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CONTENTS

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SUMMARY

This dissertation aims toward a better understanding of employees' perfectionism in different life domains and its implications for employees' (everyday) lives. To this end, this dissertation presents a program of research that includes three independent empirical studies. Because perfectionism is deemed to be especially prevalent and highly impactful but under-researched in the work domain, Study 1 and Study 2 examined work-related perfectionism, its daily at-work antecedents, and its intraindividual implications at work and at home. Moreover, parenting perfectionism among employees is a recently increasing phenomenon of societal relevance that is insufficiently understood from a research perspective to date. Therefore, Study 3 examined parenting perfectionism and its more long-term intra- as well as interindividual implications for employees' and their intimate partners' work and private lives.

Drawing on whole trait theory and findings on the daily variability of perfectionism, Study 1 took a dynamic, within-person perspective on perfectionism at work. It investigated experiences of time pressure and criticism at work as antecedents of daily work-related perfectionism and in turn its implications for employee well-being in terms of vigor and negative affect at work and at home. Within a two-week daily diary design, employees ($N = 72$, $n = 461$ days of data) completed surveys three times per day (i.e., in the morning, at the end of the workday, and at bedtime). Results of multilevel path modeling showed that daily experiences of time pressure at work were positively related to daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns. Daily experiences of criticism at work were positively related to daily work-related perfectionistic concerns. Daily work-related perfectionistic strivings were positively indirectly related to vigor at bedtime via vigor at the end of the workday. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns were positively indirectly related to negative affect at bedtime via negative affect at the

end of the workday. Thus, Study 1 showed that work-related perfectionism can fluctuate from day to day due to employees' experiences at work and that these fluctuations can matter for employee well-being at work and at home.

Building on this finding on perfectionism's daily variability at work, Study 2 took a dynamic perspective on work-related perfectionism as well. However, Study 2 was more process-oriented in that it investigated cognitive-behavioral processes associated with daily perfectionism at work. Again, during two workweeks, employees ($N = 78$, $n = 514$ days of data) completed daily surveys during work and at the end of the workday. Analysis of the data using multilevel path modeling showed that daily work-related perfectionistic strivings related positively to planning but were unrelated to procrastinating and self-blaming at work. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns related negatively to planning, tended to be positively related to procrastinating, and related positively to self-blaming at work. Self-blaming served as a mechanism linking daily work-related perfectionistic concerns with feelings of shame and guilt at the end of the workday. Accordingly, Study 2 showed that daily fluctuations in work-related perfectionism are associated with both desirable and undesirable cognitive-behavioral processes at work – depending on the dimension considered.

Study 3 drew on and integrated theoretical approaches and empirical evidence from perfectionism and family-work research to examine parenting perfectionism and its implications more closely. Using multi-source, multi-wave survey data of 541 employed couples with parental obligation from the pairfam panel, it tested a research model that comprised intraindividual, interindividual, and domain-crossing processes driven by perfectionism in the parenting role. Path analytic results showed that parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to a decrease in positive mood and partnership satisfaction over the course of two years via

overprotection in the parenting role and family-work conflict. Furthermore, parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to a decrease in partners' positive mood and partnership satisfaction via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts. Thus, Study 3 showed that parenting perfectionism is a problematic phenomenon in that it relates to conflict-laden processes that can impair employees' own as well as their partners' longer-term well-being and satisfaction.

In summary, the findings of the three empirical studies emphasize the impact of employees' perfectionism in different life domains. That is, perfectionism has significant implications for employees' (everyday) lives in that it can impact employees' own well-being, satisfaction, cognitions, emotions, and behaviors. In addition, Study 3 showed that perfectionism can not only affect oneself but also others as it drives intra- and interindividual conflict-laden processes. This dissertation offers important new insights into domain-specific perfectionism: Study 1 and Study 3 show that perfectionism in one life domain does not only matter in this specific domain (i.e., domain-specific effects) but can permeate boundaries between life domains (i.e., domain-crossing effects). Moreover, Study 1 and Study 2 provide evidence that domain-specific (i.e., work-related) perfectionism can show short-term within-person variability in that it fluctuates from day to day. All in all, this dissertation highlights the worth of studying perfectionism in employees. Taking a dynamic, process-oriented perspective, differentiating between the two perfectionism dimensions of perfectionistic strivings and concerns, and considering intra- and interindividual implications as well as domain-crossing effects of perfectionism can broaden the understanding of perfectionism and can help toward answering the question of perfectionism's desirability in employees.

