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# Perfectionism's Relationship with Higher Education Students' Help-Seeking

*A Literature Review*

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# Abstract

**Background:** Adaptive help-seeking is an effective self-regulated learning strategy that can alleviate difficulties students encounter. Research has suggested a high prevalence of perfectionism among higher education students, and indicated that perfectionism can interfere with help-seeking. The aim of this thesis was to map and synthesise the existing research on perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking in order to advance knowledge and highlight directions for future research.

**Method:** A systematic literature search was undertaken in April 2020 in the following electronic databases: ERIC, PsychINFO, Web of Science, MEDLINE, Education Research Complete, Open-Grey.eu, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Collection of Computer Science Bibliographies and ACM Guide to Computing Literature. The PRISMA guidelines were followed during the study selection process. A qualitative content analysis was applied to extract and synthesise data from the 24 included studies.

**Findings:** The findings suggest that some aspects of the multifaceted perfectionism construct impede help-seeking, while others might facilitate help-seeking. Among the overarching categories of perfectionism, perfectionistic self-presentation displayed the most pervasive links with help-seeking. For perfectionistic strivings, small but noticeable positive links with adaptive outcomes were found, while perfectionistic concerns showed a pattern of small positive links with maladaptive help-seeking outcomes. Other-oriented perfectionism showed both positive and negative links with help-seeking

**Conclusion:** The findings are in line with previous research, highlighting a need for awareness about the potential barriers that certain perfectionistic tendencies might present to higher education students' help-seeking. The precise mechanisms that account for the links between different within-combinations of perfectionism and various aspects of help-seeking remain to be determined. More research is needed to ascertain whether, how, and to what degree, the various aspects of perfectionism are related to help-seeking.

**Keywords:** Help-seeking, self-regulated learning, perfectionism, personality, higher education

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Für







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# Abbreviations

ACM	Association for computing machinery
AHS	Adaptive help seeking
APS-R	Almost perfect scale – revised
ATHS	Attitudes toward help seeking scale
ATSPPH-FF	Fischer and Farina attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help scale
ATSPPH-FT	Fischer and Turner attitudes toward seeking professional psychological help scale
ATSPPH-SF	Attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help scale – shortened form
CAPS	Child-adolescent perfectionist scale
CCS	Collectivist coping styles inventory
CHIP	Coping with health injuries and problems
CMC	Computer-mediated communication
CMPB	Comprehensive model of perfectionistic behaviour
COM	Concern over mistakes
COPE	COPE inventory
COPEAU-A	Coping with pre-exam anxiety and uncertainty
CP	Conscientious perfectionism
CSCY	Coping scale for children and youth
CSI	Coping strategy indicator
D	Dynamic
DAA	Doubts about actions
ERIC	The education resources information center
F	Formal
F2F	Face-to-face
F-MPS	Frost multidimensional perfectionism scale
GHSQ	General help-seeking questionnaire
GWHS	Goals and work habits survey
HF-MPS	Hewitt and Flett multidimensional perfectionism scale
IASMHS	Inventory of attitudes toward seeking mental health services

IBSS	International bibliography of the social sciences
ICT	Information and communications technology
ILE	Interactive learning environment
Im	Impersonal
In	Informal
ISI	Web of science
M	Mediated
MSLQ	Motivated strategies for learning questionnaire
NDCI	Non-disclosure of imperfections
NDPI	Non-display of imperfectionism
NEO-PI-R	Revised NEO personality inventory
O	Organization
ODE	Oxford dictionary of English
P	Personal
PC	Parental criticism
PE	Parental expectations
PI	Perfectionism inventory
PRISMA	Preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses
PS	Personal standards
PSP	Perfectionistic self-promotion
PSPS	Perfectionistic self-presentation Scale
S	Static
SEP	Self-evaluative perfectionism
SHoT	Studentenes helse- og trivselsundersøkelse («The students' health and well-being study»)
SRCS	Self-report coping scale
SSER	Social support for emotional reasons
SSIR	Social support for instrumental reasons
SSOSH	Self-stigma of seeking help scale
SSS	Seeking social support
TATSPS	Trainees' attitudes toward seeking psychotherapy scale
TESS	Teacher emotional support scale
WOC-R	Ways of coping checklist – revised





# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Perfectionism is a topic of wide and increased interest, particularly within psychological research, but also beyond. A recent meta-analysis suggests that perfectionism is highly prevalent among higher education students, and that there has been an increase in perfectionism among higher education students in recent decades<sup>1</sup> (Curran & Hill, 2019). It states that, compared to prior generations, today's higher education students are harder on themselves, more demanding of others, and report higher levels of social pressure to be perfect. Similarly, a recent survey<sup>2</sup> measured the prevalence of perfectionism in the student population at Norwegian higher education institutions, thereby categorising perfectionism to be a potentially important insight into student welfare. Despite its psychometric limitations<sup>3</sup>, the results of the survey displayed a high average score on perfectionistic traits among Norwegian students (Knapstad et al., 2018). Research has also shown that many professors and academic employees struggle with the effects of perfectionism (Dunn, Whelton, & Sharpe, 2006; Flaxman, Menard, Bond, & Kinman, 2012; Sherry, Hewitt, Sherry, Flett, & Graham, 2010), implying that perfectionism is correlated with impairing consequences in the wider higher education context.

A wide body of research has highlighted the importance of self-regulation among higher education students. In this regard, self-regulation is considered crucial for higher education students, who are required to take increased responsibility for their learning (e.g. Pintrich & Zusho, 2007; Vanderstoep, Pintrich, & Fagerlin, 1996; Wolters, 1998). For instance, higher education students often encounter academic difficulties that they are not able to solve independently, in which case a frequently used self-regulated learning strategy is seeking needed assistance from their surroundings – such as teachers and peers. Students may, for

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<sup>1</sup> in the UK, Canada, and the United States

<sup>2</sup> The SHoT Study is a national student survey for health and well-being in higher education in Norway (Knapstad, Heradstveit, & Sivertsen, 2018; Nedregård & Olsen, 2011, 2014).

<sup>3</sup> The statements used in the perfectionism subsection of the SHoT 2018 study bare striking resemblance to the perfectionism subscale of the Eating Disorder Inventory (EDI-2/EDI-3) (Garner, 1991, 2004), specifically designed to assess characteristics clinically relevant to eating disorders, and only validated for this purpose.

example, ask teachers or peers for help in solving an integral equation after repeatedly getting the answer wrong on their own. Previous research has demonstrated positive effects of help-seeking on student learning and achievements (e.g. Ames & Lau, 1982; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007; Magnusson & Perry, 1992).

Multitudinous factors can influence a help-seeking process, such as the sociocultural context, individual differences, etc. Specifically, personal characteristics can impact all of the stages of the help-seeking process (Karabenick, 2011a). Yet, despite research that has identified personality-related predispositions to be important predictors of help-seeking (e.g. Atik & Yalçin, 2011; Schomerus et al., 2013), there is still little known of the possible effects that perfectionism may have on students' help-seeking. Recent research suggests that an individual's personality dispositions are intertwined with self-regulation. For example, personality traits (e.g. conscientiousness and neuroticism) are considered significant predictors of the types of self-regulated strategies that a person is most likely to engage in, as well as the expected success rate of these strategies in modifying behavioural outcomes (McCrae & Löckenhoff, 2010). However, relatively little research or theorising has targeted the intersection of self-regulated learning strategies and personality dispositions, such as perfectionism.

### *1.1.1 Help-Seeking*

The academic literature does not provide an agreed upon definition of the «help-seeking» construct. In the educational context, help-seeking can be defined as a learning (or problem-solving) strategy where a learner attempts to obtain external assistance to deal with difficulties experienced while working towards one (or more) educational goal(s)<sup>4</sup>.

Help-seeking was, «in the early studies of socialization and personality development», often viewed as an indicator of dependency and therefore took «on connotations of immaturity, passivity, and even incompetence» (Nelson-Le Gall, 1985, p. 56). Now, there is general agreement that adaptive help-seeking is an important and effective self-regulated learning strategy that can alleviate difficulties learners encounter, and that help-seeking is linked to

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<sup>4</sup> loosely based on Rickwood & Thomas's (2012, p. 180) help-seeking definition.

students' achievement goals and academic performance (e.g. Butler, 1998, 2006; Karabenick, 1998, 2004; Karabenick & Newman, 2006; Newman, 1990, 1998, 2000; Pintrich & Zusho, 2002; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Zimmerman & Pons, 1990).

However, one should note that students' help-seeking can be both adaptive and maladaptive. A central differentiation has been made between instrumental (i.e. adaptive) and executive (i.e. maladaptive) forms of help-seeking. While instrumental help-seeking focuses on mastery and understanding (i.e. to seek just enough help to be able to solve a problem or attain a goal), executive help-seeking involves avoidance of work (i.e. to request someone else to solve a problem or attain a goal on one's behalf) (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Nelson-Le Gall, Gumerman, & Scott-Jones, 1983). With adaptive help-seeking, students can comprehend concepts and complete learning tasks, which are otherwise not achievable with their own efforts (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). It may therefore be taken for granted that students will ask for help when they experience academic difficulties that they cannot solve independently. However, many students do not seek help when they would benefit from it (e.g. Good, Slavings, Harel, & Emerson, 1987; Newman & Goldin, 1990; Ryan, Hicks, & Midgley, 1997; Ryan, Patrick & Shim, 2005; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). Indeed, students who are expected to benefit the most from help are also the ones least likely to seek it (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988b).

Help-seeking is unique among self-regulated learning strategies in two notable respects. First, help-seeking is – apart from peer learning – the only self-regulated learning strategy that is potentially social in nature, and in many instances learners need to possess appropriate social skills for seeking help from a variety of sources. Second, help-seeking is potentially stigmatising due to its perceived personal costs (Karabenick & Gonida, 2018). Unlike many other self-regulated learning strategies (e.g. memorisation, organisation, and elaboration), help-seeking may require a complex balancing of perceived enticing benefits and intimidating costs (Fisher, Nadler, & Whitcher-Alagna, 1982). An obvious benefit of help-seeking is that it might increase the likelihood of the immediate problem being alleviated or solved with the resultant comprehension or task mastery (Rosen, 1983; Shapiro, 1983). Related research also lists associated benefits such as decreased effort, and the acquisition of knowledge and skills that can be used later to help oneself or others (Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998). On the other hand, associated costs include the time and effort required to seek help (Karabenick, 2011a), imposing upon surroundings (DePaulo, Leiphart, & Dull,

1984), or incurring debt to those providing assistance (i.e. creating the obligation to return the favour or provide some other form of compensation) (Greenberg & Westcott, 1983). Seeking help may also cause social embarrassment, or fear thereof, particularly when it is perceived to expose oneself to public scrutiny (e.g. being judged less capable by teachers, peers, or anyone in an evaluative position) (Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Shapiro, 1983). Similarly, help-seeking can for some be tantamount to an open admission of failure, inadequacy, or a lack of competency, and thereby pose a threat to their self-esteem (Butler, 1998; Covington, 1992; Fisher et al., 1982; Karabenick, 2003; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Nadler, 1983, 1998; Nadler & Fisher, 1986; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997; Ryan, Pintrich, & Midgley, 2001).

### *1.1.2 Perfectionism*

Perfectionism can be defined as a «multidimensional personality disposition characterized by striving for flawlessness and setting exceedingly high standards of performance accompanied by overly critical evaluations of one's behavior» (Stoeber, 2018, p. 3). While such general notions appear to be uncontroversial, there are several conceptual and pragmatic controversies concerning the perfectionism construct – for instance the disputed notion of whether or not perfectionism can be adaptive<sup>5</sup>. Setting of and striving for high standards is a common description of adaptive perfectionism. However, some argue high standards, difficult-to-attain standards, or even excessive standards should be differentiated from perfectionistic or unrealistic standards (see Blasberg, Hewitt, Flett, Sherry, & Chen, 2016). In a similar vein, some see striving for excellence as attainable, unlike striving for perfection, and argue for a differentiation between the two. Furthermore, concern has been raised that the traits used to describe the adaptiveness of perfectionism, such as achievement striving, organisation, order, dutifulness, and self-discipline, may reflect conscientiousness<sup>6</sup> rather than perfectionism (e.g. Hill, McIntire, & Bacharach, 1997; Samuel, Riddell, Lynam, Miller, & Widiger, 2012). Putting these disagreements and disputed conceptual overlaps aside, it

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<sup>5</sup> «Adaptive perfectionism», also referred to as «normal» (Hamachek, 1978), «healthy» (Greenspon, 2000), «positive» (Kung & Chan, 2014), «standards», and «functional» (Rhéaume et al., 2000) perfectionism.

<sup>6</sup> Conscientiousness is in the big five model defined as individual differences in the degree of organization, persistence, and motivation in goal-directed behaviour, assessed in the revised NEO personality inventory (NEO-PI-R) as the sum of facet scales labelled competence, order, dutifulness, achievement striving, self-discipline, and deliberation (Costa & McCrae, 1990, 1992, 2012).

may seem plausible that students' self-oriented tendency to set highly demanding standards and to conscientiously strive for their attainment can have positive effects on the attitudes and intentions they hold towards help-seeking, as well as the students' actual help-seeking behaviours.

A thorough discussion of the disputed notion of adaptive perfectionism is outside the scope of this thesis. However, what is beyond debate is the notion that perfectionism *can* be highly maladaptive<sup>7</sup> and undermine an individual's intrapersonal and interpersonal functioning<sup>8</sup>. A growing body of evidence suggests that high levels of perfectionism are associated with elevated levels of stress and anxiety (e.g. test, social, and speech anxiety), burnout, as well as various mental health issues (e.g. Bardone-Cone et al., 2007; Egan, Wade, & Shafran, 2011; Flett & Hewitt, 2013; Shafran & Mansell, 2001; Stoeber & Damian, 2016; Vanstone & Hicks, 2019). Perfectionism has also been linked to critical self-evaluation (Tangney, 2002), a contingent self-worth (A. P. Hill, Hall, & Appleton, 2011), and low self-compassion (Neff, 2003). Accordingly, students with perfectionist traits have been shown to be prone to persistent worry and fear of failure (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Mosher, 1991), to show attitudinal inflexibility and rigidity (Ferrari & Mautz, 1997), as well as to have an inclination to the use of self-handicapping learning strategies such as procrastination, over-committing, and avoidance (e.g. Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Hobden & Pliner, 1995; Kearns, Forbes, & Gardiner, 2007; Kearns, Forbes, Gardiner, & Marshall, 2008). Help-seeking avoidance – that is, resisting the urge to seek help when it is needed (e.g. «When I don't understand a task, I often guess instead of asking someone for help») – can be defined as a self-handicapping learning strategy (Huet, Dupeyrat, & Escribe, 2013).

## 1.2 Motivation

Previous research has identified perfectionism as a personality disposition that may interfere with the help-seeking process. For example, theory has suggested that perfectionistic

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<sup>7</sup> «Maladaptive perfectionism», also referred to as «neurotic» (Hamachek, 1978), «unhealthy» (Greenspon, 2000), «negative» (Kung & Chan, 2014), and «dysfunctional» (Rhéaume et al., 2000) perfectionism.

<sup>8</sup> Some have even argued in favour of including perfectionism as a higher-order maladaptive personality trait (i.e. personality disorder) in the diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (DSM-5) (see Ayearst, Flett, Hewitt, & Lejuez, 2012).

individuals may experience more difficulties with admitting to the self – or to others – that they are in need of help and therefore are not «perfect» (Hewitt et al., 2003; Hewitt, Habke, Lee–Baggley, Sherry, & Flett, 2008). This inability to admit to imperfections may thus limit their ability to seek support, and further perpetuate their problems. Similarly, perfectionists have been theorised to be fearful of making mistakes, display hypersensitivity towards criticism, and to fear interpersonal rejection, which may cause avoidance of situations where they may experience the scrutiny of others (Hewitt et al., 2003). Research has further suggested that perfectionists with concerns about social evaluation tend to be anxious (Flett, Endler, Tassone, & Hewitt, 1994), and describe themselves as unwilling to disclose mistakes when in a threatening situation (Frost et al., 1995).

Given that help-seeking may require social competencies, the interpersonal – or social – aspects of the perfectionism construct are of particular interest for help-seeking research. Interpersonal perfectionism can, for example, manifest itself in the desire to present oneself as flawless and to avoid revealing and disclosing any perceived shortcomings and imperfections or flaws (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentation), a need that can have many ramifications and manifestations in the higher education contexts. For example, research has suggested that the need to appear perfect is linked closely with an anxious sensitivity to negative social evaluations (Flett, Greene, & Hewitt, 2004), and a robust link has been found between students' need to appear perfect and social anxiety (Hewitt et al., 2003; Mackinnon, Battista, Sherry, & Stewart, 2014). Arguably, individuals with excessive levels of this self-presentational facet may be more likely to avoid situations that involve admitting or discussing their perceived shortcomings, partly because they can be perceived as self-threatening. It therefore seems likely that students who feel the need to appear perfect and to hide their shortcomings will be less inclined to self-disclose and therefore avoid seeking assistance when experiencing difficulties.

Perfectionism can further manifest itself in the perceived need to attain unrealistic standards or expectations prescribed by others (i.e. socially prescribed perfectionism). Research has showed that people characterised by this interpersonal perfectionism dimension are overly interpersonally sensitive due to their need for acceptance and reliance on others' approval as a basis for self-worth (Hewitt, Flett, Sherry, & Caelian, 2006; Nepon, Flett, Hewitt, & Molnar, 2011). Thus, socially prescribed perfectionists' exceedingly sensitive perception of

social feedback may cause them to avoid seeking help because of the negative interpretation of neutral or ambiguous social feedback.

Another aspect of the perfectionism construct is theorised to be the tendency to have unrealistic standards for others, placing importance on other people being perfect, as well as stringently evaluating others' performance (i.e. other-oriented perfectionism). Research has associated this dimensions of perfectionism with interpersonal discord through tendencies such as entitlement, blaming others, authoritarianism and dominance (R. W. Hill, Zrull, & Turlington, 1997; Stoeber, Smith, Saklofske, & Sherry, in press), tendencies which are likely to affect the potentially social aspects of the help-seeking process.

Source considerations can play an important role in the decision to seek help, and sources of help available to learners can markedly influence whether or not learners seek help and the type of help requested (Makara & Karabenick, 2013). In some contexts there may be few, or even a single source; in other contexts potential providers may be virtually unlimited (Karabenick, 2011b). Advances in technology have had important implications for the way help is sought (Karabenick & Puustinen, 2013), and current higher education students have access to a multitude of help-seeking sources. Given the presumed self-threat that help-seeking likely poses for some perfectionists, the relative degrees of anonymity that some mediated sources of help offer are likely to be preferred over sources that deliver help face-to-face. Because of the importance of source construals to the help-seeking process, knowledge on perfectionistic students' help-seeking behaviours would benefit from assessing how they perceive the helping sources that are available for them to use.

To help advance the field of higher education, it is necessary to look at ways to facilitate students' adaptive help-seeking. Understanding students' help-seeking behaviour is essential in order to be able to identify factors that can increase adaptive help-seeking among students in higher education. Given the suggested high prevalence of perfectionism in the higher education student body, the ways in which perfectionism can confer risks and/or benefits for the help-seeking process represents an important area of investigation. Despite the vast literature on perfectionism and help-seeking, there has been little consideration thus far of the effects that perfectionism may pose on the help-seeking process. There is an apparent need for a comprehensive look at perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking.



### **1.3 Research Question**

The purpose of this thesis is to review the existing research on perfectionism's relationship with higher education students' help-seeking through collecting, summarising and synthesising research on the topic. This thesis aims to create a foundation for advancing empirical knowledge and facilitating theory development, as well as promote further research on the relationship between perfectionism and help-seeking by identifying current knowledge gaps and highlighting directions for future research. Preliminary searches of the literature were conducted, and – to the best of my knowledge – this literature review represents a first attempt to synthesise and evaluate the growing literature in this area. The research question for this literature review is therefore:

*What is the relationship between perfectionism and higher education students' help-seeking?*

### **1.4 Outline**

The remainder of this thesis is comprised of four chapters. The second chapter presents the theoretical framework which will be used to analyse the research included for the in-depth review. In the third chapter, the literature review's methodology is described in detail. The fourth chapter delineates the findings of the review through a synthesis of the included research, focusing on the research question. A discussion follows in the fifth chapter, which concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the current study as well as recommendations for future research, describing critical issues and open questions that perfectionism and help-seeking research still needs to answer in order to facilitate higher education students' help-seeking.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This chapter will outline the theoretical concepts and models that will be applied in the analysis of the included research. The theoretical models provide departure points which will be combined when creating the analytical framework for the review. The models were chosen mainly because of their relevance with regard to the research question (see [section 1.3](#)), but also because of their extensive use in the research literature<sup>9</sup>. To that end, the included theoretical models will be described below in the given order: First, three supplementary and complementary models of the perfectionism construct are delineated for this purpose, namely the comprehensive model of perfectionistic behaviour (CMPB) (2.1.1), the two-factor model of perfectionism (2.1.2), and the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism (2.1.3). Next, the help-seeking process model is presented, describing the complex help-seeking process as comprised of different stages and phases (2.2.1). Third, a framework for distinguishing and categorising sources of help will be delineated (2.2.2). The chapter concludes with a summary of the theoretical models' relevance to the research question (2.3), and a description of how the framework inspired by these models will be used to interpret the studies in this review.

### 2.1 Theoretical Models of Perfectionism

There appears to be no definitive unifying definition of the term «perfectionism», upon which academic literature can agree. A lack of consensus prevails amongst scholars about exactly which attributes it comprises. However, since the development of two perfectionism scales<sup>10</sup> in the early 1990s there has been a general agreement on the general characterisation of perfectionism as a complex multidimensional personality construct consisting of both intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects. Personality constructs are broad descriptive categorisations of individuals' differentiating patterns of behaviour, thoughts and emotions.

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<sup>9</sup> Yet, as the body of reviewed literature is fragmented and specialised with regard to particular foci, some degree of qualitative interpretation is unavoidable to attain theoretical and operational compatibility (see following chapter on [methodology](#)).

<sup>10</sup> The Frost multidimensional perfectionism scale (F-MPS) (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990) and the Hewitt and Flett multidimensional perfectionism scale (HF-MPS) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Their application in research have yielded cross-situational consistency. In general terms, perfectionism is thus understood as a multidimensional personality construct, characterised by enduring personal dispositions that unite different responses to diverse stimuli, that produce distinguishable consistencies in behaviour patterns (Allport, 1961; McCrae & Costa, 2008). Among the myriad of existing perfectionism conceptualisations, three prevalent models are considered to be of particular interest and relevance to this thesis: Hewitt et al.’s (2017) comprehensive model of perfectionistic behaviour (CMPB), the two-factor model of perfectionism, and the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism.

### 2.1.1 The Comprehensive Model of Perfectionistic Behaviour (CMPB)

Hewitt, Flett and Mikail’s (2017) comprehensive model of perfectionistic behaviour (CMPB) places equal emphasis on the personal and social aspects of perfectionism<sup>11</sup>, and comprises three interacting perfectionism components (see [figure 2.1](#) below): (1) perfectionism traits (i.e. the need to *be* perfect); (2) perfectionistic self-presentation (i.e. perfectionistic expression – the need to *appear* perfect); and (3) perfectionistic cognitions (Hewitt et al., 2017).

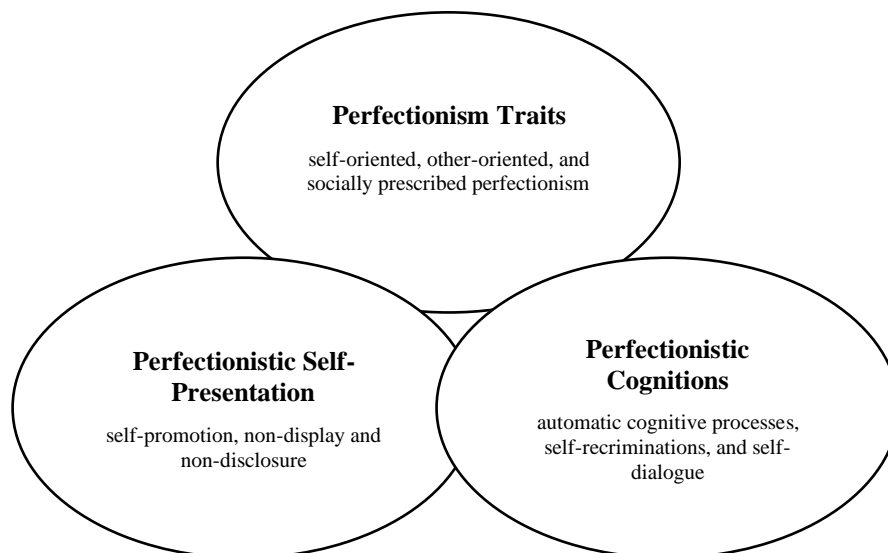


Figure 2.1 The comprehensive model of perfectionistic behaviour (CMPB), adapted from Hewitt et al. (2017, p. 34)

<sup>11</sup> whereas for example Frost et al.’s (1990) model treats perfectionism primarily as a self-focused construct.

Hewitt and Flett (1991, 2002, 2004); Hewitt et al. (2017) describe three distinct *trait dimensions* of perfectionism involving the need for the self or others to be perfect: (1) *self-oriented perfectionism*<sup>12</sup> is an *intrapersonal* dimension involving perfectionistic behaviours that both derive from the self and are directed towards the self, such as setting excessively high personal standards, accompanied by strict guidelines and assessments of oneself (e.g. «I demand nothing less than perfection of myself»); (2) *socially prescribed perfectionism* is an *interpersonal* dimension involving perfectionistic demands that are perceived to derive from others and are directed towards the self, i.e. the perceived need to attain unrealistic standards or expectations prescribed by others (e.g. «People expect nothing less than perfection from me»); and (3) *other-oriented perfectionism* is an *interpersonal* dimension involving perfectionistic behaviours that stem from the self, but where perfectionistic demands are directed towards others, such as the tendency to have unrealistic standards for significant others (e.g. «If I ask someone to do something, I expect it to be done flawlessly»). The trait dimensions are measured using the Hewitt and Flett multidimensional perfectionism scale (HF-MPS) (Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Whereas perfectionism traits refer to the excessively high standards and expectations one may hold towards others or oneself, *perfectionistic self-presentation* reflects a drive or need to appear perfect or to conceal imperfections (Hewitt et al., 2003). Hewitt et al. (2017); Hewitt et al. (2003) identify three PSP facets: (1) *perfectionistic self-promotion*, i.e. actively proclaiming and displaying one's own «perfection» to others (e.g. by looking for opportunities to impress others); (2) *non-display of imperfections*, i.e. passive avoidance or concealment of any behaviour that could be judged by others as imperfect or as reflective of the individual's imperfections (e.g. by not participating in public speaking); and (3) *non-disclosure of imperfections*, i.e. passive concealment through avoidance of personal verbal disclosures (e.g. avoiding situations that involve admitting or discussing real or perceived shortcomings, mistakes, or failures). *Effortless perfectionism* is further described as an extreme form of perfectionistic self-presentation where individuals try to seem effortlessly perfect by attempting to display achievements as if they were the products of little effort (Flett, Nepon, Hewitt, Molnar, & Zhao, 2016; Hewitt et al., 2017; Travers, Randall, Bryant,

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<sup>12</sup> It appears that self-oriented perfectionism is the most prevalent (and least controversial) personality trait used when defining «perfectionism» (Blatt, 1995; Burns, 1980; Hewitt, Mittelstaedt, & Wollert, 1989; Shafran & Mansell, 2001).

Conley, & Bohnert, 2015). Perfectionistic self-presentation is measured using the perfectionistic self-presentation scale (PSPS) (Hewitt et al., 2003).

