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Research Article

The Relationship between Perfectionism and Fatigue among EFL Teachers: The Mediating Roles of Depression and Stress

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ABSTRACT

This research study was conducted to investigate the relationship between perfectionism and fatigue among EFL teachers, considering the mediating roles of depression and stress. Although perfectionism is often seen as a booster to help individuals achieve high standards, it may negatively impact individuals' well-being through stress and depression. These psychological outcomes may contribute to fatigue. In our study, we collected data from 151 EFL teachers using various measurement scales, namely perfectionism, stress, depression, and fatigue. Our findings indicated that there is a positive correlation between maladaptive perfectionism and both stress and depression. This relationship, in turn, mediates the association between perfectionism and fatigue. The results suggest that when teachers have maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies, they are more likely to experience stress and depression, which can lead to mental and physical fatigue. This research emphasizes that it is crucial to tackle these perfectionistic beliefs, as they can increase the risk of burnout. Future research studies can use a mixed-methods approach to gain a more complete picture of how perfectionistic thinking patterns affect teachers' mental processes.

Introduction

To teach is to have a career that is very fulfilling (Olsson & Roxå, 2013) yet quite challenging (Hargreaves & Goodson, 1996). Hargreaves (1998) observes that teachers are not automatons performing different tasks; they are

deeply committed individuals who aim to invest significant passion, creativity, and energy in their roles. When teachers aim to do so, they will be engaged both emotionally and cognitively in managing classrooms, handling language barriers, and addressing students' various needs (Näring et al., 2012). These challenges can result in exhaustion, stress, and emotional strain (Carroll et al., 2022; Papastylianou et al., 2009; Sharp Donahoo et al., 2018). As teachers try to tackle these needs and challenges, their professional satisfaction and well-being will be affected.

Another disposition that can deepen the complexity of the situation is perfectionism, a trait that prompts numerous teachers to set exceptionally high standards (Shim et al., 2020). Moreover, perfectionism can create extra pressure to perform well (Frost et al., 1990). However, when they cannot meet their own high expectations, it may result in mental conflict. According to cognitive dissonance theory, the gap between what they want to achieve (their perfect ideal) and what they actually achieve makes them feel uncomfortable (Festinger, 1957). Teachers are naturally driven to do their best and achieve high standards. However, when there is a gap between their aspirations and reality, it can lead to negative outcomes, such as stress or emotional exhaustion (Boddez et al., 2022). From the lens of Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), individuals pursue excellence to fulfill their psychological needs. One of these needs is competence, defined as the need to experience mastery and effectiveness in one's activities. Teachers feel competent when they can improve their students' learning or master their teaching craft. Nevertheless, if the goals they set exceed their ability to be achieved, they begin to feel incompetent (Shafran et al., 2002).

These challenges are particularly pronounced for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, who must navigate additional stressors such as language barriers, cultural adaptation, and performance expectations related to student language acquisition. Given these pressures, understanding the complex relationships between perfectionism, stress, depression, and fatigue in this population is critical. While previous research has examined perfectionism and burnout among teachers (Granziera et al., 2023), there remains limited investigation into the mediating roles of stress and depression in this process, particularly among EFL educators.

Thus, this study seeks to examine the direct and indirect relationships between perfectionism, stress, depression, and fatigue among EFL teachers. By identifying how perfectionistic tendencies contribute to teacher burnout, this research can inform targeted interventions—such as stress management training and institutional support systems—to promote teacher well-being and enhance educational outcomes.

Literature Review

Fatigue

Fatigue is a commonly experienced symptom in the general population (Aritake et al., 2015). While it is often a consequence of medical or psychiatric conditions, many individuals experience fatigue due to lifestyle or situational factors, such as insufficient sleep or stress. Research indicates a significant correlation between stress from an extremely demanding work environment and chronic fatigue (Springer et al., 2023). In academic or educational settings,

fatigue is a significant concern, as it can adversely affect both teachers and students. Research studies show that severe degrees of fatigue, especially cognitive fatigue, lead to poorer academic results and performance (Chen & Qin, 2024; Smith, 2018). Moreover, fatigue and teachers' performance and satisfaction have been studied, and the results show that fatigue negatively correlates with performance, leading to teacher turnover (Ormiston et al., 2022). It is well established that two major factors contributing to fatigue are stress and depression (Åkerstedt et al., 2014; Demyttenaere et al., 2005).