DISSERTATION OUTLINE AND OVERVIEW

This dissertation comprises five chapters. Chapter 1 represents the general introduction to this dissertation. Chapters 2 to 4 report three programmatic but independent empirical studies that form the core of this dissertation. Chapter 5, the general discussion, closes this dissertation. Chapter 1, the general introduction, provides fundamental knowledge of perfectionism and the central theoretical assumptions and goals of this dissertation. It is structured into six subchapters. The first subchapter gives an overview of the history, conceptualization, and assessment of multidimensional perfectionism. The second subchapter introduces the assumption of perfectionism's domain specificity, which is the first central tenet of this dissertation. The third subchapter deals with perfectionism in the work domain. It presents the current state of research and discusses key limitations of previous research. The fourth subchapter covers the conceptualization and assessment of parenting perfectionism and describes previous research findings on perfectionism in the parenting domain. The fifth subchapter turns to the dynamic view on perfectionism at work, which is the second central tenet of this dissertation. This subchapter introduces the study of personality dynamics, describes its application in organizational psychology, and explains how perfectionism is considered as both a personality trait and personality state in this dissertation. The sixth subchapter, finally, presents the goals of this dissertation.

Chapter 2 presents the first empirical study of this dissertation. Based on theoretical approaches to personality dynamics and research findings on the daily variability of perfectionism, Study 1 took a dynamic view on perfectionism at work to investigate at-work antecedents and well-being implications of employees' daily work-related perfectionism with a diary design. Study 1 also examined domain-crossing processes of perfectionism from the work

to the home domain. Chapter 3 presents the second empirical study of this dissertation. Study 2 took a dynamic view on perfectionism at work as well. This diary study investigated implications of employees' daily work-related perfectionism on their cognitive-behavioral processes at work. Chapter 4 presents the third empirical study of this dissertation. In contrast to Study 1 and Study 2, Study 3 focused on parenting perfectionism and, thus, on perfectionism in the home domain. Study 3 used multi-wave, multi-source survey data from the pairfam panel. It examined implications of parenting perfectionism for employed couples with parental obligation. Study 3 investigated domain-crossing processes of perfectionism as well but this time from the home to the work domain. Adding to Study 1 and Study 2, Study 3 researched also interindividual processes and applied another temporal perspective on perfectionism and its implications.

Chapter 5, the general discussion, summarizes and discusses the findings of the three empirical studies of this dissertation. It is structured into six subchapters. The first subchapter summarizes the study findings. The second subchapter takes up the central theoretical tenets and assumptions of the studies and explains the theoretical contributions of this dissertation. Based on the study findings, the third subchapter describes implications for practical action for employees, their co-workers and supervisors, and organizations. The fourth subchapter points out strengths and limitations of the three studies. The fifth subchapter discusses open research questions and fruitful avenues for future research. Finally, the sixth subchapter presents some concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

My bias is that perfection is not only an undesirable goal but a debilitating one as well. In my judgment, perfection per se does not exist in reality, but it is the striving for that nonexistent perfection that keeps people in turmoil and is associated with a significant number of psychological problems. (Pacht, 1984, p. 386)

"It has to be perfect." Most people have probably said this (or a similar) sentence, thought about it, read it, or heard it at least once in their lifetime. This sentence conveys the message that perfection is a desirable, rewarded goal and also entails societal pressure to reach for perfection (Burns, 1980). But what is perfection? If one looks its definition up in various dictionaries, perfection can be defined as a state of flawlessness, of "being complete and correct in every way" (Cambridge, n.d.), of "an unsurpassable degree of accuracy or excellence" (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). This state of perfection might not even exist in reality (Pacht, 1984), but might be all in the mind. Indeed, following the famous ancient saying "errare humanum est" (to err is human), perfection in human beings seems to be a contradiction in terms: If it is part of human nature to err and to make mistakes, how can human beings ever attain a state of flawlessness? If *im*perfection is part of human nature, is attaining perfection, consequently, inhuman?

Notwithstanding this observation, the striving for perfection and worries about not attaining perfection (i.e., perfectionism) resonate with many individuals. In this general introduction of my dissertation, I will first describe the current understanding of perfectionism. Then, I turn to domain-specific perfectionism and will elaborate on what is known and what is not known on perfectionism in the work domain yet. After that, I will describe the state of

research on perfectionism in the parenting domain. Because I examine perfectionism as both a personality trait (Study 3) and personality state (Study 1 and Study 2) in my dissertation, I will then introduce the study of personality dynamics and will explain what is meant with a dynamic view on perfectionism at work. In the final section of this introduction, I will present the goals of this dissertation.

