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## Socially Prescribed Perfectionism and Burnout among Foreign Language Learners: The Role of Shame and Self- Esteem

Nasser Fallah

Assistant Professor of TEFL, English Department, University of Zabol, Iran

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### Abstract

Given the dearth of research on the association between perfectionism in general and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP) in particular and learning burnout among English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, the present research set to examine the link between SPP and language learning burnout under the effects of self-esteem and shame emotion simultaneously. Accordingly, 244 university EFL learners were recruited conveniently. They were administered adapted self-reported questionnaires. The data analysis was done through SPSS, AMOS, and Process Macro. The findings of SEM analysis showed that SPP and shame were positively related to burnout. Further, self-esteem could negatively predict burnout. There was also a negative relationship between shame and self-esteem. The findings of mediation analysis also indicated that both self-esteem and shame significantly mediated the impact of SPP on burnout. Theoretical and practical implications were presented and suggestions were provided for further research.

**Keywords:** *Academic Burnout, Self-esteem, Shame, Socially Prescribed Perfectionism, EFL Learners, SEM, Mediation Analysis*

### Introduction

Academic or learning burnout as a negative emotional, mental, and physical reaction to prolonged periods of school-related stress has been increasingly studied worldwide within the last two decades (for a review see Kim, Jee, Lee, An, & Lee, 2018; Madigan & Curran, 2020). It is deemed a highly prevalent problem which might be associated with negative developmental outcomes, such as decreased motivation to continue university studies, low academic achievement, poor class

attendance, poor physical health, and psychological distress (see Alves et al., 2022; Bask & Salmela-Aro, 2013; Madigan & Curran, 2020; Mun & Kim, 2022; Robins, Roberts, & Sarris, 2018; Schaufeli, Martínez, Marqués-Pinto, Salanova, & Bakker, 2002; Wang, Wu, & Ma, 2018; Yang & Farn, 2005).

This negative phenomenon can also occur in the realm of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as language learners are prone to high levels of anxiety and apprehension due to frequent and unpredictable classroom interactions and evaluations specific to language learning classes (Fallah, 2017; Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Khodadady & Khajavy, 2013; Yu, Wang, & Liu, 2022). Apropos of this, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) posited that learning a foreign language engenders an unsettling psychological state among the learners and heavily affects their self-concept and worldview, thereby, causing unfavorable negative affective reactions among the EFL students and raising their affective filters (Horwitz et al., 1986; Yu, Wang, & Liu, 2022). Altogether, these factors can trigger the experience of burnout among the foreign language learners.

Nevertheless, despite the high probability of academic burnout in EFL context and subsequently its potential negative repercussions on EFL learners' psychological and physical well-being (Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Liu, He, Ding, Fan, Hwang, & Zhang, 2021; Yu, Wang, & Liu, 2022), few related research has been done in this context. Therefore, in order to shed further light on learning burnout in EFL context, an examination of potential risky and protective factors related to student burnout is important.

One important factor which has proved to be closely related to academic burnout is perfectionism (Brazeau, 2010; Zhang, Gan, & Cham, 2007). This personality attribute is referred to as striving towards excellence and faultlessness and establishing excessively high performance norms and criteria along with inclinations toward excessively serious evaluations of one's performance (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Research has shown that the inability of perfectionists to fulfil their high standards makes them more susceptible to burnout (Sorkkila & Aunola, 2020).

Thus, considering the insufficiency of research on academic burnout in EFL context particularly its association with perfectionism, the present research study aims to explore the link between perfectionism and burnout. Furthermore, to shed light on the potential mechanisms through which perfectionism could affect burnout, the mediating effects of two individual concepts, namely self-esteem and shame are explored. It is argued that perfectionists endure distress that is focused predominantly upon self-worth and self-criticism as they reprimand, attack, and criticize themselves, and experience intense feelings of shame, low self-esteem and worthlessness (Blatt, 1995). Viewed in this way, maladaptive and unhealthy perfectionistic standards could engender extreme self-critical feelings of shame, thoughts, and deficient self-esteem, all of which ultimately predispose the individual to depression and burnout (Budiartha & Helmi, 2021; Stoeber, Kempe, & Keogh, 2008).