Stress

As evidence indicates that there is an association between stress and fatigue, it is crucial to explore how stress can worsen fatigue among teachers. It is clear and well-documented that teachers' personal health and well-being are impacted by stress, especially work stress (Dicke et al., 2015; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010). Stress is especially common among EFL teachers, primarily due to the demanding nature of their roles (Travers & Cooper, 1996). These demands encompass various areas, such as student-related issues, heavy workload, difficulty in maintaining work-life balance, and financial stressors (Alqarni, 2021; Barabadi et al., 2024; Desouky & Allam, 2017; Mousavi, 2007). The stress teachers experience may contribute to fatigue, as the body's prolonged activation of the stress response system depletes energy reserves and impairs cognitive functioning (McEwen, 2007).

Depression

Furthermore, depression is another factor that can influence the relationship between stress and fatigue (Azizoddin et al., 2020). It is defined as a mood disorder marked by feelings of despondency, anger, low energy, and difficulty concentrating; however, symptoms develop variably between individuals (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). In education, teachers who are depressed often have poorer relationships with learners, marked by less closeness and more conflict (Whitaker et al., 2015). Moreover, teachers with depression show less sensitivity and are more withdrawn from interactions with learners (Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Mashburn et al., 2008). Importantly, research has demonstrated that chronic stress can predict increased depression (Kyriacou, 2001; Reddy et al., 2013), which, in turn, can negatively impact teachers' emotion regulation strategies (Qu & Wang, 2024). This creates a vicious cycle where stress and depression may lead to fatigue, and even mediate one another, which further compromises teachers' effectiveness and mental health.

Perfectionism

In addition to stress and depression, personality traits such as perfectionism may further exacerbate teachers' effectiveness and well-being. Perfectionism, defined as setting high standards to achieve unrealistic goals, is categorized into two types: adaptive (positive) and maladaptive (negative) (Hamachek, 1978). Individuals belonging to the former set high standards but realistic and achievable goals, while those belonging to the latter set excessively high standards, often unrealistic, and are almost unable to accomplish such goals. Research studies have shown that adaptive perfectionism

is associated with well-being (e.g., Suh et al., 2017), life satisfaction (e.g., Park & Jeong, 2015), self-efficacy (e.g., Locicero & Ashby, 2000), positive emotions (e.g., Chasetareh et al., 2023), and higher L2 achievement (e.g., Barabadi & Khajavy, 2020). On the other hand, the maladaptive type is linked to depression (e.g., Enns et al., 2002), psychologicaldistress (e.g., Sheppard & Hicks, 2017), eating disorders (e.g., Dakanalis et al., 2014), suicidal attempts (e.g., Kiamanesh et al., 2015), and chronic fatigue (e.g., Kempke et al., 2011).

In the context of teaching, an early study by Flett et al. (1995) investigated the relationship between dimensions of perfectionism and various aspects of job stress, perceptions of organizational support, and job satisfaction among teachers. Their findings highlighted that perfectionistic beliefs tied to external expectations exacerbate stress-related reactions, emphasizing the importance of supportive environments in mitigating these effects. Expanding on these insights, Bieling et al. (2003) examined the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral outcomes of perfectionism in academic achievement contexts. They found evidence that maladaptive perfectionism can have detrimental effects on teachers' mental health and classroom practices. Similarly, Stoeber and Rennert (2008) investigated how perfectionism affects stress appraisals in teachers, revealing that striving-for-perfection tendencies promote active coping strategies and reduce the likelihood of burnout, while negative reactions to imperfection are strongly linked to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and avoidant coping. In a different context, Rezvani et al. (2015) explored the impact of teacher perfectionism on language learning motivation and achievement among Iranian English language learners, finding no significant relationship between teachers' perfectionism and students' motivation or achievement.

According to the findings of these studies, it can be hypothesized that the unrealistic standards of maladaptive perfectionists may result in the experience of fatigue. We presume that since these individuals strive for perfection, they may ignore self-care and cannot manage their workload. Moreover, this unattainable ideal, coupled with the shadow of stress and depression, may weave a deeper tapestry of fatigue. Thus, our aim is to investigate this intricate association between perfectionism and fatigue, considering stress and depression as mediators.

Method

This quantitative study was conducted among junior and senior high school English teachers in Bojnord during the academic year of 2023 to 2024. A total of 352 teachers participated in the study, comprising 245 female (69.61%) and 107 male (30.39%) teachers. Given the limited size of the target population (352 teachers), a census sampling method was employed. All members of the population were invited to complete the questionnaire. Of these, 280 agreed to participate, and 151 fully completed questionnaires were collected and usable for analysis.