Multidimensional Perfectionism

Up to the 1980s, perfectionism was primarily conceptualized as a unidimensional construct that was closely linked to psychopathologies such as anxiety, depression, anorexia, or obsessive-compulsive personality disorder (Burns, 1980; Pacht, 1984; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). These earlier conceptualizations focused on the cognitive factors of perfectionism like rigid thinking patterns and dysfunctional attitudes (Burns, 1980; Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Knowledge of perfectionism back then was mostly gained from case studies, observations, and anecdotal evidence from a clinical viewpoint (Smith et al., 2022). In the 1990s, the understanding of perfectionism changed fundamentally. Acting on the assumption that perfectionism is a complex construct that comprises multiple distinct aspects, two groups of researchers conceptualized perfectionism as multidimensional and independently developed a respective Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Albeit both scales assess multiple dimensions of perfectionism, they differ in the number of dimensions proposed and the scope of these dimensions. That is, Frost et al.'s (1990) scale comprises six dimensions: *personal standards*, *concern over mistakes*, *doubts about actions*,

organization, *parental expectations*, and *parental criticism*.[1] The former four dimensions capture aspects of perfectionism directed toward the self; the latter two dimensions capture aspects of perfectionism that reflect perceptions of parental demands on the self (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Personal standards refer to the setting of very high standards and goals for oneself and one's performance. Concern over mistakes reflects concerns to lose social recognition and feelings of being a failure in case of making mistakes. Doubts about actions capture individuals' doubts that they complete courses of action wrongly. Organization comprises needs for and attempts at organization, order, and neatness. Parental expectations refer to the perception that one's parents set very high standards and goals for oneself and one's performance. Finally, parental criticism captures perceptions of not living up to parental expectations and of punishment for imperfection during childhood (Frost et al., 1990).

Hewitt and Flett (1991) focused on both personal and social components of perfectionism. Their scale comprises three dimensions: *self-oriented perfectionism*, *other-oriented perfectionism*, and *socially prescribed perfectionism*. Self-oriented perfectionism refers to perfectionism directed toward the self, that is, demanding perfection in oneself. In contrast, other-oriented perfectionism refers to perfectionism directed toward other people, that is, demanding perfection in others. Whereas these two dimensions focus on the target to whom perfectionism is directed, socially prescribed perfectionism focuses on the source of perfectionism. It comprises beliefs that significant others expect oneself to be perfect (Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Smith et al., 2022).

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[1] Personal standards, concern over mistakes, and doubts about actions can be considered as the central dimensions of Frost et al.'s (1990) conceptualization of perfectionism (Smith et al., 2022). Organization can be rather considered as a complementing than a central component of perfectionism (Frost et al., 1990). Parental expectations and parental criticism can be rather considered as developmental precursors of perfectionism that are important to understand its etiology than core features of perfectionism (Smith et al., 2022).

Frost et al.'s (1990) and Hewitt and Flett's (1991) work was groundbreaking and permanently changed the understanding of perfectionism. They did not only establish perfectionism as a multidimensional construct but made substantial progress regarding its assessment as well. These advances facilitated and stimulated an extensive amount of empirical research on perfectionism during the following 30 years (Flett & Hewitt, 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018a). During these times, the clinical view on perfectionism prevailed as most of the proposed perfectionism dimensions were still associated with psychopathology. However, evidence emerged that perfectionism might not be detrimental overall but that some dimensions might be less maladaptive or even adaptive (Blatt, 1995; Frost et al., 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Stoeber & Otto, 2006).

In line with this remark, the conceptualization of perfectionism was further refined. To compare and better understand the interrelationship between Frost et al.'s (1990) and Hewitt and Flett's (1991) conceptualizations of multidimensional perfectionism, Frost et al. (1993) performed a factor analysis on the nine subscales of both measures. A clear two-factor structure emerged. The first factor consisted of high loadings for the concern over mistakes, doubts about actions, parental expectations, parental criticism, and socially prescribed perfectionism scales. The second factor consisted of high loadings for the personal standards, organization, self-oriented perfectionism, and other-oriented perfectionism scales.[2] Due to its positive correlations with positive affect and its non-significant correlations with negative affect and depression, Frost et al. (1993) labeled the first factor *positive striving*. Due to its positive correlations with

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[2] Parental expectations, parental criticism, organization, and other-oriented perfectionism are not deemed to be core facets of perfectionistic strivings and concerns. As mentioned above, parental expectations, parental criticism, and organization are not considered to be core components of perfectionism. Furthermore, other-oriented perfectionism is better considered as a form of perfectionism outside the two-factor model because it is not directed toward the self, but toward other people (Stoeber, 2018a; Stoeber & Otto, 2006).

negative affect and depression and its non-significant correlation with positive affect, they labeled the second factor *maladaptive evaluation concerns* (Stoeber, 2018a).