*Perfectionistic cognitions* are automatic thoughts which focus primarily on the need to be perfect and concerns about one's inability to achieve perfection (e.g. «I have to be perfect») and reflect comparative evaluations between the currently perceived self and an ideal or «perfect» self. Perfectionistic cognitions commonly involve perfectionism-related self-dialogue, self-criticism or self-recriminations and derogation (e.g. internal dialogue such as harsh self-directed statements regarding one's own imperfection), and sometimes abject self-hatred and shame (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Gray, 1998; Flett, Hewitt, Nepon, & Besser, 2018; Flett, Hewitt, Whelan, & Martin, 2007; Hewitt et al., 2017). Automatic perfectionistic cognitions include perseveration, for example in the form of repetitive and negative worry<sup>13</sup> and rumination<sup>14</sup>. Perfectionists are prone to experience a wide array of various types of recurrent thoughts and forms of cognitive perseveration, including types of overthinking, and perfectionism is associated with a quicker and more frequent onset of rumination as well as persistent and prolonged rumination. Furthermore, excessive cognitive activation and perseveration leads to an overdeveloped memory for mistakes, failures, and stressful experiences that highlight a sense of personal inadequacy. This excessive cognitive activity and perseveration leads to a hypervigilance and cognitive bias towards related cues that signal the possibility of mistakes, failures, and negative social evaluations (Flett et al., 2018; Flett, Nepon, & Hewitt, 2016). Research has linked automatic perfectionism cognitions to trait perfectionism, particularly self-oriented perfectionism (Flett et al., 1998). Perfectionistic cognitions are measured using the perfectionism cognitions inventory (PCI) (Flett et al., 1998), consisting mostly of self-oriented thoughts.

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<sup>13</sup> Worry is defined as thoughts and images that are affectively negative and relatively uncontrollable (Borkovec, Ray, & Stöber, 1998; Borkovec, Robinson, Pruzinsky, & Depree, 1983), primarily focused on the future (Watkins, Moulds, & Mackintosh, 2005) and events (Nolen-Hoeksema, Wisco, & Lyubomirsky, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Rumination is defined as repetitive, intrusive cognitions about negative experiences (Papageorgiou & Siegle, 2003), primarily focused on the past (Watkins et al., 2005) and feelings (Nolen-Hoeksema et al., 2008).

### 2.1.2 The Two-Factor Model of Perfectionism

One broad definition of perfectionism is that of a combination of excessively high personal standards and overly critical self-evaluations (Frost et al., 1990), a duality which is reflected in the two-factor model of perfectionism<sup>15</sup>. More precisely, the two-factor model asserts that the majority of common variance among perfectionism dimensions is attributable to two higher-order – or super-ordinate – factors: (1) perfectionistic strivings; and (2) perfectionistic concerns (Stoeber, 2018). *Perfectionistic strivings*<sup>16</sup> refers to the propensity to demand nothing less than perfection from the self and to set excessively high personal standards of performance that are often unrealistic in nature, whereas *perfectionistic concerns*<sup>17</sup> includes overly critical appraisals of one’s own behaviour, excessive concerns about others’ evaluations, expectations, and criticism, as well as an inability to derive satisfaction from successful endeavours (Blankstein & Dunkley, 2002; Dunkley et al., 2000). The two higher-order perfectionism factors are frequently operationalised utilising the perfectionism subscales listed in [table 2.1](#) below.

Perfectionism Scale	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns
<i>F-MPS</i>	Personal standards	Concern over mistakes Doubts about actions
<i>HF-MPS</i> <sup>18</sup>	Self-oriented perfectionism	Socially prescribed perfectionism
<i>APS-R</i>	High standards	Discrepancy
<i>PI</i>	Striving for excellence	Concern over mistakes
<i>MIPS</i>	Striving for perfection	Negative reactions to imperfection

Table 2.1 Indicators (or «proxies») of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, adapted from Stoeber and Gaudreau (2017, p. 380)<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> also referred to as the bidimensional model of perfectionism.

<sup>16</sup> also referred to as positive striving (Frost, Heimberg, Holt, Mattia, & Neubauer, 1993), personal standards (Dunkley & Blankstein, 2000), and adaptive (Rice, Ashby, Slaney, & Hill, 1998) perfectionism.

<sup>17</sup> also referred to as maladaptive evaluation concerns (Frost et al., 1993), evaluative concerns (Dunkley et al., 2000), self-critical (Dunkley & Blankstein, 2000) and maladaptive (Rice et al., 1998) perfectionism.

<sup>18</sup> The two-factor model has been unable to include one trait dimension of the CMPB, namely other-oriented perfectionism.

<sup>19</sup> F-MPS = Frost multidimensional perfectionism scale (Frost et al., 1990); HF-MPS = Hewitt-Flett multidimensional perfectionism scale (Hewitt & Flett, 1991, 2004); APS-R = almost perfect scale-revised (Slaney, Rice, Mobley, Trippi, & Ashby, 2001); PI = perfectionism inventory (R. W. Hill et al., 2004); MIPS = multidimensional inventory of perfectionism in sport (Stoeber, Otto, Pescheck, Becker, & Stoll, 2007).

### 2.1.3 The 2 x 2 Model of Perfectionism

The two-factor model of perfectionism represents the foundation of Gaudreau and Thompson's (2010) 2 x 2 model of perfectionism<sup>20</sup> (Gaudreau & Thompson, 2010). While the two-factor model focuses on the *unique* effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, the 2 x 2 model conceptualises the underlying structure of perfectionism by examining the *interactive* effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns. In other words, the 2 x 2 model proposes that the two higher-order perfectionism factors cohabit within every individual, albeit to a different degree.

		Perfectionistic Concerns	
		Low	High
Perfectionistic Strivings	High	Pure Perfectionistic Strivings	Mixed Perfectionism
	Low	Non-Perfectionism	Pure Perfectionistic Concerns

Figure 2.2 The 2 x 2 model of perfectionism, adapted from Gaudreau and Thompson (2010, p. 533)

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<sup>20</sup> also referred to as the quadripartite model of perfectionism.

According to the 2 x 2 model, dispositional within-person combinations of perfectionistic strivings<sup>21</sup> and perfectionistic concerns<sup>22</sup> are the key features needed to differentiate four subtypes of perfectionism that are distinctively associated with antecedents, processes, and outcomes (see [figure 2.2](#) above): (1) non-perfectionism (low strivings and low concerns); (2) pure perfectionistic strivings (high strivings and low concerns); (3) pure perfectionistic concerns (low strivings and high concerns); and (4) mixed perfectionism (high strivings and high concerns).

Individuals with coexisting low levels of both perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns are characterised by *non-perfectionism*. Non-perfectionists are not personally oriented towards perfectionistic strivings, and do not perceive that significant others are putting pressure on them to pursue perfectionistic standards. The subtype of *pure perfectionistic strivings* characterises individuals with coexisting high strivings and low concerns. Individuals high in this perfectionism subtype hold perfectionistic standards that derive uniquely from the self without perceiving a need to attain unrealistic standards or expectations prescribed by others. The subtype *pure perfectionistic concerns* refer to individuals with coexisting high concerns and low strivings. This way of being a perfectionist includes pursuing perfectionistic standards deriving from perceived external pressure without personally valuing or internalising these standards and represents a form of externally regulated or non-internalised perfectionism in which the goals, motives, and values of the person are mostly derived from pressure exerted by the social environment. Individuals with coexisting high levels of both strivings and concerns are characterised by *mixed perfectionism*. Mixed perfectionists perceive pressure from significant others to strive towards perfection, and at the same time adhere to these perfectionistic standards. In this partially internalised perfectionism, perceived external contingencies cohabit with personal values, standards, and priorities (Gaudreau, Franche, Kljajic, & Martinelli, 2018; Gaudreau & Thompson, 2010).

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<sup>21</sup> referred to as «personal standards perfectionism» in the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism.

<sup>22</sup> referred to as «evaluative concerns perfectionism» in the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism.



## 2.2 The Help-Seeking Process

Help-seeking is one of many learning strategies that learners use in order to self-regulate their learning<sup>23</sup>. Self-regulated learning broadly refers to learners' ability to actively regulate their cognitive, affective, metacognitive, motivational, and behavioural processes towards the attainment of their goals (Schunk & Greene, 2018; Zimmerman, 2001).

### 2.2.1 The Help-Seeking Process Model

The help-seeking process model is presented as a consolidation of two complementary models (as shown in [figure 2.3](#) below).

Several theoretical models have conceptualised help-seeking as a multistep process with distinct stages<sup>24</sup> (e.g. Gross & McMullen, 1982, 1983; Karabenick & Newman, 2009; Karabenick & Gonida, 2018; Nelson-Le Gall, 1981; Newman, 1998). The help-seeking process model presented in this thesis categorises the complex help-seeking process as comprising eight distinct stages: (1) determine there is a problem; (2) determine that help is needed; (3) decide to seek help; (4) select the goal of the help-seeking; (5) select the source of help; (6) solicit help; and (7) obtain the requested help; and (8) process the help received<sup>25</sup>.

The help-seeking process model is mapped onto Zimmerman's (2000) model of self-regulated learning in order to enable further conceptual clarity of the complex help-seeking process. According to Zimmerman's (2000) model, students' self-regulation comprises three phases: *forethought*, *performance*, and *self-reflection* processes.

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<sup>23</sup> In addition to help-seeking, self-regulated learning involves the use of various learning strategies such as goal setting and planning (Bandura & Schunk, 1981), self-evaluating (Bandura & Cervone, 1983, 1986), self-consequating (Mace & Kratochwill, 1985), and information-seeking (Wang, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> The different models include similar combinations of the help-seeking stages delineated in the help-seeking process model.

<sup>25</sup> The eight stages will be described in more detail in the [findings](#) chapter.

«The forethought phase refers to learning processes and sources of motivation that precede efforts to learn and influence students' preparation and willingness to self-regulate their learning. The performance phase involves processes that occur during learning and affect concentration and performance, and the self-reflection phase involves processes that follow learning efforts but influence a learner's reactions to that experience»

(Zimmerman & Moylan, 2009, pp. 300-301)

The first five stages of the help-seeking process model comprise the *forethought* phase of Zimmerman's (2000) model, soliciting help and obtaining the requested help comprise the *performance* phase, while processing the received help is considered the *self-reflection* phase of the help-seeking process (Karabenick & Berger, 2013).

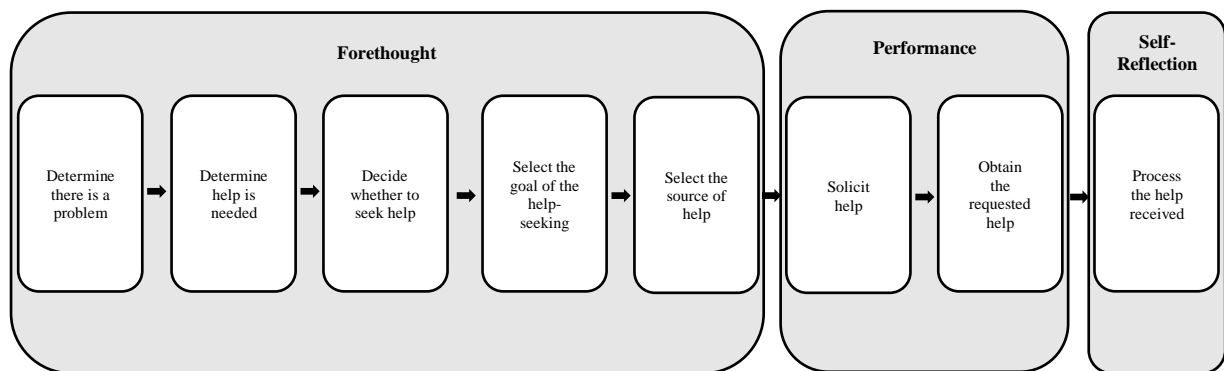


Figure 2.3 The help-seeking process model<sup>26</sup>

Although the help-seeking process model presents the help-seeking process with distinct and logically sequential stages, in practice it is a dynamic and iterative hermeneutic process where the movements between the different stages are interrelated and non-linear<sup>27</sup> (Gross & McMullen, 1983). Deciding on a helping source could, for instance, precede the decision to seek help.

<sup>26</sup> see Gross and McMullen (1983, pp. 48-49) for a more exhaustive multistage help-seeking process model.

<sup>27</sup> The three self-regulation processes of Zimmerman's (2000) model of self-regulated learning (i.e. forethought, performance, and self-reflection) are also structurally interrelated and cyclically sustained.

### 2.2.2 Framework for Distinguishing Sources of Help

Given the myriad of available helping sources, it is useful to aggregate different sources under some common denominators<sup>28</sup>. Makara and Karabenick's (2013) proposed framework for distinguishing sources of help characterises helping sources according to four dichotomous dimensions<sup>29</sup>: (1) *role*, i.e. formal versus informal<sup>30</sup>; (2) *relationship*, i.e. personal versus impersonal; (3) *channel*, i.e. mediated versus face-to-face; and (4) *adaptability*, i.e. dynamic versus static (see [table 2.1](#) below for examples).

The *role* dimension indicates whether the source's function requires help to be offered. For instance, an instructor's role at a university requires that they help students. The *role* dimension categorises formal sources as sources whose function requires help to be offered (e.g. instructors, school counsellors, mental health professionals), while informal sources do not require help to be offered (e.g. peers, friends, family) (Makara & Karabenick, 2013). Formal sources are likely to have more expertise and useful information, whereas informal sources may be more available and less judgmental (Karabenick, 2011b). The perceived *relationship* between the help seeker and the helping source can be distinguished into sources that are perceived to be personal and those judged to be more impersonal. Personal sources are those in which the relationship between the helper and help seeker is perceived by the learner to be close (e.g. peers, friends, family). By contrast, impersonal sources are those in which the relationship between the helper and help seeker is perceived by the learner to be distant, formal or indifferent (e.g. intelligent tutoring programs). The *channel* used to access the helping source distinguishes between sources in which the help is distributed face-to-face (e.g. talking to peers, instructors or librarians in person) and those in which the distribution of help is mediated via some form of technology – that is, through any tool or instrument (e.g. books, phones, computers). Finally, the *adaptability* dimension categorises sources as either dynamic or static. Dynamic sources adapt or change over time based on a learner's help-seeking needs (e.g. instructors), while static sources cannot (e.g. textbooks and encyclopaedias) (Makara & Karabenick, 2013).

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<sup>28</sup> However, such classifications are not absolute and will vary depending on the cultural context and other factors (Rickwood & Thomas, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> «[The dimensions] are understood as learners' subjective appraisals or construals rather than how the characteristics are specified a priori» (Karabenick & Gonida, 2018, pp. 424-425).

<sup>30</sup> The characterisation of helping sources as formal or informal is the most referred to dimension in early as well as contemporary help-seeking research (Karabenick & Gonida, 2018).

There are no strict lines between the dimensions, and the classification of a particular source may vary, and whereas the source appraisals are presented as dichotomous, in many cases they fall along a continuum (Makara & Karabenick, 2013). A student may, for example, perceive their instructor as a *personal* source in a small class, and as an *impersonal* source in a large introductory lecture class due to the size of the course or the method of instruction<sup>31</sup> (Reeves & Sperling, 2015).

<b>Helping source examples</b>	<b>Role</b> Formal (F) vs. Informal (In)	<b>Relationship</b> Personal (P) vs. Impersonal (Im)	<b>Channel</b> Mediated (M) vs. Face-to-Face (F2F)	<b>Adaptability</b> Dynamic (D) vs. Static (S)
<i>Chat room (classmates)</i>	In	P	M	D
<i>Chat room (strangers)</i>	In	Im	M	D
<i>Course website</i>	F	Im	M	S
<i>Discussion board</i>	In	P / Im	M	D
<i>Instructor via e-mail</i>	F	P / Im	M	D
<i>Instructor in person</i>	F	P	F2F	D
<i>Intelligent tutoring program</i>	F	Im	M	D / S
<i>Librarian</i>	F	P / Im	F2F	D
<i>Mobile phone (friend)</i>	In	P	M	D
<i>Mobile phone (family)</i>	In	P	M	D
<i>Peer in person</i>	In	P	F2F	D
<i>Peer via e-mail/ text/ message</i>	In	P	M	D
<i>Social networking site</i>	In	P / Im	M	D
<i>Syllabus</i>	F	Im	M	S
<i>Textbook/readings</i>	F	Im	M	S
<i>Tutor/help centre</i>	F	P / Im	F2F	D
<i>Web encyclopaedia</i>	F	Im	M	D / S
<i>Web search engine</i>	F / In	Im	M	S

Table 2.1 Multidimensional framework for distinguishing among helping sources, reproduced from Makara and Karabenick (2013, p.47)

<sup>31</sup> This change in the perceived relationship with potential help providers may be particularly relevant when transitioning from school to higher education, when the relationship with instructors generally becomes more impersonal.

## 2.3 Theoretical Framework Utilisation: Building an Analytical Framework

By including three models of perfectionism, one aim was to make obvious the substantial heterogeneity among perfectionists as well as the complexities inherent in the perfectionism construct.

Specifically, the comprehensive model of perfectionistic behaviour (CMPB) was chosen because of its breadth. In order to grasp the numerous individual differences as well as the many possible effects perfectionism can have on help-seeking, it is necessary to consider all the perfectionism components, and the CMPB conceptualises perfectionism as a broad and dimensional personality style that can operate at several levels, i.e. the dispositional/trait level, the other-relational level, and the intrapersonal level (Hewitt et al., 2017). Furthermore, the question of how perfectionism is related to the various stages of the help-seeking process depends on how perfectionism is defined.

Although the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism is considered the preferred framework for analysis, the two-factor model of perfectionism was included since a preponderance of the research into perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking is expected to have been conducted within the framework of the latter theory. The two-factor model was also included since it has been shown to replicate across different multidimensional measures of perfectionism (e.g. Hill et al., 2004). The two-factor model will therefore be used to establish some common ground in order to be able to synthesise research containing different operationalisations of perfectionism, where various perfectionism dimensions can be attributed to the two higher-order factors perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns<sup>32</sup>.

While the CMPB conceptualises perfectionism as a diathetic personality style, the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism was included in order to build a conceptual framework for explaining how perfectionism can be both adaptive and maladaptive, and further because it can provide guidance for understanding the possibility of different, and possibly opposing, relationships that various dimensions of perfectionism can have (Stoeber, 2018) with different factors of

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<sup>32</sup> The indicators of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns (as listed in [table 2.1](#)) may serve as a compass for readers when navigating the different models and measures of perfectionism presented in the [findings](#) chapter of this review.

the help-seeking process. The 2 x 2 model was also included in order to provide a framework for discussing how the relationship between perfectionism and the help-seeking process might depend on the *interaction* of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, given that previous studies have documented that their effects may depend on the level of the other (Gaudreau & Thompson, 2010; Shim & Fletcher, 2012).

The help-seeking process model provides «a general framework for locating points in the process at which psychosocial factors can critically affect decisions» (Gross & McMullen, 1983, p. 49). Given the kaleidoscopic nature of the help-seeking process, the help-seeking process model was chosen in order to be able to structure the research data. Moreover, the model was chosen because of the usefulness of considering help-seeking as involving different stages, each of which can be affected by perfectionism in different ways.

Makara and Karabenick's (2013) source framework was added in order to bring greater conceptual clarity to the help resource landscape through covering the different characteristic of the multitudinous available helping sources to higher education students, such as those that are mediated through information and communication technology<sup>33</sup>. The helping source framework acknowledges how various aspects of sources may influence students' help-seeking and will be used to analyse the links between students' perfectionism and their considerations of different helping sources.

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<sup>33</sup> Information and communications technology (ICT) is an «umbrella term used to cover both computing and telecommunications technologies, with an emphasis on their combined use in information processing and transmission» ("Information and Communications Technology (ICT)," 2016).

## 3. Methodology

This chapter will delineate the methodology used in conducting this review on perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking. The methodology will be described in three subsections. First, the systematic literature search strategy is outlined (3.1), describing how the search string was developed, how the electronic databases were selected, and how the databases were searched. Second, the study selection process is presented (3.2), describing how the eligible texts for the review were selected by screening the abstracts and full texts for their relevance to the research question. Third, the analysis strategy (i.e. qualitative content analysis) which was used to analyse the included texts is outlined (3.3). The whole process was iterative, meaning there was a recursive and reflexive movement back and forth between the literature search, study selection, data extraction, and text analysis.

### 3.1 Literature Search

A systematic search strategy was developed and undertaken to identify relevant articles for inclusion in the review. First, key search terms were identified, aiming to represent the two primary concepts of perfectionism and help-seeking. In order to broaden the retrieval of documents, a list of related key terms and synonyms were generated for each of the identified concepts by examining the terminology used in the perfectionism, help-seeking, and information and communication technology literature, as well as by locating synonyms in thesauruses (e.g. MEDLINE, PsycINFO, ERIC and EBSCO). For example, help-seeking has been studied both as a self-regulated learning strategy and as a coping strategy. Hence, «cope AND coping» were added to the search string in order to retrieve studies that have examined perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking within the framework of coping strategies. Several of the identified terms were, in the end, not included in the search string. For example, «self-concealment» was considered for inclusion because of its association with perfectionistic self-presentation (PSP; i.e. the need to appear perfect). However, self-concealment was in the end left out due to research suggesting self-concealment and PSP not to be redundant with each other (Hewitt et al., 2003). In order to produce relevant results,

several Boolean search strings were developed next by combining the selected keywords with Boolean operators (see [attachment 1](#)). Separate search strings were initially developed for both perfectionism and help-seeking. Additionally, a search string was developed for the context relevant for answering the research question (i.e. higher education). A search string was also developed to cover information and communication technologies. Information and communication technologies were early on in the literature search process considered relevant because of its increased prevalence in higher education and relevance for the help-seeking process, especially considering various types of digital helping sources.

A «term impact analysis» string validation method was used to test the search strings with and without each term, in order to evaluate how they variably affected the results. Terms with no impact on the results were discarded, while some of the terms responsible for a large part of the results were deemed too generic and therefore refined. The literature search was limited by language (i.e. English) and was further restricted to the academic disciplines relevant for answering the research questions. In addition to educational and social sciences databases, psychological and medical databases were chosen for the literature search since much of the research on perfectionism and help-seeking was assumed to have been conducted from the viewpoint of clinical psychology. Furthermore, informatics databases were included to cover information and communication technologies. «Grey literature»<sup>34</sup> repositories were also searched with the aim of maximising search sensitivity and precision, as well as to reduce publication bias and to facilitate a more balanced view of the evidence, and thereby help ensure the most current picture of what is happening within the body of evidence. In the end, the following electronic databases were searched: ERIC, PsychINFO, Web of Science, MEDLINE, Education Research Complete, Open-Grey.eu, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Collection of Computer Science Bibliographies and Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) Guide to Computing Literature. It became evident after conducting trial database searches with various combinations of the developed search strings (see [attachment 2](#)) that the empirical research on perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking within the higher education context was very limited, and that the information and communication technology key terms were redundant. The final search string was therefore a combination of the search strings developed for «perfectionism» and «help-seeking»:

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<sup>34</sup> Grey literature refers to «that which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers (...), i.e., where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body» (Schöpfel & Farace, 2010).



*perfectionis\* AND (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR (self-help) OR (resource management strateg\*) OR cope OR coping)*

No other restrictions were implemented. The search strategy was deliberately inclusive, thereby minimising the likelihood of omitting any published studies. Given the presumably limited relevant research for answering the research question, no restrictions on publication dates were placed. Therefore, all articles published through the spring of 2020 were included in the search. The last date of the electronic search was 25<sup>th</sup> April 2020.

A manual search followed the electronic search. The «snowballing technique» was used to locate additional publications for the review, i.e. searching the reference lists of all the articles identified in the electronic search with the intention of finding additional studies. The snowballing technique yielded 10 additional articles. After having finished both the electronic and manual search, all references, including duplicates, were imported into the bibliographic software Zotero for performing the subsequent study selection.

### **3.2 Study Selection**

The preliminary database searches returned 2691 published English-language abstracts. Next, duplicates were removed, and abstracts were screened for relevance to the research question. Thereafter, a full-text review of the retrieved papers was embarked upon to further screen for relevance. The full English-language text therefore had to be available for the study to be included in the review. Thorough searches were conducted with the aim of finding the full texts of all of the identified studies. The missing full texts were automatically excluded from the review. Moreover, the studies were required to address the direct relationship between perfectionism on help-seeking (i.e. not just correlations through mediating factors, e.g. self-concealment).

Given the embryonic nature of the research topic, all research designs (quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods) were deemed eligible for inclusion to ensure all available data was captured. Furthermore, all studies were included, irrespective of their quality, biases, and population(s). For example, studies measuring help-seeking using both help-seeking scales and help-seeking subscales (e.g. coping subscales) were included, despite the possible low reliabilities for the subscales of coping scales (Endler & Parker, 1990). Studies that did not meet all inclusion criteria (see [table 3.1](#) below) were deemed ineligible and were excluded.

<b>Inclusion criteria</b>
Full text available
English-language texts
All research designs (e.g. quantitative, qualitative and mixed)
All populations
Studies that address the direct relationship between perfectionism on help-seeking

Table 3.1 Inclusion criteria used for the study selection

In total, the electronic and manual search yielded 25 studies (5 doctoral theses and 20 journal articles) that met the eligibility criteria used for retaining the literature and were included in the final review. The screening process of the papers are represented in a «preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses» (PRISMA) flow diagram in [figure 3.1](#) below (Moher et al. 2009). The flow diagram summarises the many reasons for why, out of the 2691 articles identified in the systematic search, 24 were eventually identified as being relevant for the in-depth review.

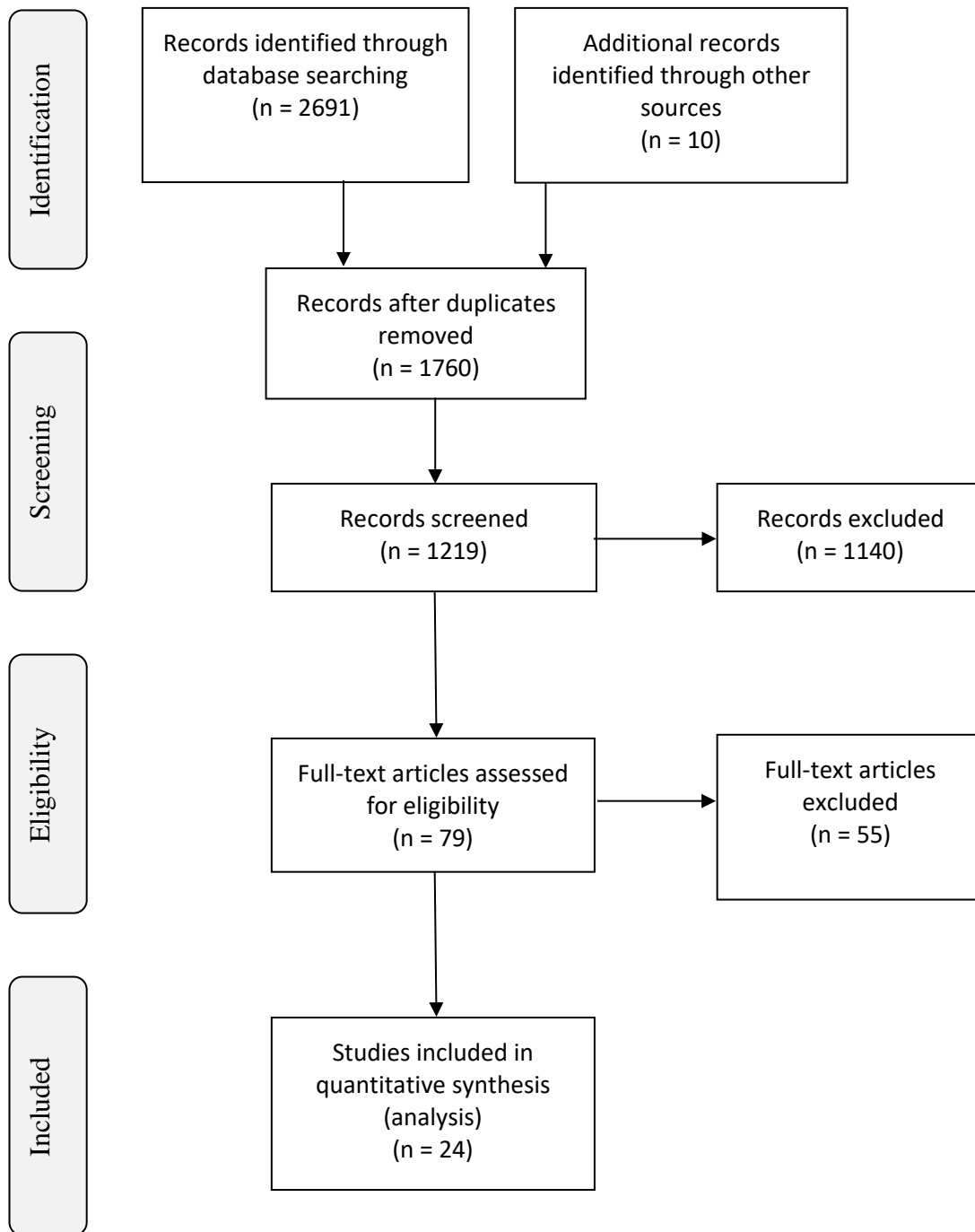


Figure 3.1 PRISMA flow diagram: Perfectionism and help-seeking

Once finalised for inclusion, each study was collated and coded independently. A pre-formulated coding scheme, or data extraction sheet, was designed and used to help identify the components relevant for addressing the research question. Data coded included the following characteristics of the studies (see [attachment 3](#)): (1) author name(s); (2) year published; (3) type of text (e.g. journal article, PhD); (4) population description (number of participants, location of study, gender, age mean); (5) country (location of study); (6) perfectionism dimension(s) and/or measure(s); (7) help-seeking factor(s)/measure(s); and (8) perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking (description of themes or items as listed by the study). The data extraction sheet was revised during the extraction process until it was applicable to all the included studies.

