

# Parental Meta-Emotion as a Mediator Between Perfectionism and Self-Handicapping in Adolescents

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## Article Info

### Article type:

Original Research

### How to cite this article:

Kheyrdoust, S., & Kord Tamini, B. (2025). Parental Meta-Emotion as a Mediator Between Perfectionism and Self-Handicapping in Adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent and Youth Psychological Studies*, 6(5), 1-11.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.61838/kman.jayps.6.5.1>



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## ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study was conducted to investigate the parental meta-emotion as a mediator between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents of high school students in Zahedan City, Iran.

**Methods and Materials:** The statistical population of this study consisted of all high school students in Zahedan in the academic year 2023-2024 and one of their parents (180 participants), of whom 180 adolescents (91 girls, 89 boys) were selected as the research sample by multi-stage cluster sampling. Participating parents answered the Kehoe (2006) Parents' Meta-Emotion Philosophy Questionnaire, and their children answered two scales, Frost's (1990) Multi-dimensional Perfectionism, and Jones and Rhodewalt's (1982) Self-Handicapping Scale. The data were analyzed using Pearson's correlation coefficient in SPSS-2 and path analysis through Smart PLS-4 software.

**Findings:** The findings indicated that parental meta-emotion displayed a significant positive correlation with perfectionism ( $r = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and a significant negative correlation with self-handicapping ( $r = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). A substantial positive relationship existed between perfectionism and self-handicapping ( $r = .46$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results indicated that parental meta-emotion had a significant effect on self-handicapping (Beta =  $-.413$ ,  $t = 14.00$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). Perfectionism had a significant positive effect on parental meta-emotion (Beta =  $.503$ ,  $t = 20.94$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). Perfectionism had a significant positive effect on self-handicapping (Beta =  $.728$ ,  $t = 48.43$ ,  $p = .0001$ ). The indirect effect of perfectionism via the parental meta-emotion on self-handicapping (Beta =  $-.208$ ,  $t = 12.10$ ,  $p = .0001$ ) was significant. The results indicated that parental meta-emotion significantly negatively affected self-handicapping, whereas perfectionism had a significant positive direct effect on both parental meta-emotion and self-handicapping. The findings further revealed that parental meta-emotion played a significant mediating role in the relationship between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents.

**Conclusion:** According to the results, it is concluded that parental meta-emotion is a significant mediator between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents, and accordingly, it is recommended to adopt appropriate plans to regulate parental meta-emotion in adolescents.

**Keywords:** Parental meta-emotion, perfectionism, self-handicapping, adolescents.

## 1. Introduction

Perfectionism is an internal desire to achieve or demonstrate perfection to oneself or others. Among adolescents, perfectionism may encompass adaptive and maladaptive types that impact mental well-being and academic achievement (Çheç et al., 2025). In recent decades, researchers have explored perfectionism from various perspectives. This topic has gained significance among researchers due to its diverse associations with beneficial and detrimental outcomes. To address this concern, recent studies have emphasized the importance of distinguishing between perfectionism and excellence. However, the applying of this distinction to adolescence remains largely unknown, even though this period is crucial for the emergence of perfectionism (Bien et al., 2025). Researchers have demonstrated that the goal of excellence differs from perfection. A person striving for excellence does not inherently seek perfection. In contrast, a perfectionist pursues excellence in the form of being flawless. Consequently, assessing the pursuit of perfection and excellence requires a holistic approach. This framework illustrates the desirable relationship between these two forms of striving. It aims to consider the various factors that influence an individual's pursuit, including motivation, goals, and the levels of determination and willpower (Gaudreau et al., 2023). To date, no research has examined the relationship between perfectionism and emotions outside the parent-child dynamic, so the present study investigates findings from studies that have addressed the connection between perfectionism and emotional variables. Gaudreau et al. (2023) identified a positive association between the pursuit of perfection and achievement (Gaudreau et al., 2023). This suggests that those who aim for perfection are likely inclined to seek excellence in other areas. A thorough assessment of these initiatives enhances our understanding of individuals' motivation and performance, which is especially important in academic and professional contexts. Studies indicate that perfectionism, along with elements such as the behavioral activation system and the inhibitory system, significantly influences cognitive control of emotions (Yosefi et al., 2023).