Frost et al.'s (1993) work was the cornerstone for what became known as the *two-factor model of perfectionism*. Nowadays, this model serves as a guiding conceptual framework in perfectionism research (Stoeber, 2018a). In the two-factor model, one factor is deemed to reflect more of the positive, adaptive aspects of perfectionism, whereas the other factor is deemed to reflect more of the negative, maladaptive aspects of perfectionism (Frost et al., 1993; Stoeber, 2018a; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). Following Stoeber and Otto (2006), in Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation, we refer to the former higher-order dimension of perfectionism as *perfectionistic strivings* and the latter dimension as *perfectionistic concerns* and examine both dimensions in Study 1 and Study 2.

In both studies, we assessed perfectionism at work with a short form (Rice et al., 2014) of the Revised Almost Perfect Scale (Slaney et al., 2001), one of the most often used perfectionism measures (Stoeber, 2018b). Whereas the full version of the Revised Almost Perfect Scale comprises the three subscales *standards*, *order*, and *discrepancy*, the shortened version captures only one's high standards (i.e., standards subscale) and perceptions of a discrepancy between these standards and one's actual performance (i.e., discrepancy subscale; Rice et al., 2014; Slaney et al., 2001). The standards subscale represents an indicator of perfectionistic strivings; the discrepancy subscale represents an indicator of perfectionistic concerns (Stoeber, 2018a). Thus, following the two-factor model of perfectionism, we focused on the standards and the discrepancy subscale. After this brief digression on the history of perfectionism, its conceptualization, and assessment, I now turn to the domain specificity of perfectionism, which is a central tenet of this dissertation.

Domain-Specific Perfectionism

Originally, multidimensional perfectionism was conceptualized as a fairly stable, global personality trait (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). It was assumed that perfectionistic individuals – at least those with very high levels of perfectionism – aim to achieve very high standards across many or even all domains of their lives (Flett & Hewitt, 2002; Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). However, this view has changed. Investigating the principle of perfectionism's domain specificity (i.e., the assumption that levels of perfectionism vary across life domains) in samples of pupils and student-athletes, Dunn et al. (2005) and McArdle (2010) found evidence that perfectionism levels differ between life domains. That is, student-athletes showed higher levels of perfectionism in the sports than in the school domain (Dunn et al., 2005). In contrast, pupils showed higher levels of perfectionism in the school than in the sports domain (McArdle, 2010). Broadening the scope of life domains (i.e., university/work, relationships, physical activity/sport, domestic environment, and appearance), Haase et al. (2013) found further support for the domain specificity of perfectionism in students, with perfectionism being the highest in the university/work domain. Stoeber and Stoeber (2009) examined what life domains are most likely affected by perfectionism. They investigated 22 various life domains, such as work, personal hygiene, social relationships, spelling, eating habits, and domestic chores in both a student sample and a sample of internet users. Their results show that, in both samples, work was the domain in which participants were most often perfectionistic.

Especially relevant in the context of this dissertation are findings on domain-specific perfectionism in employees. In an early study, Mitchelson and Burns (1998) investigated the relationship between domain-specific perfectionism and indicators of well-being in employed mothers. For this purpose, they administered two versions of Hewitt and Flett's (1991)

Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale: one that assessed perfectionism in relation to the work context and one that assessed perfectionism in relation to the home context. Their results showed that perfectionism in one domain relates to well-being in this specific domain. That is, socially prescribed perfectionism at work was positively related to burnout symptoms, whereas socially prescribed and other-oriented perfectionism at home were positively related to parental distress. Interestingly, their results further showed that employed mothers' levels of all three studied perfectionism dimensions (i.e., self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism) were higher in the work than in the home domain. In another study, Mitchelson (2009) examined domain-specific perfectionism in working adults with family obligations in relation to experiences of conflict between the work and the home domain. They administered a work- and a home-specific version of the Revised Almost Perfect Scale (Slaney et al., 2001). Contrary to Mitchelson and Burns' (1998) findings, participants in the Mitchelson (2009) sample had higher perfectionism levels in terms of standards and discrepancy at home than at work; levels of order did not differ between domains.

Taken together, there is some evidence that supports the two assumptions that perfectionism is not global, but domain-specific and that levels of perfectionism vary across life domains. Accordingly, individuals do not equally aim to achieve very high standards across all domains of their lives. For instance, one can be highly perfectionistic at work but less perfectionistic regarding one's domestic chores – and vice versa. However, the higher individuals' general perfectionism, the higher the number of domains they report to be perfectionistic in (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). Perfectionism in one life domain does neither seem to be dependent nor fully independent of perfectionism in other life domains. That is, some domain-specific perfectionism scales are significantly correlated, while others are not (Haase et

al., 2013; McArdle, 2010; Mitchelson, 2009). Domain-specific perfectionism measures are deemed to be better predictors of domain-specific processes and outcomes than general (i.e., domain-unspecific) measures of perfectionism (e.g., Dunn et al., 2011; Stoeber & Yang, 2015). Therefore, perfectionism was assessed in relation to a specific domain of interest in all three studies of this dissertation to better capture perfectionism's effects in the respective domain.