### **3.3 Analysis Strategy**

A meta-analysis was not feasible due to the sparsity of eligible research. Owing to the nature of the research question, it was expected that the included studies would investigate perfectionism and help-seeking differently, make use of different research questions, and use different criteria to investigate perfectionism and help-seeking behaviours. Following the study selection process, and given the heterogeneity in study methodologies, a qualitative content analysis<sup>35</sup> methodology was applied to analyse the texts in order to summarise and describe key aspects of the texts.

Qualitative content analysis is a method for systematically describing the meaning of texts, done by assigning successive parts of the texts as instances of the categories of a coding frame (Mayring, 2000; Schreier, 2012, 2014). The emphasis of a qualitative content analysis is on discovery and description, including search for contexts, underlying meanings, patterns and processes (Altheide, 1987, 1996). The qualitative content analysis method is systematic, flexible, and it reduces data. This thesis's analysis is comprised of a sequence of steps that are characteristic of qualitative content analysis: First, a coding frame was built that comprised main categories, each with their own set of subcategories. A segmentation of the

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<sup>35</sup> also sometimes referred to as ethnographic content analysis (Altheide, 1987, 2004), thematic coding (Boyatzis, 1998; Saldana, 2009) or qualitative media analysis (Altheide, 1996).

texts followed, where the texts were divided into units in such a way that each unit fit into exactly one subcategory of the coding frame. Next, a trial coding was executed, and the coding frame was evaluated in terms of the consistency of coding and in terms of validity and revised accordingly. Afterwards, all the texts were coded, using the revised version of the coding frame. After the coding frame was completed, the information was transformed to the case level. Finally, the findings were interpreted and presented (Schreier, 2012).

A detailed description of the whole analysis process follows below. First, the aim and creation of the coding frame will be described in detail, followed by a description of the application of the coding frame.

### *3.3.1 Creation of the Coding Frame*

Concerning the classifying of the texts according to the coding frame, the goal was to go beyond individual understanding and interpretation. The coding frame was developed as a way of structuring the data, a way of differentiating between different meanings vis-a-vis the research question. The coding frame functioned as a structure, a kind of filter through which the data was viewed. Qualitative content analysis focuses the analysis on selected aspects and reduces the texts by limiting the analysis to those aspects that are relevant in relation to the research question. Also, through classifying specific information as an instance of a category, the specific information is subsumed under a more general concept. When engaging in reducing specifics through the process of classification, new information across texts is produced, telling how the texts compare to each other with respect to the categories in the coding frame. Specific information might be lost on the individual level, but information is gained on the aggregate level. The coding frame was tailored to the eligible texts in order to be reliable and valid. The coding frame consists of main categories (or dimensions) specifying relevant aspects of the texts, and a set of subcategories for each main category specifying the meaning of the texts with respect to the main categories (Schreier, 2012).

Aspects of the texts that were necessary for answering the research question were identified and turned into the main categories of the coding frame. In other words, the main categories are the aspects on which the analysis focuses. The initial step was to create these dimensions of the coding frame. In order to have all of the material accounted for, this was done by

working in a concept-driven way (i.e. deductively), i.e. by drawing upon previous knowledge, for example theory, prior research, everyday knowledge, or logic (Schreier, 2012). The main categories were each made to cover a single aspect of the texts only (requirement of unidimensionality) (Schreier, 2014). In line with the research question (i.e. «What is the relationship between perfectionism and higher education students' help-seeking?»), this review on perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking drew upon the help-seeking process model for generating the main categories for the analysis. Therefore, the main categories – or dimensions – of the coding frame were set to be the eight defined stages of the help-seeking process model, as introduced in [subsection 2.2.1](#).

Once the eight help-seeking stages had been specified as the main categories, the next step was to identify what is said in the texts about these categories. In doing so, the three requirements of unidimensionality, mutual exclusiveness, and exhaustiveness were kept in mind. Subcategories were specified for each of the above-mentioned main categories, using a data-driven (i.e. inductive) strategy, i.e. by looking at what is in the texts and letting the subcategories emerge from the texts (Schreier, 2012). Because of the limited number of texts eligible for this review, new data-driven subcategories were added even when the relevant aspect only appeared once in the included research.

For both types of categories (i.e. main categories and subcategories), names were chosen to provide a concise description of what the category in question referred to. Furthermore, the definitions of the main categories and the subcategories were made to focus on the interrelation between the data and the categories. In other words, they were created to help recognise instances of the categories in the data and to assign segments of the data to the appropriate categories. While the definitions of the main categories were of a more general nature, the definitions of the subcategories were made to be as precise as possible (see [table 3.2](#) below) (Schreier, 2014).

The subcategories within one main category were created so that they were mutually exclusive. The requirement of mutual exclusiveness did not, however, rule out assigning one unit of coding to subcategories belonging to different dimensions of the coding frame (Schreier, 2014). For example, instead of solely being a binary question of «Should I seek help, or shouldn't I?» at a single point in time in the help-seeking process model, the help-seeking decision is an ongoing process where a learner can decide to seek – or to not seek –

help at any stage of the process. Consequently, Shim et al.'s (2016) «adaptive help-seeking» and «avoidance of help-seeking» goals were assigned to more than one main category in the coding frame. They were assigned to the subcategory «attitudes towards help-seeking», since the intent to avoid or to approach seeking help bears relevance to whether or not one chooses to seek aid. They were also assigned to the main category «select the goal of the help-seeking» of the coding frame, since the differentiation between approach and avoidance goal orientations is considered central in achievement goal theory.

An important concern was to make the coding frame exhaustive with respect to the research question. That is, each unit of coding in the data had to be assigned to at least one of the subcategories in the coding frame. This was to make sure that all parts of the texts were equally accounted for by the coding frame. Furthermore, the criterion of saturation required each subcategory to be used at least once during the analysis. Where this analysis' coding frame was created in a concept-driven way, some of the resulting main categories were not used in the remaining coding of the texts, and these dimensions remained «empty». In these cases, the criterion of saturation was not applicable as the finding of «empty» main categories might be an important finding in and of itself (Schreier, 2012). In the current review, four of the main categories remained empty after having finished the coding of all the eligible texts, namely the «determine there is a problem», «solicit help», «obtain the requested help» and «process the help received» stages of the help-seeking process model.

During the pilot phase, the coding frame was tried out on a few of the eligible texts. This was crucial for recognising and modifying any shortcomings in the frame before the main analysis was carried out. Texts for the pilot phase were selected to cover all types of data and data sources in the texts. Additionally, the texts were selected so that the majority of categories in the coding frame could be applied during the trial coding (Schreier, 2014). An attempt was made to finalise the coding frame based on the selected part of the texts, but in order to arrive at the final set of categories, the texts had to be worked through several times to include more data and generate additional categories before finally arriving at the final set of categories. The coding process of the material was iterative. That is, the subcategories that were distilled from the examination of the eligible texts were continuously revised, with a recursive and reflexive movement back and forth between conceptualisation, data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Altheide, 1996, 2004). Because the same set of categories were used for analysing the relationship between perfectionism and help-seeking in all the eligible studies,

the coding frame was developed by going through each of the studies eligible for the review, adding more data-driven categories whenever additional aspects were mentioned. The decision of how many subcategories were to be included derived from what was considered to be important information in relation to the research question. The final coding frame consisted of eight main categories and seventeen subcategories. The resulting multi-level structure is shown in [figure 3.2](#) below.

When evaluating the coding frame, the results of the trial coding were examined in terms of the coding frame's consistency and validity, and the higher the reliability between the two rounds of coding, the higher the quality of the frame. The extent to which the categories adequately describe the texts and the concepts that are part of the research question is considered the validity of the coding frame. Given there was only one coder, consistency across different points in time was considered an important criterion during the pilot and the main analysis phase (Schreier, 2014).



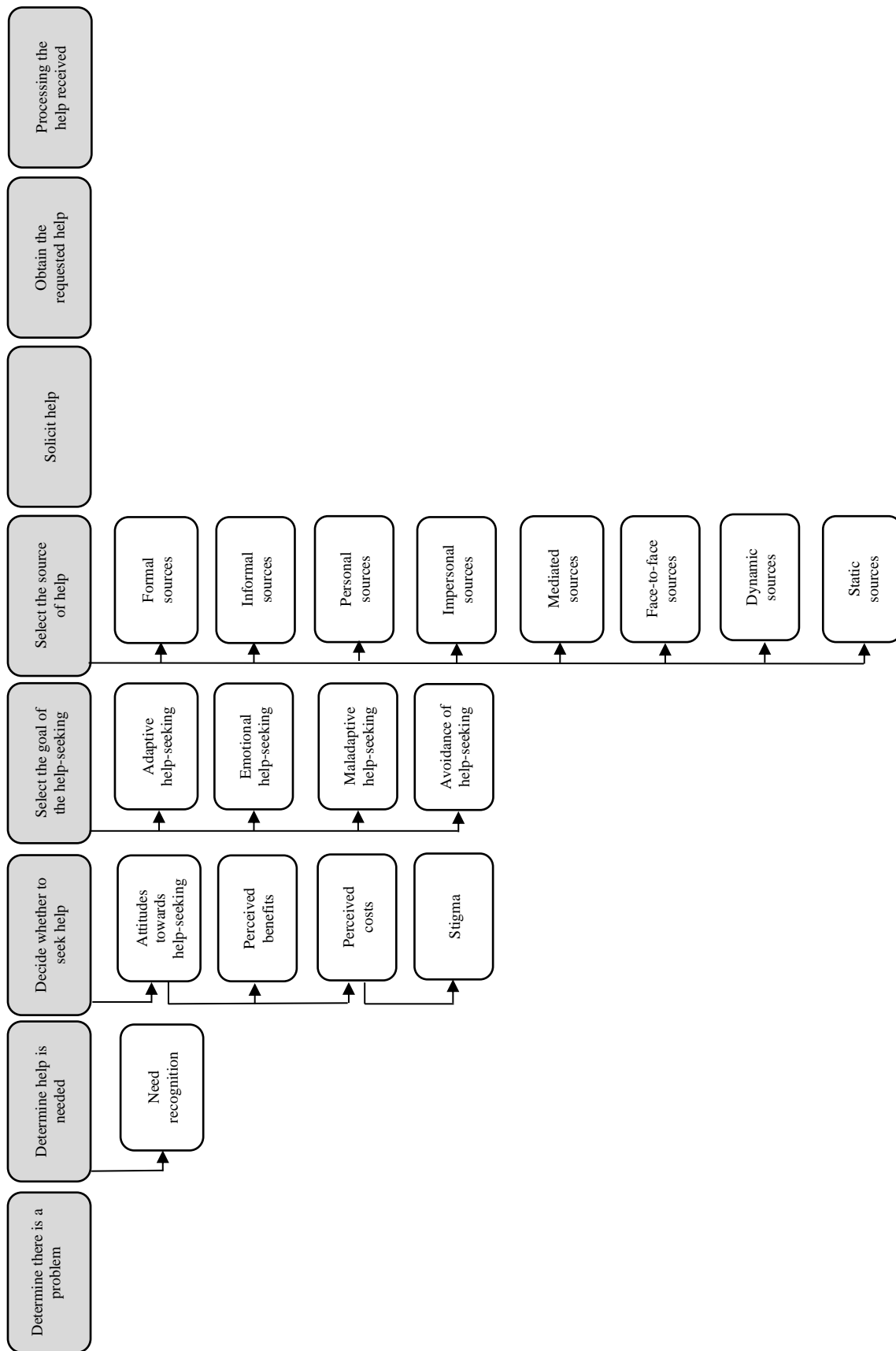


Figure 3.2 The hierarchical structure of the coding frame

Main category	Main category definition	Subcategory	Subcategory definition
<b>Determine there is a problem</b>	Recognising difficulties and defining them as a problem		
<b>Determine help is needed</b>	Recognising that help-seeking is an appropriate way of dealing with the problem	<i>Need recognition</i>	The recognition of personal need for help.
<b>Decide whether to seek help</b>	Deciding whether or not to seek help based on the perceived benefits and threats of help-seeking	<i>Attitudes towards help-seeking</i> <i>Perceived benefits</i> <i>Perceived costs</i> <i>Stigma</i>	<p>The set of emotions, beliefs, and behaviours held towards help-seeking.</p> <p>The perception of the positive consequences caused by help-seeking.</p> <p>The perception of the negative consequences caused by help-seeking.</p> <p>The negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency.</p>
<b>Select the goal of the help-seeking</b>	Choosing the motives or reasons for seeking help	<i>Adaptive help-seeking</i> <i>Emotional help-seeking</i> <i>Maladaptive help-seeking</i> <i>Avoidance of help-seeking</i>	<p>To seek just enough help to be able to solve a problem independently.</p> <p>To seek help in order to reduce or manage emotional distress.</p> <p>To seek help to avoid effort when solving a problem.</p> <p>To not seek help when it is needed to solve a problem.</p>

<p><b>Select the source of help</b></p>	<p>Help-seeking source considerations and selection</p>	<p><i>Formal sources</i> <i>Informal sources</i> <i>Personal sources</i> <i>Impersonal sources</i> <i>Mediated sources</i> <i>Face-to-face sources</i> <i>Dynamic sources</i> <i>Static sources</i></p>	<p>Sources of help whose function requires help to be offered. Sources of help whose function does not require help to be offered. Sources of help whose relationship between the helper is perceived by the learner to be close. Sources of help whose relationship between the helper is perceived by the learner to be distant, formal or indifferent. Sources of help whose distribution of help is mediated via some form of technology. Sources of help in which the help is distributed face-to-face. Sources of help which adapt or change over time based on a learner's needs. Sources of help which cannot adapt or change over time based on a learner's needs.</p>
<p><b>Solicit help</b></p>	<p>Engaging a source's help, i.e. the content or form of the help request</p>		
<p><b>Obtain the requested help</b></p>	<p>Gaining or acquiring the help that has been requested</p>		
<p><b>Process the help received</b></p>	<p>Judging or evaluating one's help-seeking performance and subsequent perceptions of satisfaction, as well as the implications for subsequent help-seeking</p>		

Table 3.2 Definitions of main categories and subcategories of the coding frame

### *3.3.2 Application of the Coding Frame*

During the main analysis phase, the main coding was prepared for and carried out, i.e. the coding frame was applied to all the eligible texts, codes were compared, and a decision was made on the final meaning of the units of coding. Furthermore, the results from the level of the unit of coding were transformed to the level of the unit of analysis (Schreier, 2012). In the final step of the main analysis phase, the results of the coding were prepared so that they were suitable for answering the research question.

In the current review, the coding frame was the main finding. The findings of the analysis are presented in a mixed style – that is, in both a quantitative and a qualitative way. The findings presented in a qualitative way through continuous text and in a quantitative way through the reporting of coding frequencies, percentages or inferential statistics such as chi-square analysis. The use of inferential statistics such as chi-square analysis for comparing different sources was feasible whenever there were enough cases pertaining to a subcategory (Schreier, 2014).

# 4 Findings

This chapter presents the findings of this literature review on the relationship between perfectionism and help-seeking. It opens with an overview of the general characteristics of the included research, followed by a systematic presentation of the findings considered relevant to the research question.

To facilitate contextual understanding to the reader, with regards to both findings and model, the help-seeking process model is further elaborated in conjunction with the presentation of relevant findings - with one dedicated section for each of the model's stages (see [figure 4.1](#) below)<sup>36</sup>. Each section starts with a description of the help-seeking stage in question, followed by an analysis of the relationship perfectionism has with that specific stage of the help-seeking process. The findings will be presented in alphabetic order, according to the surnames of the studies' authors.

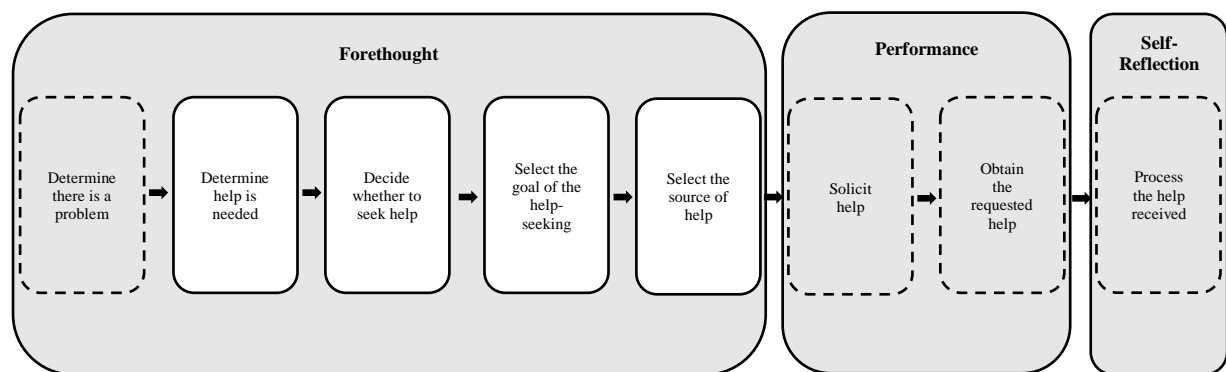


Figure 4.1 Help-Seeking process model with the stages covered by the literature (in white)

<sup>36</sup> The reader should note that the included literature only appears to address four stages of this model, as is evident from the application of the coding frame (see preceding [methodology](#) chapter). These four stages are commonly associated with the «forethought» phase of Zimmerman's (2000) cyclical model on self-regulated learning. However, in order to retain consistency and a wider / more comprehensive perspective, the whole overarching help-seeking process model is used.

## 4.1 Characteristics of the Included Research

The following in-depth analysis includes 24 empirical studies which have investigated the relationship different ways of being a perfectionist and different factors of the help-seeking process. The characteristics of each of the studies are detailed in [attachment 3](#). This subsection provides an overview of these characteristics, including the year and location of the studies, the methodologies employed, and the characteristics of the study participants.

Perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking is a fairly new research field with empirical research dating back to the turn of the century (see [figure 4.2](#) below).

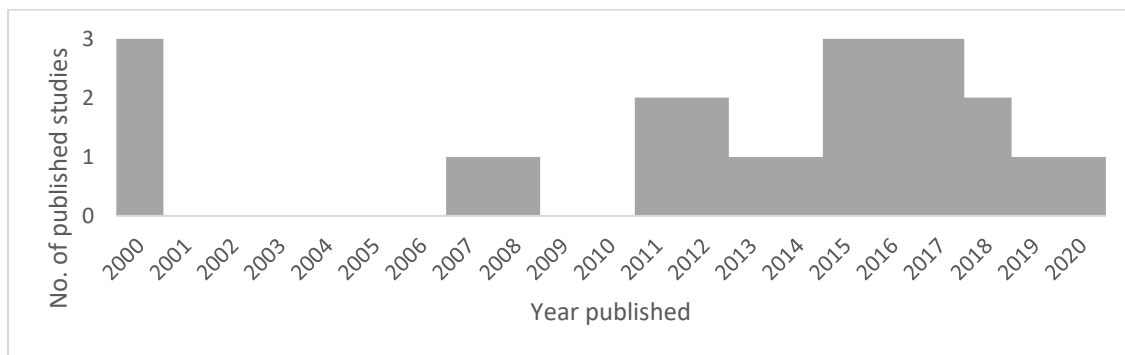


Figure 4.2 Publication years of the included studies

The largest bulk of studies ( $n = 12$ ) were conducted on higher education students (see [figure 4.3](#) below). Of the studies examining higher education students, five examined students enrolled in psychology courses specifically. Four of the studies were conducted on older populations (i.e. community members, medical employees, married graduate students, and clinical psychologist trainees). One of the studies examined more than one sample (i.e. both university students and community members). Of the remaining studies, eight studies were performed on adolescents, and a sole study examined children.

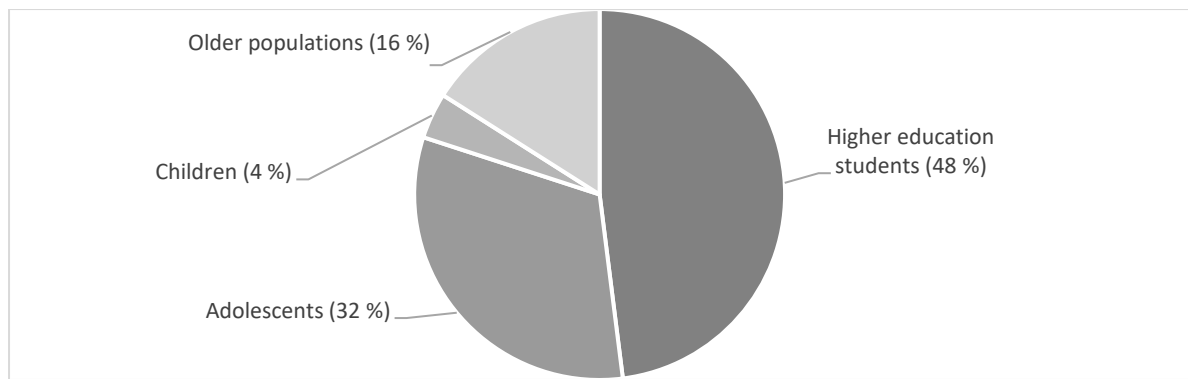


Figure 4.3 Populations examined in the included research

The included research originated from eight different countries. The majority of the studies were conducted in North America – nine studies in the U.S. and eight studies in Canada, respectively. Two took place in Malaysia, while one each derived from Argentina, Australia, Great Britain, Romania and Taiwan. The number of participants in the studies varied from 58 to 475. Most of the articles provided the mean age of participants ( $\mu = 9.7 - 38.6$ ).

All of the studies included participants of both genders, but there was a predominance of female participant in the studies. Eighteen of the studies included more female participants than male participants, five had more male than female participants, while two of the studies had female and male populations of equal size. The female ratio among the participants was 52 % for adolescents, 57 % for the higher education students, and 74 % for the older samples.

All of the included studies used a qualitative methodology where the research was conducted utilising self-report surveys in order to collect data. One study completed the use of self-reports with written daily reports. About half of the included studies utilised help-seeking subscales of coping whole-scales, where help-seeking was examined along with other coping strategies. The majority of the reviewed studies comprised cross-sectional design, and most of the participants were recruited through self-selection.

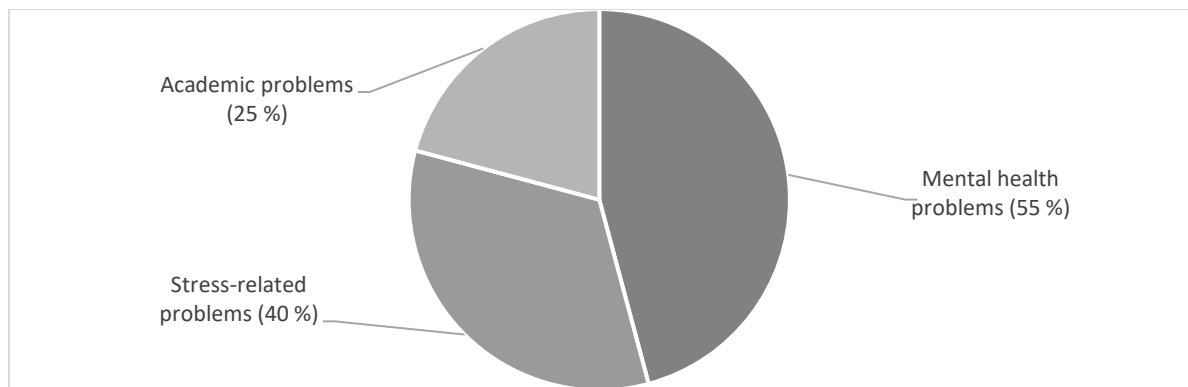


Figure 4.4 Problems examined in relation to perfectionism

The included studies examined the relationship between perfectionism and help-seeking for problems within four different problem areas (see [figure 4.4](#) above). Five of the studies focused on help-seeking for academic problems, eight concerned seeking help for stress-related problems, while eleven focused on help-seeking in relation to mental health problems.

As expected, the included research utilised different multidimensional measures of perfectionism. The different dimensions of perfectionism were therefore – whenever it was possible – categorised as indicators of either perfectionistic strivings or perfectionistic concerns (listed in [table 2.1](#) of the theoretical framework) in order to allow for the synthesising of the research findings.



## 4.2 Determine There is a Problem

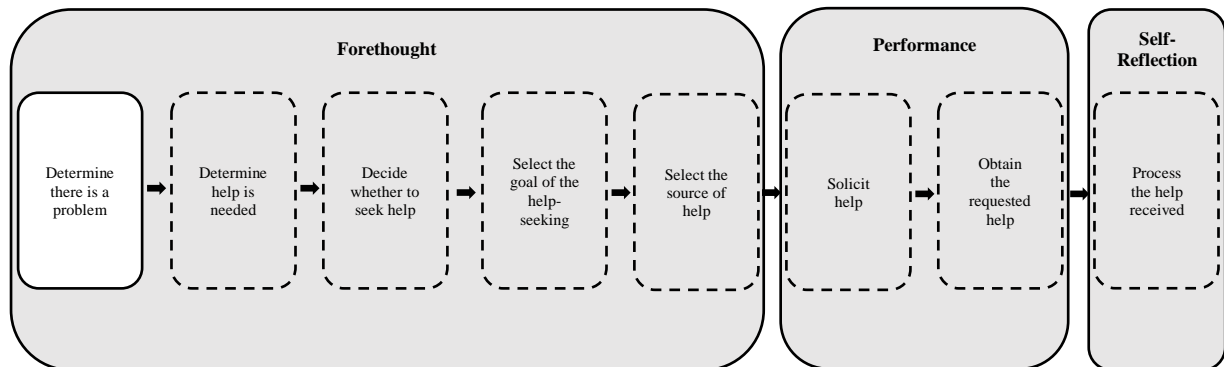


Figure 4.5 «Determine there is a problem» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

The initial stage of the help-seeking process model involves recognising difficulties and defining them as a problem. The mere recognition of some difficulty is often insufficient to lead to action, and an individual must further identify the difficulty as problematic before seeking outside help (Gross & McMullen, 1983). Implicit ideas about what constitutes comprehension or performance vary between individuals and groups of people. As a consequence, there is considerable variation across individuals to the types and qualities of problems that receive attention and generate sufficient concern to seek help (Gross & McMullen, 1983). Determining there is a problem can depend on factors such as social comparison processes (e.g. the grade your peers receive), levels of aspiration (e.g. whether a grade «C» is satisfactory), a learner's comprehension criterion (i.e. the level of understanding one is willing to accept) and social influences (Karabenick & Newman, 2009).

None of the studies included in this review examined perfectionism's relationship with the problem perception stage of the help-seeking process. As a consequence, the current review does not provide any new insights into whether the different ways of being a perfectionist influences which difficulties higher education students recognise, and further define as problems. Furthermore, the extent to which perfectionistic students have an increased and/or decreased tendency to experience academic difficulties is unknown. Nor does this review clarify whether perfectionistic students differ from non-perfectionistic students in the degree

to which they define experienced difficulties as problems (e.g. based on their excessive high standards, social comparisons, etc).