Data Collection Instruments

This study utilized several questionnaires to gather data. The Perfectionism Questionnaire by Smith et al. (2016) was employed to assess levels of perfectionism. Fatigue was measured using the Chalder Fatigue Scale (Chalder et al.,

1993). Symptoms of depression were evaluated with the CES-D Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977), while stress levels were assessed using the Cohen Perceived Stress Scale (Cohen et al., 1993). Additionally, a general questionnaire was included to collect demographic information about the participants.

Perfectionism Questionnaire

Developed by Smith et al. (2016) based on the Hewitt and Flett (1991) model, this scale assesses negative perfectionism. It contains 13 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). For this study, the "Doubts About Actions" subscale (5 items) was used.

Fatigue Questionnaire

The Chalder Fatigue Scale (1993) measures symptoms of mental and physical fatigue over the past month. It contains 11 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = less than usual to 4 = more than usual). Higher scores indicate greater fatigue. Pilot testing yielded a Cronbach's alpha of 0.81. The questionnaire includes items such as "Do you lack energy?" and "Do you feel sleepy and lethargic?" In this study, the content validity of the questionnaire was confirmed by experts in the field of psychology. This scale demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.89, indicating excellent reliability.

Depression Questionnaire

The CES-D Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977) measures depression prevalence. This study used 7 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = rarely/never to 5 = almost always). Higher scores indicate greater depression. Pilot testing resulted in a Cronbach's alpha of 0.91. The questionnaire items include statements such as "I don't feel hopeful about the future" and "I feel like a failure in my life."

Perceived Stress Questionnaire

The participants' feelings and thoughts were assessed using Cohen's Perceived Stress Scale (PSS). For each statement, participants reported how frequently they experience the specified feeling or thought. Importantly, participants were instructed to provide the first response that came to mind, without spending time deliberating or counting occurrences. Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (most of the time) (Cohen et al., 1983). The scale consists of 14 items, with a maximum possible score of 25. An example of an item is "I feel very stressed when I teach." This scale has a reliability of .87, which shows good internal consistency.

Data Collection

Since data collection in schools requires official authorization from the Department of Education, the necessary administrative processes were undertaken at the outset. Approval was first obtained from the university, followed by the issuance of a license from the Department of Education in Bojnord, granting access to the participating teachers. The questionnaire, designed using Google Docs, was distributed to teachers via a shared link. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any stage without consequence. They were assured that their responses would remain strictly anonymous, accessible only to the researcher, and that the data would be used

exclusively for research purposes. The approximate time required to complete the questionnaires was 20 minutes; however, participants were free to take more or less time as needed.

Data Analysis

Following the collection of questionnaires and the necessary information, the data were coded and uploaded to a computer for analysis. Data entry was performed using SPSS 24, with initial steps including coding responses (e.g., assigning 1 for male and 2 for female) and identifying potential outliers. The normality of the data distribution was assessed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, median, standard deviation) and correlation analyses were conducted. To verify the structure of the questionnaire, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS 24. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the proposed hypotheses, including the mediating roles of stress and depression in the relationship between perfectionism and fatigue.

Results

Preliminary Data Analysis

We analyzed the data using SPSS and AMOS software. Initially, we employed a data screening process to ensure the data's suitability for further analysis. This process involved examining the normality of the data, identifying outliers, and addressing missing data. We used skewness and kurtosis statistics to assess data normality. For samples exceeding 300 participants, absolute values of skewness and kurtosis should be less than 2 and 7, respectively (Kim, 2013). The skewness and kurtosis values for all items fell within the acceptable range. It is noteworthy that SPSS displays excess kurtosis as the absolute kurtosis minus 3. Accordingly, Table 3 only shows excess kurtosis values, all of which are less than 4.

Standardized Z-values between -3 and +3 were used to identify univariate outliers. Consequently, one item in socially prescribed perfectionism showed 34 outliers, and three items in self-oriented perfectionism demonstrated 50 outliers. We excluded these from the subsequent analyses. Multivariate outliers were then examined using Mahalanobis D^2, leading to the exclusion of 22 additional cases from the dataset due to $p < 0.001$. We addressed missing data using the expectation-maximization (EM) approach in SPSS.