In this dissertation, I examine perfectionism in two domains that are central to the lives of many adults, namely the work domain (Study 1 and Study 2) and the parenting domain (Study 3). As mentioned, prior research showed that perfectionism in one domain is related to processes and outcomes in this specific domain (i.e., domain-specific effects; e.g., perfectionism at work was found to relate to burnout symptoms and perfectionism at home was found to relate to parental distress; Mitchelson & Burns, 1998; physical appearance perfectionism was found to relate to eating disorder symptoms; Stoeber & Yang, 2015). What is less known is whether perfectionism can have *domain-crossing* effects (i.e., whether perfectionism in one domain relates to processes and outcomes in another domain) as well. We address this question in Study 1 and Study 3. More precisely, we investigate domain-crossing processes of work-related perfectionism from the work to the home domain in Study 1 and domain-crossing processes of parenting perfectionism (Snell et al., 2005) from the family to the work domain in Study 3.

Perfectionism in the Work Domain

During the past 30 years, multidimensional perfectionism received substantial scholarly attention in several fields of psychology, such as educational, clinical, and sports psychology (Smith et al., 2022, Stoeber, 2018a). Accordingly, perfectionism was mostly examined in samples of pupils, students, people with clinical problems, or athletes (Stoeber & Damian, 2016). However, perfectionism received far less scholarly attention in organizational psychology,

leading Stoeber (2018b) to conclude that perfectionism at work is an under-researched area. This lack of research – and, consequently, knowledge on perfectionism in employees – is unfortunate. As mentioned, perfectionism is especially prevalent in the work domain (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). Moreover, perfectionism is deemed to be highly influential at work (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020).

Therefore, Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation investigate perfectionism in the work domain. In the following, to embed Study 1 and Study 2 in previous research on perfectionism in the work domain, I will first give a brief, non-exhaustive overview of earlier research findings. Then, I will discuss key limitations of previous research. Both subsections are mainly based on Harari et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis on perfectionism at work, published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, and Ocampo et al.'s (2020) review, published in the *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. In their meta-analysis, Harari et al. (2018) focused on multidimensional perfectionism's relationships with organizationally relevant variables. Ocampo et al. (2020) reviewed and integrated the literature on perfectionism at work, presented main theoretical perspectives of previous research, and discussed an agenda for future research.

Perfectionism at Work: Previous Research

Researchers and practitioners who deal with perfectionism at work are intrigued by one central question: Is perfectionism a desirable personality characteristic at work, or not? To date, there is still no satisfactory answer to this question. Indeed, both Harari et al. (2018) and Ocampo et al. (2020) bemoan that a coherent understanding of perfectionism's impact at work is lacking. Two major reasons for that are that research efforts are scattered across multiple disciplines and that scholars use varying conceptualizations of perfectionism, which impedes a shared understanding. Harari et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis – aptly entitled *Is perfect good?* – aimed

toward a better understanding of perfectionism's usefulness and desirability at work. The authors examined both overall perfectionism and its two higher-order dimensions perfectionistic strivings, termed *excellence-seeking perfectionism* in their study, and perfectionistic concerns, termed *failure-avoiding perfectionism*.

Harari et al. (2018) included results from published journal articles, book chapters, nonpublished studies, and dissertations in their meta-analysis. In total, they drew on 95 samples of studies that met their inclusion criteria (e.g., no underage participants, non-clinical samples). They investigated perfectionism's relationship with organizationally relevant variables from several areas, such as correlates of work effort (i.e., motivation, hours worked, workaholism), psychological work states (i.e., engagement, burnout and its facets), mental well-being (i.e., stress, anxiety, depression), and performance (i.e., job performance, task performance, organizational citizenship behaviors). In briefly describing the results of this meta-analysis, I focus on the significant and generalizable relationships. Reported correlations are corrected mean true-score correlations.

Regarding perfectionism's relationships with the work effort correlates, overall (ρ = .23) and excellence-seeking perfectionism (ρ = .38) were positively correlated with motivation. Overall (ρ = .15) and failure-avoiding perfectionism (ρ = .14) were positively correlated with the hours worked. Overall (ρ = .49) and failure-avoiding perfectionism (ρ = .56) were also positively correlated with workaholism. Regarding perfectionism's relationships with the psychological work state correlates, excellence-seeking perfectionism was positively correlated with engagement (ρ = .35), whereas failure-avoiding perfectionism was negatively correlated with engagement (ρ = -.19). Overall (ρ = .21) and failure-avoiding perfectionism (ρ = .34) were positively correlated with overall burnout. Overall and failure-avoiding perfectionism were also

positively correlated with the burnout facets emotional exhaustion (EE) and cynicism (CY), with $\rho = .26$ (EE) and $\rho = .17$ (CY) for overall perfectionism and $\rho = .39$ (EE) and $\rho = .36$ (CY) for failure-avoiding perfectionism, respectively.