### 4.3 Determine Help is Needed

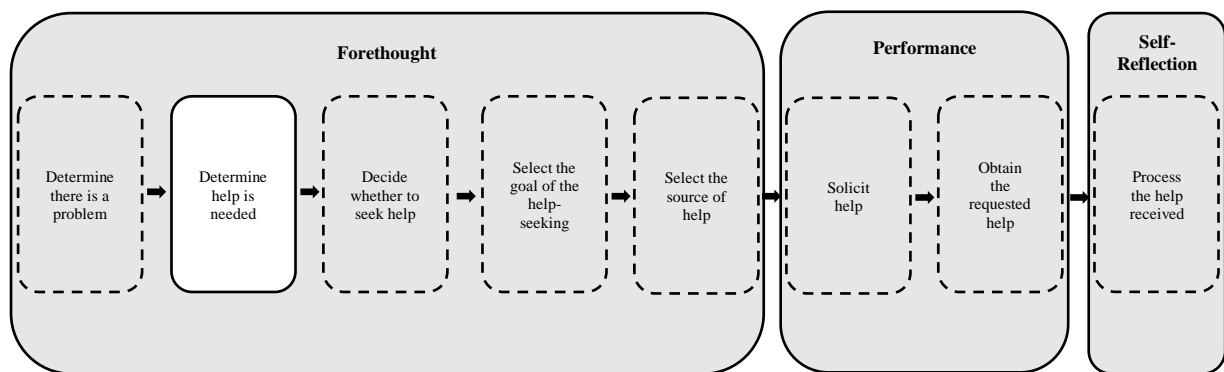


Figure 4.6 «Determine help is needed» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

Once identified, a problem must further be perceived as amenable to aid. The second stage of the help-seeking process model involves recognising that seeking help is an appropriate way of dealing with the problem at hand (Gross & McMullen, 1983). In other words, a learner has to decide whether or not help is needed or wanted. Determining that help is needed depends on several factors, including the perception of insufficient personal resources (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981), whether other strategies have been exhausted (Karabenick & Newman, 2009), attributions for why problems exist that are help-relevant (Ames, 1983), and the proper calibration of need (Nelson-Le Gall, Kratzer, Jones, & DeCooke, 1990; Newman & Schwager, 1993).

A single study, Dang et al.'s (2020), presented the direct correlations between perfectionism and need recognition. Their study examined whether the participants' perfectionistic tendencies were related to their recognition of a personal need for professional psychological/psychotherapeutic help. While the remaining included studies all focused on a

single sample, Dang et al. (2020) examined both a university student sample (sample 1) and an older<sup>37</sup> community-based sample (sample 2). This enabled the assessment of whether the relationship between perfectionism and need recognition would replicate across the samples. The links between the participants' reported perfectionistic tendencies and their need recognition are systematised in [attachment 4](#).

The need to *be* perfect (i.e. perfectionism traits) showed differentiated relations with the recognition of a need for mental help in the two samples. All of the examined perfectionism traits (i.e. self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed perfectionism) were negatively correlated with the need recognition in the student sample. In contrast, all three perfectionism traits were positively correlated with the community members' need recognition.

«In both samples, perfectionistic self-presentation facets, compared with perfectionism traits, were more consistently associated with negative thoughts and attitudes towards help seeking and displayed greater magnitudes of effects» (Dang et al., 2020, p. 6). The drive or need to appear perfect and to conceal imperfections (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentation) showed negative links with the need recognition in both the university student sample and the community member sample. However, the correlations were only significant in the university student sample.

The associations between the participants' need recognition and their perfectionism traits and perfectionistic self-presentation were generally more negative for the university student sample.

Dang et al. (2020) utilised the «recognition of personal need for psychological help» subscale of Fischer and Turner's (1970) «attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help» scale to measure the participants' recognition of a need for help. Fischer and Turner (1970) themselves recommended interpreting the subscale correlations somewhat cautiously, since they lack the stability of the whole-scale scores. The reliability of the aforementioned findings is in this regard questionable.

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<sup>37</sup> The mean age was  $\mu = 18.7$  for the university student sample and  $\mu = 37.2$  for the community member sample.

## 4.4 Decide Whether to Seek Help

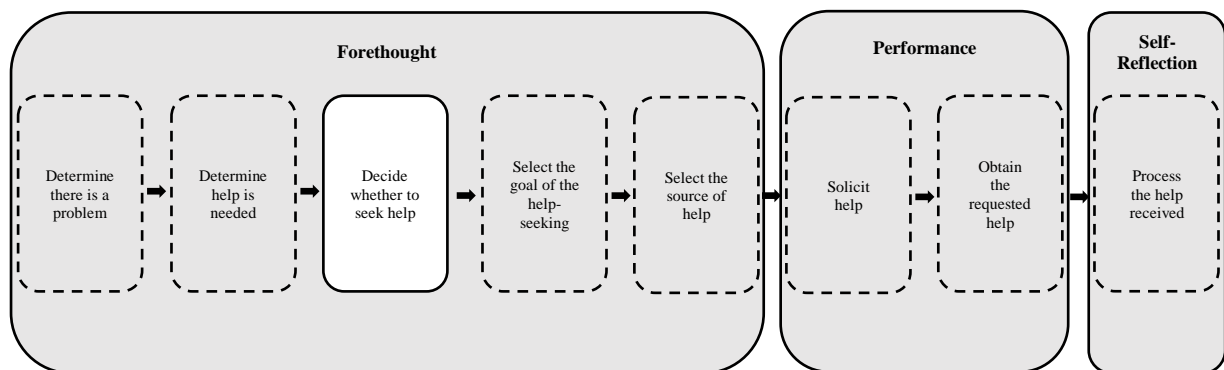


Figure 4.7 «Decide whether to seek help» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

The decision stage of the help-seeking process involves deciding on whether or not to seek assistance by weighing different self-motivation beliefs, including self-efficacy (i.e. the belief that one can marshal the resources to seek the desired help), outcome expectations (i.e. the belief that doing so will result in the desired outcome) (Karabenick & Berger, 2013), and task value (Karabenick & Newman, 2009; Nadler, 1998; Newman, 2002, 2008).

The perceived benefits (or «positive attitudes») of help-seeking reflect a recognition of help-seeking as an instrumental and pragmatic means of learning (e.g. «I believe that asking my teachers questions helps me learn») (Ames, 1983; Nelson-Le Gall, 1985). In contrast, the perceived threats (or «negative attitudes») of help-seeking reflect either a threat to self-esteem caused by the perceived inadequacy or the sociocultural norms that inveigh against seeking assistance (e.g. «I believe the teachers might think I am dumb if I ask a question in class») (Gross & McMullen, 1983; Rosen, 1983; Shapiro, 1983).

Several methods have been utilised to systematically investigate the decision stage of the help-seeking process, such as examining the attitudes and beliefs people have regarding help-seeking, underlying intentions and motivations for seeking help, as well as past help-seeking

behaviour<sup>38</sup>. Accordingly, several research groups have conducted research that relates to the «decide whether to seek help» stage of the help-seeking process.

There is a preponderance of clinical research, compared to that of academic research, in relation to this stage of the help-seeking process model. Out of the twenty relevant studies, three examined *academic* help-seeking, seven examined *stress-related* help-seeking, and ten examined *mental* help-seeking (see [figure 4.8](#) below).

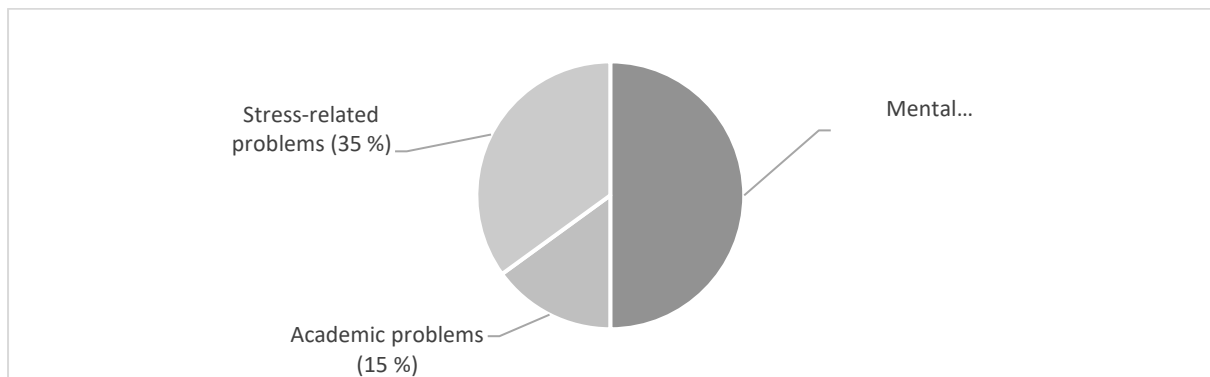


Figure 4.8 Categories of problems examined in relation to the help-seeking decision

The remainder of this section presents the findings on perfectionism's relationship with the attitudes people hold towards help-seeking in order to deal with three aggregated groups of problems. First, the findings with regard to academic problems are outlined. The second subsection focuses on stress-related problems. Third, the findings on perfectionism's links with mental help-seeking are described. The fourth subsection focuses on stigmatisation, which is identified as a help-seeking barrier in the literature.

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<sup>38</sup> Past help-seeking behaviour – that is, whether students have chosen to seek help on previous occasions – was considered indicative of their help-seeking attitudes and was therefore assigned to the «attitudes towards help-seeking» subcategory of the coding frame.

#### 4.4.1 Academic Help-Seeking

Three of the included studies examined how perfectionism is related to people's help-seeking when they are trying to handle academic problems. The correlations between the participants' academic help-seeking and the various examined perfectionism dimensions are presented in attachment 5. The results of the studies will be presented in more detail below, *first* in relation to perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, and *next* with regard to other-oriented perfectionism.

#### **Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns**

Shim et al.'s (2016) study was unique in that it utilised both the framework of the two-factor model of perfectionism (presented in subsection 2.1.2) and the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism (outlined in subsection 2.1.3). In other words, both the *unique* and *interactive* effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns were examined.

#### *The Unique Effects of Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns*

Mills and Blankstein (2000) examined whether perfectionism traits were linked to the undergraduate students' past help-seeking behaviour (without specifying the recipients of the help-seeking). In their study, there was a positive link between self-oriented perfectionism and the undergraduate students' past help-seeking, but the correlation was not significant. Higher scorers on socially prescribed perfectionism, on the other hand, reported lower usage of help-seeking.

Parker et al.'s (2019) study examined 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' attitudes towards seeking help from teachers – whether they perceived help-seeking as beneficial or threatening. In their study, they found «adaptive perfectionism» (i.e. the setting of high personal standards) to be a significant, positive predictor of adaptive help-seeking, and «[s]tudents who had higher levels of adaptive perfectionism showed higher levels of adaptive help seeking from teachers» (Parker et al., 2019, p. 661). In contrast, «maladaptive perfectionism» (i.e. perceiving a discrepancy between the high standards one holds and one's actual performance) yielded an inverse, statistically significant relationship with adaptive help-seeking from teachers.

Shim et al. (2016) examined 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' help-seeking from peers. The study differentiated between adaptive help-seeking and avoidance of help-seeking<sup>39</sup> goals. In their study, Shim et al. (2016) found perfectionistic strivings<sup>40</sup> to be the only significant predictor of adaptive help-seeking. In contrast, perfectionistic concerns<sup>41</sup> yielded an inverse, statistically insignificant relationship with adaptive help-seeking. Furthermore, the main effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns on the students' avoidance of help-seeking were significant. While perfectionistic strivings were linked to low avoidance of help-seeking, perfectionistic concerns were linked to heightened levels of avoidance of help-seeking.

The *unique* effects of the two higher-order perfectionism factors on students' academic help-seeking differed between perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns. When synthesising the results of the three studies, perfectionistic strivings were related to a desirable pattern of engagement, while perfectionistic concerns were linked to a disadvantageous pattern. More specifically, perfectionistic strivings were positively linked to students' academic help-seeking, but the correlation was only significant in the two adolescent student samples (not the university student sample). On the other hand, perfectionistic concerns yielded a negative relationship with academic help-seeking across the samples, but the correlations were only significant for the university student sample and the 9<sup>th</sup> grade students (and not the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students). Similarly, the findings on the adolescents' avoidance of help-seeking were reversed compared to those of the examined approach behaviour. The findings suggest perfectionistic strivings to be a significant negative predictor, and perfectionistic concerns to be a significant positive predictor of the 9<sup>th</sup> graders' avoidance of help-seeking.

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<sup>39</sup> The study also differentiated expedient help-seeking. All three help-seeking goals will be described in more detail in [section 4.5](#). The findings on maladaptive help-seeking were considered more relevant for the goal selection stage of the help-seeking process, and will therefore be presented in [subsection 4.5.3](#).

<sup>40</sup> measured as personal standards (F-MPS, Frost et al., 1990).

<sup>41</sup> measured as concern over mistakes (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

### *The Interactive Effects of Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns*

The aforementioned findings concerned the *unique* relationship between academic help-seeking and perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns. In Shim et al.'s (2016) study, the relationship between the middle school students' avoidance of help-seeking and perfectionistic strivings (PS) and perfectionistic concerns (PC) appeared to depend on the *interaction* between them. Shim et al. (2016) found mixed perfectionism (i.e. high PS and high PC) to have almost no effect on the students' avoidance of help-seeking, while pure perfectionistic concerns (i.e. low PS and high PC) showed an increase in the middle school students' intentions to avoid seeking academic help from peers (see [table 4.1](#) below).

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Pure Perfectionistic Strivings</i>	<i>Mixed Perfectionism</i>	<i>Pure Perfectionistic Concerns</i>	<i>Non-Perfectionism</i>
Shim et al. (2016)	–	Very small negative correlation with avoidance of help-seeking	Strong positive correlation with avoidance of help-seeking	–

Table 4.1 Avoidance of help-seeking and perfectionism

### **Other-Oriented Perfectionism**

In addition to examining self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism, Mills & Blankstein's (2000) study also examined whether the perfectionism trait other-oriented perfectionism (i.e. the tendency to impose excessively high standards on other individuals) was related to the undergraduate students' academic help-seeking. Contrary to their hypothesis<sup>42</sup>, other-oriented perfectionism was significantly positively correlated with the undergraduate students' help-seeking.

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<sup>42</sup> «that other-oriented perfectionism would not be related, or only weakly related, to motivation and learning strategies» (Mills & Blankstein, 2000, p. 1194).



#### 4.4.2 Stress-Related Help-Seeking

Seven of the included studies examined how perfectionism is related to individuals' help-seeking when dealing with stress-related problems. The correlations between different ways of being a perfectionist and stress-related help-seeking are presented in [attachment 6](#). The results of the studies will be presented in more detail below, *first* in relation to perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, and *next* with regard to other-oriented perfectionism.

##### **Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns**

Arana and Furlan (2016) examined university students' reported perfectionism affected their social support seeking when they were trying to cope with pre-exam anxiety and uncertainty. They found no association between help-seeking and discrepancy, whereas the students' high standards were linked with help-seeking. However, the link became insignificant after correction.

The undergraduate students in Blankstein et al.'s (2007) study were asked whether they had sought social support in order to deal with a recent stressful event. In their study, neither socially prescribed perfectionism nor self-oriented perfectionism were significantly correlated with the students' emotional help-seeking.

Dry et al. (2015) examined how children coped in response to a problem. In the study, self-oriented perfectionism showed a weak positive correlation, while socially prescribed perfectionism showed a small negative correlation with the children's assistance seeking.

Gnilka et al.'s (2012) study examined the coping strategies undergraduate students use to manage stressful demands. In their study, non-perfectionists scored significantly lower on help-seeking than both «adaptive» (scored high on personal standards) and «maladaptive» (scored high on discrepancy) perfectionists. In their study, both perfectionism factors were positively related with socioemotional help-seeking. Contrary to Gnilka et al.'s (2012)

hypothesis<sup>43</sup>, the adaptive and maladaptive perfectionistic students were more likely to seek help than the non-perfectionistic students.

Gong et al. (2015) examined how the college students used various coping strategies to handle stressful situations. One of the coping strategies, socioemotional coping, entailed using emotional social support, focusing on and venting of emotions, as well as the use of instrumental social support. In the study, «personal standards were associated with high levels of (...) socioemotional coping and low levels of avoidant coping. Concern over mistakes and doubt about actions were related to high levels of avoidant coping» (Gong et al., 2015, p. 264).

Mofield (2008); Mofield et al. (2016) examined gifted middle school students' social support seeking in response to academic stress. Both studies asked how frequently the students solicited help (from friends, teachers, family members or others) when getting a bad grade in school (i.e. worse grade than what they usually get). In the studies, personal strivings<sup>44</sup> showed generally positive relations, while concern over mistakes and doubts about actions showed generally small negative relations with the students' help solicitation.

Trotter's (2011) study examined how Taiwanese undergraduate students cope with stressful events. In the study, the collectivist coping styles inventory was used, which identifies family support as a key coping style in many Asian cultures (Heppner et al., 2006). In the study, the students who reported setting high standards for their performance were more likely to seek family support. The students' perceived discrepancy between their high standards and their performance, on the other hand, showed weak negative links with family support.

When synthesising the results of the relevant empirical studies, there appeared to be a generally weak positive link between the students' perfectionistic strivings<sup>45</sup> and their help-seeking. In contrast, there was a generally small negative link between perfectionistic

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<sup>43</sup> «Participants with adaptive perfectionism would have higher levels of (...) Seeking Social Support (...) than both participants with nonperfectionism and participants with adaptive perfectionism» (Gnilka et al., 2012, p. 428).

<sup>44</sup> measured as personal strivings and organization (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

<sup>45</sup> measured as self-oriented perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), high standards (APS-R; Slaney et al., 2001), and positive strivings (GWHS; Frost et al., 1990).

concerns<sup>46</sup> and their stress-related help-seeking. The only exception was Gnilka et al.'s (2012) study, where perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns were both positively linked with the undergraduate students' stress-related help-seeking.

### **Other-Oriented Perfectionism**

Blankstein et al.'s (2007) further examined whether there are any links between undergraduate students' believing that others demand perfection of them (i.e. other-oriented perfectionism) and their past help-seeking behaviour. In their study, other-oriented perfectionism was significantly positively correlated with help-seeking.

#### *4.4.3 Mental Help-Seeking*

Ten of the included studies concerned the relationship between different ways of being a perfectionist and attitudes towards *mental* help-seeking. The correlations in the relevant research are presented in [attachment 7](#). The findings on perfectionism's relationship with mental help-seeking attitudes will be specified below, *first* in relation to perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, *next* with regard to other-oriented perfectionism, and *finally* perfectionistic self-presentation.

### **Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns**

Abdollahi et al. (2017) examined the relationship between two forms of perfectionism and the attitudes Malaysian students hold towards seeking psychological help. The results of the study «indicated that high school students with high levels of socially prescribed perfectionism (...) and low levels of self-oriented perfectionism reported negative attitudes toward seeking psychological help» (Abdollahi et al., 2017, p. 1019).

The results of Dang et al.'s (2020) study showed that both self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism were negatively related with positive attitudes towards seeking

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<sup>46</sup> measured as socially prescribed perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), discrepancy (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001), and evaluative concerns (GWHS; Frost et al., 1990).

professional psychological help. Socially prescribed perfectionism was most consistently associated with negative help-seeking attitudes in the university student sample.

DeRosa (2000) examined the willingness of catholic high school students to seek help for psychological problems. In her study, greater self-oriented perfectionism was found to be «related to active help-seeking. However, (...) the zero-order correlations did not suggest a positive link between self-oriented perfectionism and help-seeking attitudes» (DeRosa, 2000, p. 85). «Unexpectedly, there was the lack of a significant correlation between socially prescribed perfectionism and negative help-seeking attitudes» (DeRosa, 2000, p. 96).

Ey et al. (2000) found that distressed medical and dental students had higher levels of socially prescribed perfectionism and less positive attitudes towards mental health treatment.

Flett et al. (2012) examined adolescents' perceived levels of support as they were trying to cope with emotional problems «related to family physical, emotional, and/or sexual abuse» (Flett et al., 2012, p. 122). In their study, «self-oriented perfectionism was not associated significantly with any of the social support measures. In contrast, there was a robust negative association between socially prescribed perfectionism and family support» (Flett et al., 2012, p. 125).

Foo et al. (2017) found that the graduate students who were characterised by perfectionistic traits were generally more negative towards seeking professional psychological help compared to those without.

Rasmussen et al. (2013) tested perfectionism as a predictor of help-seeking attitudes among Latter-Day Saint undergraduate students. Their multiple linear regression analysis found that the students who were characterised by doubts about actions and concern over mistakes reported less positive attitudes towards psychological services than those who reported perfectionistic personal standards.

Shannon et al. (2018) examined whether perfectionistic tendencies were linked to the attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help in a sample of university students and found that neither self-oriented nor socially prescribed perfectionism were significantly related with the students' attitudes.

Wimberley (2017) operationalised the undergraduate students' intentions to seek mental help in two differentiated ways. *First*, the perfectionistic students' intentions of seeking «no help» (as opposed to seeking help from informal, formal and self-help sources) was examined. High standards (i.e. holding oneself to high standards and high expectations) were negatively linked, whereas discrepancy (i.e. the experienced difference between set standards and performance) was positively linked with the students' intentions to seek no help, but none of the correlations were significant. *Second*, perfectionism's relationship with the students' attitudes towards seeking help from mental health services were also examined. Neither perfectionism dimensions revealed a significant relationship with the undergraduate students' help-seeking attitudes and intentions.

The findings highlight differences between how perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns are linked with help-seeking for mental health reasons. The links with perfectionistic strivings<sup>47</sup> appeared to be generally of a small positive size. In contrast, perfectionistic concerns<sup>48</sup> were generally linked with negative help-seeking attitudes. However, most of the correlations were insignificant. An exception to this pattern was Dang et al.'s (2020) study, where both perfectionism factors were negatively linked with positive attitudes towards help-seeking.

### **Other-Oriented Perfectionism**

Two studies, Dang et al.'s (2020) and Shannon et al.'s (2018), concerned the relationship between higher education students' tendency to hold others to rigidly high standards (i.e. other-oriented perfectionism) and their attitudes towards seeking professional assistance in order to deal with mental health problems. The correlations between other-oriented perfectionism and mental help-seeking attitudes were of a small (positive and negative) size in the studies.

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<sup>47</sup> measured as high standards (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001), personal standards (F-MPS, Frost et al., 1990) and self-oriented perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

<sup>48</sup> measured as discrepancy (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001), concerns over mistakes, doubts about actions (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990), and socially prescribed perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

## **Perfectionistic Self-Presentation**

Dang et al. (2020) found perfectionistic self-presentation to be more consistently associated with negative thoughts and attitudes towards help seeking and to display greater magnitudes of effects compared with perfectionism traits. While perfectionistic self-presentation significantly correlated with all of the help-seeking attitudes in the university student sample, the correlations with need recognition or confidence in professionals were insignificant in the community sample. In fact, there were both fewer significant correlations and smaller magnitude of associations in the community sample.

In DeRosa's (2000) study, the self-presentational dimensions of perfectionism were related to the adolescents' attitudes towards help-seeking. Specifically, one facet of perfectionism self-presentation (i.e. an unwillingness to disclose imperfection to others) predicted significant variance in their negative help-seeking attitudes.

Shannon et al. (2018) found perfectionistic self-presentation to be generally associated with more negative attitudes towards professional help-seeking for mental health difficulties. More specifically, the desire to appear perfect (i.e. perfectionistic self-promotion) was associated with more negative help-seeking attitudes towards seeking professional help for mental health difficulties, and a greater refusal to engage in any behaviour that is less than perfect (i.e. non-display of imperfection) predicted the university students' attitudes towards seeking mental help.

Weller (2018) only examined one of the three identified perfectionistic self-presentation facets – namely non-disclosure of imperfections – because it was considered most theoretically relevant to help-seeking attitudes. A negative correlation was found between the clinical psychologist trainees' non-disclosure of imperfection and their overall attitudes towards seeking psychotherapy.

Wimberley (2017) found perfectionistic self-presentation to have a significant negative direct effect on both the undergraduate students' help-seeking attitudes and their help-seeking intentions. In addition, perfectionistic self-presentation showed a significant positive effect on the students' intentions to seek «no help».

In sum, the studies indicated a generally negative relationship between the need to *appear* perfect (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentation) and positive attitudes towards help-seeking for mental health reasons, where the relationship appeared to be stronger for the university student sample compared to the community member sample in Dang et al.'s (2020) study.

#### 4.4.4 Stigmatisation

A perceived stigma can be defined as «the negative social attitude attached to a characteristic of an individual that may be regarded as a mental, physical, or social deficiency» (APA, 2020). Stigma is a multidimensional phenomenon, where a theoretical difference has been drawn between two stigma dimensions, namely public stigma<sup>49</sup> and self-stigma (P. W. Corrigan & Watson, 2006). A « [p]erceived public stigma refers to discrimination and devaluation by others, and anticipated self-stigma refers to internalization of negative stereotypes about people who seek help» (Pattyn, Verhaeghe, Sercu, & Bracke, 2014, p. 232). Previous research has found self-stigma to be a stronger deterrent than public stigma with regard to help-seeking (P. Corrigan, 2004).

Four of the included studies concerned the relationship between perfectionism and perceived mental health stigma. The correlations between the examined perfectionism dimensions and perceived mental health stigma are presented in attachment 8. The findings on perfectionism's relationship with mental help-seeking attitudes will be delineated below, *first* in relation to perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, *next* with regard to other-oriented perfectionism, and *finally* perfectionistic self-presentation.

#### **Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns**

Dang et al.'s (2020) study concerned the stigma tolerance of two samples of participants – one comprised of university students and another comprised of community members. Regarding the examined perfectionism traits, socially prescribed perfectionism was negatively related to stigma tolerance in the student sample. The findings may suggest that

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<sup>49</sup> Also referred to as «stigma by others» (e.g. Vogel, Wade, and Ascherman, 2009).

the stigma tolerance of the university students is lower compared to the stigma tolerance of the community members.

Shannon et al. (2018) examined the links between university students' perfectionism and their perceived self-stigma for seeking psychological help. In their study, self-oriented perfectionism predicted self-stigma for seeking help, and socially prescribed perfectionism predicted perceptions of stigmatisation by others.

Wimberley (2017) examined whether perfectionism was associated with undergraduate students' indifference to stigma. In the study, the students who reported high standards appeared to be more indifferent to stigma, while the students who reported a perceived discrepancy between their standards and performance perceived a greater stigma with regard to psychological help-seeking.

Zeifman et al. (2015) linked self-stigma with trait perfectionism and found that a higher self-stigma for needing help was correlated with greater self-oriented perfectionism among the examined high school students. Their findings suggest that some perfectionistic students have a propensity towards judging themselves negatively for needing help, and that «perfectionism was associated with self-stigma among those students with little to no experience with people with a history of mental illness» (Zeifman et al., 2015, p. 273). More specifically, the relationship with self-stigma was only significant for self-oriented perfectionism (and not socially prescribed perfectionism) in their study, and only for the adolescents who reported low familiarity with other people experiencing mental problems. However, the relations were only significant for a small sub-sample ( $n = 33$ ), and results concerning such small samples tend to be unreliable and are therefore unlikely to replicate (Maxwell, 2004).

The perceived stigma differed to some extent between the two higher-order perfectionism factors. Individuals characterised by perfectionistic concerns<sup>50</sup> generally showed a reduced stigma tolerance with regard to mental help-seeking. Individuals characterised by

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<sup>50</sup> Measured as socially prescribed perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991) and discrepancy (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001).



perfectionistic strivings<sup>51</sup> also scored high on increased stigma, but to a lesser extent than those who reported high perfectionistic concerns.

### **Other-Oriented Perfectionism**

In Shannon et al.'s (2018) study, expecting perfection from others (i.e. other-oriented perfectionism) significantly predicted the university students' self-stigma, but not their stigma by others.

Dang et al. (2020) examined the tolerance of the stigma associated with psychological help of two samples of participants and found that the tendency to hold others to rigidly high standards was related to the participants' reduced stigma tolerance. The link was stronger for the university students compared to the sample consisting of older community members.