Demographic Analysis

Table 4.1

Gender	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Male	56	37.08
Female	95	62.91
Total	151	100.0

Table 4.2

Gender	Mean	Range	SD
Male	12.55	30	8.21
Female	8.43	28	6.33

Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistics of the study variables, including perfectionism, stress, depression, and physical-mental fatigue, are presented in Table 3. As shown, fatigue had the highest mean (18.06), while perfectionism had the lowest mean (10.46).

Table 4.3

	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD	Reliability
Perfectionism	5	28	10.46	6.39	0.92
Stress	5	33	15.07	5.97	0.78
Depression	7	30	15.46	6.57	0.91
Fatigue	8	44	18.06	8.70	0.83

Table 4.4.

Descriptive Statistics of Variables (Perfectionism, Stress, Depression, and Fatigue)

	1	2	3	4
Perfectionism	1.00			
Stress	**.56	1.00		
Depression	**.40	**.49	1.00	
Fatigue	**.71	**.53	**.42	1.00

Correlation Analysis

The correlation coefficients among variables are shown in Table 4-4. Perfectionism exhibited a significant positive correlation with stress, depression, and fatigue. Additionally, both mediating variables, stress and depression, showed positive relationships with fatigue, with stress having a stronger correlation. These findings align with the study's hypotheses and previous research.

Validity and Reliability of Research Scales

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was employed to assess construct validity of the scales. Separate CFAs were conducted for perfectionism, stress, depression, and physical-mental fatigue. The Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) were used to evaluate fit. For CFI and TLI, values above 0.90 and 0.95 indicate adequate and excellent fit, respectively (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Marsh et al., 2004). RMSEA and SRMR values below 0.08 and 0.05 represent adequate and excellent fit, respectively.

Figure 4.1 represents a path diagram illustrating the relationships between various observed variables (Q52–Q56 for stress and Q43–Q49 for depression) and their respective constructs, "stress" and "depression." The model shows how each item (Q52–Q56 and Q43–Q49) is associated with the constructs, with standardized factor loadings (e.g., .81, .55, etc.) listed beside the arrows.

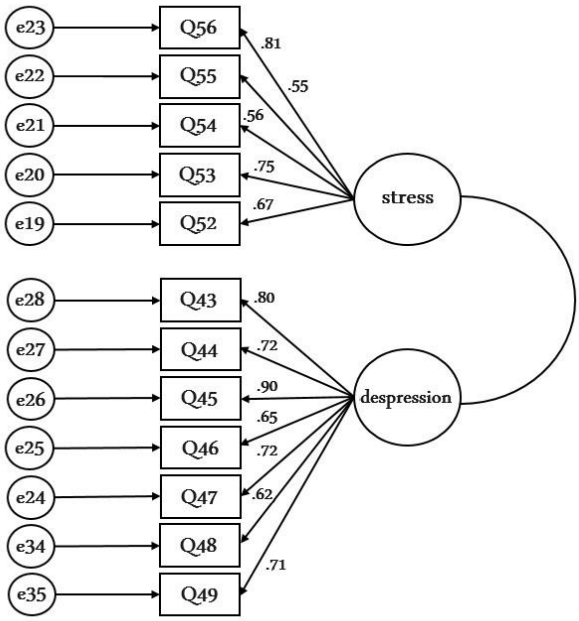

Figure 4.1.

The relationships between observed variables and their constructs of stress and depression

Below, Figure 4.2 represents a path diagram illustrating the relationships between various observed variables (Q33–Q41) and the variable "Fatigue." The diagram shows how each observed variable (Q33–Q41) is associated with the construct, with standardized factor loadings (e.g., .60, .77, etc.) listed beside the arrows. These loadings represent the strength of the association between each observed variable and the variable, while the error terms (e.g., for Q33 to Q41) indicate the measurement error for each item.

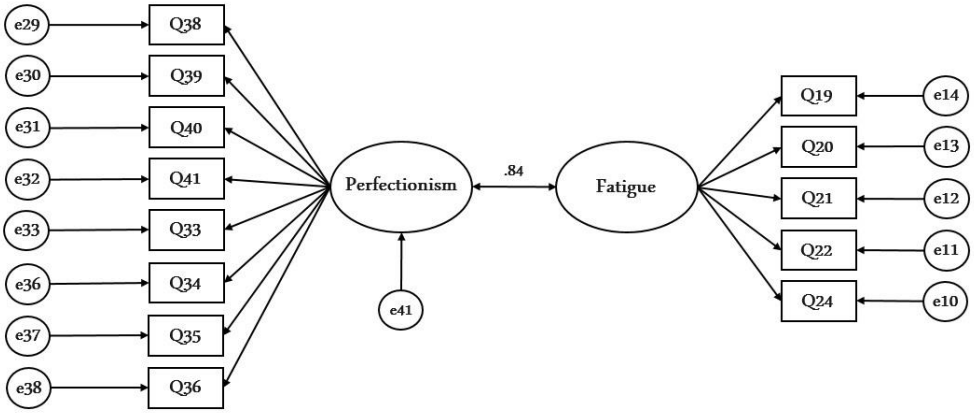

Figure 4.3.