Self-handicapping is an essential variable during adolescence. Self-handicapping refers to a self-protective approach where an individual identifies or constructs barriers to achievement to produce justifications for potential failure; this tactic safeguards the person's positive self-perception by enabling them to downplay reasons for a

lack of competence. Additionally, self-handicapping can also serve to enhance attributions to one's abilities after achieving success (Wang, 2016). In simpler terms, by setting specific challenges, a person provides a reason to explain their poor performance; these challenges can be either real or imagined. Self-handicapping is a protective strategy that individuals use to maintain their reputation and self-worth in the face of potential failure. In this context, the individual creates challenges for themselves before completing a task or undergoing an evaluation. These challenges offer a valid explanation for unsatisfactory performance. Thus, if the person fails to complete the task, they can attribute their failure to these challenges rather than a lack of skill or talent (American Psychological, 2023).

Parental meta-emotion refers to the feelings parents experience regarding their own emotions and those of their children. Meta-emotion philosophy is a structured collection of ideas and metaphors, a belief system, and a way of managing one's feelings and those of one's children (Gottman et al., 1996). Parental attitudes and parenting styles significantly influence self-handicapping in adolescents. Wang et al. (2024) demonstrated that the supportive style exhibits a minimal level of self-handicapping, while the authoritarian style shows the most significant level (Wang et al., 2024). For example, an adolescent with encouraging parents might view mistakes as opportunities for growth, whereas one with strict parents may avoid trying due to fear of failure. Parenting styles affect the satisfaction of adolescents' psychological needs, which can lead to the development of intrinsic motivation. Ultimately, this process influences the extent of self-handicapping in adolescents. Positive meta-emotion is negatively and significantly related to suicidal ideation, while negative meta-emotion has a positive and significant relationship with psychological distress (Sabbaghi Renani et al., 2023). Some findings indicated that maternal stress in parents of children with behavioral issues is predicted by factors such as perfectionism and psychological flexibility, with this parental stress mediated by the interplay between psychological flexibility and perfectionism (Jannesari, 2025). The research findings have also shown that there is a direct relationship between authoritative parenting style, positive perfectionism, and self-esteem. This suggests that parents who adopt authoritative methods are more likely to have children who exhibit perfectionistic traits and possess high self-esteem. In other words, parenting style can significantly affect the personality traits of children (Khodadadi et al., 2024). It seems that emotion regulation is

also connected to perfectionism in adolescents. Emotion regulation can also predict perfectionism, with the dimensions of blaming others, acceptance, and positive reappraisal as predictors of perfectionism (Dastgahi & Farrokhnia, 2023). Difficulties in emotion regulation are positively linked to perfectionism, particularly concerning the strategies and aspects of maladaptive perfectionism. It was also noted that issues related to perfectionism and negative emotions are present in both healthy and unhealthy individuals. For instance, a perfectionist might worry about completing a work assignment flawlessly, and this concern can lead to feelings of anxiety and frustration. Nonetheless, it remains uncertain whether perfectionistic worries lead to negative feelings or vice versa (Brás et al.). Hummel et al. (2023) suggest that there may be a one-way causal link from perfectionistic concerns to negative feelings in individuals who possess high levels of trait perfectionism (Hummel et al., 2023). Studies have shown that maladaptive perfectionism predict the psychological vulnerability, for instance, in a study Xiong et al. (2024) found that maladaptive perfectionism positively and significantly predicts anxiety, and that self-compassion can substantially mediate the relationship between maladaptive perfectionism and anxiety, with family support moderating the mediating effect of self-compassion on anxiety regarding maladaptive perfectionism (Xiong et al., 2024). Some other findings show a favorable correlation between perfectionism and academic stress, along with the mediating role of worry and rumination in the connection between academic stress and symptoms of anxiety and depression (Gil et al., 2023). Clinical perfectionism correlates with adverse facets of mental health (Nguyen & Morris, 2024). This form of perfectionism, characterized by excessively high and unattainable expectations for oneself and others, may result in a diminished sense of psychological well-being. In particular, perfectionists tend to encounter elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. These individuals might frequently worry about unfavorable assessments, often stressing their inability to meet unattainable expectations. These concerns ultimately lead to mental anguish, appearing as feelings of despair, insignificance, and unhappiness with life. Menon et al. (2024) noted a significant and positive correlation among perceived parental expectations, maladaptive perfectionism, and fear of negative assessment. They also found a heightened perceptions of parental expectations and maladaptive perfectionism elevated levels of fear of negative evaluation (Menon et al., 2024). Maladaptive perfectionism played a notable mediating role