Regarding perfectionism's relationships with the mental well-being correlates, overall ($\rho = .36$) and failure-avoiding perfectionism ($\rho = .47$) were positively correlated with stress. Overall ($\rho = .35$), excellence-seeking ($\rho = .11$), and failure-avoiding perfectionism ($\rho = .42$) were all positively correlated with anxiety. Overall ($\rho = .32$), excellence-seeking ($\rho = .09$), and failure-avoiding perfectionism ($\rho = .42$) were also all positively correlated with depression. Neither perfectionism's relationships with job performance, nor task performance or organizational citizenship behaviors were significant and generalizable. Overall, Harari et al. (2018) conclude that their findings "highlight the notable impact perfectionism and its dimensions have on employees and organizations" (p. 1137).

In their review, Ocampo et al. (2020) differentiated between perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns as well. They did an integrative summary with a focus on perfectionism's intra- and interpersonal consequences in the work context. Like Harari et al. (2018), they grouped the intrapersonal outcomes associated with perfectionism into broader categories, namely job attitudes (e.g., vocational efficacy, job engagement, job satisfaction), well-being (e.g., stress, affect, performance anxiety), and job performance (e.g., task performance, creativity, goal achievement). Interpersonal outcomes comprised work-family/family-work conflict, parental distress, or social support, for instance. Ocampo et al. (2020) included conceptual, qualitative, and quantitative studies in their review, both journal articles and theses/dissertations. In total, they drew on 117 articles, 40 of these articles were included in Harari et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis.

In general, Ocampo et al.'s (2020) results were quite similar to those of Harari et al. (2018). Overall, perfectionistic concerns were more strongly related to negative job attitudes than perfectionistic strivings. For instance, engagement was positively related to perfectionistic strivings but negatively related to perfectionistic concerns in both studies. However, there were notable differences in the results of both studies as well. For instance, different from Harari et al.'s (2018) meta-analytic finding, perfectionistic strivings were positively related to workaholism in Ocampo et al.'s (2020) review. Perfectionistic concerns were consistently negatively related to well-being indicators. The findings regarding the relationship between perfectionistic strivings and well-being were mixed. Similar to Harari et al. (2018), Ocampo et al. (2020) report a positive relationship between perfectionistic strivings, depressive symptoms, and performance anxiety. The relationships between perfectionistic strivings and stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion are ambivalent in that there was empirical evidence for both a positive and a negative relationship. According to Ocampo et al. (2020), research shows that perfectionism and job performance are strongly connected. They report positive relationships of perfectionistic strivings with innovative behavior, task performance, creativity, and organizational citizenship behaviors as well as a positive relationship of perfectionistic concerns with work effort. Nevertheless, they found ambivalent relationships between perfectionistic strivings, goal achievement, and productivity and a negative relationship between perfectionistic concerns and goal achievement.

In short, perfectionism is very impactful (Smith et al., 2022) – especially at work. Both Harari et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis as well as Ocampo et al.'s (2020) review highlight perfectionism's notable impact in the work context, be it beneficial or detrimental. Perfectionism is related to many significant organizationally relevant variables. In addition, their work also

highlights the importance of differentiating and simultaneously examining perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns because both perfectionism dimensions show different patterns of relationships with organizationally relevant variables. Interestingly, both Harari et al. (2018) and Ocampo et al. (2020) found slightly dissimilar answers to the question of perfectionism's desirability at work. Harari et al. (2018) concluded that "in total, perfectionism is likely not constructive at work. The consequences of high levels of perfectionism, especially failure-avoiding perfectionism, for employees do not appear to be equally counteracted by its advantages" (p. 1137). Ocampo et al. (2020) point more strongly to possible beneficial effects of perfectionism at work: "perfectionism, under certain conditions or in combination with certain traits, does not always result in detrimental outcomes" (p. 159).

Perfectionism at Work: Limitations of Previous Research

Undoubtedly, previous research made important contributions that shaped the current understanding of perfectionism and its implications at work. However, for the most part, previous studies also shared some methodological and conceptual limitations. Most of these limitations are not specific to research on perfectionism at work but apply to perfectionism research in general. One major limitation concerns the lack of methodological rigor (Ocampo et al., 2020). Very few perfectionism studies apply designs that go beyond collecting cross-sectional, mono-source, self-report survey data.[3] Accordingly, most studies are limited because they cannot adequately address directionality and temporal precedence (e.g., whether perfectionism is an antecedent or an outcome), let alone causation. Furthermore, study results could be inflated by common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012) or inaccurate due to biased

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[3] Fortunately, some methodologically more rigorous studies on perfectionism and its work-related implications were published in recent years (e.g., Guo et al., 2020; Horan et al., 2021; Kleszewski & Otto, 2020).

self-perceptions (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b).