The relationship between perfectionism and fatigue

As shown in Figure 4.3, a path diagram represents the relationships between perfectionism and fatigue, with several observed variables (Q38–Q41, Q33–Q35) associated with the variable "Perfectionism" and another set of observed variables (Q19–Q24) linked to the variable "Fatigue." The model shows a strong positive relationship between perfectionism and fatigue, with a standardized factor loading of .84. Each observed variable (Q38–Q41, Q33–Q35, Q19–Q24) is associated with its respective construct, with factor loadings next to the arrows indicating the strength of these associations. The error terms (e29–e41) are also displayed, representing the measurement error for each item.

Two other direct models that also examine the effect of perfectionism on stress and depression (Figures 4.4 and 4.5) showed a good fit to the data. Standardized parameter estimates (standardized beta coefficients) were measured and perfectionism showed a positive and significant relationship with stress and depression. Also, structural models related to the relationship between fatigue and the two mediating variables, stress and depression, are presented below.

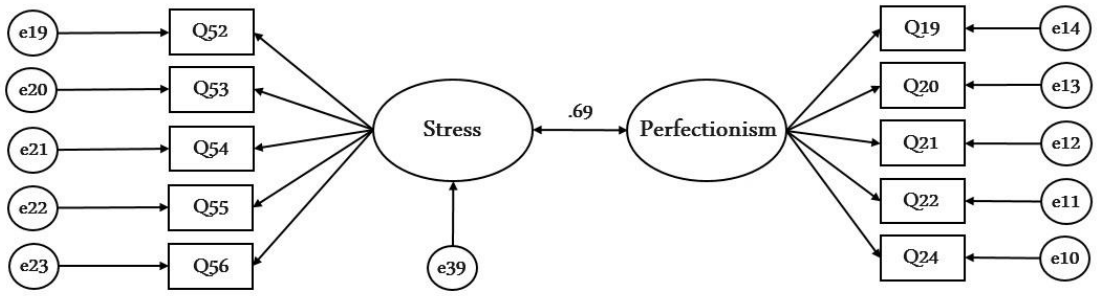

Figure 4.4.

The relationships between stress and perfectionism

Figure 4.5 presents a path diagram showing the relationships between depression, perfectionism, and their observed variables (Q43–Q49 for depression and Q19–Q24 for perfectionism). The diagram illustrates a weak relationship between depression and perfectionism, with a standardized factor loading of .32.

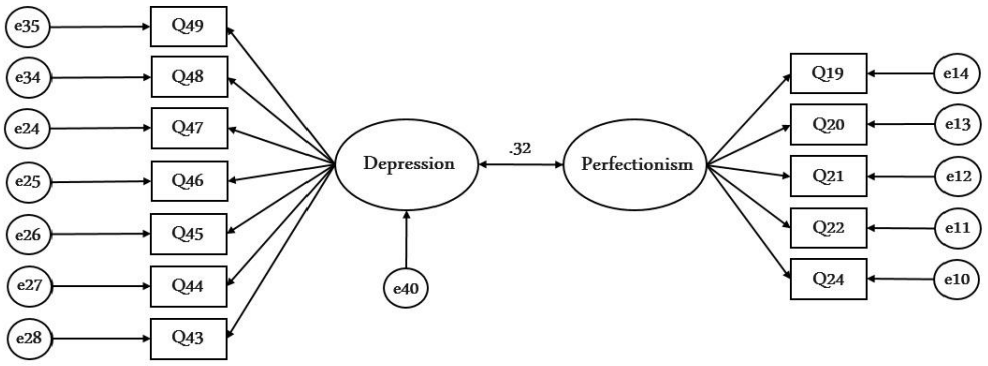

Figure 4.5.