in the connection between perceived parental expectations and fear of negative evaluation.

Limited research has been carried out to investigate the connection between perfectionism and self-handicapping. In a study, Kavyani et al. (2023) found a positive and significant correlation between self-handicapping behavior and perfectionism (Kavyani et al., 2023). Some research findings indicate that maladaptive perfectionism positively predicts self-handicapping and also, maladaptive perfectionism positively affects self-handicapping tendencies. On the contrary, adaptive perfectionism negatively predicts self-handicapping (Manav & Temel, 2024). Maladaptive perfectionism is a positive and significant predictor of fear of failure, self-handicapping, and burnout among athletes (Kang & Gong, 2024). It seems that negative personality characteristics are connected to perfectionism. For example, dark personality traits, conditional self-esteem, and academic self-efficacy are directly linked to the perfectionism of students. Moreover, dark personality traits and conditional self-esteem are indirectly associated with students' perfectionism via academic self-efficacy. The findings confirmed that academic self-efficacy mediates the causal links between dark personality traits and conditional self-worth concerning perfectionism (Ashrafzade & Sheikhalizadeh, 2023). Research evidence indicates that intervention in the mediating variables of goal orientation, metacognitive beliefs, and perfectionism has a significant effect on students' academic self-handicapping (Ghaffarzadeh et al., 2023). Perfectionism related to evaluation anxiety has a significant positive effect on procrastination behaviors, fear of failure, and self-handicapping (Chang et al., 2025).

Given that there has been a lack of studies investigating parental meta-emotion as a mediator between perfectionism and self-handicapping in Iranian adolescents, this research aims to explore the relationship between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents. It will also examine the mediating role of parental meta-emotion among adolescents in Zahedan, a city in southeastern Iran. By investigating the influence of parental meta-emotion, this research intends to address a gap in the literature on adolescent psychology in Iran. It aims to clarify how emotional attitudes within families contribute to self-handicapping behaviors in perfectionistic adolescents.

## 2. Methods and Materials

## 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study is categorized as descriptive-correlational research regarding the data collection method. The population for this study consists of all high school students and their parents in Zahedan during the academic year 2023–2024. The sample size was calculated using G\*Power software (Soper, 2024), with an effect size ( $f^2$ ) set at .03, an error probability (alpha) of .05, a power (Beta) of .80, four latent variables, and a total of 87 observed variables (items). Using this formula, the minimum sample size was calculated to be 137 adolescents, and in this study, 180 adolescents (91 girls and 89 boys) were chosen through a multi-stage cluster sampling method, where the pertinent questionnaires were handed out to students by visiting high schools in Zahedan. In the initial phase of the study, an introductory letter was secured from the University of Sistan and Baluchestan, addressed to the General Directorate of Education of Sistan and Baluchestan Province for sample selection and questionnaire distribution. Subsequently, the required permits were acquired from the General Directorate of Education of Sistan and Baluchestan Province to conduct the research in the Education and Training Department of District Two in Zahedan City, southeastern Iran. The sampling method was as follows: six high schools (three girls' and three boys' schools) were randomly selected from District 2 of Zahedan city, and then five classes were randomly selected from each school. Twelve adolescent male and female students were selected from each class. In the final stage 180 adolescents (91 girls and 89 boys) were randomly selected and requested to complete their own perfectionism and self-handicapping scale as well as the parental meta-emotion questionnaire from one of their parents. Ultimately, with the collaboration of school officials, students and their guardians filled out the surveys. The data gathered from the questionnaires was examined.

