

Application of the analytical techniques

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The aim of this paper is to demonstrate advanced analytical and critical skills, showing understanding of the undisclosed principles for both main research methods utilised in social science. One of the core principles of this written inquiry will be to find the evidence of the application of the analytical techniques used for given research questions; design and data and critically investigate the statistical analysis of qualitative data used in psychological research.

When conducting sophisticated research within social research in certain aspect an act of art as no statistical test is able to tell the analytical success when obtained significance as this is only sometimes valid to the investigated population at the particular moment of time (Babbie, 2016). For the purpose of this assessment, two papers focusing on perfectionism (P) from different methodological stand point were chosen to demonstrate how those two approaches can work more as fulfilling rather than as antagonistic tools aiming for better understanding the phenomena of perfectionism.

Starley (2018) for instance delivered comprehensive research using qualitative pragmatic approach where the main attention was focused on understanding the roots of the P by gathering systematic review of up to date knowledge surrounding perfectionism and creating a very powerful message that P is a coping skill, ' a way of coping with anxiety arising from unmet need'.

When on the other hand Ferrari, Yap, Scott, Einstein, & Ciarrochi (2018) were utilising the qualitative approach of self-report questionnaires to investigate maladaptive perfectionism, self-compassion and depression during the life

between two samples and leading to the conclusion that self-compassion acts as a buffer when approached by dysfunctional P on depression.

When facing the dilemma of choosing the methods ‘appropriate’ for the purpose of investigation of the phenomena it can be problematic, as the qualitative-quantitative debate is still an actively open subject for the constructive argumentation. The topic itself is not new, rooting as far as 1894 with Dilthey been heavily criticized for his reductionism way of explaining mental processes (Collican, 2017).

For the purpose of this paper, two chosen articles investigated in their perused of understanding the perfectionism. This paper will produce evidence how both approaches can deliver different valuable insight into the topic as well as they can work in a synergistic way in order to deliver a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena, and this is the main aim of this paper.

Ferrari et al. (2018) delivered interesting research utilising application of quantitative principles when exploring perfectionism although they research faced multiple limitations as well and strengths by the chosen enquiry to investigate the phenomena by numbers and statistics. Despite the fact sample, size was impressive as 541 (99males, 442 females) with men age of 14 years and one month and obtaining significant results, it is still important to mention that the size of the examined population was relatively small when aiming for generalisation of the results due to biased sample.

In order to claim for generalisations it is important to conduct similar research but with heterogeneous population; bigger than 541 participants
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without using convenience sampling in this case – students of private schools are not the representation of the whole population, and they should adopt homogeneous convenience samples to prevent poor generalisability by using conventional convenience samples (Jager, Putnick, & Bornstein, 2017).

Another limitation of the quantitative investigation the use of the self-report surveys, rising serious questions about validity of the obtained results due to the subjective nature of the participants in the way they approached the questionnaires (Fonagy et al., 2016; Spector, 1994;). In terms of making claims of generalisability, it will be difficult as the participants for the study were not a reflection of the population as they were recruited from five Australian private schools, and all participants completed the questionnaires as a fragment of a bigger wellbeing intervention study, as a part of baseline assessment (Ferrari et al., 2018).

Study utilised standardised scales; The Child and Adolescent Perfectionism Scale (CAPS, Flett et al., 2016) to measure perfectionism; The Short Mood and Feelings Questionnaire (SMFQ, Sharp, Goodyer, & Croudace, 2006) to measure depressive mood, and The Self-Compassion Scale-Short form (SCS-s, Raes, Pommier, Neff, & Van Gucht, 2011) to measure self-compassion. Research project granted ethical approval; participation was voluntary, anonymous and only students who returned completed information and consent forms were allow taking part in the study.

There were situation in the study when they needed to break the confidentiality for the students who identified very depressed mood with the need for future referral; however this way of dealing with data was explain in

the information and consent form. Study clearly provided information about dependent variable – depression, and predictor variables included maladaptive perfectionism and self-compassion. In total 1, 249 participants were invited but only 541 returned the signed consent by parents and students and collected data was analysed using hierarchical multiple regressions.

This study has multiple strengths, one of them was to establish a moderating role of self-compassion, and suggesting for future clinical interventions to assess the benefits of practising self-compassion based intervention for depression and perfectionism (Ferrari et al., 2018). Research faced few limitations; due to investigating two independent age unit, obtained data was cross-sectional and it is not clear whether self-compassion was the cause or the result of depression.

One of the greatest contributions delivered by the research is the acknowledgement of the high cost of perfectionism on individuals in holistic way especially linked to psychopathology. This paper delivered evidence that self-compassion acts as a buffer to the impact of maladaptive perfectionism on depression therefore further research into these interventions should be explored further utilising different approaches.

Starley (2018) explored perfectionism from qualitative standpoint by synthesising the current relevant literature and research in the field of psychology in order to face perfectionism as a challenging but worthwhile research area for educational psychology, when actually exceeded the expectations and managed to produce an explanation for the causation of

perfectionism. One of the most important advantages of the article is a sophisticated conceptualisation of the phenomena by exploring research gathered in New Zealand, Australia and Asia, which was considered as one of the limitations of the study.

Research and knowledge on P in UK school students are restricted to a small sample of studies focused on P in relation to sporting rather than academic achievement and this was one of the reasons Starley (2018) conducted the pioneering research in this challenging area. As much as the topic was difficult to investigate in a quantitative approach, the findings can deliver the answer for increasing problems in mental health not only in the United Kingdom but globally.

United Kingdom is one of the top countries with the highest rate of mental health problems among children, adolescent and adults, with suicide as a leading cause of death in young peoples. Globally suicide is the second most common cause of death among adolescents after road traffic accidents (Mental Health Foundation, 2018) that research exploring the phenomena should be read by the people responsible for the changes on the government and executive level.