The relationship between depression and perfectionism

Figure 4.6 presents a path diagram illustrating the relationship between fatigue and depression. The model shows a weak positive relationship between the variables Fatigue and Depression, with a standardized factor loading of .23.

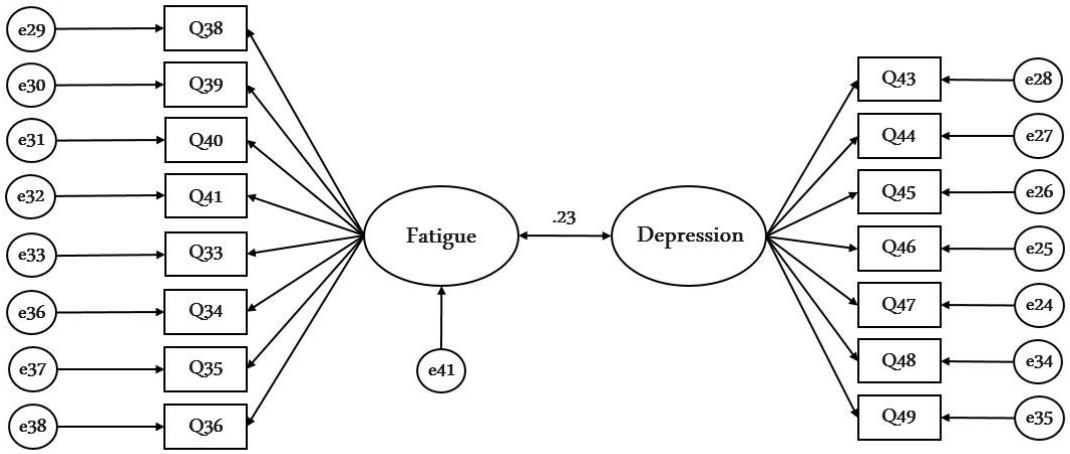

Figure 4.6.

The relationship between fatigue and depression

This figure (4.7) shows a path diagram illustrating the relationship between fatigue and stress. The model indicates a moderate positive relationship between the variables *Fatigue* and *Stress*, with a standardized factor loading of .47.

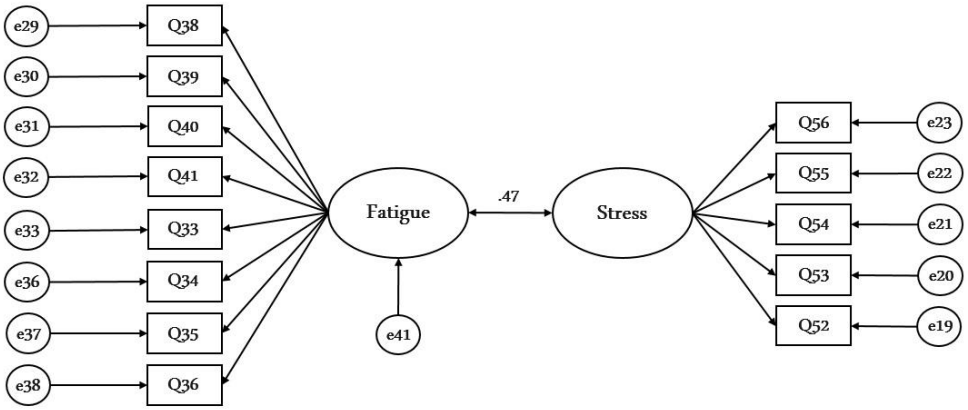

Figure 4.7.

The relationship between fatigue and stress

A full structural model (Figure 4.8) was used to assess the mediating effects of stress and depression between perfectionism on the one hand and mental-physical fatigue on the other hand among EFL teachers. This model showed a good fit to the data. In this structural model, for EFL teachers, stress and depression were able to play a mediating role between perfectionism ($\beta = 0.82$, $p < 0.01$) and mental-physical fatigue. However, for this sample of participants, in this model, perfectionism, along with the role of mediating variables, could account for 82% of the variance in fatigue among EFL teachers in this study.