Therefore, scholars repeatedly advocated to improve perfectionism research by using longitudinal designs, experimental designs, interviews, informant reports, observable outcome variables, or indirect measures of perfectionism (Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). Albeit the three studies of this dissertation are far from being flawless, my co-authors and I partly addressed limitations of previous research. In Study 1 and Study 2, we responded to the explicit call for diary studies on perfectionism that capture within-person fluctuations in perfectionism, their antecedents, and associated consequences (Boone et al., 2012a; Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018b). In Study 3, we go beyond cross-sectional, mono-source data by analyzing multi-wave panel survey data that capture partner-rated implications of perfectionism as well.

Conceptual limitations concern the multidimensionality and domain-specificity of perfectionism. Although most scholars acknowledge that perfectionism is multi- and not unidimensional, they do not fully consider this multidimensionality in all of their studies. As Stoeber (2018b) noted, there is a tendency to focus only on perfectionistic concerns while neglecting perfectionistic strivings, probably due to a heightened interest in perfectionism's destructiveness. This neglect might be the reason that the outcomes of perfectionistic strivings are less well understood and remain open for empirical scrutiny (Ocampo et al., 2020). Perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns are conceptually distinct constructs that reflect distinct aspects of perfectionism and that show different patterns of relationships with organizationally relevant variables (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020). Consequently, their strict distinction and simultaneous examination (see Study 1 and Study 2) are crucial for unraveling the unique effects of both perfectionism dimensions.

Research on perfectionism at work oftentimes neglects perfectionism's domain-specificity. That is, perfectionism that is supposed to relate to work-related constructs is assessed with global, domain-unspecific measures rather than work-specific measures (for exceptions see e.g., Childs & Stoeber, 2012; Mitchelson, 2009; Mitchelson & Burns, 1998). This is unfortunate because work-specific perfectionism measures should be better predictors of organizationally relevant variables and processes than general measures of perfectionism (see Dunn et al., 2011; Stoeber & Yang, 2015). In a similar vein, Harari et al. (2018) advocated developing work-specific perfectionism scales to improve predictive validities. In all three studies of this dissertation, perfectionism was assessed with domain-specific measures (i.e., work-related perfectionism in Study 1 and Study 2, parenting perfectionism in Study 3).

Perfectionism in the Parenting Domain

Another domain in which people can be perfectionistic is the parenting domain. *Parenting perfectionism* refers to the striving for perfection in the upbringing of one's children. Accordingly, parents high in this specific kind of perfectionism aim to achieve extremely high standards for their performance as parents and tend to overly criticize their parenting abilities (Snell et al., 2005). Back in 2005, Snell et al. presented the Multidimensional Parenting Perfectionism Questionnaire (MPPQ), a 65-item self-report measure designed to assess multiple aspects of perfectionism in one's role as a parent. Drawing on the multidimensional perfectionism conceptualizations of Hewitt and Flett (1991) and Frost et al. (1990), the MPPQ comprises eleven subscales.

Three of these subscales capture respondents' own expectations regarding their parenting. That is, *self-oriented parenting perfectionism* reflects extremely high self-set standards as a parent and an excessive motivation to be a perfect parent. Similarly, *personal parenting*

standards refer to the setting of excessively high standards of parenting conduct. *Parenting organization* captures tendencies to emphasize orderliness and precision in the daily activities of being a parent. Two other subscales assess respondents' concerns regarding their parenting: *Doubts about one's parenting capacity* capture uncertainty about or dissatisfaction with the quality of one's parenting behaviors and abilities; *concern over parenting mistakes* refers to being overly self-critical of one's parenting abilities.

Moreover, four subscales assess perceptions of external expectations to be a perfect parent. *Partner's expectations for perfect parenting* as well as *partner's expected parenting standards* reflect respondents' perceptions that their intimate partners expect them to be a perfect parent and that partners hold perfectionistic standards for respondents' parenting behavior, respectively. *Partner's parenting criticism* captures partners' critical evaluations and expectations of respondents' parenting behaviors and abilities. *Societal prescribed parenting perfectionism* refers to societal expectations for perfect parenting. Finally, *actual partner parenting perfectionism* reflects respondents' perceptions of partners' perfectionistic parenting standards and *desired partner parenting perfectionism* assesses respondents' perfectionistic parenting expectations directed toward their partners.