In summary, the tendency to have unrealistic standards for significant others was linked with a reduced stigma tolerance among higher education students.

### **Perfectionistic Self-Presentation**

In Dang et al.'s (2020) study, perfectionistic self-presentation was consistently and strongly associated with stigma tolerance. When comparing the two examined samples, the older community sample was found to have a higher mean stigma tolerance compared to the university student sample. Likewise, the stigma tolerance appeared to be lower for the university students who were characterised by *perfectionistic self-promotion* (i.e. a tendency to actively proclaim and display one's own «perfection» to others), as well as those characterised by *non-disclosure of imperfections* (i.e. passively concealing imperfections through avoiding disclosing them verbally).

In Shannon et al.'s (2018) study, the university students' perfectionistic self-presentation was associated with a greater perceived stigma about mental help-seeking. The findings indicated

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<sup>51</sup> Measured as self-oriented perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), and high standards (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001).

that all three perfectionistic self-presentation facets predicted self-stigma with strong and consistent associations.

*«The desire to appear perfect (i.e., perfectionistic self-promotion) was associated with greater self-stigma towards seeking help for mental health difficulties (...) greater refusal to engage in any behaviour that is less than perfect (i.e., nondisplay of imperfection) predicted self-stigma (...), and was associated with perceived stigmatization by others for seeking help. (...) Similarly, refusal to admit to any imperfection (i.e., nondisclosure of imperfection) was also significantly related to both self-stigma and perceived stigmatization by others»*

*(Shannon et al., 2018, p. 69)*

Wimberley's (2017) study addressed the self-stigma associated with perfectionistic self-presentation in a sample of undergraduate students. In the study, the students who scored high on *non-disclosure of imperfections* (i.e. passive concealment through avoidance of personal verbal disclosures) were least likely to experience an indifference to stigma.

Overall, perfectionistic self-presentation was linked to both an increased stigma by others and an increased self-stigma. Of the three differentiated perfectionistic self-presentation styles, the avoidance of disclosing any imperfection (i.e. non-disclosure of imperfections) showed the most robust negative link with the students' perceived mental health stigma. As a consequence of their decreased stigma tolerance, the students characterised by perfectionistic self-presentation were more likely to have negative attitudes towards seeking professional psychological help.

## 4.5 Select the Goal of the Help-Seeking

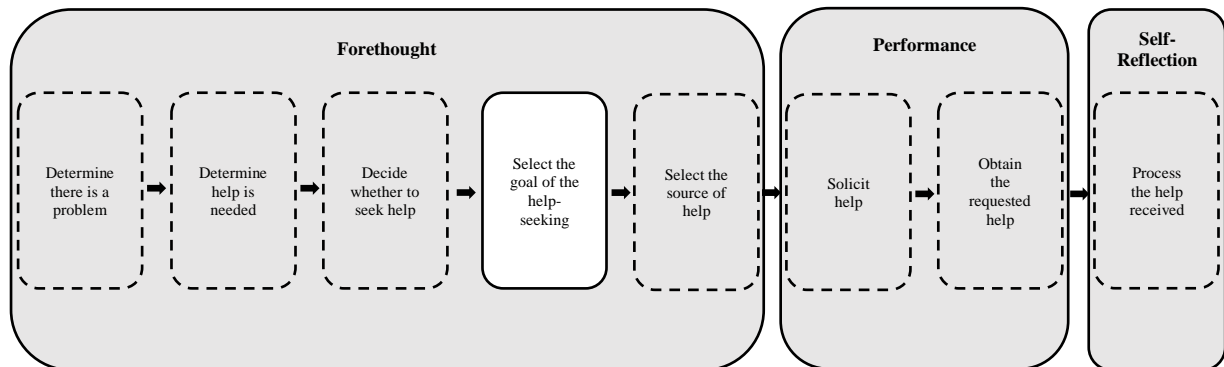


Figure 4.9 «Select the goal of the help-seeking» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

Once the decision has been taken to seek help, a learner needs to assign a purpose or meaning to the assistance seeking. Perfectionism's relationship with the motives, or reasons, for seeking help were a focus in a considerable number ( $n = 14$ ) of the studies included in this review. Help-seeking motives can take many forms, and consequently there are different ways of categorising help-seeking goals.

This review differentiates four categories of help-seeking goals, namely adaptive help-seeking, emotional help-seeking, and maladaptive help-seeking, and avoidance of help-seeking. The differentiation of emotional and adaptive help-seeking was based on research suggesting that emotional help-seeking can be both adaptive and maladaptive<sup>52</sup>.

<sup>52</sup> Seeking out emotional support can be adaptive through reassuring a stressed and insecure individual, thus fostering problem-focused learning. On the other hand, sources of sympathy can be used for the ventilation of one's feelings, and evidence show that seeking help in this manner can be both adaptive and maladaptive (Berman & Turk, 1981; Billings & Moos, 1984; Costanza, Derlega, & Winstead, 1988; Tolor & Fehon, 1987).

In the following subsections, perfectionism's relationship with the above-mentioned help-seeking goals are described<sup>53</sup>. *First*, the findings on the links between different ways of being a perfectionist and help-seeking for *adaptive* reasons are presented. *Second*, the links between perfectionism and help-seeking for *emotional* reasons are described. *Third*, *maladaptive* help-seeking's relation with different perfectionism dimensions are delineated. The *fourth* subsection concerns perfectionistic students' *avoidance* of help-seeking. All of the subsections commence with a brief description of the help-seeking goal in question, and each finish with a summary of the findings.

#### 4.5.1 Adaptive Help-Seeking Goals

Adaptive help-seeking<sup>54</sup> involves improving one's capabilities and/or increasing one's understanding by seeking just enough help to be able to solve a problem or attain a goal independently. Adaptive help-seeking can, for example, involve students asking for hints about the solution to problems, examples of similar problems, or clarification of the problem at hand (Arbreton, 1993; Karabenick & Knapp, 1991; Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985; Newman, 1994).

Four of the included studies concerned the relationship between perfectionism and adaptive help-seeking. The results of the studies are systematised and presented in [table 4.2](#) below. In the following, the findings will be described in more detail, *first* in relation to perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, and *next* with regard to perfectionistic self-presentation.

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<sup>53</sup> The results of Shim et al.'s (2016) study were briefly outlined in relation to academic help-seeking in [subsection 4.4.1](#), but will be presented again in this subsection in order to retain a wider perspective on the relationship between perfectionism and different help-seeking goals.

<sup>54</sup> also referred to as instrumental, mastery-oriented (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985), autonomous (Nadler, 1998), autonomy-oriented (Komissarouk, Harpaz, & Nadler, 2017), strategic (Karabenick, 1998b), appropriate (Ryan, Patrick, & Shim, 2005) and negotiating (Asser, 1978) help-seeking.

## Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns

Crăciun and Dudău's (2014) study examined how medical employees with perfectionistic tendencies cope with stressful situations, and differentiated social support for instrumental reasons from social support for emotional reasons. In their study, both conscientious and self-evaluative perfectionism showed weak positive correlations with the tendency to seek social support for instrumental reasons.

Parker et al. (2019) examined how perfectionism might affect 9<sup>th</sup> grade students' adaptive help-seeking from teachers across multiple classes<sup>55</sup>. In their study, adaptive help-seeking from teachers yielded a small inverse relationship with maladaptive perfectionism, and a moderate positive association with adaptive perfectionism.

Shim et al. (2016) examined adolescent students' adaptive help-seeking from peers<sup>56</sup>, and found that the setting of very high standards and placing excessive importance on the set standards (i.e. *personal standards*) were linked with a significant increase in the students' adaptive help-seeking. In contrast, there was only a small negative relation with the students' reported *concern over mistakes* (i.e. negative reactions to mistakes and believing one will lose the respect of others following failure).

Stoeber and Janssen (2011) examined whether university students' perfectionism affected their use of coping strategies (e.g. using emotional and instrumental support) when they were dealing with stress caused by failures. In their study, instrumental help-seeking was differentiated from emotional help-seeking. While *perfectionistic concerns* (measured as concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, and socially prescribed perfectionism) showed a particularly strong negative link with the university students' instrumental help-seeking, the relationship with *perfectionistic strivings* (measured as personal standards and self-oriented perfectionism) was of a small positive size. Interestingly, the social support strategies (i.e. using emotional and instrumental support) predicted lower satisfaction at the end of the day.

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<sup>55</sup> The study did not differentiate the students' expedient or avoidant help-seeking goals.

<sup>56</sup> Adaptive help-seeking was differentiated from expedient and avoidance of help-seeking goals in the study.

The findings suggest that the two super-ordinate perfectionism factors show opposite relationships with help-seeking for adaptive reasons. While perfectionistic strivings<sup>57</sup> generally showed weak positive relations, perfectionistic concerns<sup>58</sup> showed small negative correlations with adaptive help-seeking. In fact, the only significant (positive) predictor was personal standards (i.e. the setting of high standards for one’s performance) in Shim et al.’s (2016) study.

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Strivings</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Concerns</i>	<i>Other-Oriented Perfectionism</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Cognitions</i>
Crăciun and Dudău (2014)	Conscientious perfectionism <sup>59</sup> weak positive correlation	Self-evaluative perfectionism <sup>60</sup> negative correlation for men. Positive correlation for women	–	–
Parker et al. (2019)	Small positive correlation	Moderate negative correlation	–	–
Shim et al. (2016)	Significant positive correlation	Small negative correlation	–	–
Stoeber and Janssen (2011)	Small positive correlation	Strong negative correlation	–	–

Table 4.2 Adaptive help-seeking and perfectionism

### **Perfectionistic Self-Presentation**

Crăciun and Dudău’s (2014) also examined the relationship between the students’ perfectionistic self-presentation and their adaptive help-seeking. In their study, instrumental – or adaptive – help-seeking was negatively associated with all of the three identified perfectionistic self-presentation facets (see table 4.3 below). Thus, the need to *appear* perfect was found to have a negative relationship with adaptive help-seeking, and among the

<sup>57</sup> measured as conscientious perfectionism (PI; Hill et al., 2004), high standards (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001), personal standards (F-MPS, Frost et al., 1990), and self-oriented perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

<sup>58</sup> measured as self-evaluative perfectionism (PI; Hill et al., 2004), discrepancy (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001), concern over mistakes, doubts about actions (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990), and socially prescribed perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

<sup>59</sup> includes organization, planfulness, striving for excellence, and high standards for others (R. W. Hill et al., 2004).

<sup>60</sup> includes rumination, need for approval, concern over mistakes, and parental pressure (R. W. Hill et al., 2004).

differentiated ways of displaying perfectionism to others, two facets showed particularly strong negative links, namely the tendency to actively proclaim and promoting oneself as perfect (i.e. perfectionistic self-promotion) and the tendency to passively avoid or conceal behaviour that could be judged by others as imperfect (i.e. non-disclosure of imperfections).

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Self-Presentation</i>		
	<i>Perfectionistic Self-Promotion</i>	<i>Non-Display of Imperfections</i>	<i>Non-Disclosure of Imperfections</i>
Crăciun and Dudău (2014)	Strong negative correlation	Moderate negative correlation	Strong negative correlation

Table 4.3 Adaptive help-seeking and perfectionistic self-presentation

#### 4.5.2 Emotional Help-Seeking Goals

Emotional help-seeking is a multifaceted construct (see Zellars & Perrewé, 2001), where the goal is to reduce or manage emotional distress, e.g. by getting moral support, sympathy or understanding (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989).

Two of the included studies concerned the relationship between perfectionism and emotional help-seeking. In the following, the findings will be described in more detail, *first* in relation to perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, and *next* with regard to perfectionistic self-presentation.

#### **Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns**

Crăciun and Dudău's (2014) study also took a closer look at social support seeking for emotional reasons. In their study, the medical employees' help-seeking was linked to their reported conscientious perfectionism<sup>61</sup> and self-evaluative perfectionism<sup>62</sup> in differentiated

<sup>61</sup> includes organization, planfulness, striving for excellence, and high standards for others (R. W. Hill et al., 2004).

<sup>62</sup> includes rumination, need for approval, concern over mistakes, and parental pressure (R. W. Hill et al., 2004).

ways. While the employees' conscientious perfectionism showed a small positive relation with the tendency to seek emotional social support, the link with self-evaluative perfectionism was weak and negative. Notably, while both the men and women's scores on self-evaluative perfectionism were negatively associated with their tendency to seek support for emotional reasons, the correlation was stronger for men.

Stoeber and Janssen (2011) found perfectionistic strivings to have a moderate positive correlation, while perfectionistic concerns showed a significant negative relationship with the university students' help-seeking for emotional reasons.

The results concerning the two perfectionism factors are systematised and presented in [table 4.4](#) below. In summary, perfectionistic concerns<sup>63</sup> showed negative links with help-seeking for emotional reasons. Perfectionistic strivings<sup>64</sup>, on the other hand, was positively linked with emotional help-seeking.

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Strivings</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Concerns</i>	<i>Other-Oriented Perfectionism</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Cognitions</i>
Crăciun and Dudău (2014)	Conscientious perfectionism weak positive correlation (both men and women)	Self-evaluative perfectionism negative correlation (stronger for men)	–	–
Stoeber and Janssen (2011)	Moderate positive correlation	Significant negative correlation	–	–

Table 4.4 Emotional help-seeking and perfectionism

### **Perfectionistic Self-Presentation**

Crăciun and Dudău (2014) also examined the links between the medical employees' preoccupation with presenting a perfect image of themselves (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentation) and their help-seeking.

<sup>63</sup> measured as concern over mistakes, doubts about actions (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990), socially prescribed perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), and self-evaluative perfectionism (PI; Hill et al., 2004).

<sup>64</sup> measured as personal standards (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990), self-oriented perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), and conscientious perfectionism (PI; Hill et al., 2004).



In their study, Crăciun and Dudău (2014) found strong links between the employees' interpersonal display of perfectionism and their emotional help-seeking (see [table 4.5](#) below). The tendency to seek social support for emotional reasons were negatively associated with all three perfectionistic self-presentation facets. The strongest link was with the perfectionistic self-presentation facet involving passive concealment through the avoidance of personal verbal disclosures (i.e. non-disclosure of imperfections).

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Self-Presentation</i>		
	<i>Perfectionistic Self-Promotion</i>	<i>Non-Display of Imperfections</i>	<i>Non-Disclosure of Imperfections</i>
Crăciun and Dudău (2014)	Moderate negative correlation for women. Strong negative correlation for men	Strong negative correlation (both men and women)	Strong negative correlation (both men and women)

Table 4.5 Emotional help-seeking and perfectionistic self-presentation

#### 4.5.3 Maladaptive Help-Seeking Goals

While adaptive help-seeking focuses on understanding and capabilities, the goal of maladaptive help-seeking<sup>65</sup> is to avoid effort, i.e. requesting someone else to solve a problem or attain a goal on one's behalf (e.g. by asking for solutions or answers to problems) (Karabenick, 2011b; Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985).

One study differentiated maladaptive help-seeking as a motive for help-seeking. In their study, Shim et al. (2016) found that perfectionistic strivings<sup>66</sup> was positively related and perfectionistic concerns<sup>67</sup> to be negatively related to the middle school students' maladaptive help-seeking (see [table 4.6](#) below). However, none of the correlations were significant.

<sup>65</sup> also referred to as executive, dependency-oriented (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985), nonadaptive (Rosen, 1983), dependent (Nadler, 1998), expedient (Ryan & Shim, 2012) and didactic (Asser, 1978) help-seeking.

<sup>66</sup> measured as personal standards (F-MPS, Frost et al., 1990).

<sup>67</sup> measured as concern over mistakes (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation <sup>68</sup>			Perfectionistic Cognitions
				PSP	NDPI	NDCI	
Shim et al. (2016)	Personal standards small negative correlation	Concerns over mistakes small positive correlation	–	–	–	–	–

Table 4.6 Maladaptive help-seeking and perfectionism

### 4.5.3 Avoidance of Help-Seeking

Avoidance of help-seeking refers to instances when students require help but do not seek it, e.g. a student might skip a problem altogether or put down any answer rather than ask for help (Arbreton, 1993; Ryan & Pintrich, 1997).

Help-seeking avoidance was examined alongside adaptive and expedient help-seeking in Shim et al.'s (2016) research article. While the remainder of the included studies in this review studied the *unique* effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, their study also examined the *interactive* effects of the two perfectionism factors on the middle school students' avoidance of help-seeking. The findings will be presented accordingly.

### The Unique Effects of Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns

The *unique* effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns were significant in Shim et al.'s (2016) research. While perfectionistic strivings<sup>69</sup> were linked to low avoidance of help-seeking, perfectionistic concerns<sup>70</sup> were linked to heightened levels of avoidance of help-seeking among the adolescent students. However, the effects were restricted by a significant interaction between the two higher-order perfectionism factors.

<sup>68</sup> PSP = perfectionistic self-presentation, NDPI = non-display of imperfections, and NDCI = non-disclosure of imperfections.

<sup>69</sup> measured as personal standards (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

<sup>70</sup> measured as concern over mistakes (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

### **The Interactive Effects of Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns**

When examining their partialled effects on avoidance of help-seeking (utilising the 2 x 2 model of perfectionism, presented in [subsection 2.1.3](#)), Shim et al. (2016) found that the effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns depended on the *interaction* them. More specifically, while mixed perfectionism (i.e. high strivings and high concerns) was found to have almost no effect on the students' avoidance of help-seeking, pure perfectionistic concerns (i.e. low strivings and high concerns) appeared to increase the adolescent students' intentions to avoid seeking academic help from peers<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> Presented in [table 4.1](#) in [subsection 4.4.1](#) on academic help-seeking.

## 4.6 Select the Source of Help

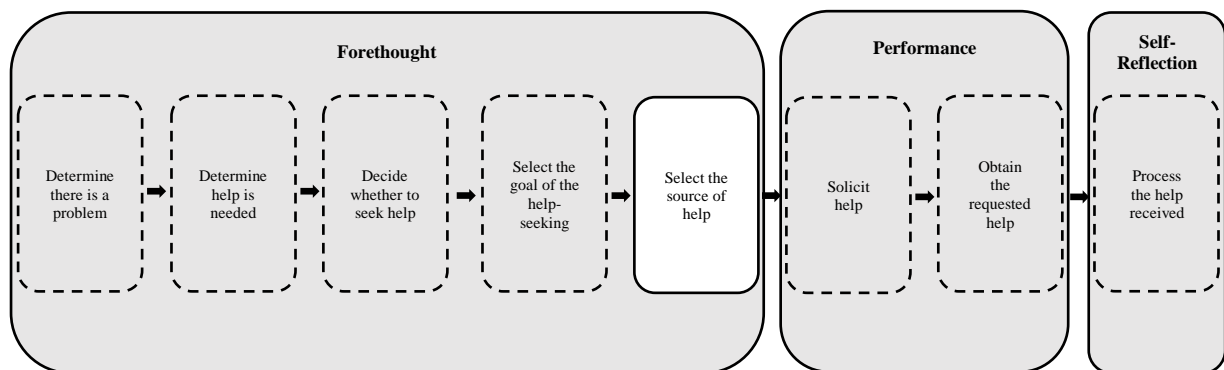


Figure 4.10 «Select the source of help» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

A central part of the help-seeking process is identifying and considering available sources of help. Students' source construals are important indicators of which helping sources they gravitate towards and/or are deterred from. Many factors, such as personal characteristics of the help-seeker and the helping source, as well as situational characteristics of the helping context can determine the perceptions help-seekers have of helping sources and subsequently influence which sources they choose to solicit aid from. Help can be sought from a wide variety of sources. As a consequence, there are multiple ways of categorising sources of help.

Three of the included studies examined the links between different ways of being a perfectionist and individuals' intentions to seek assistance from different sources of help. In order to facilitate the analysis of the research data, the helping sources were categorised according to the four dichotomous dimensions of Makara and Karabenick's (2013) source framework (delineated in [subsection 2.2.2](#)). An overview of the helping sources examined in the relevant studies is shown in [table 4.7](#) below.

<b>Helping sources</b>	<b>Role</b> Formal (F) vs. Informal (In)	<b>Relationship</b> Personal (P) vs. Impersonal (Im)	<b>Channel</b> Mediated (M) vs. Face-to-Face (F2F)	<b>Adaptability</b> Dynamic (D) vs. Static (S)
<i>Family</i>	In	P	M / F2F	D
<i>Friend</i>	In	P	M / F2F	D
<i>Instructor</i>	F	P / Im	M / F2F	D
<i>Intimate partner</i>	In	P	M / F2F	D
<i>Mental health professional</i>	F	P / Im	M / F2F	D
<i>Peer</i>	In	P	M / F2F	D
<i>Phone helpline</i> <sup>72</sup>	F	P / Im	M	D
<i>Religious leader</i>	F	P / Im	M / F2F	D
<i>Self-Help</i> <sup>73</sup>	F / In	Im	M	S

Table 4.7 Examined helping sources, classified according to Makara and Karabenick's (2013) source framework

The following subsections will present the findings on perfectionists' subjective appraisals of differentiated categories of helping sources. *First*, the relationship between the interpersonal display of perfectionism (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentation) and higher education students' source construals is described. *Second*, the sources of help which could be categorised as simultaneously, as well as exclusively, informal, personal, and dynamic are examined in relation to perfectionism. *Third*, the findings on higher education students' intentions to seek help from self-help sources are presented. The *fourth* subsection examines the links between higher education students' perfectionism and the sources of help which could be categorised as formal.

<sup>72</sup> «Phone helpline» was one of the sources aggregated under «formal sources» in Wimberley's (2017) study.

<sup>73</sup> e.g. books, audiotapes, and web-based content.

#### 4.6.1 Perfectionistic Self-Presentation and Helping Source Considerations

Wimberley (2017) examined whether perfectionistic self-presentation affected undergraduate students' intentions help from different helping sources (i.e. informal sources, formal sources, self-help sources, and «no one»<sup>74</sup>). In the study, perfectionistic self-presentation showed a significant negative direct effect on the students' intentions to seek help from *formal* (e.g. mental health professionals, doctors, and clergy) and *informal* (e.g. family, friends, and partners) helping sources. Contrary to Wimberley's (2017) hypothesis<sup>75</sup>, perfectionistic self-presentation also showed a significant negative direct effect on the undergraduate students' intentions to seek help from *self-help* sources (e.g. books, audiotapes, and web-based content).

#### 4.6.2 Formal Sources of Help

Three of the included studies examined students' intentions to seek help from sources which were categorised as *formal* – that is, sources of help that require help to be offered. The results of the studies are systematised in [attachment 9](#), and formal sources are visualised within the source framework of Makara and Karabenick (2013) in [attachment 13](#).

Rasmussen et al. (2013) examined the links between the perfectionistic tendencies of a sample of Latter-Day Saint students and their likelihood of seeking help from four sources of help (i.e. mental health professional, clergy, friends, and family) in order to alleviate mental health problems. In their study, the undergraduate students' personal standards showed weak negative links, while doubts about actions and concern over mistakes showed weak positive and negative links with the students' likelihood of seeking help from the sources of help which were categorised as formal (i.e. mental health professional and clergy).

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<sup>74</sup> It was not possible to assign «no one» (i.e. not seeking help from any source) to any of the dimensions of Makara and Karabenick's (2013) source framework. Seeking help from «no one» was rather considered to bare a relevance to the help-seeking decision and was thus assigned to the «attitudes towards help-seeking» subcategory of the [coding frame](#).

<sup>75</sup> «Higher levels of trait perfectionism and perfectionistic self-presentation will (...) positively predict intentions for seeking self-help sources» (Wimberley, 2017, p. 18).

Wimberley (2017) found that both perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns were positively linked with the students' reported likelihood of seeking help from formal sources (i.e. mental health professionals, phone helplines, general practitioners, and self-help).

The findings point to inconsequential relations between students' intentions to seek mental help from formal helping sources and their perfectionistic strivings<sup>76</sup> and perfectionistic concerns<sup>77</sup>, with the links ranging from positive to negative.

#### 4.6.3 Informal, Personal, and Dynamic Sources of Help

All of the relevant studies examined sources which could be categorised as simultaneously, as well as exclusively, informal, personal, and dynamic (e.g. peers, family, and friends). The helping sources were categorised as *informal* since they do not require help to be offered and as *personal* since the relationship with the help-seeker is considered to be close. The helping sources were further seen as able to adapt or change over time based on a learner's needs and were therefore labelled as *dynamic*. [Attachment 14](#) visualises where informal, personal, and dynamic sources of help are placed within Makara and Karabenick's (2013) source framework.

Flett et al.'s (2012) study examined adolescents' perceived levels of support from peers, classmates and family members as they were struggling to handle emotional problems related to family abuse. In the study, the adolescents' self-oriented perfectionism did not show significant associations with the adolescents' perceptions of social support. In contrast, there was a significant negative association between the socially prescribed perfectionism reported by adolescents and their perceived family support. The links between the adolescents' reported socially prescribed perfectionism and their perceived support from peers and classmates were, on the other hand, not significant.

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<sup>76</sup> measured as high standards (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001) and personal standards (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

<sup>77</sup> measured as discrepancy (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001) and concern over mistakes and doubts about actions (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

In Rasmussen et al.'s (2013) study, the undergraduate students' personal standards, doubts about actions, and concern over mistakes were only weakly (positively and negatively) correlated with their likelihood of seeking help from friends and family.

In Wimberley's (2017) study, neither the students' high standards nor discrepancy were significantly correlated with their intentions to seek help from informal sources (i.e. included intimate partners, friends, parents, and non-parent family members).

When synthesising the research data, the links between higher education students' intentions to seek help from informal, personal, and dynamic sources of help and their perfectionistic strivings<sup>78</sup> and perfectionistic concerns<sup>79</sup> appeared to be insignificant. The only exception was the significant negative link between perfectionistic concerns and family support in Flett et al.'s (2012) study.

#### 4.6.4 Self-Help Sources: Formal, Impersonal, Mediated, and Static

Self-help can, in general terms, be defined as the «action or faculty of using one's own efforts and resources to achieve something, or provide for oneself, with little or no assistance from others» (ODE, 2018). One of the included studies, Wimberley's (2017), examined perfectionists' intentions towards seeking help from *self-help* sources. Wilson et al.'s (2005) general help seeking questionnaire was used in the study, which exemplifies self-help as books, audiotapes, and web-based content.

Self-help sources was the only examined category of helping sources where the perceived relationship between the help seeker and the helping sources was considered to be simultaneously, as well as exclusively, formal, impersonal, mediated, and static. The self-help sources were assigned as *impersonal* since the relationship with the help-seeker was judged as distant or indifferent. Self-help was further categorised as *mediated*, since the distribution of self-help is mediated via some form of technology. Self-help also qualifies as

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<sup>78</sup> measured as self-oriented perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), high standards (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001), and personal standards (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).

<sup>79</sup> measured as socially prescribed perfectionism (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991), discrepancy (APS-R; Slaney et al, 2001), and concern over mistakes and doubts about actions (F-MPS; Frost et al., 1990).



*static*, since self-help sources are considered to be unable to adapt or change over time based on a learner's needs. Self-help sources are visualised within the framework of Makara and Karabenick (2013) in attachment 15.

In Wimberley's (2017) study, both perfectionistic strivings<sup>80</sup> and perfectionistic concerns<sup>81</sup> showed weak positive links with the undergraduate students' intentions to seek help from self-help resources.

The references to helping sources mediated through information and communication technologies in the included research were limited in number, and only included a brief mention of online chatting in Trotter's (2011) study as well as phone helplines and web-based self-help content in Wimberley's (2017) study.

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<sup>80</sup> measured as high standards (APS-R; Slaney et al., 2001).

<sup>81</sup> measured as discrepancy (APS-R; Slaney et al., 2001).