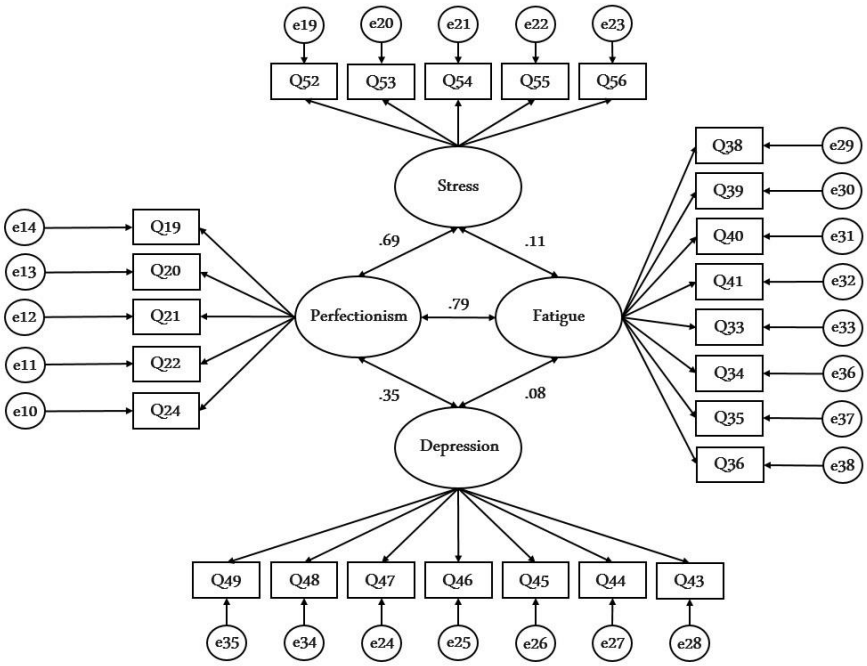

Figure 4.8.

The relationships between stress, perfectionism, fatigue, and depression

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between perfectionism and fatigue among high school English teachers, with the mediations of depression and stress. Our findings revealed that maladaptive perfectionism has a positive relationship with stress and depression, which aligns with the findings of Childs and Stoeber (2012) and Gluschkoff et al. (2017). The findings can be attributed to the fact that individuals with maladaptive perfectionistic tendencies are often under pressure, as these individuals are constantly worried about fully achieving their unrealistic goals and standards. Perfectionistic individuals experience ruminative thoughts about potential mistakes or the inability to perform tasks perfectly (Flett et al., 2002). These ruminations, in turn, contribute to stress and depression. Maladaptive perfectionists tend to view any flaws or shortcomings in their performance as deficiencies, translating them as personal inadequacy and perceiving them as significant failures. It should be added that perfectionistic tendencies and self-criticism can impact individuals' health, contributing to anxiety and stress (Araújo et al., 2017).

Similarly, we discovered that maladaptive perfectionism is positively associated with mental-physical fatigue among teachers. What we found has been echoed by other researchers, such as Dittner et al. (2010) and Deary and Chalder (2008). This is mainly due to the fact that individuals who constantly subject themselves to negative evaluations, perceiving them as failures (Hamachek, 1978), are likely to experience mental and physical fatigue (Flett et al., 2016). Such negative thoughts about achieving goals, often imposed by others and accompanied by fear of failure and self-criticism, prevent individuals from acquiring metacognitive awareness. Thus, individuals struggle to address cognitive challenges in the classroom, leading to self-handicapping behaviors and subsequent mental and physical fatigue (Midgley & Urdan, 2001). To be very specific, depression and negative thinking play a role in contributing to overall fatigue, while perfectionism correlates positively with the emotional and cognitive aspects of fatigue (Arpin-Cribbie & Cribbie, 2007).

Research by Ramis et al. (2023) demonstrated that irrational beliefs, such as the need to be perfect, negatively affected the psychological well-being of athletes. Although they did not consider the role of stress and depression as mediators, the researchers argued that perfectionistic environments (sports settings) may experience stress and negative emotional states in the long run. Ramis et al. (2023) concluded that the longer individuals are under perfectionistic pressures, the lower their well-being and poorer performance.

The results regarding our second hypothesis were confirmed. It was indicated that stress and depression significantly mediated the relationship between perfectionism and mental-physical fatigue. One explanation for this mediation is the relationship between perfectionism and stress. Stoeber (2008) demonstrated that teachers with high levels of perfectionism are more likely to appraise situations as stressful, contributing to increased stress levels. The same study showed that perfectionism can lead to burnout. This is relevant to our findings since burnout shares a key component with mental fatigue, which is emotional exhaustion. The study by Flett (1995)

also supports our findings, showing a link between socially prescribed perfectionism and teacher stress. Thus, this lends evidence to our study that stress can mediate the relationship between perfectionism and fatigue.

