Indirect Relationship between Perfectionism and Depression through Self-Silencing and Guilt: A Cross-Cultural Study

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Abstract : Depression is one of the most common mental health disorders. Self-silencing theory adopts a socio-cultural lens to examine the development and maintenance of depression. Self-silencing can be a vulnerability factor in depression, and personality vulnerabilities (e.g., perfectionism) and moral emotions (e.g., guilt) are strongly related to self-silencing and depression. Yet, the relationships between all four variables among different cultural groups are not clear. We aimed to address this gap by examining whether perfectionism and depression are related indirectly through self-silencing and guilt and whether cultural group moderates these associations. Participants (N=288) from either European Australian or Iranian Australian cultural backgrounds completed an online survey assessing self-silencing, guilt, perfectionism, and depression. First, we found an indirect relationship between perfectionism and depression through self-silencing. Second, using a serial mediation model, we found an indirect association between perfectionism and depression through self-silencing and guilt. There was no evidence that cultural groups moderated these indirect relationships. Our findings leave an important question for future longitudinal studies to answer; that is, whether the association between self-silencing and depression is oversimplified and whether moral emotions in this relationship have been overlooked.

Keywords : perfectionism, depression, self-silencing, culture, guilt
Conference Title : ICPP 2025 : International Conference on Psychiatry and Psychology
Conference Location : Toronto, Canada
Conference Dates : June 15-16, 2025