## **Literature Review**

### *Academic Burnout*

Teaching and learning are stress provoking experiences. This kind of stress is even more evident in EFL context which is replete with negative feelings such as anxiety and emotional distress due

to its challenging and stressful learning nature for most language students who do not live in a natural language environment (Fallah, 2014, 2017). These negative experiences if not dealt with, may lead to academic burnout (Liu et al., 2021; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Tating et al., 2023; Yu et al., 2022).

As a multidimensional concept, academic burnout refers to feelings of academic insufficiency (reduced efficacy), despairing view towards academic curricula and education (cynicism), and feelings of fatigued due to academic and studying demands (exhaustion) (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Research has shown that academic burnout exerts negative effects on learners' psychological and physical health (for a review, Madigan & Curran, 2020). For example, it is related to low levels of student self-efficacy (Charkhabi, Azizi, & Hayati, 2013; Yang & Chen, 2016), low levels of students intrinsic motivation (Karimi & Fallah, 2021), high levels of psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, fear and hostility (Markelj, Kovač, & Jurak, 2023; Rezaei, Karimianpour, Azizyani, Sayyedi, & Vahabi, 2019). Furthermore, empirical research has revealed that academic burnout results in poor academic performance (Charkhabi et al, 2013; Kim et al., 2018; Tating et al., 2023), lack of interest in continuing academic study, irregular school attendance, disengagement in class participation and activities, and feelings of aimlessness and lack of significance in academic issues and activities (Madigan & Curran, 2020; Yang & Farn, 2005; Yu, Wang, & Liu, 2022).

Nevertheless, despite the deleterious repercussions of academic burnout, the related research on this area is still in its incipient stage in EFL context (see Liu et al., 2021). Further research is thus required to illuminate this negative psychological phenomenon and its potential antecedents in order to help future research design appropriate interventions to diminish psychological distress and avoid academic burnout.

### *Perfectionism*

One of the important individual factors with high significance in learning burnout research but low focus in EFL context is perfectionism. This personality construct has been referred to as striving towards excellence and faultlessness and establishing excessively high performance norms and criteria, along with inclinations toward excessively serious evaluations of one's performance (Fang & Liu, 2022; Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Burns (1983) also defines perfectionism as a web of cognitions, expectations and interpretations of entities and appraisal of oneself and others based upon establishing unrealistic criteria and norms.

People with high perfectionism are often identified by behavioral inclinations which render a low mistake tolerance, a bias for organization and order (Frost, Marten, Lahart, & Rosenblate, 1990; Madigan, 2019), and a preference for admiration (Rice & Preusser, 2002). Perfectionists often place excessive importance on the judgment of others and themselves (Fang & Liu, 2022; Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Madigan, 2019). Therefore, perfectionist individuals may suffer a high level of stress to succeed as they feel that they must fulfil both their own perfect standards and norms and those of significant others. As such, hardly surprising that perfectionism has been related to extreme rates of psychological distress (Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr, 1996; Madigan, 2019; Spagnoli, Buono, Kovalchuk, Cordasco, & Esposito, 2021).

According to Hewitt and Flett (1991), perfectionism has three main dimensions as follows: self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), other-oriented perfectionism (OOP), and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP). SOP suggests that an individuals have high norms for themselves and use sever self-criticism while committing errors. In SOP, the person has unreasonable standards, pursues these standards and norms, is highly self-critical, prefers to unduly concentrate on his faults, and tends to evade failure. The next component is other-oriented perfectionism (OOP), based on which the person has unrealistic norms and expectations about the capabilities of others, and is usually extremely critical of others' behaviors and performance. As for SPP, the individual assumes that others have perfectionist motives and expectations about them, and they feel they have to meet those norms and standards (Blankstein & Winkworth, 2004; Fang & Liu, 2022; Sorkkila & Aunola, 2020).

In the present study, in line with previous research (Raudasoja, Sorkkila, & Aunola, 2022; Stoeber et al., 2008), only the SPP dimension was taken into account. Though all three dimensions of perfectionism are connected with specific kinds of debilitating cognitions, emotions, and behaviors (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Flett, Hewitt, & Blankstein, 1991; Spagnoli, et al., 2021), it could be postulated that the SPP dimension would contribute most to the prediction of psychological distress (Raudasoja et al., 2022; Stoeber et al., 2008).

