

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The Effectiveness of Emotional Intelligence Training on Social Anxiety and Perfectionism of Art Students in Kerman City

Sina Shafiei Soork*¹, Ali Shamsadin Pour

1. Assistant Professor of Psychology, Anar Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran.
2. Master's degree, Anar Islamic Azad University, Kerman, Iran

Correspondence:

Sina Shafiei Soork

Email: Sina_shafiei@tabrizu.ac.ir

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ABSTRACT

Perfectionism and social anxiety are among the most important psychological challenges of student life that can have widespread negative consequences on mental health, academic performance, and social relationships of students. Perfectionism, especially in its uncompromising form, is associated with setting extreme standards, fear of making mistakes, and severe critical self-evaluation, and provides the basis for anxiety, avoidance, and decreased academic performance. Meanwhile, emotional intelligence, as a set of abilities related to understanding, regulating, and managing one's own and others' emotions, plays an important role in promoting psychological adjustment, improving social relationships, and reducing emotional problems. This study investigated the effects of emotional intelligence training on social anxiety and perfectionism in art students in Kerman. The study was conducted as a semi-experimental design using a pre-test, post-test, and control group design. The sample included 30 art students who were randomly assigned to two experimental (15) and control (15) groups. Data were collected using the Jerabek (1996) and Hill et al. (1978) social anxiety questionnaires. The findings showed that the interaction between the experimental procedure (emotional intelligence training) and the perfectionism pretest and the interaction between the experimental procedure (emotional intelligence training) and the social anxiety pretest were not significant, so there was no interaction and the slopes of the regression line were the same between the groups in the pretest. Based on the findings, the experimental procedure (emotional intelligence training) did not affect any of the dependent variables (perfectionism and social anxiety). As a result, emotional training did not affect perfectionism and social anxiety, so it is suggested that changes be made in the implementation method and the number of sample subjects in future studies.

KEYWORDS

Emotional Intelligence, Social Anxiety, Perfectionism, Students, Art.



Introduction

One of the main obstacles to achieving the goals of the educational system is the psychological characteristics of students, which can affect their learning process and academic progress. One of these characteristics is the students' extreme expectations of themselves, which is referred to as perfectionism (Hemmati Fakher, 2012). Perfectionism means an individual's tendency to achieve high ideals and perform assigned tasks perfectly; in such a way that perfectionists consider themselves obligated to perform perfectly and without errors, and if they feel unable to fulfill these criteria, they may react with avoidance or procrastination (Zivari et al., 2024). This personality construct is known for its characteristics such as emphasis on perfection, setting very high standards, and a tendency to critical self-evaluation (Hewitt & Felt, 1991; Crick & Ozkek, 2022). Reports show that the prevalence of social anxiety in children and adolescents is between 1.1 and 3.7% and in adults between 3 and 13% (Hatami-Nejad et al., 2025).

Research indicates that social anxiety has significant negative effects on academic performance and the learning process of students (Wang et al., 2024). Due to the social nature of the school environment and the necessity of interacting with peers and teachers, students with social anxiety may avoid attending school or avoid active participation in class activities and educational communication, which ultimately disrupts their learning (Mian et al., 2025). Therefore, social anxiety disrupts students' learning.

Due to the creative, self-disclosing, and evaluation-oriented nature of art activities, art students may be more susceptible to social anxiety and perfectionism than other students. Exposing artwork to the judgment of others, receiving feedback, and comparing themselves to peers can increase social anxiety levels in this group. Also, the desire to create perfect works and the pressure to achieve high standards may lead to maladaptive perfectionism, psychological burnout, and decreased self-satisfaction (Thompson, 2025). Given the importance of emotional intelligence and its role in students' mental health and academic success, and since few domestic studies have examined the effect of training emotional intelligence components on students' social anxiety and perfectionism, the present study seemed necessary. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training on reducing social anxiety and perfectionism in art students.

Methodology

This research is experimental using pre-test and post-test with a control group. The research sample consisted of 30 art students in Kerman who were randomly divided into two experimental groups (15 people) and control (15 people). The experimental group participated in an emotional intelligence training course that consisted of 8 60-minute sessions. The data collection tool included the Social Anxiety Questionnaire (Marabek, 1996) and the Perfectionism Questionnaire (Herman, 1991). The data were analyzed using statistical tests such as independent t-test and analysis of variance.

The data collection tool included the Social Anxiety Questionnaire (Marabek, 1996), whose Cronbach's alpha coefficient calculated in Sepehri's research (2010) was estimated to be above 0.7 for this questionnaire. In Sepehri's research (2010), the content, face, and criterion validity of this questionnaire were assessed as appropriate. ** The reliability of the questionnaire in SPSS software was obtained with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.83. And also the Perfectionism Questionnaire (Herman, 1991), which in the study of Zarei (2014) was calculated to be 0.86 based on a preliminary study. ** The reliability of the questionnaire in SPSS software was obtained with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.28.