## 2.2. Measures

### 2.2.1. Parents' Meta-Emotion Philosophy

The Parent Meta-Emotion Questionnaire, developed by Kehoe (2006), was utilized to assess parental meta-emotion (Kehoe, 2006). The initial version of the questionnaire included 30 questions, which Parsai and Foladchang (2010) translated, validated, and confirmed as reliable for Iranian culture, and three questions were removed. This survey contains two measures: leadership and awareness (acceptance) (Parsai & Foladchang, 2010). Kehoe (2006)

investigated the reliability of the questionnaire through factor analysis, and findings indicated that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .93 for the leadership sub-scale, .85 for awareness, and .79 for the overall scale (Kehoe, 2006). In Iranian culture, Parsai and Foladchang (2010) indicated that the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the leadership sub-scale is .86, for the awareness sub-scale is .81, and for the overall scale is .88 (Parsai & Foladchang, 2010). In the study by Karami and Seydi, (2022), the total reliability of this questionnaire, measured with Cronbach's alpha, was .90 (Karami & Seydi, 2022). In the current research, the Cronbach's alpha values for the overall scale was .90.

### 2.2.2. Frost Multi-dimensional Perfectionism Scale

To assess adolescent perfectionism, the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale developed by Frost et al. (1990) was utilized. The Multi-dimensional Perfectionism Scale, created by Frost et al. in 1990, is grounded in the multi-dimensional model of perfectionism (Frost et al., 1990). This survey comprises 35 questions that assess six sub-scales. The scales included in this questionnaire are: 1. Concern and Anxiety regarding Errors sub-scale, 2. Individual Standards, 3. Expectations from Parents, 4. Criticism from Parents, 5. Uncertainty and Doubts regarding Actions, and 6. Structure and Organization. In the Iranian adaptation of this questionnaire, the internal consistency coefficient for the complete questionnaire was .86. At the same time the sub-scales for Worry about Mistakes, Doubt about Actions, Parental Expectations, Parental Criticism, Personal Standards, and Organization had coefficients of .85, .72, .78, .47, .57, and .83, respectively. The test-retest coefficient for the complete questionnaire with a one-week gap was also found to be .90. The test-retest coefficients for the sub-scales were as follows: concern over errors .84, uncertainty regarding actions .81, expectations from parents .79, criticism from parents .53, individual standards .85, and planning .83. The research conducted by Soleimani and Pakravan (2024) reported a reliability of .84 determined through the Cronbach's alpha method. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha for the complete scale was recorded as .91 (Soleimani & Pakravan, 2024).

### 2.2.3. Self-Handicapping Scale

To assess self-handicapping in adolescents, the Jones and Rhodewalt Self-Handicapping Scale (1982) was utilized, which was created and modified to evaluate self-handicapping. This scale is made up of 25 items. The

responses to the inquiries are measured on a 6–point Likert scale ranging from 0 to 5. The internal consistency of this scale was achieved through Cronbach's alpha, yielding a value of .79, which is considered acceptable (Jones & Rhodewalt, 1982; Soleimani & Pakravan, 2024). The scale's stability was preserved through retesting within a month, and the data gathered from various samples also demonstrate both convergent and divergent validity. In the research conducted by Molaei Moghbeli et al. (2023), the Cronbach's alpha value was .77. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha was measured at .80 (Molaei Moghbeli et al., 2023).