This type of perfectionism is also referred to as a constantly enervating disposition, closely tied with fear of negative evaluation, self-blame, self-criticism, over-generalization of failure, and anxiety (Flett et al., 1991; Hill, Hall, Appleton, & Kozub, 2008). Conceived in this way, SPP is quite related to the EFL context where anxiety and fear of negative evaluation are evident in EFL learners' over concern with social impressions when speaking a new language (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Zafarani, Ahangari, & Hadidi, 2022) and academic and personal evaluations of their competence and performance in the foreign language (Liu et al., 2021).

Research has also proved that, among different kinds of perfectionism, the maladaptive SPP is the strongest predictor of burnout (Sorkkila & Aunola, 2020; Spagnoli, et al., 2021; Stoeber et al., 2008), indicating that specifically perceived expectations and demands from others, when not guarded, are critical risk factors for student burnout. It has been also argued that those with high levels of SPP, due to extreme preoccupation with self-critical thoughts and others' approval and expectations are prone to negative emotions especially shame (Klibert, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & Saito, 2005; Liu et al., 2021; Tangney & Dearing, 2002).

*H<sub>1</sub>: SPP can significantly and positively predict burnout among EFL learners.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: SPP can significantly and positively predict shame among EFL learners.*

### *Self-Esteem*

One sheltering factor against depression, psychological distress and the deleterious impacts of SPP on well-being, might be the individuals' self-esteem, as it has proved to buffer the negative effects of several challenges and difficulties (Fernández-Castillo & Fernández-Prados, 2022; Orth & Robins, 2014). It is deemed an appraisal of the self-worth or value of the self (Espayos, Llevado, Meneses, & Tus, 2022; Fekih-Romdhane et al., 2023; Jordan et al., 2015).

Self-esteem is commonly viewed as a continuance with high self-esteem at one pole and low self-esteem at another (Jordan et al., 2015). Low self-esteem is associated with poor physical health

(Budiarto & Helmi, 2021; Stinson et al., 2008), depression, rumination after failures (Brown, 2010; Jordan et al., 2015), and less satisfying social networks (Stinson et al., 2008). Moreover, low self-esteem has also been identified as a risk factor for burnout (Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018). High self-esteem, in turn, has been shown to be related to several favorable outcomes, such as good physical and mental health (Fernández-Castillo & Fernández-Prados, 2022; Fekih-Romdhane et al., 2023; Orth & Robins, 2014; Stinson et al., 2008), positive social relationships (Espayos et al., 2022; Orth & Robins, 2014), well-being at work and successful occupational paths (Kuster, Orth, & Meier, 2013).

As far as we know, the impacts of SPP and self-esteem on academic burnout have not been investigated simultaneously in previous research especially in EFL context. We aimed to investigate whether self-esteem could affect the association between SPP and burnout. Therefore, it is hypothesized that high self-esteem would be one resource factor for EFL students and protect against academic burnout.

*H<sub>3</sub>: Self-esteem can significantly and negatively predict burnout among EFL learners.*

*H<sub>4</sub>: Self-esteem can significantly mediate the effect of SPP on burnout among EFL learners.*

#### *Shame*

Besides the link between SPP and burnout, shame emotion has also long been related to perfectionism and depression (Blatt, 1995; Budiarto & Helmi, 2021; Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Spagnoli et al., 2021). As a kind of self-critical emotion, shame is generally defined as a forceful affection represented by perceptions of self-devaluation, inferiority, and worthlessness (Tangney & Dearing, 2002). It is strongly associated with negative self-evaluation and deficit of self-confidence (Budiarto & Helmi, 2021; Bynum et al., 2023). It demeans self-value and leads to helplessness and social alienation through avoiding social connections (Stearns & Parrott, 2012).

Research has shown that shame emotion has many deleterious psychological and behavioral consequences. It can cause low self-esteem and feelings of worthlessness (Franzoni et al., 2013). Those who endure high rates of shame are usually self-critical and put more emphasis on significant others' evaluations of and opinions about themselves (Budiarto & Helmi, 2021; Kim et al., 2011). Moreover, high levels of shame is related to having higher social anxiety and depression, less empathy, lower self-esteem (e.g., Lim & Yang, 2015; Tangney & Dearing, 2002), less academic enjoyment, diminished intrinsic motivation and reduced academic interest (Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Pekrun, Goetz, Titz, & Perry, 2002). It has been also related to academic burnout (Bynum et al., 2023; Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Lim & Yang, 2015).