The costs and the burdens of mental illness for the individuals and for the society are tremendous and it is a time to look not only for effective treatments but for the roots of the problems and focus on the prevention (Goodwin et al., 2018). Growing interest in the phenomena indicates hopefully healthy pursuit to ‘treat’ in disciplines such as education, psychology, counselling and health or to effectively support individuals

effected by perfectionism instead of only trying to ‘measure’ it using self-rating scales.

As reported by Starley (2018) when conducting a review of literature of childhood perfectionism, they were multiple challenges, starting from conceptualisation, with broad definitions of the construct with only one agreement made on multidimensionality of perfectionisms by Hewitt & Flett (1991).

This generosity of the views reflected in scales attempted to rate perfectionism, with assessments showing contrasting constructs (Morris & Lomax, 2014) with ambiguous, subjective and highly challenging quality to measure. Concepts of healthy achieve and perfectionism lacks clarity, as well as the scales to ‘measure’ the phenomena this can present the barrier to deliver an effective treatment through approaching life with growth mindset rather than a need for perfection, however people need to feel good enough, well attached as a child and so on.

One of the biggest arguments against quantitative research is the subjectivity, ambiguity and the importance of critical reflexivity Mitchell, Boettcher-Sheard, Duque, & Lashewich (2018). Author was emphasising the dominant theme within the current literature surrounding perfectionism, making clear-cut that there is nothing healthy about perfectionism and linking perfectionism with development and maintenance of mental health problems as anxiety Jensen et al. (2018), obsessive-compulsive disorder Melli, Bulli, Doron, & Carraresi (2018), and eating disorders Drieberg, McEvoy, Hoiles, Shu, & Egan (2018).

Despite the fact, there is very limited literature about the perfectionism as well as and the area is a challenging due to lack of agreement on its nature Starley (2018) made sure that all the paper cover all aspects including making a sophisticated distinction between perfectionism and striving for achievement or healthy pursuit for excellence.

The author in small steps explain the ethology behind perfectionism, introducing the concept of 'roots and leaves' proposed by Shafran, Egan, & Wade (2010) conceptualised the idea of perfectionism as a root of variety of mental health conditions, and perfectionism should be addressed first than for example focusing on depression or anxiety. This model has more practical application, looking beyond a diagnostic label and moving to more positive, systematic thinking, solution-focused psychology and exploring this construct as a way of communicating something about the individual's needs.

Regardless of the operationalization chosen for exploration of perfectionism, both studies came to very similar conclusion that perfectionism is a negatively charged concept. Despite the fact they were able to deliver unique set of knowledge in different forms, one as numbers, second looking into the depth of the concept linked with anxiety and arisen from unmet needs, having own function, as a coping skill Starley (2018).

On the other hand, Ferarri et al. (2018) argued that improving self-compassion lead to significant reduction of maladaptive perfectionism on individuals. Both chosen methodologies to explore research topic have they limitations and strengths, however, deliver an encouraging message for

further research looking for an effective way of dealing with negative impact of perfectionism on the individuals especially children as they were influenced by mental health issues linked directly to perfectionism.

Based on the information provided in both articles quantitative approach seems to deliver the answer and potential effective cure for perfectionism. Both types of researcher due to different methodological stance were able to deliver different kind of knowledge by using different approaches. This is why within the social science the idea that some methodologies are more scientific than others should be very cautiously exercised. The social science faced over-representation of positive tests of hypotheses. Ioannidis (2005) reported that more than 50% of published ‘significant’ research findings in natural science (medical and psychological) were false, when seven years later this went nearly up to 95% (Ioannidis, 2012).

Psychology was consumed for long time by positivism paradigm that thing worthy of scientific attention are those which can be observed and measured, supported by realism advocating unbiased and objective methods while investigating and finding out the truth (Collican, 20017). It is important that scientific rigorous is without any doubts more than lip-service, focusing on reliable and unbiased findings (Stahl & Pickles, 2018).

Psychological pursuit to be thoroughly scientific made psychology to over-react and continue with this desire to be a ‘true’ science, and focused so much energy on the things which even ‘hard’ scientist are not rigid about. This is why when conducting research within psychology should utilise more diverse sampling as by now psychology samples almost exclusively are

generated from convenience industrialised, Western, rich, nations, threatening the generalisability as for sure they are not a clear cut representation of the general population (Cooper, 2016).

This is why scientific aura of qualitative psychology can fool so many people who are simply unaware about the ‘ politics’ within social science and making people believe and accept the fact about the world based on speculative and very specific findings from limited sample (Coolican, 2017). Especially in 21st century overtaken by social media with compromised moral and ethical values where the profit and fame is the main concern and politics trying to corrupt social science by masquerading the reality and manipulating the findings by selectively choosing population for the purpose of the inquiry.

To conclude this critical review it is vital to remind that psychology is an accumulative, iterative, self-correcting endeavour and like all human activity, psychology research is also a social process, and the methods to explore the social phenomena not define the object in terms of faulty methods of current pursuit or social expectation.

As reported by Stahl & Pickles (2018) social science face indeed a real challenge to reduce the proportion and impact of false positives and maybe it is time to look for more comprehensive, unbiased exhaustive collation of research by giving more credit and encourage formal quantitative combination as already has become the accepted basis for recommendation from organisation such as National Institute for Clinical Excellence.

This way will encourage not only student but publishers to focus on those scientifically expected from the stance of the validity and reliability point of view and completely neglecting this field of research where quantitative approach can be the only way to not only answer the nurturing question but to find the answer to the most troublesome and problematic dilemmas.