Result

The results showed that the effect of the experimental action (emotional intelligence training) was not significant $P > 0.05$, $F(2,25, 0.993 = \text{Wilks' lambda})$, as a result, the experimental action (emotional intelligence training) did not affect any of the dependent variables (perfectionism and social anxiety).

The distribution of scores of the subjects in the experimental and control groups is given in the perfectionism variable of art students. The results showed that in perfectionism in the experimental group, the mean and standard deviation were ($M=192.06\pm 22.82$) in the pre-test stage and ($M=196.8\pm 26.52$) in the post-test stage. In the control group, the mean and standard deviation were ($M=196.13\pm 24.18$) in the pre-test stage and ($M=201.2\pm 24.27$) in the post-test stage. Also, the corrected mean of the perfectionism variable in the experimental group was ($M=198.48$) and the control group was ($M=199.51$).

First hypothesis: Emotional intelligence training is effective in reducing perfectionism in art students.

Table (1): Analysis of covariance in the context of multivariate analysis of covariance for the perfectionism variable

Sources	sum of squares	degrees of freedom	mean of squares	F value	significance level	eta squared
Perfectionism Pre-Test	9521/4	1	9521/4	40/29	0/000	0/608
Trial Practice	7/69	1	7/69	0/033	0/85	0/001
Error	6144/06	26	236/31			

Table (1) shows the results of the comparison of the effects of experimental practices between the experimental and control groups on the perfectionism variable. The results showed that there was no significant difference in perfectionism between the two groups ($P=0.85$, $F(1,26)=0.033$). As a result, the effect of the experimental practice (emotional intelligence training) on improving perfectionism in art students was not effective.

The distribution of the scores of the subjects in the experimental and control groups is given in the variable of social anxiety of students. The results showed that in social anxiety in the experimental group, the mean and standard deviation in the pre-test stage are ($M=75.26\pm 5.45$) and in the post-test stage are ($M=76.8\pm 5.21$). In the control group, the mean and standard deviation in the pre-test stage are ($M=74.73\pm 6.04$) and in the post-test stage are ($M=75.8\pm 7.94$). Also, the corrected mean of the variable of social anxiety in the experimental group was ($M=76.66$) and the control group was ($M=75.93$).

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine the effectiveness of emotional intelligence (EI) training on social anxiety and perfectionism among art students in Kerman. Contrary to expectations, the findings indicated that EI training did not lead to statistically significant improvements in either social anxiety or perfectionism. Specifically, no significant group differences were found in perfectionism ($F(1,26)=0.033$, $p=0.85$) or social anxiety ($F(1,26)=0.099$, $p=0.75$). Therefore, both research hypotheses were rejected. These results suggest that, within the conditions of this study, EI training was not sufficiently effective to bring about measurable psychological change in the target group. These findings are inconsistent with a substantial body of prior research that has emphasized the positive role of emotional intelligence in reducing maladaptive psychological outcomes. For instance, Hashemi-Nejad et al. (2025) reported that maladaptive perfectionism and experiential avoidance directly and positively predict social anxiety, and that difficulties in emotion regulation play a mediating role in this relationship. While their findings support the theoretical link between EI-related variables and social

anxiety, the present study did not replicate such effects through EI training, indicating a possible contextual or methodological discrepancy.

Similarly, Bakhshi and Sedighi Arfaei (2021) found that EI-based interventions, particularly when combined with social self-efficacy, significantly improved social anxiety and perfectionism among elementary students. Although their results align with the theoretical assumptions of the current study, they contrast with the present empirical findings, where no significant effects were observed. A similar pattern of inconsistency was found when comparing the results with those of Attadokht (2016), who emphasized the importance of addressing perfectionism and EI to prevent academic burnout. While this perspective supports the theoretical framework of the present research, the actual outcomes did not confirm its effectiveness in practice. Recent international studies have also highlighted the positive and mediating role of emotional intelligence.

Conclusions

This study investigated the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training on social anxiety and perfectionism among art students in Kerman. The findings revealed that the intervention did not produce statistically significant changes in either variable, leading to the rejection of both research hypotheses. Despite strong theoretical support and numerous previous studies demonstrating the benefits of EI-based interventions, the present results suggest that such training may not always yield immediate or measurable effects in all contexts. The discrepancy between the current findings and prior research highlights the importance of considering contextual, motivational, and methodological factors when implementing EI programs. It appears that the effectiveness of emotional intelligence training is highly dependent on participant engagement, instructional quality, and the relevance of the content to learners' real-life experiences.

Future research should focus on designing more interactive, culturally adapted, and long-term EI interventions, as well as incorporating qualitative measures to better understand participants' experiences. By addressing these limitations, future studies may better capture the true potential of emotional intelligence training in improving students' psychological well-being.

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