**Table 1**

*Mean and standard deviation in the variables of parental hyperarousal, perfectionism, and self-handicapping*

No.	Variable	n	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	Perfectionism	180	83.43	13.31
2	Self-handicapping	180	35.48	12.93
3	Parental meta-emotion	180	71.38	6.72

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics regarding the participants' scores on parental meta-emotion, perfectionism, and self-handicapping factors. According to the findings in the table above, the average scores for perfectionism were 83.43, for self-handicapping were 35.48, and for parental meta-emotion were 71.38,

**Table 2**

*Correlation coefficient between parental meta-emotion, perfectionism, and self-handicapping*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Perfectionism	1		
2. Self-handicapping	.46**	1	
3. Parental meta-emotion	.30**	-.14*	1

\*\*p<0.01

The findings from Table 2 indicate that parental meta-emotion displayed a significant positive correlation with perfectionism ( $r = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and a significant negative

### 2.3. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data from this research, descriptive statistics indicators like frequency, mean, and standard deviation were utilized, along with inferential statistics including the Pearson correlation coefficient, employing SPSS-26 software and path analysis through Smart PLS-4 software.

## 3. Findings and Results

This section presents the descriptive statistics indicators (mean and standard deviation) of participants' scores on the Parental Meta-emotion Questionnaire, the Perfectionism Scale, and the Self-Handicapping Scale.

accordingly. The standard deviations for perfectionism, self-handicapping, and parental meta-emotion were 13.31, 12.93, and 6.72, respectively.

Table 2 presents the correlation coefficients between the research variables

correlation with self-handicapping ( $r = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ ). A substantial positive relationship existed between perfectionism and self-handicapping ( $r = .46$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 3**

*Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, AVE, HTMT*

Variable	Cronbach's alpha	CR	AVE	1	2	3
1. Parental Meta-Emotion	.90	.90	.41			
2. Perfectionism	.91	.93	.37	.61		
3. Self-Handicapping	.80	.78	.24	.41	.76	-



Standard criteria were applied to evaluate how well the data fit the model. Usually, values between .70 and .95 for Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are widely accepted. Table 3 illustrates the presentation of internal consistency reliability (CA and CR) in this research. In this research, all constructs achieved Cronbach's alpha values between .80 and .91. Furthermore, all constructs achieved values ranging from .78 to .93 for composite reliability. Consequently, the structure of this research demonstrates acceptable internal consistency reliability. On the other hand, average variance extracted values exceeding .50 are typically considered sufficient. In the current study, the all three indices fell below this threshold, .41 for parental meta-emotion, .37 for perfectionism, and .24 for self-handicapping and the variables exhibited low AVEs,

demonstrating insufficient convergent validity. Generally, values below .85 are considered acceptable for the HTMT criterion. In the current research, every construct achieved values ranging from .41 to .76 for discriminant validity based on the HTMT criterion.

A bootstrap analysis was conducted for both direct and indirect effects to investigate if parental meta-emotion served as a mediator in the connection between perfectionism and self-handicapping among adolescents. All analyses were performed utilizing Smart PLS-4 software applications.

Table 4 presents the results of the mediation model for the parental meta-emotion as a mediator between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents.

**Table 4**

*Results of the mediation model for the parental meta-emotion as a mediator between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents*

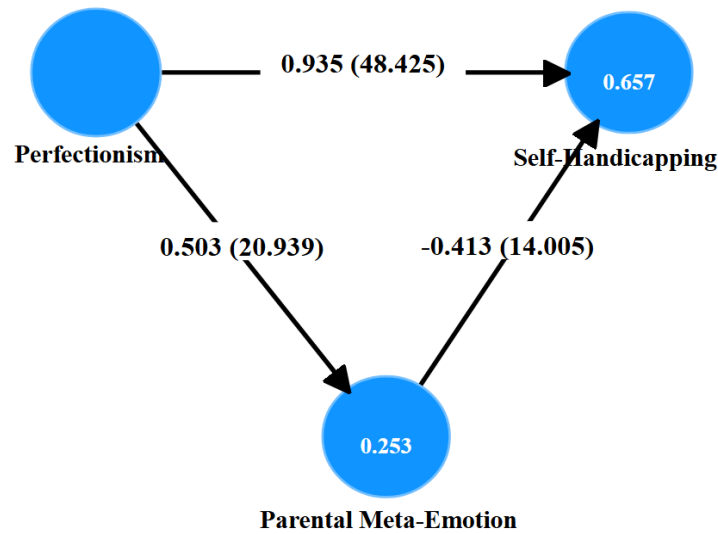
Pathway	Beta	t	Sig.	R <sup>2</sup>	Q <sup>2</sup>	f <sup>2</sup>	Lower Bound (CI 95%)	Upper Bound (CI 95%)
Direct effect								
Parental meta-emotion-> Self-handicapping	-.413	14.00	.0001	.25	.32	.37	-.47	-.36
Perfectionism -> Parental meta-emotion	.503	20.94	.0001	.66	.32	.34	.46	.55
Perfectionism -> Self-handicapping	.728	48.43	.0001	-	.14	1.91	.90	.97
Indirect effect								
Perfectionism -> Parental meta-emotion -> Self-handicapping	-.208	12.098	.0001	-	-	-	-.24	-.18