## 4.7 Solicit Help

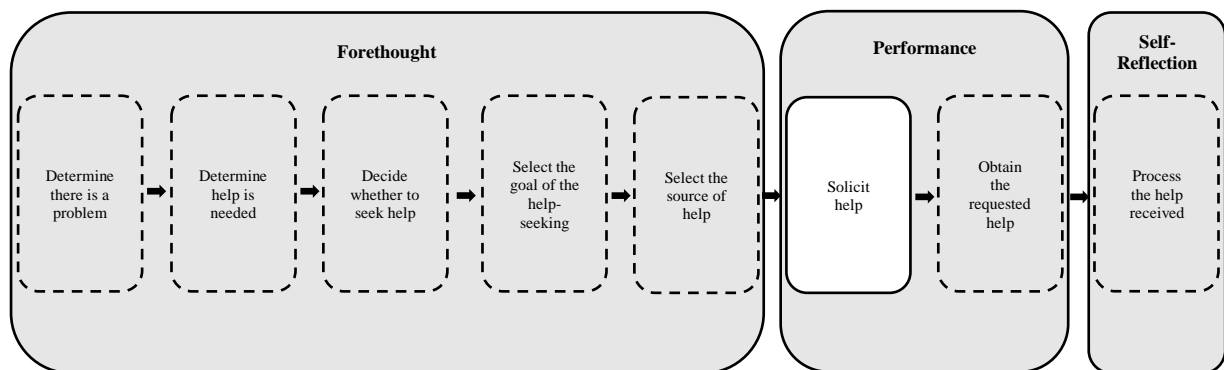


Figure 4.11 «Solicit help» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

Once a potential helping source has been identified, the help-seeker must enlist the help. This stage of the help-seeking process concerns the content or form of the request for help – i.e. how to request help. Overt help-seeking involves the employment of various help-seeking strategies for engaging a source’s help (e.g. expressing a question at a particular time with a particular tone) (Ryan & Pintrich, 1998). The help solicitation process requires social competencies, including the knowledge and skills to approach a helping source for the desired help in ways that are socially desirable (Karabenick & Berger, 2013; Karabenick & Gonida, 2018; Karabenick & Newman, 2009).

*« [D]etermining how the request should be worded to match the specific task demands is a function of students' knowledge and skills of discourse [...]. In theory, adaptive help seekers explicitly address their difficulty, both averting short-term failure and optimizing the chance for long-term mastery (e.g., by not asking for unnecessary help). Requests for explanations, clarification of information, confirmation of uncertain answers, and justifications tend to be relatively frequent among self-regulated learners [...]. Important in operationalizing adaptiveness is the degree to which the request meets task demands. A match depends on, at least partially, how much task-specific knowledge students already have as well as their*

*motivational goals. So, for example, when considering a choice among different types of requests for clarification (e.g., a hint vs. a direct request for the correct answer), one can imagine that hints are most appropriate when students have partial knowledge as well as a desire for challenge. Yet, directly asking for the correct answer might also be adaptive at times, for example, when students have no knowledge in a particular task domain and they can use the answer for debugging and self-correcting previously unsuccessful solutions [...]»*

*(Newman, 1998, pp. 15-16)*

The relationship between perfectionism and this stage of the help-seeking process was not examined in any of the studies included in this review.

## 4.8 Obtain the Requested Help

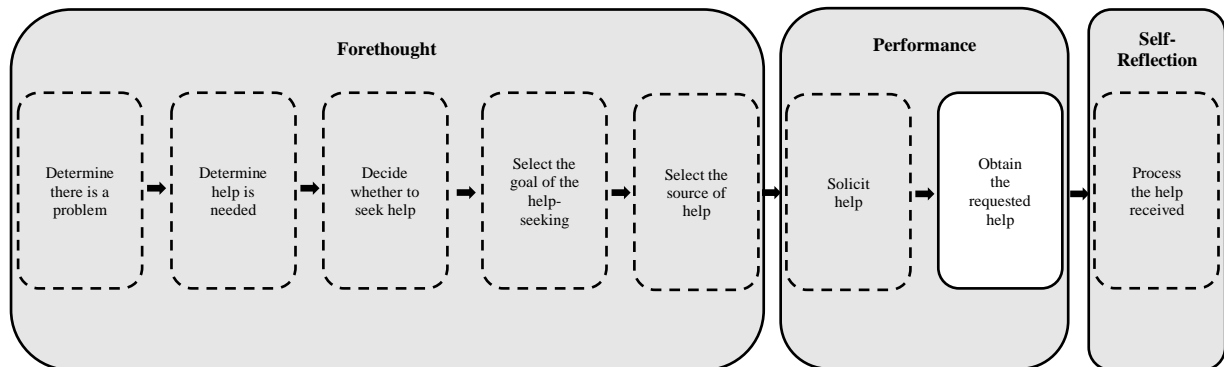


Figure 4.12 «Obtain the requested help» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

If a help-seeker is successful in soliciting help from a targeted helping source, the next stage of the help-seeking process involves gaining or acquiring the help that has been requested. Obtaining the requested help involves the help-seeker integrating the new information with existing knowledge and evaluating the quality of the received help. After having received help, a learner must decide to what degree the help is useful and addresses the experienced difficulties. If the assistance falls short in alleviating the difficulties, a learner must request further help or will possibly have to identify a new helper (Aleven, Stahl, Schworm, Fischer, & Wallace, 2003).

None of the research included in this review concerned this stage of the help-seeking process.

## 4.9 Process the Help Received

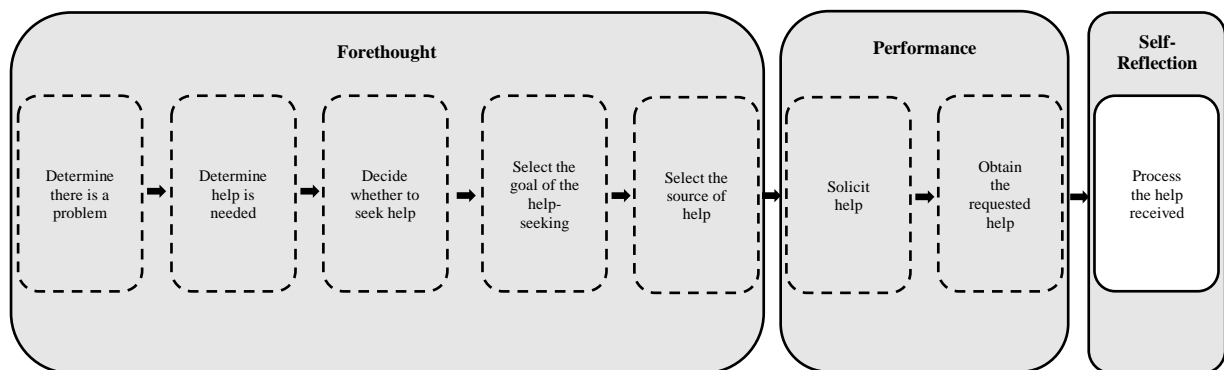


Figure 4.13 «Process the help received» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

An important aspect of help-seeking – and self-regulated learning in general – is the utilising of skills and strategies in order to process the received help. In Zimmerman’s (2000) self-regulation model, this identified self-reflection phase is manifested by the two self-reflective processes self-judgment and self-reactions<sup>82</sup>. While *self-judgment* entails self-evaluating one’s performance and attributing causal significance to the outcome, *self-reactions* refer to the comparison of self-monitored information and a standard or goal.

Zimmerman’s (2000) model further postulates that there are four distinctive types of criteria that learners use to evaluate themselves; (1) mastery; (2) previous performance; (3) normative; and (4) collaborative. *Mastery* criteria involve the use of a graduated sequence of tests or test scores for performance ranging from novice to expert (Zimmerman, 2000), such as evaluating whether the help adequately addresses one’s help-seeking goals (e.g. solving problems, completing assignments, or performing well on exams). *Previous performance* – or self-criteria – involves comparing current and previous performance. *Normative* criteria refer to social comparisons (i.e. comparing one’s own performance with the performance of others), while the *collaborative* criteria primarily applies in team work, where goal attainment is defined in terms of fulfilling a specific role (Zimmerman, 2000).

<sup>82</sup> The two self-reflective processes were originally identified by Bandura (1986).

Processing the received help further involves reactions to the help received – that is, judging or evaluating one’s satisfaction and the implications for subsequent assistance seeking (Karabenick & Berger, 2013). Zimmerman (2000) describes two key forms of *self-reactions*, namely self-satisfaction and inferences. *Self-satisfaction* comprises perceptions of satisfaction or dissatisfaction and associated affect regarding one's performance, which encourages or discourages further demands for help. *Adaptive or defensive inferences* concern how one’s help-seeking needs altering during subsequent learning efforts. Adaptive inferences about the received help direct learners to new and potentially better forms of help-seeking, which – in turn – may optimise the probability of attaining a goal in subsequent help-seeking attempts. In contrast, defensive inferences primarily protect the learner from future dissatisfaction and aversive affect, and include self-handicapping strategies such as procrastination, task avoidance, and cognitive disengagement (Zimmerman, 2000).

This self-reflection stage of the help-seeking process was not examined in any of the included studies.

## 5. Discussion

Adaptive help-seeking is an important and effective self-regulated learning strategy. Previous research has identified perfectionism as a personality disposition that may interfere with the help-seeking process. Moreover, research has suggested a high prevalence of perfectionism in the higher education student body. Thus, the ways in which perfectionism can confer risks and/or benefits for higher education students' help-seeking represented an important area of investigation. The present literature review integrated findings from empirical studies to establish the overall importance of perfectionism's relationship with the help-seeking process. By undertaking the review, the aim was to map, assess and clarify the existing research on the topic and try to specify questions that can guide future research.

This chapter provides an analytical examination and discussion of the findings from the literature review (see [chapter 4](#)). After a brief recap of these findings (5.1), it turns to a discussion of adaptive and maladaptive properties of perfectionism, with regard to the help-seeking process (5.2). This is followed by a comparative evaluation of different populations that have been studied (5.3), and assessments of two aspects of help-seeking that make it unique among self-regulated learning strategies: potential stigma (5.4) and social prerequisites (5.5). In light of the latter, earlier assumptions about perfectionists' preference for mediated help sources are revisited (5.6) along with the self-reflective phase of evaluating and processing received help (5.7). After a dedicated section for limitations and future research (5.8), this thesis is then rounded off with concluding remarks on implications for higher education (5.9).

### 5.1 Perfectionism's Relationship with Help-Seeking

This review found that the general inability to demonstrate or admit to one's imperfections (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentation) showed strong negative links with the examined aspects of the help-seeking process. The relationship between help-seeking and the tendency to have unrealistic standards for significant others (i.e. other-oriented perfectionism) was equivocal,

in that the perfectionism trait displayed correlations ranging from significantly positive to negative with different aspects of help-seeking. When synthesising research conducted using different operationalisations of perfectionism, the two-higher-order perfectionism factors (i.e. perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns) generally showed opposing unique relationships with help-seeking processes and outcomes. Perfectionistic strivings were generally linked with adaptive outcomes, while perfectionistic concerns were linked with maladaptive outcomes. However, the correlations were only occasionally significant. Perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns further showed differentiated interactive relationships with help-seeking. While mixed perfectionism (i.e. high strivings and high concerns) showed close to no effects, pure perfectionistic concerns (i.e. low strivings and high concerns) had a positive effect on the students' intentions to avoid seeking help. When comparing the research examining higher education students with the other examined populations, the similarities outnumbered the differences. However, higher education students' perfectionism appeared to be linked with more maladaptive outcomes compared to the other examined populations concerning some help-seeking aspects.

## **5.2 «Maladaptive» and/or «Adaptive» Perfectionism**

Although the research into perfectionism's relationship with the help-seeking process is in its infancy, the findings of the current review highlight salient differences between different ways of being a perfectionist and various aspects of the help-seeking process. Perfectionism has previously been described as a «double-edged sword» (Molnar, Reker, Culp, Sadava, & Decourville, 2006; Stoeber, 2014), and while the current review lends support to the maladaptive nature of perfectionism, the adaptiveness of perfectionism in relation to help-seeking is less clear-cut. More specifically, the findings of this review may suggest that some aspects of the multifaceted perfectionism construct impede help-seeking, while other aspects, in some cases, may facilitate help-seeking. Notably, the links with maladaptive processes and outcomes appear to both outnumber and be generally stronger in effect than the adaptive, especially for higher education students.



### 5.2.1 *Unique Effects of Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns*

The maladaptive, adaptive and/or benign nature of perfectionism depends on how the perfectionism construct is defined and operationalised. As anticipated, a majority of the included research utilised different multidimensional measures of perfectionism, and the two-factor model of perfectionism (see [subsection 2.1.2](#) of the theoretical framework) was used to establish some common ground for the synthesising of the findings.

Previous research has found perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns to «typically show different, often opposing relationships with adaptive and maladaptive outcomes» (Stoeber, Madigan, & Gonidis, 2020, p. 1)<sup>83</sup>. Consistent with prior research, the findings of this review found perfectionistic strivings to generally show small unique positive relationships with adaptive outcomes, whereas perfectionistic concerns showed a more consistent pattern of small positive relationships with maladaptive help-seeking outcomes.

Differentiating approach and avoidance goals is important for understanding how various perfectionism dimensions are connected to different forms of achievement motivation. The differentiation is also central because students' help-seeking can be parsimoniously described by distinct approach and avoidance patterns (Karabenick, 2004). Previous research has suggested links between perfectionism and different achievement goals. For example, a recent review implied that perfectionistic strivings are mainly approach-oriented whereas perfectionistic concerns are mainly avoidance-oriented (see Stoeber et al., 2018). The findings of this review suggest a similar pattern for help-seeking, where perfectionistic strivings are positively linked with help-seeking approach behaviour (i.e. help-seeking for adaptive and emotional reasons), whereas perfectionistic concerns are positively linked with avoidance behaviour (i.e. avoidance of help-seeking and help-seeking for maladaptive reasons<sup>84</sup>).

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<sup>83</sup> Frost et al. (1993) originally named the two perfectionism factors «positive striving perfectionism» and «maladaptive evaluative concerns perfectionism», thereby suggesting that one was adaptive, while the other was maladaptive.

<sup>84</sup> It has been argued that maladaptive help-seeking can be as non-adaptive as avoiding seeking help entirely (see Marchand & Skinner, 2007; Newman, 2008), and Karabenick (2004) categorises maladaptive help-seeking as a distinct help-seeking avoidance pattern.

Despite the above-mentioned general pattern of opposing relationships, perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns also showed similarities in their links with a few help-seeking aspects, namely need recognition and intentions to seek help from self-help sources. More specifically, the two super-ordinate perfectionism factors were negatively related to the university students' recognition of a need for help (while the links were positive among the community members) in Dang et al.'s (2020) study. In Wimberley's (2017) study, both perfectionism factors were positively related to the undergraduate students' intentions to seek help from self-help resources.

A majority of the correlations between help-seeking and perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns were, however, not significant. So, although the findings showed the propensity to set excessively high personal standards and to demand perfection from the self (i.e. perfectionistic strivings) and the extraordinarily critical appraisals of one's own behaviour and excessive preoccupations with others' evaluations showed (i.e. perfectionistic concerns) to be related with different aspects of help-seeking, it is unknown whether the findings indicate that the factors affect students' help-seeking.

The research included in this review «mainly focused on the outcomes associated with core dimensions of perfectionism rather than examining how these dimensions are differentially organized within each individual» (Gaudreau & Thompson, 2010, p. 532). Previous research has shown that the two perfectionism factors typically are correlated, which can obscure the relationship between perfectionism and various outcomes (Stoeber & Otto, 2006), and that the effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns depend on the level of the other (e.g. Gaudreau & Thompson, 2010; Shim & Fletcher, 2012). It has been argued that the reduction of perfectionism into a dichotomy of perfectionistic strivings versus perfectionistic concerns is a differentiation which does not represent the broad spectrum of perfectionists, and that it is considered important to move beyond their *unique* effects and to rather focus on their *interactive* effects.

### 5.2.2 Interactive Effects of Perfectionistic Strivings and Perfectionistic Concerns

The 2 x 2 model of perfectionism was included in in this review in order to be able to build a conceptual framework for explaining how perfectionism can be both adaptive and maladaptive (as stated in [section 2.3](#) of the theoretical framework). Examination of the partialled effects of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns within the framework of the 2 x 2 model will prove useful when assessing the degree to which each dimension's associated help-seeking outcomes are due to their unique or shared variance.

Pure perfectionistic strivings (high strivings and low concerns) – which has been found to exist in a significant portion of higher education students, with estimates ranging from 37 % to 46 % (see Gaudreau, 2015) – is central to the debate about the adaptive nature of perfectionism. The 2 x 2 model views pure perfectionistic strivings «as the most “adaptive” within-person combination of perfectionistic strivings and concerns» (Smith, Saklofske, Yan, & Sherry, 2015, p. 142). Pure perfectionistic strivings may, at first glance, appear like an adaptive personality facet that may prove beneficial in the higher education learning context. Gaudreau et al. (2018) have argued that pure perfectionistic strivings might confer some relative advantages when the problems encountered appear manageable, but that they may vanish when problems pile up. They further identify the transitioning from school to higher education as one such potentially stressful period.

*«According to the 2 x 2 model, perfectionistic strivings buffers against the negative effects of perfectionistic concerns. The 2 x 2 model thus claims the most deleterious within-person combination of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns is low strivings and high concerns.»*

*(Smith et al., 2015, p. 141)*

It may seem likely that pure perfectionistic strivings will display stronger, more positive relationships with help-seeking and that pure perfectionistic concerns will display stronger, more negative relationships with help-seeking when the links between the two perfectionism factors are controlled for. In the findings of the current review, pure perfectionistic concerns (low strivings and high concerns) showed a strong positive effect on adolescent students' intentions to avoid seeking help from peers, thereby confirming prior research claiming pure

perfectionistic concerns to be a maladaptive subtype of perfectionism. Mixed perfectionism (high strivings and high concerns), on the other hand, appeared to have almost no effect on the students' avoidance of help-seeking (Shim et al., 2016). Apart from these findings, the shared, combined, and interactive relations between help-seeking and the two higher-order factors remain unknown. Thus, whether, and to what degree, the four different ways of being a perfectionist (i.e. pure perfectionistic strivings, mixed perfectionism, pure perfectionistic concerns, and non-perfectionism) are adaptive, maladaptive, or benign in relation to help-seeking is still by and large an open question.

### *5.2.3 Other-Oriented Perfectionism*

The findings of this review suggest that perfectionistic behaviours that stem from the self and are directed towards others (i.e. other-oriented perfectionism) are both positively and negatively linked with different factors of the help-seeking process. For example, other-oriented perfectionism was significantly positively correlated with undergraduate students' positive attitudes towards help-seeking for academic problems (Mills & Blankstein, 2000) and stress-related problems (Blankstein et al., 2007). The findings may therefore suggest other-oriented perfectionism to predict higher education students' help-seeking, and that the tendency to expect perfection from others increases their help-seeking for academic and stress-related problems. In contrast, the correlations were insignificant with help-seeking for mental health problems (Dang et al., 2020; Shannon et al., 2018). Other-oriented perfectionism was also linked with a reduced mental stigma tolerance and a reduced ability to determine a need for mental help among university students (Dang et al., 2020; Shannon et al., 2018).

The findings are, however, based on limited research. This is partly due to the exclusion of other-oriented perfectionism from the studies that examined children and adolescents<sup>85</sup>. The sparse literature is also, in part, caused by the exclusion of other-oriented perfectionism from

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<sup>85</sup> The studies utilised the child-adolescent perfectionist scale (CAPS; Flett, Hewitt, Besser, et al., 2016), which is based on Hewitt and Flett's multidimensional perfectionism scale (HF-MPS; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). While the HF-MPS includes all three perfectionism trait dimensions, the CAPS excludes other-oriented perfectionism, «due to a lack of developmental information on precisely when young perfectionists begin to expect perfection from other people» (Flett, Hewitt, et al., 2016, p. 635).

the two-factor model of perfectionism (see [table 2.1](#) in the theoretical framework chapter), which has been applied in a majority of the included research to date.

Given that recent generations of higher education students appear to be imposing more demanding and unrealistic standards on those around them than previous generations (see Curran & Hill, 2019), studying this perfectionism dimensions within the context of tertiary education is important.

#### 5.2.4 Perfectionistic Self-Presentation

*«Perfectionistic self-presentation is based on the premise that certain perfectionists are highly invested in covering up their mistakes and are preoccupied with trying to present themselves as perfect (...) or defensively minimizing the number of mistakes that are on display for others to see.»*

*(Besser, Flett, & Hewitt, 2010, p. 2126).*

The findings of this review suggest perfectionistic self-presentation to be a predictor of negative attitudes towards mental help-seeking among higher education students. For example, the interpersonal display of perfectionism appeared to negatively influence students' perception of the acceptability of seeking help for mental health reasons (Dang et al., 2020; Shannon et al., 2018; Wimberley, 2017). Wimberley's (2017) findings further suggest perfectionistic self-presentation to reduce students' intentions to seek help from formal sources, informal sources, and self-help sources. Therefore, students who feel the need to appear perfect and to hide their shortcomings may presumably be less inclined to self-disclose and be more likely to avoid seeking help when they are struggling with mental health problems.

Given that the findings of this review suggest that perfectionistic self-presentation affect help-seeking negatively, it is further assumed that «effortless perfectionism» – an extreme form of perfectionistic self-presentation which involves trying to seem effortlessly perfect by attempting to display achievements as if they were the products of little effort (Flett, Nepon, Hewitt, et al., 2016; Hewitt et al., 2017; Travers et al., 2015) – will also negatively impact the help-seeking process. For example, it is inevitable that seeking help through certain types of

sources (e.g. face-to-face) will communicate to helpers and bystanders that a student is having to put in effort in order to solve a task. Arguably, individuals characterised by effortless perfectionism will likely strive to hide their effort by avoiding to seek help from these sources when help is needed.

### **5.3 The Higher Education Student Population**

In some respect, the relationship between perfectionism and help-seeking seemed more pervasive for higher education students compared to the other examined populations.

For example, Dang et al. (2020) found the associations between help-seeking attitudes and perfectionism traits and perfectionistic self-presentation to be more negative, and to display greater magnitudes of effects, in the university student sample compared to the community member sample. The findings of the study may suggest that university students characterised by the need to be perfect (i.e. perfectionism traits) and to appear perfect (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentations) find it more difficult to recognise that they are in need of mental help and have more negative attitudes towards help-seeking, compared to the community members. One potential mediation link for the differences in associations is the mean ages of the samples (university students:  $\mu = 18.7$  and community members:  $\mu = 37.2$ ). The average age difference might have had a notable effect on the results, since age as a demographic characteristic has been found to be significantly related with help-seeking behaviour. For example, a recent review analysed the association between age and help-seeking among individuals with major depression and found a positive association between age and help-seeking, where being middle-aged was significantly related to higher mental help-seeking rates than other age groups (Magaard, Seeralan, Schulz, & Brütt, 2017).

Moreover, the findings on students' academic help-seeking differed between the adolescent samples and the university student sample. While perfectionistic strivings showed a significant positive link with academic help-seeking among the adolescents (Parker et al., 2019; Shim et al., 2016), the link was insignificant among the university students (Mills & Blankstein, 2000). And while perfectionistic concerns showed a significant negative relation

with the university students' academic help-seeking, the link was insignificant for the adolescents. Thus, the relationship between the students' help-seeking and their perfectionistic strivings and concerns appeared to be more pervasive for the university students compared to the adolescent students in the studies. It is, however, important to note that both perfectionism and help-seeking were operationalised differently in the three studies, which complicates cross-study comparisons. Whether the findings suggest university students have a harder time seeking help when dealing with academic problems, compared to adolescent students, is therefore uncertain.

## **5.4 Stigma Tolerance**

Help-seeking is the only self-regulated learning strategy that is potentially stigmatising due to its perceived personal costs (Karabenick & Gonida, 2018). Stigma as a mediation link between perfectionism and help-seeking is therefore central when examining perfectionists' help-seeking attitudes. The findings of this review suggest perfectionism to be consistently associated with a decreased mental health stigma tolerance (both public stigma and self-stigma), which is likely to negatively affect their help-seeking attitudes, which – in turn – may keep them from seeking mental help.

The largest bulk of the included research was conducted from the perspective of clinical psychology, a perspective that differs from the academic learning perspective. For example, it might be easier for students to recognise a need for help when struggling to achieve a concrete academic goal (e.g. solving a mathematical equation), versus recognising that the mental anguish or stress they are experiencing are caused by mental health issues that they are not equipped to handle on their own.

The possibly biggest difference between the academic versus the clinical perspective is the significant stigma that is attached to mental health problems. Research has identified mental illness as one of the most stigmatised conditions in society (Byrne, 1997, 2000; P. W. Corrigan & Penn, 1999), and the negative effects of mental health stigma have been consistently cited in the literature. For example, a review by Clement et al. (2015) found that mental health-related stigmatisation has a detrimental impact on help-seeking for mental

health problems. In fact, the public, perceived, and self-stigmatising attitudes to mental illness has been reported as the greatest barrier to seeking psychological help in young people (Gulliver, Griffiths, & Christensen, 2010, 2012), and many people with mental health problems choose not to seek help from mental health services due to stigma (WHO, 2015).

The question of whether students seek needed help when they are struggling to deal with mental health problems is relevant to their academic proficiency. As many as 20-30 % of higher education students have been reported to suffer from common mental health conditions (e.g. Auerbach et al., 2016; Ibrahim, Kelly, Adams, & Glazebrook, 2013), and research has further linked mental health conditions to impaired academic achievements (e.g. Andrews & Wilding, 2004; Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Hunt, 2009; Hysenbegasi, Hass, & Rowland, 2005).

The perceived benefits and barriers towards seeking help for mental problems (e.g. major depression) are likely to differ significantly from those for academic problems (e.g. difficulty grasping course material). The findings of this study may emphasize the increased stigma perfectionists perceive in relation to mental help-seeking. However, little is still known of the personal costs perfectionistic students perceive to be associated with academic help-seeking.

## **5.5 «Interpersonal» versus «Intrapersonal» Perfectionism**

Help-seeking is – unlike other self-regulated learning strategies such as organising, self-checking, and self-testing – inherently social and thus susceptible to numerous cultural and interpersonal influences (Karabenick, 1998a). The interpersonal<sup>86</sup> aspects of the perfectionism construct are of particular interest for help-seeking research since help-seeking – apart from peer learning – is the only self-regulated learning strategy that may require social competencies.

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<sup>86</sup> Hewitt, Flett, and Mikail's (2017) comprehensive model of perfectionistic behaviour (CMPB) emphasises both the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of perfectionism (described in [subsection 2.1.1](#)).



«*Interpersonal perfectionism*» can be defined as the aspects of the perfectionism construct which relate to relationships or to the communication between people – in short, the socially based aspects of perfectionism. Among the various ways of being perfectionistic, the findings of this review suggest the interpersonal display of perfection (i.e. perfectionistic self-presentation) to be a predictor of negative attitudes towards mental help-seeking (see [subsection 5.2.4](#)). The findings further show perfectionistic demands that are perceived to stem from others and that are directed towards the self (i.e. socially prescribed perfectionism) to be linked with negative attitudes towards seeking mental help. In fact, socially prescribed perfectionism was the trait dimension of perfectionism that showed the most consistent and robust associations with maladaptive help-seeking outcomes. Meanwhile, the research on perfectionistic demands that stem from the self and are directed towards others (i.e. other-oriented perfectionism) showed both positive and negative links with help-seeking (see [subsection 5.2.3](#)).

While interpersonal perfectionism refers to the social aspects, «*intrapersonal perfectionism*» involves the personal aspects of the perfectionism construct which exist or occur within an individual's mind or self. None of the included empirical studies examined the relationship between students' automatic thoughts that focus primarily on the need to be perfect and concerns about one's inability to achieve perfection (i.e. perfectionistic cognitions) and their help-seeking. The other intrapersonal perfectionism dimension of the CMPB, which involves perfectionistic behaviours that both derive from the self and are directed towards the self (i.e. self-oriented perfectionism), was both positively and negatively linked with different aspects of help-seeking, but the relations were only occasionally significant.

The aforementioned findings may suggest that the interpersonal aspects – in general – are more detrimental to the help-seeking process compared to the intrapersonal aspects of the perfectionism construct.