Our results also showed that stress and depression significantly mediated the relationship between perfectionism and fatigue. These findings align with previous research (Sharp Donahoo et al., 2017). They found the techniques special education staff employed reduced their stress levels, which in turn alleviated fatigue. Similarly, in our case, when perfectionists place immense pressure on themselves to perform flawlessly, they become more susceptible to stress. If stress is not managed well, it can accumulate and lead to fatigue.

This stress-fatigue relationship is further supported by Capone and Petrillo (2018), who highlight that burnout is strongly associated with depression and poor mental health, which directly relates to fatigue. Moreover, Pines and Aronson (1988) argue that emotional exhaustion, encompassing both mental and physical fatigue, results in low energy levels and contributes to a constant feeling of chronic fatigue.

As discussed earlier, perfectionistic individuals, due to their constant fear of failure, fear of negative evaluations, lack of confidence in interacting with others, and adherence to extremely high and unrealistic standards, are always exposed to stress, anxiety, and depression (Chasetareh et al., 2023). These individuals suffer from cognitive tension and ruminative thoughts, torn between their high standards and self-critical tendencies regarding their inability to meet such standards. Such ruminations lead to significant stress (Barabadi et al., 2023; Barabadi et al., 2024a).

When any activity is perceived as exceeding a person's capacity—as often happens with teachers—this inherent inability to cope with the task can seriously cause stress and fatigue. In reality, the challenge itself does not cause stress; rather, the perception of inefficacy among perfectionistic individuals when facing such challenges results in stress and fatigue. When individuals hold the incorrect belief that they cannot overcome challenging situations, they are more likely to experience anxiety and depression. These negative emotions stem from the bitter reality that perfectionistic individuals focus on their failures and shortcomings in meeting unrealistic standards imposed on them, rather than their actual abilities to solve problems. This negative cycle ultimately leads to cognitive and emotional disturbances (Overholser & Dimaggio, 2020; Winter, 2005).

Conclusion

As previously mentioned, the primary goal of this study was to explore the mediating role of stress and depression in the relationship between perfectionism and mental-physical fatigue among English language teachers. The findings indicate a significant positive correlation between perfectionism, stress, depression, and mental-physical fatigue. The impact of perfectionism on teacher fatigue is both direct and indirect through stress and depression.

Mental-physical fatigue refers to a type of energy depletion, with fatigued individuals being susceptible to burnout. Teachers with irrational and perfectionistic beliefs are more likely to experience mental-physical fatigue due to increased stress and depression. Given the

findings of this study and previous research on the negative effects of perfectionistic beliefs, especially among English language teachers, it is recommended that educational authorities take measures to help teachers manage their irrational beliefs and negative emotions. This can be achieved through in-service training programs aimed at enabling teachers to effectively control their irrational thoughts and perfectionistic tendencies. Without such interventions, these individuals are at risk of mental-physical fatigue, burnout, and job dissatisfaction, which in turn could negatively impact the quality of education and student learning outcomes.

Like any other study, this research is not without limitations. This study is quantitative, with data collected through questionnaires. A comprehensive understanding of the relationship between perfectionism and mental-physical fatigue requires mixed-method research (quantitative and qualitative). Another limitation is the cross-sectional nature of the study, meaning the data was collected at a specific point in time. A longitudinal study would provide a better understanding of the relationships between variables over time. Another difficulty in our research was its correlational nature; this does not clarify the causal relationships between variables. Finally, as participation was voluntary, not all teachers in the target population completed the questionnaires. Therefore, the results reflect only a subset of the population. Future researchers could employ additional tools, such as interviews and critical notes, to better understand the variables. Also, the cognitive aspect of perfectionism can be considered, such as ruminative and repetitive thoughts, alongside negative perfectionism. Scholars could also consider teachers in middle school settings.

As classrooms are often overcrowded, it would be difficult for teachers to perform effectively (Barabadi et al., 2024b), especially those who are perfectionists. Therefore, the negative impact of perfectionistic beliefs and thoughts can be particularly harmful to their satisfaction and mental health. Subsequent steps should involve counseling and in-service training sessions to help these individuals address their irrational and perfectionistic beliefs effectively. It is better to assist perfectionistic individuals in managing negative emotions such as stress, depression, and anxiety, which stem from idealistic and perfectionistic beliefs. While personality traits like perfectionism may not be easily altered, educational authorities and administrators can help these individuals regulate their emotions and control their irrational beliefs to reduce negative emotional experiences.

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