Typically, R<sup>2</sup> values of .75, .50, and .25 are strong, moderate, and weak. Moreover, Q<sup>2</sup> values exceeding zero are essential. Concerning the effect sizes (f<sup>2</sup>), values of .35, .15, and .02 are considered significant, moderate, and small for f<sup>2</sup>. In the current study, the R<sup>2</sup> values for the self-handicapping were .25, and for the parental meta-emotion, .66, which indicate weak and mild values, respectively. The Q<sup>2</sup> values for parental meta-emotion, perfectionism, and self-handicapping were .32, .32, and .14, respectively, and all were above zero. In the current research, the f<sup>2</sup> value was .37 (moderate effect) regarding the self-handicapping, .34 (moderate effect) for parental meta-emotion, and 1.91 (significant effect).

The results indicated that parental meta-emotion has a considerable significant effect on self-handicapping (Beta=

-.413, t= 14.00, p= .0001). In contrast, perfectionism has a significant positive effect on parental meta-emotion (Beta= .503, t= 20.94, p= .0001). Perfectionism has a significant positive effect on self-handicapping (Beta= .728, t= 48.43, p= .0001). The indirect effect of perfectionism via the parental meta-emotion on self-handicapping (Beta= -.208, t= 12.10, p= .0001) was significant. According to the results of structural equation modeling (SEM) parental meta-emotion significantly negatively affected self-handicapping, whereas perfectionism had a significant positive direct effect on both parental meta-emotion and self-handicapping. The findings further indicated that parental meta-emotion played a significant mediating role in the relationship between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents.

Figure 1

*Direct and indirect pathway coefficients*

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the mediation role of parental meta-emotion as a mediator between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents. The findings showed a positive and meaningful relationship between perfectionism and self-handicapping in adolescents. The results also indicated that perfectionism had a direct and notable effect on self-handicapping. The results of this research align with specific findings from earlier studies (Chang et al., 2025; Ghaffarzadeh et al., 2023; Kang & Gong, 2024; Kavyani et al., 2023; Manav & Temel, 2024; Yosefi et al., 2023). It seems that perfectionism positively affects the self-handicapping behavior of adolescents (Kavyani et al., 2023). The previous findings are in coordination with the results of current research. The previous ones found that maladaptive perfectionism positively predicted and affected self-handicapping tendencies (Kang & Gong, 2024; Manav & Temel, 2024). It is deduced that intervening in the mediating factors of goal orientation, metacognitive beliefs, and perfectionism significantly influenced students' academic self-handicapping (Ghaffarzadeh et al., 2023). Moreover, it appears that perfectionism has significant association with evaluation anxiety and positive impact on self-handicapping (Chang et al., 2025). To support the results found in this research, it can be concluded that the connection between these two concepts in adolescents is quite reasonable, both pertain to adolescents' worries about expectations, their perceived competence, and their parents' evaluations of

them. Adolescents are constantly striving to meet favorable benchmarks. This endeavor can impact their self-perception and the worth attributed by their parents and others. Adolescent perfectionism appears to have a positive correlation with self-handicapping, as it drives teens to seek validation from parents and others for their emotions. For instance, a perfectionistic teenager might refrain from undertaking something significant due to anxiety about failing. The teenager wishes that parents and others won't hold it against him for not making an effort; instead, they will view him as a gifted individual who just happens to be unfortunate. This behavior is seen as self-handicapping in adolescents, as the adolescent deliberately establishes situations that lessen their likelihood of achievement. By doing this, the perfectionist adolescent stops his parents and others from critically assessing his skills. It appears that adolescents frequently feel anxious about the opinions their parents and others have of them. Consequently, they seek methods to shield themselves from criticism.