## 5.6 Mediated versus Face-to-Face Sources of Help

Information and communication technologies have become increasingly pervasive in the last decades, and the rapid expansion of the provision of digital tools has had a profound influence on the help-seeking process, especially the process of deciding on whether or not to seek help and for the form of help-seeking (Karabenick & Puustinen, 2013). For example, the asynchronous format offered by information and communication technologies reduces the time pressure and affords more time to reflect (Järvelä, 2011; Keefer & Karabenick, 1998; Kitsantas & Chow, 2007; Puustinen, Bernicot, & Bert-Erboul, 2011), while the relative degrees of privacy/anonymity information and communication technologies provide can reduce the perceived threat that help-seeking often poses (Karabenick & Knapp, 1988a). It is generally acknowledged that the greater potential for anonymity and the lack of time pressure that is characteristic of asynchronous formats, reduces help-seeking's potential for self-threat (Keefer & Karabenick, 1998). Given the pivotal role threat plays on whether or not students seek help, computer-mediated communication could be very conducive to students' help-seeking, especially under the highly evaluative higher education context, and for students who feel threatened by the prospect of admitting publicly that help is needed (see Keefer & Karabenick, 1998). Arguably, mediated sources of help might be construed as more appealing for some perfectionists compared to sources where help is delivered face-to-face. By reducing the threat that help-seeking might pose for some perfectionistic students, mediated helping sources may hold the potential to increase their self-disclosure and help-seeking.

Wimberley's (2017) findings suggested that perfectionistic self-presentation reduces the likelihood of students seeking help from all of the examined sources of help, including those mediated through some form of technology (i.e. self-help sources). On the other hand, the links between students' intentions to seek help from self-help sources and their perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns diverged from the generally opposing relationships the two perfectionism factors showed with other aspects of help-seeking. More specifically, both perfectionism factors showed small positive relations with the undergraduate students' intentions to seek help from self-help sources (Wimberley, 2017). However, given the small size of the positive relationships, the findings were neither able to confirm nor dispute the assumption that some perfectionists prefer some mediated sources of help over face-to-face help-seeking.

## **5.7 Processing the Received Help**

The current review did not provide any new insights into whether perfectionism affects the way in which higher education students judge or evaluate their help-seeking performance. Nor did this review garner any knowledge into whether perfectionistic students have specific patterns concerning their alteration of subsequent help-seeking efforts, based on their previous help-seeking satisfaction – or dissatisfaction.

However, previous research has shown that perfectionism may affect the self-reflection phase of self-regulatory processes. For example, undergraduate students high in perfectionistic strivings have been shown to raise their standards after successfully meeting them rather than take credit for their achievements, since the standards are perceived too low and insufficiently demanding (Kobori, Hayakawa, & Tanno, 2009; Stoeber, Hutchfield, & Wood, 2008). Moreover, a study conducted by Hill et al. (2011) found that students who were high in self-oriented perfectionism experienced a more pronounced increase in perceived threat following failure on a task and subsequently reported withdrawing effort from the subsequent attempt. Despite the fact that the above-mentioned studies examined self-regulatory processes other than help-seeking, it is plausible that similar mechanisms apply for perfectionists' self-reflective processing after they have obtained help.

## **5.8 Limitations and Directions for Future Research**

More research is needed in order to get a comprehensive understanding of how various perfectionism dimensions are linked to the different aspects of the help-seeking process.

All of the included research relied on self-report data, which is subject to many biases. For example, personality and help-seeking test scores are influenced by non-test-relevant response determinants, resulting in the problem of response distortion (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960). The problems with using survey research to investigate cognitions and behaviour include the problem of meaning, omission, memory, question threat, the possible gap between stated and actual behaviour, and the social desirability effect. Responses to personality questionnaires can be faked if respondents intend, or are instructed, to do so. The

social desirability bias is the research respondents' tendency towards replying in ways that are meant to be consistent with their perceptions of the desirability of certain kinds of answers (Bryman, 2012), i.e. to over-report «good» and underreport «bad» behaviours and characteristics so others will view them in a positive light. The social desirability aspect might be particularly relevant in relation to perfectionism, since studies have indicated that students perceive perfectionism to be a socially desirable personality characteristic in educational settings. This may also include perfectionism dimensions that are generally regarded as maladaptive, such as socially prescribed perfectionism (Stoeber & Hotham, 2013). Future research would therefore benefit from the inclusion of other methods of data collection than self-reports, involving more objective measures such as other-report measures (e.g. teacher ratings of students' help-seeking behaviours) and behavioural observations in order to triangulate and validate self-reports.

There is an ambiguity about the direction of causal influence between many of the examined links between perfectionism and help-seeking. It was impossible to establish causal connections between perfectionism and help-seeking in many cases since most of the included studies examined the mere relationships between the variables. It is therefore largely unknown whether the examined perfectionism dimensions affect the help-seeking factors or vice versa, whether there are reciprocal effects, or whether the perfectionism dimensions and the help-seeking factors are mere correlates. In order to advance the understanding of the relationship between perfectionism and help-seeking, future research would benefit from supplementing self-reports with other research designs, such as longitudinal studies, daily measures and case studies in order to determine the causal inferences between various ways of being perfectionistic and different help-seeking factors.

Many of the eligible studies measured perfectionism's associations with the different stages of the help-seeking process using subscales of whole-scales. Because of the psychometric problems involved with many of the coping scales, e.g. a lack of empirical support and relatively low reliabilities for the subscales (Endler & Parker, 1990), future research would benefit from studying perfectionism's relationship with individuals' perceived need for help – and help-seeking in general – in a more comprehensive manner. Given the importance of help-seeking for learning, a thorough focus on help-seeking – not simply as one, among many other, coping strategies – is recommended.

Future research would further benefit from an expanded focus on the substantial heterogeneity among perfectionists. As mentioned in [subsection 5.2.1](#), controlling for the relationships between the two super-ordinate perfectionism factors of perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns (see Gotwals, Stoeber, Dunn, & Stoll, 2012; Stoeber & Otto, 2006) will help develop a clearer picture of the potentially adaptive nature of perfectionism in relation to help-seeking. More research is also needed to clarify the links between all of the interpersonal and intrapersonal perfectionism dimensions and their respective help-seeking outcomes. Studying the links between interpersonal perfectionism and the help-seeking stages which are theorised to require social competencies (i.e. the «select the source of help» and «solicit help» stages)<sup>87</sup> might be particularly rewarding in this regard.

This review did not garner any knowledge on whether different ways of being a perfectionist are related to students' efforts to engage a source's help. Hewitt et al.'s (2017; 2006) perfectionism social disconnection model posits that perfectionism produce a variety of interpersonal problems such as interpersonal sensitivity and hostility, which confer vulnerability to social disconnection, alienation, or a sense of not belonging<sup>88</sup> (Hewitt et al., 2017). Hence, the model may hold the potential for guiding research on how perfectionism functions at an idiographic level for students who are soliciting help.

In order to gain more knowledge of how perfectionism influences higher education students' help-seeking, empirical studies could benefit from more comparisons between the higher education student population and other populations. Future research could, for example, compare perfectionistic higher education students' help-seeking to the help-seeking of peers who are not pursuing a higher education.

This review's findings on perfectionism's links with students' source considerations are not extensive since only a few empirical studies have examined the topic. Likewise, synthesising the relevant research proved challenging, given the many different operationalisations of the examined helping sources. Future research would benefit from an extended focus on the

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<sup>87</sup> See Karabenick and Berger (2013); Karabenick and Dembo (2011); Karabenick and Newman (2009) for an overview of the primary competencies and resources that are theorised to be needed at the various stages of the help-seeking process.

<sup>88</sup> According to the model, perfectionists' interpersonal sensitivity (i.e. evaluative fear and vigilance experienced around others) causes subjective social disconnection (i.e. low perceived social support), while perfectionists' interpersonal hostility (i.e. anger and suspiciousness directed towards others) causes objective social disconnection (i.e. severed or impaired interpersonal relationships) (Hewitt et al., 2017; Hewitt et al., 2006).

relationship between perfectionism and the different characteristic of the multitudinous available helping sources to higher education students in order to establish the overall significance of perfectionism on students' helping source considerations.

A majority of the participants in the included literature volunteered for the research. This self-selection may have led to biased data where the respondents may not have represented the entire target population. Future would benefit from using other forms of sampling recruitment.

There was a predominance of female participants in the included research, of which only a minority controlled for gender as a mediating factor. Given that previous research has consistently shown that women generally have more positive attitudes towards seeking mental health services than men (e.g. Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Ang, Lim, Tan, & Yau, 2004; Mackenzie, Gekoski, & Knox, 2006; Morgan & Robinson, 2003), this might have affected the findings. Hence, future research should control for gender differences when researching the relationship between students' perfectionism and help-seeking.

#### *5.8.1 Methodological Limitations of the Current Literature Review*

The analytical framework allowed for the summarisation of the results of the included research and helped make sense of and explain the research findings. However, the framework also affected the research, thereby biasing the findings. For example, this review is unlikely to present an unbiased account of perfectionism since researchers define the construct differently. For example, the findings into the maladaptiveness and/or adaptiveness of perfectionism in relation to the help-seeking process were influenced by how the perfectionism construct was defined in the theoretical framework.

An expansion of both the literature search string and the inclusion criteria would have enabled the discovery of additional research which might have expanded the knowledge on the topic and potentially helped cover help-seeking stages that were not examined in the current review. For example, including «social support» could have expanded the knowledge on perfectionists' subjective social support (i.e. perceived social support) and objective social support (i.e. available social support), which are relevant for the help-seeking process –

particularly the stage concerning the selection of a helping source. However, this would have made the already laborious study selection process even more resource intensive.

Only English-language studies were included in this review, resulting in a predominance of studies conducted within the Western or European American culture. The findings of this review may therefore not generalise to other cultures, given that previous research has shown that culture may influence both help-seeking (see Shwalb & Sukemune, 1998) and personality (see Triandis & Suh, 2002). For example, many Asian cultures have cultural values rooted in Confucianism<sup>89</sup> and Buddhism which emphasise interdependence and collectivism, as opposed to many Western cultures where independence and individualism is prevalent (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Furthermore, emerging evidence has suggested potential cultural variations in the correlates of perfectionism (e.g. Stoeber, Kobori, & Tanno, 2013). The inclusion of non-English studies in future research may prevent the underrepresentation of research from cultures other than the Western, which may further allow for cross-cultural comparisons.

Examining perfectionism's relationship with help-seeking is complicated at both the conceptual and empirical levels because of the multidimensional nature of both constructs. A challenge to the current research was the complexities inherent in the perfectionism and help-seeking constructs, where a kaleidoscope of terms and labels exist regarding various phenomena within both. Research conducted from different vantage points with respect to the two constructs will therefore be relevant to the efforts to achieve a true understanding of their reciprocal relationship.

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<sup>89</sup> «filial piety» is a central social norm of Confucianism. Filial piety (Chinese: 孝, *xiào*) can be defined as a contextualised personality construct (Bedford & Yeh, 2019), i.e. «stable patterns of thought, feelings, and behaviors that occur repeatedly within a given context» (Heller, Watson, Komar, Min, & Perunovic, 2007, p. 1229). Filial piety further represents «culturally-sensitive psychological schemas of parent-child interaction», i.e. «dual reciprocal and authoritarian [expectations that underly] parent-child relations» (Bedford & Yeh, 2019, p. 1).

## 5.9 Implications for Higher Education

Adaptive help-seeking is a self-regulated learning strategy that can result in benefits not only for help-seekers, but also for help-givers and potential bystanders. Help-seeking and help-giving can for example be in the form of elaboration, a cognitive learning strategy that involves making information meaningful and building connections between existing knowledge and the information one has been given (Weinstein, Husman, & Dierking, 2000). Elaboration strategies such as question-asking and question-answering can result in deeper processing of the learning material, thereby improving comprehension and learning (Garavan & O'Brien, 2012). Hence, it would seem plausible to expect the facilitation of adaptive help-seeking to be given priority in higher education institutions.

### 5.9.1 Determine There is a Problem – Revisited

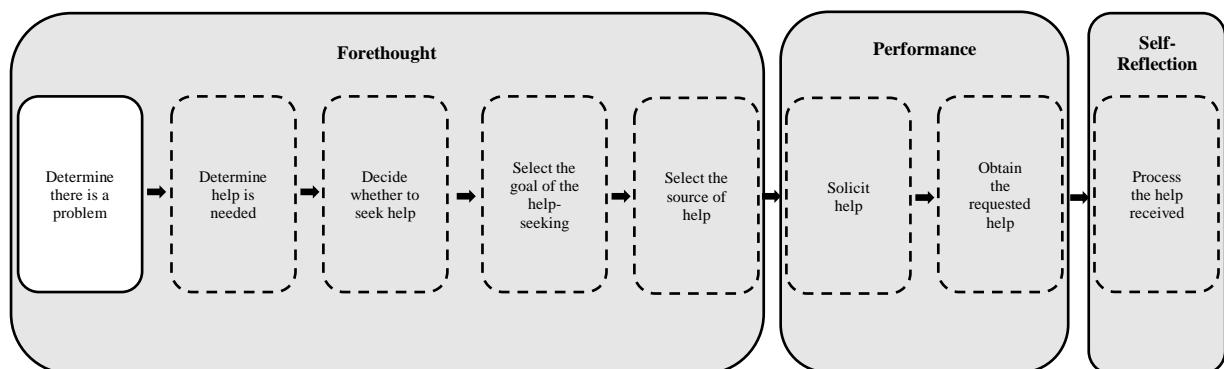


Figure 5.1 «Determine there is a problem» stage (in white) of the help-seeking process model

The help-seeking process is mediated by a wide variety of sociocultural variables, situational factors, and subcultural norms. Frequently, it is the fit of certain signs with a society's major values that accounts for the degree of attention symptoms or problems receive, and it is natural to believe that societal and cultural factors have an influence on whether perfectionism is recognised as a coveted trait or risk. Along the same lines, individuals and populations often need to be sensitised to conditions that affect them adversely (Gross &



McMullen, 1983). Given the suggested high prevalence of perfectionism in the higher education student body and the identified negative links between perfectionism and adaptive help-seeking, it is natural to ask whether higher education institutions (e.g. students, employees, structural elements, etc.) are sensitised to problems derived from perfectionism.

The findings of the current review build on previous research and highlight the need for awareness about the different ways of being perfectionistic and the potential barriers certain perfectionistic tendencies might present to help-seeking among higher education students. Increased awareness is also important given that previous research has indicated that university students perceive perfectionism to be socially desirable in educational settings (Stoeber & Hotham, 2013). Indeed, research has shown a tendency for university students to refuse to give up perfectionism even though they see it as a source of distress, in part because they felt it had contributed to their success (Slaney & Ashby, 1996; Slaney, Chadha, Mobley, & Kennedy, 2000).

In DePaulo, Nadler, and Fisher's (1983, pp. 48-49) help-seeking decision model, a «waiting stack» hierarchy of problems is visualised. The waiting stack represents the idea that a potential help-seeker, after having determined that there is a problem, has to determine whether or not the defined problem is the most important problem at hand. Given the negative relationship between higher education students' adaptive help-seeking and certain perfectionistic tendencies, higher education students characterised by these tendencies may need to move perfectionism further up their waiting stack of problems.

# Conclusion

This thesis investigated and highlighted salient differences and links between various ways of being a perfectionist and phases of the help-seeking process. The findings suggest that some aspects of the multifaceted perfectionism construct impede help-seeking, while others could facilitate help-seeking. Notably, the links with maladaptive processes and outcomes appear to both outnumber and be generally stronger in effect than the adaptive, particularly for higher education students.

The interpersonal facets of perfectionistic self-presentation showed the most prevalent and noticeable links with the help-seeking process. Based on these findings, it is plausible to assume that students with inclinations to appear perfect and to hide shortcomings might be less inclined to self-disclose and more likely to avoid seeking help for mental health problems.

The findings further suggest perfectionism to be consistently associated with a relatively lower mental health stigma tolerance (both public stigma and self-stigma), which could discourage perfectionistic students from seeking help. Likewise, the findings imply that the interpersonal aspects of the perfectionism construct to generally have more pervasive links with help-seeking, when compared with the intrapersonal aspects.

Consistent with prior research, the propensity to set excessively high personal standards and demand perfection from the self (i.e. perfectionistic strivings) generally showed small positive links with adaptive outcomes, whereas extraordinarily critical appraisals of one's own behaviour and excessive preoccupations with others' evaluations (i.e. perfectionistic concerns) showed a pattern of small positive links with maladaptive help-seeking outcomes.

The precise mechanisms that regulate the relationship between the different within-combinations of perfectionism and aspects of the help-seeking process remain to be determined. More research is needed to ascertain whether, and to what degree, all the different ways of being a perfectionist impede and/or facilitate help-seeking.

The findings of the literature review are in line with previous research, highlighting the need for awareness about potential barriers certain perfectionistic tendencies might present to help-seeking among higher education students. Given an apparent prevalence of perfectionistic tendencies among higher education students, and indications of perfectionism being perceived as desirable in educational settings, an increased awareness and focus on this subject seems to be warranted.

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# Attachments

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## Attachment 1: Search Strings

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### Perfectionism

perfectionis\*

### Help-seeking

((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR («self-help») OR («resource management strateg\*») OR cope OR coping

### ICTs

computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR («interactive learning environment\*») OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR («social media»)

### Higher education

(«higher education») OR college\* OR universit\* OR student\* OR postsecondary OR («post-secondary») OR graduate\* OR undergraduate\* OR postgraduate\*

### Perfectionism AND Help-seeking

perfectionis\* AND (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR («self-help») OR («resource management strateg\*») OR cope OR coping)

### **Perfectionism AND ICTs**

perfectionis\* AND (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR («interactive learning environment\*»)) OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR («social media»))

### **Perfectionism AND Help-seeking AND ICTs:**

perfectionis\* AND (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR («self-help»)) OR («resource management strateg\*»)) OR cope OR coping) AND (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR («interactive learning environment\*»)) OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR («social media»))

### **Perfectionism AND Help-seeking AND Higher education:**

perfectionis\* AND (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR («self-help»)) OR («resource management strateg\*»)) OR cope OR coping) AND ((«higher education») OR college\* OR universit\* OR student\* OR postsecondary OR (post-secondary) OR graduate\* OR undergraduate\* OR postgraduate\*)

### **Perfectionism AND ICTs AND Higher education:**

perfectionis\* AND (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR («interactive learning environment\*»)) OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR («social media»)) AND ((«higher education») OR college\* OR universit\* OR student\* OR postsecondary OR («post-secondary») OR graduate\* OR undergraduate\* OR postgraduate\*)

**Perfectionism AND Help-seeking AND ICTs AND Higher education:**

perfectionis\* AND (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR («self-help») OR («resource management strateg\*») OR cope OR coping) AND (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR («interactive learning environment\*») OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR («social media»)) AND («higher education») OR college\* OR universit\* OR student\* OR postsecondary OR («post-secondary») OR graduate\* OR undergraduate\* OR postgraduate\*)

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## Attachment 2: Database Searches

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Database	Filters	Search strategy
<i>ERIC (Ovid)</i>	Limit to yr=«1965- 2020»  Language: English	1 perfectionis*.mp. [mp=abstract, title, heading word, identifiers]
		2 limit 1 to english language
		3 (((help* or support* or assist* or treatment or aid* or counsel* or counsel*) and (seek* or get* or request* or ask* or elicit* or avoid* or negat*)) or self-help or resource management strateg* or cope or coping).mp. [mp=abstract, title, heading word, identifiers]
		4 limit 3 to english language
		5 2 and 4
		6 (computer* or technolog* or digital or interactive learning environment* or online or virtual or internet or web* or electronic or mobile or skype or e-mail* or chat or social media).mp. [mp=abstract, title, heading word, identifiers]
		7 limit 6 to english language
		8 2 and 7
		9 2 and 4 and 7
		10 (higher education or college* or universit* or student* or postsecondary or post secondary or graduate* or undergraduate* or postgraduate*).mp. [mp=abstract, title, heading word, identifiers]
		11 Limit 10 to english language
		12 2 and 4 and 11
		13 2 and 7 and 10
		14 2 and 4 and 7 and 11

**PsychINFO**  
**(Ovid)**

- Limit to yr=«1806-2020»
- Language: English
- 1 perfectionis\*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh]
  - 2 limit 1 to english language
  - 3 (((help\* or support\* or assist\* or treatment or aid\* OR counsel\* or information) and (seek\* or get\* or request\* or ask\* or elicit\* or avoid\* or negat\*)) or self-help or resource management strateg\*).mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh]
  - 4 limit 3 to english language
  - 5 2 and 4
  - 6 (computer\* or technolog\* or digital or interactive learning environment\* or online or virtual or internet or web\* or electronic or mobile or skype or e-mail\* or chat or social media).mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh]
  - 7 limit 6 to english language
  - 8 2 and 7
  - 9 2 and 4 and 7
  - 10 (higher education or college\* or universit\* or student\* or postsecondary or post secondary or graduate\* or undergraduate\* or postgraduate\*).mp. [mp=abstract, title, heading word, identifiers]
  - 11 Limit 10 to english language
  - 12 2 and 4 and 11
  - 13 2 and 7 and 10
  - 14 2 and 4 and 7 and 11



*Web of  
Science*

Limit to  
yr=«1900-  
2020»

Language:  
English

- 1 **ALL FIELDS:** (perfectionis\*) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR («self-help») OR («resource management strateg\*») OR cope OR coping)
- 2 **ALL FIELDS:** (perfectionis\*) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR (interactive learning environment\*) OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR (social media))
- 3 **ALL FIELDS:** (perfectionis\*) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR («self-help») OR («resource management strateg\*») OR cope OR coping) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR (interactive learning environment\*) OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR (social media))
- 4 **ALL FIELDS:** (perfectionis\*) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR (self-help) OR (resource management strateg\*) OR cope OR coping) AND **ALL FIELDS:** ((higher education) OR college\* OR universit\* OR student\* OR postsecondary OR (post-secondary) OR graduate\* OR undergraduate\* OR postgraduate\*)

- 5 **ALL FIELDS:** (perfectionis\*) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR («interactive learning environment\*») OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR («social media»)) AND **ALL FIELDS:** ((higher education) OR college\* OR universit\* OR student\* OR postsecondary OR (post-secondary) OR graduate\* OR undergraduate\* OR postgraduate\*)
- 6 **ALL FIELDS:** (perfectionis\*) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (((help\* OR support\* OR assist\* OR treatment OR aid\* OR counsel\*) AND (seek\* OR get\* OR request\* OR ask\* OR elicit\* OR avoid\* OR negat\*)) OR (self-help) OR (resource management strateg\*) OR cope OR coping) AND **ALL FIELDS:** (computer\* OR technolog\* OR digital OR («interactive learning environment\*») OR online OR virtual OR internet OR web\* OR electronic OR mobile OR skype OR e-mail\* OR chat OR («social media»)) AND **ALL FIELDS:** ((higher education) OR college\* OR universit\* OR student\* OR postsecondary OR (post-secondary) OR graduate\* OR undergraduate\* OR postgraduate\*)

**MEDLINE  
(Ovid)**

Limit to yr=«1946- 2020»	1	perfectionis*.mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, floating sub-heading word, keyword heading word, organism supplementary concept word, protocol supplementary concept word, rare disease supplementary concept word, unique identifier, synonyms]
Language: English	2	limit 1 to english language

- 3 (((help\* or support\* or assist\* or treatment or aid\* OR counsel\* or information) and (seek\* or get\* or request\* or ask\* or elicit\* or avoid\* or negat\*)) or self-help or resource management strateg\* or cope or coping).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, floating sub-heading word, keyword heading word, organism supplementary concept word, protocol supplementary concept word, rare disease supplementary concept word, unique identifier, synonyms]
- 4 limit 3 to english language
- 5 2 and 4
- 6 (computer\* or technolog\* or digital or interactive learning environment\* or online or virtual or internet or web\* or electronic or mobile or skype or e-mail\* or chat or social media).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, floating sub-heading word, keyword heading word, organism supplementary concept word, protocol supplementary concept word, rare disease supplementary concept word, unique identifier, synonyms]
- 7 limit 6 to english language
- 8 2 and 7
- 9 2 and 4 and 7
- 10 (higher education or college\* or universit\* or student\* or postsecondary or post secondary or graduate\* or undergraduate\* or postgraduate\*).mp. [mp=title, abstract, original title, name of substance word, subject heading word, floating sub-heading word, keyword heading word, organism supplementary concept word,

		protocol supplementary concept word, rare disease supplementary concept word, unique identifier, synonyms]
	11	Limit 10 to english language
	12	2 and 4 and 11
	13	2 and 7 and 10
	14	2 and 4 and 7 and 11
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### Attachment 3: Study Characteristics (in alphabetical order)

Authors	Year	Type	Help-seeking	Population	Country	Perfectionism dimension(s) and / or measure(s)	Help-seeking factor(s) / measure(s)	Perfectionism's effects on help-seeking
Abdollahi, Hosseinian, Beh-Pajoooh, & Carlbring	2017	Journal article	Psychological	475 high school students 51 % male 49 % female $\mu = 17.2$	Malaysia	- CAPS: • Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP) • Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)	- Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-FF)	Positive correlation between SOP and positive attitudes toward seeking psychological help. Negative correlation between SPP and positive attitudes toward seeking psychological help.
Arana & Furlan	2016	Journal article	Academic	277 university students 81 % female 19 % male $\mu = 23.9$	Argentina	- APS-R: • High Standards («Adaptive Perfectionism») • Discrepancy («Maladaptive Perfectionism»)	- COPEAU-A: • Task-Oriented and Preparation • Seeking Social Support • Avoidance	For pre-exam coping, there was a small positive relation between High Standards and Seeking Social Support (became insignificant after correction), whereas no association was found with Discrepancy.
Blankstein, Lumley, & Crawford	2007	Journal article	Coping with stress	205 undergraduate students 70 % female 30 % male $\mu = 22.1$	Canada	- HF-MPS: • Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP) • Other-Oriented Perfectionism • Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)	- Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI) • Problem-Solving • Social Support Seeking • Avoidance	Social Support Seeking was negatively correlated with OOP in women. Otherwise no relations found between Social Support Seeking and SPP, SOP and OOP.
Crăciun & Dudău	2014	Journal article	Coping with stress	60 medical employees 50 % female 50 % male $\mu = 38.6$	Romania	- PI: • Conscientious Perfectionism (CP) • Self-Evaluative Perfectionism (SEP) - PSPS: • Non-Disclosure of Imperfections • Non-Display of Imperfections • Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	- COPE: • Active Coping • Social Support for Instrumental Reasons (SSIR) • Social Support for Emotional Reasons (SSER)	Small positive relation between CP and SSIR. No to small positive relation between CP and SSER. Small to moderate negative relation between SEP and SSIR. Small to moderate negative relation between SEP and SSER. (Small to) moderate negative relation between Perfectionistic Self-Promotion and SSIR and SSER. Small to moderate negative relation between Non-Display of Imperfections and SSIR and SSER. Moderate negative relation between Non-Disclosure of Imperfection and SSIR and SSER.
Dang, Quesnel, Hewitt, Flett, & Deng	2020	Journal article	Psychological	Sample 1: 99 university students 57 % female 43 % male $\mu = 19.7$ Sample 2: 77 community members 34 % female 66 % male	Canada	- HF-MPS: • Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP) • Other-Oriented Perfectionism (OOP) • Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP) - PSPS: • Non-Disclosure of Imperfections • Non-Display of Imperfections	- Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-FT): • Need recognition • Stigma Tolerance • Interpersonal Openness • Confidence - Thoughts About Therapy Survey:	PSP facets were correlated significantly with all help-seeking attitudes (negatively) and thoughts about psychotherapy (positively) subscales (except for Need Recognition and Confidence in Professionals in the community sample). Sample 1: No to small relation between SOP and Help-seeking attitudes. Small positive relation between SOP and Thoughts about psychotherapy. No to small negative relation between OOP and Help-seeking attitudes. Small positive relation