Nevertheless, a review of the existing literature reveals that study of shame particularly its connection with perfectionism and psychological distress is quite slim. Few studies have documented the widespread presence of shame in EFL context and its unpleasant repercussions on language learners (e.g., Cook, 2006; Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Wang, 2016). It is postulated that much more than any other community of students, EFL learners are susceptible to the experience of shame due to severe communication apprehension, and intense fear of others' negative judgments on their performance in the new language (Cook, 2006; Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Liu et al., 2021).

*H<sub>5</sub>: Shame can significantly and positively predict burnout among EFL learners.*

*H6: Shame can significantly and negatively predict self-esteem among EFL learners.*

*H7: Shame can significantly mediate the effect of SPP on burnout among EFL learners.*

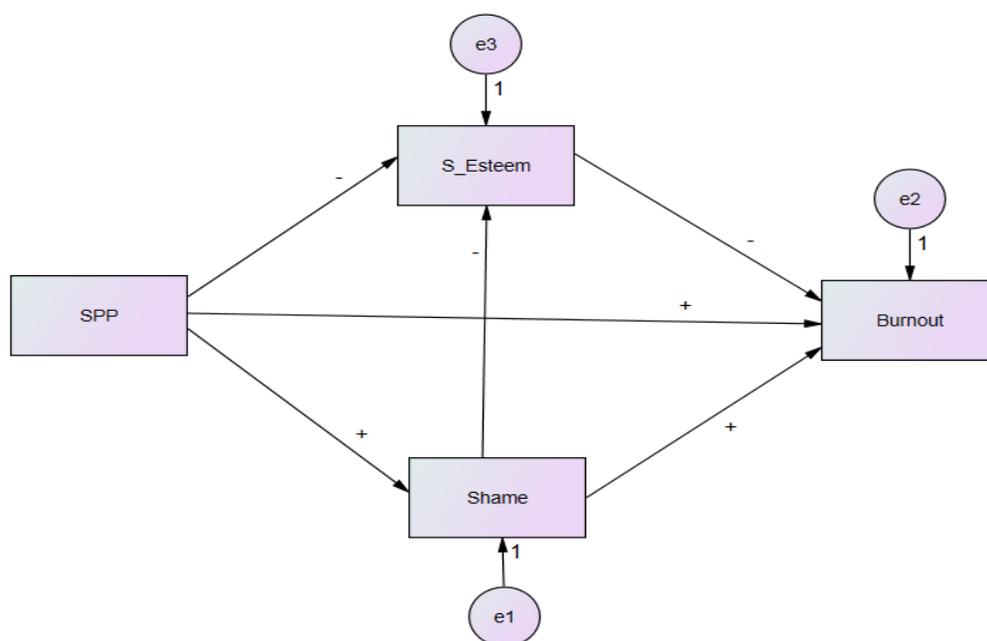
### The Hypothesized Model

As stated earlier, this study purported to investigate the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic burnout among Iranian EFL learners. Further, the mediating role of shame and self-esteem in the SPP – burnout connection was tested.

Altogether, based on a review of the available theoretical and empirical research, it is hypothesized that higher levels of SPP will be related to higher levels of learning burnout and shame. It is also expected that SPP will be reversely related to self-esteem. Further, self-esteem is expected to negatively relate to burnout. A negative path is also hypothesized from shame to self-esteem. In addition, SPP can indirectly related to burnout through the mediating effects of self-esteem and shame emotion. The hypothetical causal paths among these concepts are provided in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The Hypothesized Model*



### Methodology

#### *Participants and Procedure*

This study was descriptive with a cross-sectional design. A sample of 244 university EFL students were chosen through convenient sampling. The students were studying a three-credit compulsory general English course in a state university. One hundred and four students (42.6 %) were male and 140 (57.4 %) were female. Their ages varied from 17 to 26 years ( $M = 19.65$ ,  $SD = 2.06$ ).

Before data collection, permission was obtained from the language professors and the English Department. The participants' informed consent was obtained, and the anonymity of the questionnaires and confidentiality of the collected raw data were assured for them. The Persian version of the scales was administered in physical classes within three weeks. Learners completed the questionnaires by taking into account their general English class. Incomplete questionnaires, refusal to submit the informed consent, and reluctance to continue the study were taken as exclusion criteria. At the end, a total of 244 completed questionnaires (91.04 % return rate) were received from the participants.