Additionally, the findings of the current study indicated that perfectionism has a direct and meaningful impact parental meta-emotion of adolescents. These results align with several results from earlier studies (Brás et al.; Dastgahi & Farrokhnia, 2023; Gil et al., 2023; Hummel et al., 2023; Menon et al., 2024; Xiong et al., 2024). This indicates that parents of children with perfectionistic characteristics might face emotional responses more intensely than others. These inclinations can likewise influence their perception of competence as parents, leading them to feel less adept in

their parenting responsibilities. In general, it is evident that perfectionism significantly impacts emotional well-being and parenting abilities. It appears that emotion regulation has significant effect on perfectionism in adolescents (Dastgahi & Farrokhnia, 2023). Moreover, the previous findings discovered a positive connection between challenges in emotional regulation and perfectionism, particularly in terms of maladaptive perfectionism strategies and aspects (Brás et al.). According to the findings of this study, it can be inferred that parents' heightened emotional worries, particularly those concerning their children's perfectionism, can significantly impact adolescent mental health. These worries, frequently stemming from unrealistic expectations and a wish for perfect achievement in their offspring, can inadvertently result in detrimental perfectionism in adolescents. Moreover, the perfectionist adolescent may fret about accomplishing tasks perfectly. This concern can result in anxiety and frustration for him. For instance, a student might dedicate hours to assignments to avoid making an error. This anxiety about failing can hinder his performance. Nonetheless, it remains uncertain whether perfectionistic worries lead to negative feelings in adolescents or if the reverse is true. There isn't a significant amount of research on this subject. It seems that perfectionistic worries are associated with negative feelings (Hummel et al., 2023). Adolescents who are perfectionists tend to encounter negative feelings if they fret about achieving perfection. These results suggest that addressing perfectionists' concerns is essential for alleviating negative emotions.

The findings of the current study indicated that parental meta-emotion had a direct and significant effect on adolescents' self-handicapping. The findings of previous studies were similar to the outcomes of the current research (Jannesari, 2025; Khodadadi et al., 2024; Sabbaghi Renani et al., 2023; Wang, 2016). This discovery suggests that parents' confidence in their ability to raise their children significantly contributes to minimizing self-handicapping behaviors in adolescents. Up to this point, there has been no research focused specifically on parental meta-emotion and self-handicapping in adolescents. It seems that the supportive parenting style exhibited the least amount of self-handicapping among adolescents. In comparison, the authoritarian style led to the most significant degree of self-handicapping (Wang et al., 2024). For instance, adolescents with encouraging parents might view their errors as chances to gain knowledge. However, an adolescent with strict parents might refrain from attempting due to a fear of failing. Parenting approaches affect how well an adolescent's

