionate principles and exercises, such as being mindfully self-aware, taking self-compassionate breaks, writing in a self-

compassion journal, engaging in compassionate imagery, and practicing affectionate breathing, may bring about desired changes. As self-compassion is enhanced, clients could learn more positive psychological strategies to help themselves engage in thoughts and actions that encourage and sustain positive growth. In corporate settings, educational environments, and in any context where goal formation and pursuit is essential, self-compassion programs may be given to facilitate adaptive growth and career development. To illustrate, perfectionists tend to be individualists who avoid seeking help (Flett & Hewitt, 2015a). The sense of connectedness learned from such methods may enable them to view colleagues as associates instead of competitors, which could foster collaboration and reciprocity.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Although there was an effort to include respondents from across the country and from various socio-economic backgrounds, there appears to be an overrepresentation in some sub-populations. While marital status seemed properly represented, females between 36 and 40 years old, with higher educational attainment, accounted for majority of the respondents. Findings cannot be generalized to the Filipino adult population, due to the use of convenience sampling. A more randomly selected sample in future studies will increase external validity. Future studies may include Filipino translations or the creation of scales more applicable to the local context. Studies can also be done based on initial findings from this research. It is interesting to determine if findings will hold in individuals high in perfectionist traits, as the current sample was composed mostly of those with normative levels. Other samples, such as young adults and older adults, may be an area for future study, given that self-compassion and personal growth initiative have been found to change with age. The current framework may also be improved with the addition of constructs indicative of external situations as either predictors or mediators. Finally, future experimental studies evaluating the effectiveness of self-compassion training on individuals high in perfectionism could also be considered.

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