## Measures

### *Socially Prescribed Perfectionism*

Socially prescribed perfectionism was measured using the SPP sub-scale of Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). The items represented the degree to which students feel that high standards and norms are being dictated to them by immediate others and that acceptance or acknowledgement is based upon the fulfilment of those criteria (e.g., *Failing at something is awful if other people know about it*). The items were addressed on a five-point Likert scale varying from "not at all true" (1) to "completely true" (5). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability estimate of the scale was  $\alpha = .87$ .

### *Student Burnout Scale*

Students' academic burnout was gauged by the 15-item Academic Burnout scale (Bresó, Salanova, & Schaufeli, 2007). These fifteen items were classified into three dimensions, namely Exhaustion (EX; five items, sample item: *I feel used up at the end of a day at university.*), academic inefficacy (AI; six items, sample item: *I cannot effectively solve the problems that arise in my studies.*) and Cynicism (CY; five items, sample item: *I have become less enthusiastic about my studies.*). They were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "0" (never) to "6" (always). The reliability estimate for the whole burnout was  $\alpha = .87$ .

### *Shame Scale*

EFL learners' feeling of shame was measured via an adapted version of the Internalized Shame Scale (ISS; Cook, 1994). The items of this self-report inventory were rated via a Likert scale with five points varying from "never" (1) to "almost always" (5). The sample item is *"I think others are able to see my defects."* The reliability estimate was  $\alpha = .93$ .

### *Self-Esteem*

EFL learners' general level of self-esteem was gauged with self-esteem sub-scale of the ISS (Cook, 1994). It includes 6 items which are scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "never" (1) to "almost always" (5). The reliability estimate was  $\alpha = .85$  and the sample item is *"I take a positive attitude towards myself."*

## Results

Prior to conducting the main analyses, data screening and initial assumptions were first tested to check for outliers, normality, linearity, multicollinearity, homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, with none of them being violated. Kurtosis and Skewness of the questionnaire items were

also checked. It was found that their values (varying from .12 to .74 for kurtosis and from – .08 to –.48 for skewness) were statistically insignificant. Reliability estimates of the scales, descriptive statistics (standard deviations, means), and inter-relationship among the main factors are reported in Table 1. As shown, SPP, self-esteem, shame, and burnout are all noticeably inter-correlated with one another.

**Table 1**

*Reliability Estimates, Descriptive Statistics, and Correlation Matrix (n=244)*

Variables	M / SD	$\alpha$	1	2	3	4
1. Burnout	45.93/20.11	.90	-			
2. SPP	14.54/3.54	.87	.33**	-		
3. Self-esteem	23.22/ 4.50	.85	-.37**	-.24**	-	
4. Shame	53.38/18.10	.93	.43**	.42**	-.55**	-

\*\*p < .01

Further, to test gender differences in EFL learners' burnout, SPP, self-esteem, and shame, one-way MANOVA was conducted. The findings indicated no significant differences in burnout ( $F = 1.69, p > .05$ ), SPP ( $F = 1.37, p > .05$ ), self-esteem ( $F = .15, p > .05$ ), and shame ( $F = 3.65, p > .05$ ) among males and females (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistics and F-values by Gender (N=244)*

Scales	Male (N=104)		Female (N=140)		F	Sig
	M	SD	M	SD		
Burnout	46.19	1.86	42.99	1.61	1.69	.19
SPP	14.10	.42	13.40	.36	1.37	.24
Self—Esteem	23.01	.45	23.23	.38	.15	.70
Shame	57.04	1.86	52.34	1.60	3.65	.06

*SEM Analysis*

SEM analysis with maximum likelihood estimation was then run via AMOS software to investigate the interrelations among the EFL learners' SPP, self-esteem, shame, and academic burnout. To this end, following Ho (2006), goodness of fit indices of Chi-square divided by degree of freedom ( $\chi^2/df$ ), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), and Normed Fit Index (NFI) were examined. Generally, it is suggested that a cut-off measure of below 3 for  $\chi^2/df$ , a cut-off point of lower than .08 for RMSEA, and a cut-off point measure of above 90 for CFI, NFI, and TLI would indicate an acceptable fit to data (Ho, 2006; Kline, 2005). The hypothesized model was tested, and the following estimates of goodness-of-fit were observed for the base model; TLI = .92, CFI = .95, normative-fit index NFI