psychological needs are met. Meeting these needs can influence the adolescent's inner motivation. This internal drive ultimately influences the adolescent's degree of self-sabotage. To put it differently, parents who satisfy their children's psychological needs tend to have children who exhibit fewer self-handicapping behaviors. Sabbaghi Renani et al. (2023) discovered that positive meta-emotion has a negative correlation with suicidal ideation. Furthermore, negative meta-emotion has a positive correlation with psychological distress (Sabbaghi Renani et al., 2023). This discovery suggests that parents' capacity to manage own and their children's emotions can avert the development of psychological issues in adolescents. Parents who can convey positive feelings and handle their negative emotions are more likely to raise children with improved mental well-being. It seems that maternal stress in mothers of kids with behavioral issues is linked to perfectionism and mental flexibility (Jannesari, 2025). The stress experienced by these mothers is related to their children's perfectionism via psychological flexibility. In other words, mothers characterized by perfectionism and lower psychological flexibility face increased stress from their children's behavioral issues. This tension can influence their interactions with their children and eventually result in self-sabotaging behaviors in adolescents. It is inferred that authoritative parenting style affects positively on perfectionism, and self-esteem (Khodadadi et al., 2024). Parents employing authoritative parenting styles are more inclined to raise children who are perfectionists while also possessing high self-esteem. The authoritative parenting style is one where parents set high expectations for their children. Simultaneously, they assist them and address their requirements. This approach to parenting can make adolescents feel capable and worthwhile, which can lead to a reduction in self-destructive behaviors. In summary, the style of parenting exhibited by parents can significantly influence the personality characteristics of their adolescent children.

The findings of the current study indicated that parental meta-emotion had a notable mediating effect on the connection between perfectionism and self-handicapping of adolescents. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that parents with a strong sense of meta-emotion and skill in fulfilling their parental role can mitigate the adverse effects of perfectionism on their children's inclination for self-handicapping. For instance, a mother confident in her parenting skills will likely to minimize her child's self-destructive behaviors through supportive and encouraging



actions. These results suggest that parental meta-emotion in child-rearing plays a crucial role in alleviating the adverse impacts of perfectionism and averting self-handicapping. In other terms, parents who have confidence in their skills to rear their children are more prone to establish a secure and encouraging atmosphere where their children feel safe and evade harmful behaviors.

## 5. Limitations & Suggestions

Despite its valuable insights, the present study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study employed a cross-sectional design, which restricts the ability to infer causal relationships between parental meta-emotion and adolescent self-handicapping or perfectionism. Secondly, the generalizability of the findings is limited to adolescent students in Zahedan, Iran, and caution should be exercised when attempting to apply these results to broader adolescent populations without contextual and cultural adaptation. Thirdly, the study revealed that the average variance extracted (AVE) values for the constructs were below 0.50, indicating low convergent validity, which presents a psychometric weakness and may affect the reliability and robustness of the constructs used. These limitations suggest the need for longitudinal designs, broader samples, and improved measurement tools in future research.

The practical implications of this study underscore the critical role that parental meta-emotion plays in shaping adolescents' psychological development, particularly concerning perfectionism and self-handicapping behaviors. By recognizing that their emotional expressions and responses significantly impact their children's tendencies toward maladaptive patterns, parents are positioned to adopt more emotionally intelligent and supportive approaches. This shift can help adolescents develop healthier emotional regulation and resilience, reducing the likelihood of engaging in self-sabotaging behaviors. The findings advocate for increased parental awareness and intervention programs aimed at enhancing parental emotional responsiveness, which can serve as a preventive strategy against the development of negative perfectionism in adolescents. Thus, this study not only highlights the necessity of emotional attunement in parenting but also suggests that parental behaviors are active contributors to adolescent psychological outcomes, rather than passive environmental background factors.

In light of the study's findings, it is recommended that educational policymakers, school administrators, and curriculum designers in Zahedan give focused attention to the psychological challenges adolescents face, particularly self-handicapping and perfectionism. Interventions should include structured educational programs for parents to enhance their emotional awareness and regulation, thereby equipping them to better support their children's emotional needs. Schools could implement workshops and counseling services aimed at both students and parents to address emotional development and self-esteem building. Furthermore, strategies should be developed to foster positive perfectionism and reduce negative perfectionism through targeted educational curricula and community outreach. To strengthen future studies in this domain, researchers are encouraged to conduct longitudinal investigations with larger and more diverse populations to validate the present findings and improve convergent validity. By integrating family-based emotional training into the educational system, stakeholders can proactively work to minimize self-handicapping behaviors and cultivate healthier developmental outcomes in adolescents.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all those who cooperated in carrying out this study.

## Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

## Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

## Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

## Funding

This research was carried out independently with personal funding and without the financial support of any governmental or private institution or organization.

## Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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