DeRosa	2000	PhD	Psychological	66 % male $\mu = 37.2$	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perfectionistic Self-Promotion</li> </ul> <p>- CAPS:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP)</li> <li>• Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)</li> </ul> </p> <p>- PSPS:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Disclosure of Imperfections</li> <li>• Non-Display of Imperfections</li> <li>• Perfectionistic Self-Promotion</li> </ul> </p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Therapist Responsiveness Concerns</li> <li>• Image Concerns</li> <li>• Coercion Concerns</li> </ul> <p>- Help-Seeking Scale: willingness to seek help for psychological problems</p>	<p>between OOP and Thoughts about psychotherapy. Small to moderate negative relations between SPP and Help-seeking attitudes. <i>Sample 2</i>: No to small relation between SOP and Help-seeking attitudes. No to small relation between OOP and Help-seeking attitudes. No to small relation between SPP and Help-seeking attitudes.</p> <p>SOP was a significant predictor of help-seeking for psychological problems, with greater SOP being related to active help-seeking. Small correlation between SOP and positive help-seeking attitudes. Small correlation between SPP and negative help-seeking attitudes. Of the three PSP facets, negative help-seeking attitudes were associated with Non-Disclosure of Imperfections.</p>
Dry, Kane, & Rooney	2015	Journal article	Coping with stress	541 children 50 % female 50 % male $\mu = 9.7$	Australia	<p>- CAPS:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP)</li> <li>• Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)</li> </ul> </p>	<p>- Coping Scale for Children and Youth (CSCY):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptive coping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Assistance seeking</li> <li>▪ Cognitive behavioural problem solving</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Maladaptive coping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cognitive avoidance</li> <li>▪ Behavioural avoidance</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>SOP small positive correlation with the children's assistance seeking.  SPP small negative correlation with assistance seeking.</p>
Ey, Hemming, & Shaw	2000	Journal article	Psychological	315 medical university students 41 % female 59 % male $\mu = 25.8$	U.S.	<p>- HF-MPS:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP)</li> <li>• Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)</li> </ul> </p>	<p>- Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-FT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need recognition</li> <li>• Stigma Tolerance</li> <li>• Interpersonal Openness</li> <li>• Confidence</li> </ul>	<p>SPP (in medical and dental students) linked with an unwillingness to seek mental help. SPP was more associated with students who were distressed, not in treatment, and held more negative attitudes to mental health seeking.</p>
Flett, Druckman, Hewitt, & Wekerle	2012	Journal article	Psychological	58 adolescents 43 % female 57 % male $\mu = 15.3$	Canada	<p>- CAPS:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP)</li> <li>• Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)</li> </ul> </p>	<p>- Self-Report Coping Scale (SRCS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internalizing</li> <li>• Externalizing</li> <li>• Distancing</li> <li>• Seeking Social Support</li> <li>• Self-reliant problem solving</li> </ul>	<p>Small positive relation between SOP and Seeking Social Support. Small negative relation between SPP and Seeking Social Support. SOP not significantly associated with social support from family, friends or peers. SPP significant negative association with support from family, but not from friends or peers.</p>

Foo, Hassan, Talib, & Zakaria	2017	Journal article	Psychological	327 married graduate students 72 % female 28 % male $\mu = 36.0$	Malaysia	<p>- APS-R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Standards</li> <li>• Discrepancy</li> </ul> <p>- Dyadic Almost Perfect Scale:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dyadic High Standards</li> <li>• Dyadic Discrepancy</li> </ul>	<p>- Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-FT):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need recognition</li> <li>• Stigma Tolerance</li> <li>• Interpersonal Openness</li> <li>• Confidence</li> </ul> <p>- Ways of Coping Checklist - Revised (WOC-R):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 motivation subscales</li> <li>• 9 learning strategies subscales (of which the <i>Help-Seeking subscale</i> is relevant)</li> </ul>	<p>High standards small positive correlation and discrepancy negative correlation with positive attitudes towards help-seeking.</p>
Gnilka, Ashby, & Noble	2012	Journal article	Academic	329 undergraduate students 66 % female 33 % male $\mu = NA$	U.S.	<p>- APS-R:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Standards</li> <li>• Discrepancy</li> </ul>	<p>- Ways of Coping Checklist - Revised (WOC-R):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6 motivation subscales</li> <li>• 9 learning strategies subscales (of which the <i>Help-Seeking subscale</i> is relevant)</li> </ul>	<p>High Standards small positive correlation with Seeking Social Support, while Discrepancy was not significantly correlated with Seeking Social Support. Non-perfectionists had significantly lower Seeking Social Support scores than both adaptive and maladaptive perfectionists. Participants with adaptive and maladaptive perfectionism were equally likely to use seeking social support.</p>
Gong, Fletcher, & Bolin	2015	Journal article	Coping with stress	376 university students 81 % female 19 % male $\mu = 22.2$	U.S.	<p>- F-MPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Standards (PS)</li> <li>• Concern Over Mistakes (COM)</li> <li>• Doubts About Actions (DAA)</li> </ul>	<p>- COPE Inventory</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategy coping</li> <li>• <i>Socioemotional coping (use of emotional social support, focus on and venting of emotions, use of instrumental social support)</i></li> <li>• Avoidant coping</li> </ul>	<p>PS had a small positive relation with Socioemotional coping and a small negative relation with Avoidant coping. COM and DAA both had a small positive relation with Socioemotional coping and a medium/moderate positive relation with Avoidant coping.</p>
Mills & Blankstein	2000	Journal article	Academic	207 undergraduate students 64 % female 36 % male $\mu = 22.4$	Canada	<p>- HF-MPS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP)</li> <li>• Other-Oriented Perfectionism (OOP)</li> <li>• Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)</li> </ul>	<p>- Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ): (Help-Seeking subscale)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidant coping</li> </ul>	<p>SOP was not significantly positively correlated with help-seeking. OOP was significantly positively correlated with help-seeking. SPP in university students was associated with a decreased likelihood of help-seeking.</p>
Mofield	2008	PhD	Coping with stress	153 gifted middle school students (gifted) 54 % female 46 % male $\mu = NA$	U.S.	<p>- Goals and Work Habits Survey (GWHS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern Over Mistakes (COM)</li> <li>• Personal Standards (PS)</li> <li>• Parental Expectations (PE)</li> <li>• Parental Criticism (PC)</li> <li>• Doubts About Actions (DAA)</li> <li>• Organization (O)</li> </ul>	<p>- Self-Report Coping Scale (SRCS):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach coping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Seeking Social Support (SSS)</i></li> <li>▪ Problem-Solving</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Avoidance/emotional-focused coping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Distancing</li> <li>▪ Internalizing</li> <li>▪ Externalizing</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>No relation between COM and SSS. Small positive relation between PS and SSS. Small negative relation between PE and SSS. Small to moderate negative relation between PC and SSS. No relation between DAA and SSS. Moderate positive relation between O and SSS. Unhealthy dimensions of perfectionism (COM, PE, PC, and DAA) predicted avoidance coping while healthy dimensions of perfectionism (PS and O) predicted approach coping.</p>

Mofield, Peters, & Chakraborti-Ghosh	2016	Journal article	Coping with stress	130 middle school students (underachievers) 64 % female 36 % male $\mu = 22.4$	U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Goals and Work Habits Survey (GWHS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern Over Mistakes (COM)</li> <li>• Personal Standards (PS)</li> <li>• Parental Expectations (PE)</li> <li>• Parental Criticism (PC)</li> <li>• Doubts About Actions (DAA)</li> <li>• Organization (O)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-Report Coping Scale (SRCS): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approach coping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Seeking Social Support</i> (SSS)</li> <li>▪ Problem-Solving</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Avoidance/emotional-focused coping: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Distancing</li> <li>▪ Internalizing</li> <li>▪ Externalizing</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>No relation between COM and SSS. Small negative correlation between DAA and SSS. Small negative correlation between PE and SSS. Small to moderate negative correlation between PC and SSS. Small positive correlation between PS and SSS. Moderate positive correlation between O and SSS.</p> <p>Approach coping was predicted by adaptive perfectionism (PS-notably O), whereas avoidance coping (Internalizing, Externalizing, and Distancing) was predicted by various combined models.</p>
Parker, Shum, Suldo, Shaunessy-Dedrick, Ferron, & Dedrick	2019	Journal article	Academic	311 9 <sup>th</sup> grade students 59 % female 41 % male $\mu = 14.0$	U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- APS-R: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High Standards («Adaptive Perfectionism»)</li> <li>• Discrepancy («Maladaptive Perfectionism»)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adaptive Help Seeking (AHS)</li> <li>- Attitudes Toward Help Seeking (ATHS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived benefits</li> <li>• Perceived threats</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Teacher Emotional Support Scale (TESS)</li> </ul>	<p>Moderate positive relation between High Standards and Adaptive Help-Seeking. No relation between High Standards and Perceived threats. Small to moderate relation between High Standards and Perceived benefits. Small to moderate positive relation between High Standards and perceived Teacher Emotional Support. Small negative relation between Discrepancy and Adaptive Help-Seeking. Moderate positive relation between Discrepancy and Perceived threats. Small to moderate negative relation between Discrepancy and Perceived benefits. Small to moderate negative and perceived Teacher Emotional Support.</p>
Rasmussen, Yamawaki, Moses, Powell, & Bastian	2013	Journal article	Psychological	119 Latter-Day Saint undergraduate students 61 % female 39 % male $\mu = 20.0$	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- F-MPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Standards (PS)</li> <li>• Concern Over Mistakes (COM)</li> <li>• Parental Expectations (PE)</li> <li>• Parental Criticism (PC)</li> <li>• Doubts About Actions (DAA)</li> <li>• Organization (O)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Adapted General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ)</li> <li>- Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help (ATSPPH-FT): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need recognition</li> <li>• Stigma Tolerance</li> <li>• Interpersonal Openness</li> <li>• Confidence</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>No relation between PS and ATMHS. Negative relation between COM and ATMHS. Small negative relation between PE and ATMHS. No relation between PC and ATMHS. Negative relation between O and ATMHS. No or small relation between seeking help from 4 sources (mental health professional, clergy, friends, and family). Weak positive relation between Parental Criticism and seeking help from clergy and family members.</p>
Shannon, Goldberg, Flett, & Hewitt	2018	Journal article	Psychological	140 university students 78 % female 22 % male $\mu = 19.7$	Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- HF-MPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP)</li> <li>• Other-Oriented Perfectionism (OOP)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Attitudes Towards Seeking Professional Psychological Help Scale Shortened Form (ATSPPH-SF)</li> </ul>	<p>Small negative relation between Attitudes towards help-seeking and SOP and SPP. Small positive relation between Self-stigma and SOP, OOP, SPP. No relation between stigma by others and SOP, OOP, SPP.</p>



						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)</li> <li>- PSPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-Disclosure of Imperfections</li> <li>• Non-Display of Imperfections</li> <li>• Perfectionistic Self-Promotion</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-Stigma of Seeking Help Scale (SSOSH)</li> <li>- Perceptions of Stigmatization by Others for Seeking Help Scale</li> </ul>	<p>Negative relation between Attitudes towards help-seeking and PSP. Moderate positive relation between self-stigma and PSP. Small positive relation between perceived stigma by others and PSP. Perfectionistic Self-Promotion was associated with greater self-stigma and more negative attitudes towards seeking professional help. Non-Display of Imperfections predicted self-stigma and attitudes towards seeking help and was associated with perceived stigmatization by others. Non-Disclosure of imperfections was significantly related to both self-stigma and perceived stigmatization by others.</p>
Shim, Rubenstein, & Drapeau	2016	Journal article	Academic	169 middle school students 37 % female 63 % male $\mu = 13.1$	U.S.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- F-MPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal Standards (PS) («Perfectionistic Strivings»)</li> <li>• Concern Over Mistakes (COM) («Perfectionistic Concerns»)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Avoidance of help seeking</li> <li>- Expedient help seeking</li> <li>- Adaptive help seeking</li> </ul>	<p>Moderate (to large) negative relation between PS and avoidance of help-seeking. Small negative relation between PS and expedient help-seeking. Small to moderate positive relation between PS and adaptive help-seeking. PS remained the only significant, positive predictor for adaptive help-seeking. Small to moderate positive relation between COM and avoidance of help-seeking. Small positive relation between COM and expedient help-seeking. Small negative relation between COM and adaptive help-seeking. For avoidance of help seeking, the main effects of PS &amp; COM were significant. COM had almost no effect on avoidance of help seeking among the students with high PS, but had a strong positive effect among those with low PS.</p>
Stoeber & Janssen	2011	Journal article	Coping with stress	149 university students 78 % female 22 % male $\mu = 20.8$	GB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 5 scales from F-MPS &amp; HF-MPS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perfectionistic Strivings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Personal Standards (F-MPS)</li> <li>▪ Self-Oriented Perfectionism (HF-MPS)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Concern over Mistakes (F-MPS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Doubts about Action (F-MPS)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>- Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (HF-MPS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Brief COPE: 14 coping strategies (of which 3 are possibly relevant): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using emotional support</li> <li>• Using instrumental support</li> <li>• Venting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Small positive relation between Perfectionistic Strivings and using emotional support. Small positive relation between Perfectionistic Strivings and using instrumental support. Small positive relation between Perfectionistic Strivings and venting. Small to moderate negative relation between Perfectionistic Concerns and using emotional support. Moderate negative relation between Perfectionistic Concerns and using instrumental support. Small negative relation between Perfectionistic Concerns and venting.</p>

Trotter	2011	PhD	Coping with stress	225 undergraduate students 64 % female 36 % male $\mu = 20,6$	Taiwan	- AFS-R: • High Standards • Discrepancy	- Collectivist Coping Styles Inventory (CCS): • Acceptance Reframing and Striving • <i>Family Support</i> • Religion/Spirituality • Avoidance and Detachment • <i>Private Emotional Outlets</i>	Small positive relation between High Standards and Family Support. Small negative relation between Discrepancy and Family Support. Small positive relations between Private Emotional Outlets and both High Standards and Discrepancy.
Weller	2018	PhD	Psychological	204 clinical psychologist trainees 86 % female 14 % male $\mu = 29,0$	U.S.	- PSPS: • Non-Disclosure of Imperfections	- Trainees' Attitudes Toward Seeking Psychotherapy Scale (TATSPS)	Increased interpersonal perfectionism was associated with having greater concerns with how help-seeking would impact professional credibility, more concerns with help-seeking being kept confidential, feeling a greater need to solve problems independently, and with overall less adaptive attitudes towards seeking psychotherapy. Increased interpersonal perfectionism was related to perceiving others within the professional group to view experience of mental health difficulties and help-seeking as less acceptable. This, in turn, negatively influenced trainees' own attitudes towards seeking psychotherapy.
Wimberley	2017	PhD	Psychological	365 undergraduate students 62 % female 38 % male $\mu = NA (18+)$	U.S.	- AFS-R: • High Standards («Adaptive Perfectionism») • Discrepancy («Maladaptive Perfectionism») - PSPS: • Non-Disclosure of Imperfections • Non-Display of Imperfections • Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	- The Inventory of Attitudes toward Seeking Mental Health Services (IASMHS): • Psychological Openness • Help-Seeking Propensity • Indifference to Stigma - General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ): intentions for: • Informal Help-Seeking • Formal Help-Seeking • Self-Help • No Help-Seeking	IASMHS: Small to moderate positive relation between High Standards and IASMHS. Small to moderate negative relation between Discrepancy and IASMHS. Non-Disclosure of Imperfections had the largest negative relation (no to small/moderate), while Perfectionistic Self-Promotion has the smallest negative relation (no to small), with IASMHS of the 3 PSP facets. GHSQ: No to small relations between the help-seeking sources and High Standards and Discrepancy. PSP facers had a significant negative direct effect on intentions to seek formal help, informal help as well as self-help. Moreover, Perfectionistic Self-Presentation had a significant positive effect on intentions to seek no help

Zeifman et al.	2015	Journal article	Psychological	86 10 <sup>th</sup> grade students 53% female 47% male $\mu = 15.1$	Canada	- CAPS: • Self-Oriented Perfectionism (SOP) • Socially Prescribed Perfectionism (SPP)	- Self-stigma of Seeking Help Scale (SSOSH)	SOP associated with self-stigma for seeking help. A positive but weaker link between SPP and self-stigma, but the links were found only among those adolescents without extensive prior exposure to people with mental health difficulties.
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*Note:* APS-R = Almost Perfect Scale-Revised, CAPS = Child-Adolescent Perfectionist Scale, F-MPS = Frost Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, HF-MPS = Hewitt-Flett Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, PI = Perfectionism Inventory, PSPS = Perfectionistic Self-Presentation Scale.

## Attachment 4: Perfectionism and Need Recognition

<i>Authors</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Strivings</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Concerns</i>	<i>Other-Oriented Perfectionism</i>	<i>Perfectionistic Self-Presentation</i>			<i>Perfectionistic Cognitions</i>
				<i>Perfectionistic Self-Promotion</i>	<i>Non-Display of Imperfections</i>	<i>Non-Disclosure of Imperfections</i>	
Dang, Quesnel, Hewitt, Flett, and Deng (2020)*	Self-oriented perfectionism small negative (sample 1) and small positive (sample 2) correlations	Socially prescribed perfectionism small negative (sample 1) and very small positive correlation (sample 2)	Small negative (sample 1) and small positive (sample 2) correlation	Strong negative (sample 1) and small negative (sample 2) correlation	Moderate negative (sample 1) and very small negative (sample 2) correlation	Strong negative (sample 1) and small negative (sample 2) correlation	–

\*Sample 1: university students and Sample 2: community members

## Attachment 5: Perfectionism and Academic Help-Seeking

Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections	
Mills and Blankstein (2000)	Self-oriented perfectionism positive correlation with past help-seeking behaviour	Socially prescribed perfectionism negative correlation with past help-seeking behaviour	Significant positive correlation with past help-seeking behaviour	–	–	–	–
Parker et al. (2019)	High standards small correlation with perceived help-seeking benefits	Discrepancy moderate correlation with perceived help-seeking threats	–	–	–	–	–
Shim, Rubenstein, and Drapeau (2016)	Personal standards significant positive relationship with adaptive help-seeking and significant negative correlation with avoidance of help-seeking	Concern over mistakes small negative correlation with adaptive help-seeking and significant positive correlation with avoidance of help-seeking	–	–	–	–	–

## Attachment 6: Perfectionism and Stress-Related Help-Seeking

Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections	
Arana and Furlan (2016)	Positive correlation	Weak positive correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Blankstein, Lumley, and Crawford (2007)	Self-oriented perfectionism no correlation for women and small positive correlation for men	Socially prescribed perfectionism small negative correlation for men and women	Moderate negative correlation for women and small negative correlation for men	-	-	-	-
Dry, Kane, and Rooney (2015)	Self-oriented perfectionism weak positive correlation	Socially prescribed perfectionism weak negative correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Gnilka, Ashby, and Noble (2012)	Moderate positive correlation	Not significant correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Gong, Fletcher, and Bolin (2015)	Personal standards positive correlation	Concern over mistakes and doubts about actions positive correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Mofield (2008)	Positive strivings positive correlation	Evaluative concerns small negative correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Mofield, Peters, and Chakraborti-Ghosh (2016)	Positive strivings positive correlation	Evaluative concerns small negative correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Trotter (2011)	High standards positive correlation with family support	Discrepancy negative correlation with family support	-	-	-	-	-

## Attachment 7: Perfectionism and Mental Help-Seeking

Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections	
Abdollahi, Hosseinian, Beh-Pajoo, and Carlbang (2017)	Self-oriented perfectionism significant positive correlation	Socially prescribed perfectionism significant negative correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Dang et al. (2020) <sup>1</sup>	Self-oriented perfectionism small negative correlation (stronger for sample 1)	Socially prescribed perfectionism strong negative correlation (stronger for sample 1)	-	Small negative correlation (stronger for sample 1)	Strong negative correlation (stronger for sample 1)	-	-
DeRosa (2000)	Self-oriented perfectionism small positive correlation	Socially prescribed perfectionism small negative correlation	-	Very small negative correlation	Strong negative correlation	-	-
Ey, Henning, and Shaw (2000)	-	Socially prescribed perfectionism negative correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Foo, Hassan, Talib, and Zakaria (2017)	High standards small positive correlation	Discrepancy negative correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Rasmussen et al. (2013)	Personal standards small positive correlation	Concern over mistakes moderate negative correlation	-	-	-	-	-
Shannon et al. (2018)	Self-oriented perfectionism small negative correlation (moderate negative for women and small positive for men)	Socially prescribed perfectionism small negative correlation (moderate negative for women and small positive for men)	Very small positive correlation (small negative for men and no for women)	Moderate negative correlation	Small negative correlation	Very small negative correlation	-
Weller (2018)	-	-	-	-	Significant negative correlation	-	-
Wimberley (2017)	High standards moderate positive correlation	Discrepancy moderate negative correlation	-	Small negative correlation	Small negative correlation	Small negative correlation	-

## Attachment 8: Perfectionism and Mental Health Stigma

Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections	
Dang et al. (2020)	Self-oriented perfectionism moderate negative (sample 1) and very small positive (sample 2) correlation with stigma tolerance.	Socially prescribed perfectionism strong negative (sample 1) and moderate negative (sample 2) correlation with stigma tolerance	Moderate negative (sample 1) and small negative (sample 2) correlation with stigma tolerance	Strong negative correlation with stigma tolerance (stronger for sample 1)	Strong negative correlation with stigma tolerance (same for both samples)	Strong negative correlation with stigma tolerance (stronger for sample 2)	-
Shannon, Goldberg, Flett, and Hewitt (2018)	Self-oriented perfectionism very small positive correlation with stigma by others, and moderate positive correlation with self-stigma.	Socially prescribed perfectionism very small positive correlation with stigma by others, and moderate positive correlation with self-stigma.	Very small negative correlation with stigma by others and moderate positive correlation with self-stigma	Moderate positive correlation with stigma by others. Strong positive correlation with self-stigma.	Strong positive correlation with stigma by others. Strong positive correlation with self-stigma.	Strong positive correlation with stigma by others. Strong positive correlation with self-stigma.	-
Wimberley (2017)	High standards moderate positive correlation with indifference to stigma	Discrepancy moderate negative correlation with indifference to stigma	-	Strong negative correlation with indifference to stigma	Small negative correlation with indifference to stigma	Moderate negative correlation with indifference to stigma	-
Zeifman et al. (2015)	Self-oriented perfectionism positive correlation with self-stigma (significant for those who reported familiarity with individuals with mental illness)	Socially prescribed perfectionism positive correlation with self-stigma	-	-	-	-	-



## Attachment 9: Role Dimension of Helping Sources

Category of Helping Sources	Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections		
<i>Informal</i>	Flett, Druckman, Hewitt, and Wekerle (2012)	Self-oriented perfectionism not significantly correlated with peers, classmates and family (small positive and negative)	Socially prescribed perfectionism significant negative correlation with family (small/moderate negative with peers and classmates)	-	-	-	-	-
	Rasmussen, Yamawaki, Moses, Powell, and Bastian (2013)	Personal standards weak positive correlations with friends and family	Concern over mistakes weak positive and doubts about actions weak negative correlations with friends and family	-	-	-	-	-
	Wimberley (2017)	High standards negative correlation with informal help	Discrepancy negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation	Negative correlation	Negative correlation	-	-
<i>Formal</i>	Rasmussen et al. (2013)	Personal standards weak negative correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	Concern over mistakes weak positive and negative, and doubts about actions weak positive correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	-	-	-	-	-
	Wimberley (2017)	High standards weak positive correlation with formal help	Discrepancy positive correlation with formal help	Positive correlation	Negative correlation	Negative correlation	-	-
	Wimberley (2017)	High standards weak positive correlation with self-help	Discrepancy weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak negative correlation with self-help	Weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak negative correlation with self-help	-	-

## Attachment 10: Relationship Dimension of Helping Sources

Category of Helping Sources	Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections		
Personal	Flett et al. (2012)	Self-oriented perfectionism not significantly correlated with peers, classmates and family (small positive and negative)	Socially prescribed perfectionism significant negative correlation with family (small/moderate negative with peers and classmates)	-	-	-	-	-
	Rasmussen et al. (2013)	Personal standards weak positive correlation with friends and family	Concern over mistakes weak positive and doubts about actions weak negative correlation with friends and family	-	-	-	-	-
	Wimberley (2017)	High standards negative correlation with informal help	Discrepancy negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	-	-
Personal & Impersonal	Rasmussen et al. (2013)	Personal standards weak negative correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	Concern over mistakes weak positive and negative, and doubts about actions weak positive correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	-	-	-	-	-
	Wimberley (2017)	High standards weak positive correlation with formal help	Discrepancy positive correlation with formal help	Positive correlation with formal help	Negative correlation with formal help	Negative correlation with formal help	-	-
Impersonal	Wimberley (2017)	High standards weak positive correlation with self-help	Discrepancy weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak negative correlation with self-help	Weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak negative correlation with self-help	-	-

## Attachment 11: Channel Dimension of Helping Sources

Category of Helping Sources	Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections		
Mediated & Face-to-Face	Flett et al. (2012)	Self-oriented perfectionism not significantly correlated with peers, classmates and family (small positive and negative)	Socially prescribed perfectionism significant negative correlation with family (small/moderate negative with peers and classmates)	-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
Mediated	Wimberley (2017)	Personal standards weak negative correlation with friends and family	Concern over mistakes weak positive and doubts about actions weak negative correlation with friends and family	-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
Mediated	Wimberley (2017)	Personal standards weak negative correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	Concern over mistakes weak positive and negative, and doubts about actions weak positive correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
Mediated	Wimberley (2017)	High standards negative correlation with informal help	Discrepancy negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	-	-
				Positive correlation with formal help	Negative correlation with formal help	Negative correlation with formal help	-	-
				Weak negative correlation with self-help	Weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak negative correlation with self-help	-	-

## Attachment 12: Adaptability Dimension of Helping Sources

Category of Helping Sources	Authors	Perfectionistic Strivings	Perfectionistic Concerns	Perfectionistic Self-Presentation			Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Perfectionistic Cognitions
				Perfectionistic Self-Promotion	Non-Display of Imperfections	Non-Disclosure of Imperfections		
Dynamic	Flett et al. (2012)	Self-oriented perfectionism not significantly correlated with peers, classmates and family (small positive and negative)	Socially prescribed perfectionism significant negative correlation with family (small/moderate negative with peers and classmates)	-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
	Rasmussen et al. (2013)	Personal standards weak positive correlation with friends and family	Concern over mistakes weak positive and doubts about actions weak negative correlation with friends and family	-	-	-	-	-
Static	Wimberley (2017)	Personal standards weak negative correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	Concern over mistakes weak positive and negative, and doubts about actions weak positive correlations with mental health professionals and clergy	-	-	-	-	-
				-	-	-	-	-
	High standards negative correlation with informal help	Discrepancy negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	Negative correlation with informal help	-	-
High standards weak positive correlation with formal help	Discrepancy positive correlation with formal help	Positive correlation with formal help	Negative correlation with formal help	Negative correlation with formal help	Negative correlation with formal help	-	-	
High standards weak positive correlation with self-help	Discrepancy weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak negative correlation with self-help	Weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak positive correlation with self-help	Weak negative correlation with self-help	-	-	

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**Attachment 13: Formal Sources of Help (in grey)**

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				Relationship dimension			
				<i>Personal</i>		<i>Impersonal</i>	
				Channel dimension		Channel dimension	
				<i>Mediated</i>	<i>Face-to-face</i>	<i>Mediated</i>	<i>Face-to-face</i>
Role dimension	<i>Informal</i>	Adaptability dimension	<i>Static</i>				
			<i>Dynamic</i>				
	<i>Formal</i>	Adaptability dimension	<i>Static</i>				
			<i>Dynamic</i>				

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**Attachment 14: Informal, Personal, and Dynamic Sources of Help (in grey)**

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				<b>Relationship dimension</b>			
				<i>Personal</i>		<i>Impersonal</i>	
				<b>Channel dimension</b>		<b>Channel dimension</b>	
				<i>Mediated</i>	<i>Face-to-face</i>	<i>Mediated</i>	<i>Face-to-face</i>
<b>Role dimension</b>	<i>Informal</i>	<b>Adaptability dimension</b>	<i>Static</i>				
			<i>Dynamic</i>				
	<i>Formal</i>	<b>Adaptability dimension</b>	<i>Static</i>				
			<i>Dynamic</i>				

**Attachment 15: Self-help Sources (in grey)**

				<b>Relationship dimension</b>			
				<i>Personal</i>		<i>Impersonal</i>	
				<b>Channel dimension</b>		<b>Channel dimension</b>	
				<i>Mediated</i>	<i>Face-to-face</i>	<i>Mediated</i>	<i>Face-to-face</i>
<b>Role dimension</b>	<i>Informal</i>	<b>Adaptability dimension</b>	<i>Static</i>				
			<i>Dynamic</i>				
	<i>Formal</i>	<b>Adaptability dimension</b>	<i>Static</i>				
			<i>Dynamic</i>				