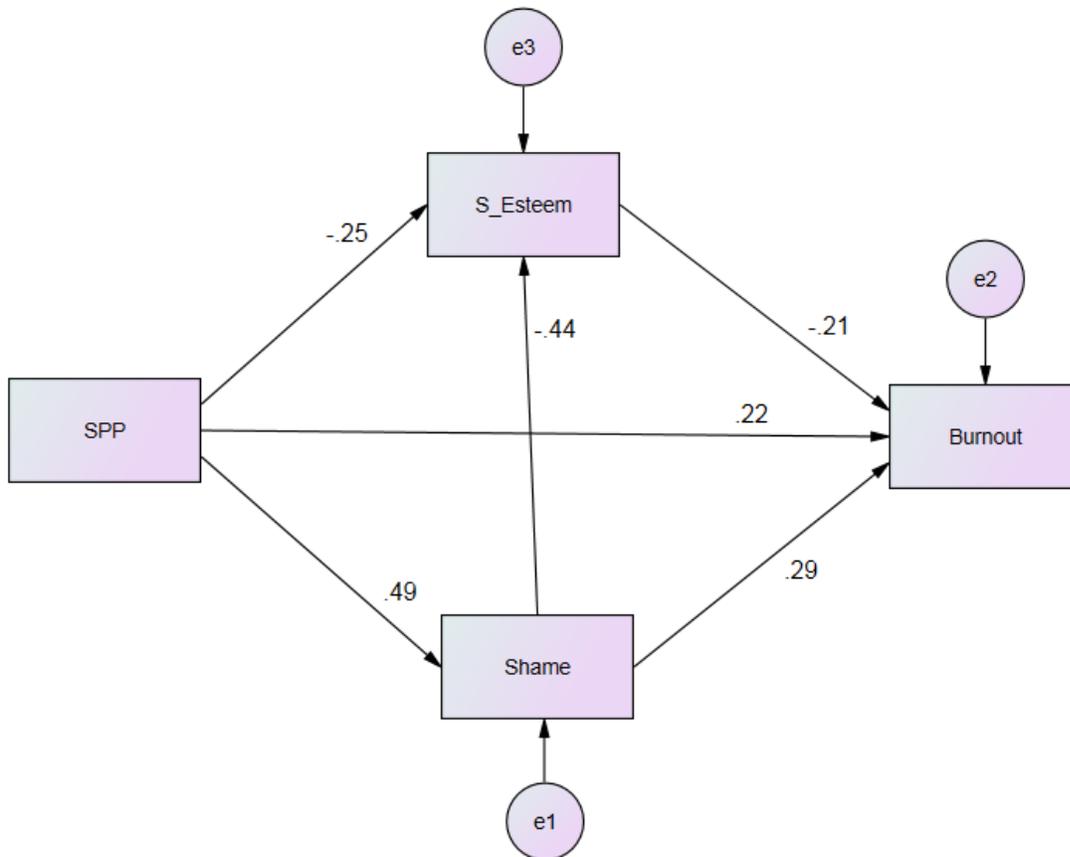
= .91, RMSEA = .07, and  $\chi^2/df = 2.89$  indicating an acceptable good fit for the hypothesized model (Tale 3).

**Table 3**  
*Fit Indices in the Structural Model*

	$\chi^2/df$	TLI	CFI	NFI	RMSEA
Recommended Threshold Values	<3	>.9	>.9	>.9	<0.08
The Model	2.89	.92	.95	.91	.07

In this model, statistically significant paths were noticed leading from SPP ( $\beta = .22, p < .01$ ), shame ( $\beta = .29, p < .01$ ), and self-esteem ( $\beta = -.21, p < .001$ ), to their expected destination of learning burnout. SPP also significantly predicted shame ( $\beta = .49, p < .001$ ). In addition, the path from shame to self-esteem was significant ( $\beta = -.44, p < .001$ ). The graphical structural model including standardized path coefficients is provided in Figure 2.

**Figure 2**  
*The Final Structural Model*



*Mediation Analyses*

In order to examine the mediating impact of self-esteem and shame on SPP-burnout connections, PROCESS macro was used (Hayes, 2013; Hayes & Matthes 2009). This computational instrument yields bootstrap confidence intervals for the indirect impacts of the predicting variables on the dependent variables through the mediator(s). The findings showed that the mediating influence of self-esteem on the impact of SPP on burnout ( $b = .26$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ , 95%,  $CI = .05, .56$ ) was statistically significant. Further, the results suggested that the mediating impact of shame on the effect of SPP on burnout ( $b = .57$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ , 95%,  $CI = .15, 1.01$ ) was statistically significant (Table 4).

**Table 4***Measures of Mediation Analysis*

indirect paths	b	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
SPP→Self-esteem→Burnout	.26	.13	.05	.56
SPP→Shame→Burnout	.57	.22	.15	1.01

Note.  $b$  = coefficient of indirect effect = represents the indirect influence of the first factor on the third one via the partial mediation of the second factor.

BootSE =Standard error of estimate; BootULCI & BootLLCI = upper and lower confidence intervals.

**Discussion**

EFL learning might dispose learners to academic burnout due to its challenging and stress provoking nature for most EFL students who do not live in a natural language learning context (Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Liu et al., 2021). Thus, in order to have a better understanding of this phenomenon and factors related to it, the present study aimed to investigate the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and academic burnout among Iranian EFL students. Further, the mediating effects of shame and self-esteem on the SPP – burnout connection were tested.

The results of SEM analysis revealed that all of the variables were inter-connected with one another. These findings confirm previous theoretical and experimental research though quite limited in EFL context. Zhang et al. (2007), for example, found that high levels of perfectionism could severely exacerbate learning burnout among Chinese university students. These results also corroborate research indicating that over preoccupation with mistakes in the face of others and maladaptive kinds of perfectionism could precipitate learning burnout (Appleton, Hall, & Hill, 2009; Lemyre, Roberts, & Stray-Gundersen, 2007; Liu et al., 2021).

SPP is related to a sense of conditional self-worth, which is based upon the fulfilment of strict standards and norms that are considered to be externally enforced (Hill, Hall, Appleton, & Kozub, 2008). Since socially prescribed perfectionist learners lack any sense of control over their goal achievement, their efforts and engagement to attain goals are usually evaluated as threatening, and result in severe anxiety and consequently burnout symptoms (Campbell & DiPaula, 2002). Besides, according to Freudenberg (1974), perfectionists are more vulnerable to burnout. Due to their inability to meet the high standards they set for themselves or perceive to be important for

immediate others, they feel depressed, distressed, and tired. Moreover, perfectionists often place excessive importance on the judgment of others and themselves (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Thus, individuals with high perfectionism may endure higher rates of stress to succeed as they feel that they must fulfil both their own perfect standards and norms and those of significant others. Therefore, perfectionism has been related to extreme rates of psychological distress (Gould, Udry, Tuffey, & Loehr, 1996; Mitchelson & Burns, 1998).

When it comes to EFL context, learners' obsession with having flawless performance in the foreign language in front of others, less tolerance for their deficiencies (e.g., errors in pronunciation, writing, and speaking and not passing English exams), and fear of looking foolish and others' negative evaluations could render high levels of anxiety (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002; Zafarani et al., 2022) and consequently lead to learning burnout. EFL learners who afraid that their teachers, classmates, and families expect them to be perfect, equal their self-worth to the fulfillment of others' expectations, consider making mistakes and having errors as highly objectionable, and have a striking fear of negative evaluation and looking foolish which might endure more burnout.

The significant paths from SPP to self-esteem and shame are in line with previous research (Ashby, Rice, & Martin, 2006; Fernández-Castillo & Fernández-Prados, 2022; Stoeber et al., 2008). Along the same line, Awad, Hallit and Obeid (2022) found that Lebanese university students who were suffering negative perfectionism felt that unreasonably high norms and standards were imposed on them from the significant others. This, in turn, led to higher rates of stress and anxiety and diminished sense of self value and worth. The findings of Piotrowski et al (2023) also revealed that learners' perfectionism could significantly affect their self-esteem and shame emotion. Connected to these findings, Hamachek (1978) posited that shame is more probable to be experienced by those perfectionist who feels that they have not met the expectations and demands of the emotionally important and immediate others. It is also said that maladaptive perfectionists probably become burned out when they also endure continuous feelings of inadequacy and low self-worth (Stoeber et al., 2008).

The negative path from self-esteem to burnout corroborated the findings of previous research suggesting that self-esteem could exert remarkable influence on well-being and psychological distress (Budiarto & Helmi, 2021; Espayos et al, 2022; Mikolajczak & Roskam, 2018). Espayos et al (2022), for example, found that senior high school students who enjoyed higher level of self-esteem endured less burnout compared to their low self-esteem peers. It appears that high level of self-esteem could act as a safeguarding factor against the deleterious impacts of SPP on learning burnout, insinuating that learners with high self-esteem might be less susceptible and sensitive to others' demands and expectations and thus, be less burned out. In other words, reminding their own self-worth, the learners might better cope with adversities and negative emotions in EFL context.

The positive association between shame and burnout is in accordance with previous research (Karimi & Fallah, 2021; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Those who endure high rates of shame are usually self-critical and put more emphasis on others' evaluations of and opinions about themselves (Budiarto & Helmi, 2021). Therefore, they might suffer higher social anxiety and

psychological distress (Lim & Yang, 2015). Considering the essence of a negative and intense emotion such as shame, obsession with communication errors and mistakes, and unpredictable challenges in communicating in the foreign language, and extreme fear of others' negative evaluation make EFL learners especially those suffering intense shame more nervous and depressed. This might result in feeling inferiority, frustration, worthlessness, and consequently learning burnout.

### **Conclusion**

Given the insufficiency of research on the association between perfectionism and burnout in EFL context, the present research intended to examine the link between SPP and language learning burnout under the effect of self-esteem and shame simultaneously. The results of the study presented evidence on the association between personality factor of SPP, burnout, shame, and self-esteem. The findings enhanced our understanding of the connection between SPP and burnout by documenting the mediating effects of self-esteem and shame on SPP and English learning burnout. Simply put, EFL learners who have socially prescribed dispositions also tend to suffer more shame emotion and possess low levels of self-esteem and thus are more probable to endure burnout in their English education.

As for the related pedagogical practices and implications, EFL learners and teachers' cognizance of such psychosocial associations and mechanisms can influentially lessen the detrimental repercussions of SPP, which could come into view in the form of low self-esteem, negative emotions and learning burnout. In order to minimize foreign language learning burnout, it is vital for teachers to help learners develop their self-confidence, cherish their self-worth and values, and provide instruction that inspires their learning enthusiasm while tackling their shame and anxiety in EFL classes particularly encountering errors and assessments. More specifically, to assuage the EFL learners' over sensitivity to and obsession with language errors, language teachers should remind language learners that foreign language learning is not a one-shot venture and that reemergence of erroneous performance is almost inescapable in the foreign learning process (Gass, 2013; Liu et al., 2021).

Furthermore, to tackle the EFL learners' preoccupation with error-free performance, a well-balanced language learning course should introduce the four common strands of form-focused learning, fluency development, meaning-focused output, and meaning-focused input as equally important (Liu et al., 2021; Fernández-Castillo & Fernández-Prados, 2022; Nation, 2007). In addition, considering that exams can be a potential source of language learning anxiety, EFL teachers should also plan for formative assessment which yields helpful feedback at each phase of learning with the aim of enhancing language learning instead of ranking the learners (Black & Jones, 2006), thereby, mitigating their intense anxiety over being judged, evaluated, and tested. Moreover, given that perfectionism can emanate from unreasonable self-beliefs (Gregersen & Horwitz, 2002), teachers are advised to help EFL learners set more obtainable goals based upon their L2 aptitude and proficiency. For example, students should be reminded that instead of over sensitivity over obtaining native-like accent, they had better pay attention to comprehensibility and intelligibility instead.

Like any other study, this research suffered a few limitations that should be taken into account. First, the data on the main variables was collected only through self-reported questionnaires. Mono-method variance bias, to some extent, could have explained the observed impact and inflated the interconnections among the variables (see Reio, 2010). Future research can thus employ other forms of data collections such as behavioral and observer-rated ones to have a clearer and more comprehensive picture of these associations. Second, although we adopted SEM to analyze the inter-connection among the variables, due to the cross-sectional nature of the design, the changes and development of learning burnout as a dynamic process have not been considered. As such, a longitudinal method would shed light on the potential causal relationships between the variables. Third, the participants were all university students, so the findings should be generalized to other settings with caution. Finally, in this study, burnout was taken as an overall concept. In order to have a more comprehensive image of this phenomenon, future research can work on its individual dimensions.

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