Because more and more parents aim to be perfect parents (Lee et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2021), parenting perfectionism has increasingly become a phenomenon of societal importance. The media repeatedly take up parenting perfectionism; several articles describing its downsides and providing self-help advice on how to overcome or handle parenting perfectionism have recently been published (e.g., Boyes, 2020; Cornwall, 2021). However, as research on parenting perfectionism is only emerging, parenting perfectionism and its implications are not well understood from a research perspective to date. One of the first studies on parenting

perfectionism and its implications focused on parenting perfectionism's role in parental adjustment. Lee et al. (2012) surveyed parents who expected their first child. The authors assessed parents' parenting perfectionism during pregnancy and parental adjustment in terms of parenting self-efficacy, stress, and satisfaction three months postpartum. For mothers, self-oriented parenting perfectionism positively related to parenting satisfaction, and societal-prescribed parenting perfectionism negatively related to parenting self-efficacy. For fathers, self-oriented parenting perfectionism positively related to parenting self-efficacy and parenting satisfaction and negatively related to parenting stress; societal-prescribed parenting perfectionism positively related to parenting stress.

Parenting perfectionism has been repeatedly associated with parents' impaired mental health and well-being. For instance, some studies investigated the interplay between parenting perfectionism, social media use, and mental health. They showed that perfectionistic parents are inclined to perfectionistic self-presentation and negative social comparisons on social media that negatively impact their mental health (e.g., Padoa et al., 2018; Schoppe-Sullivan et al., 2017). In addition, especially parenting perfectionism dimensions that capture perfectionistic concerns were found to be positively related to parental burnout in several studies (e.g., Lin et al., 2021).

To summarize, parenting perfectionism and its possible negative implications such as impaired parental mental health and well-being are on the rise. Accordingly, there is a need to better understand the phenomenon of parenting perfectionism to prevent or weaken its negative consequences. Therefore, we turn to this issue in Study 3 of this dissertation.

Personality Dynamics: Trait and State Perfectionism

Historically, personality was thought of as a quite stable construct that is not subject to substantial changes over time, aptly captured by William James' famous claim at the end of the

19th century that personality is 'set like plaster' by the age of 30. Accordingly, personality should not change over the rest of the life course – a claim that has been refuted by empirical findings (Donnellan & Robins, 2009). Indeed, especially during the last two decades, research interest in changes in personality grew and theoretical approaches to personality change received increasing attention in personality psychology. The umbrella term *personality dynamics* comprises this research on the processes, mechanisms, and changes involved in the development and manifestation of personality (Kuper et al., 2021). Traditional trait approaches to personality focus on the stable components of personality. Dynamic approaches, on the contrary, focus on the changing, variable components of personality. These changes include both short-term variability (e.g., daily fluctuations) and long-term changes (e.g., changes over the lifespan) in personality over time (Beckmann & Wood, 2020).

The study of personality dynamics also found its way into organizational psychology and enriched research on personality at work (Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Kuper et al., 2021). Organizational scholars studying personality dynamics at work mostly draw on whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001) and investigate short-term variability in personality at work. The central assumption of whole trait theory is that personality characteristics comprise dynamic components, so-called *personality states*, that fluctuate within rather short periods (e.g., days) within an individual. Personality traits and their corresponding states have the same content but different temporal characteristics. That is, personality traits describe a person in general and apply to a longer period whereas personality states describe a person during a specific, rather short period (e.g., a workday; Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Fleeson, 2001). The second assumption of whole trait theory that was taken up in organizational psychology research is that personality states can be activated by situational cues (Fleeson, 2017; Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015).

Both assumptions received support in the work context. Several studies provided evidence for short-term within-person fluctuations in personality characteristics, for instance in the Big Five (i.e., openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism), in core self-evaluations, and in workaholism. These fluctuations were found to matter for organizationally relevant variables, such as adaptive performance (e.g., Minbashian et al., 2010), task performance (e.g., Debusscher et al., 2016a, 2016b), organizational citizenship and counterproductive work behavior (e.g., Debusscher et al., 2016c), or fatigue (Clark et al., 2021). Furthermore, several studies provided evidence that situational cues can predict personality states at work. For instance, Minbashian et al. (2010) found that task difficulty and urgency related to momentary conscientiousness. Huang and Ryan (2011) examined situational characteristics of customer service employees' social interactions. Results of this study show that task focus related to state conscientiousness and that the friendliness of the other interaction party related to state extraversion and agreeableness. Besides, the anticipated workload on a specific day was found to relate to daily fluctuations in workaholism (Clark et al., 2021).

Apart from these findings, other interesting research strands on personality dynamics are evolving in organizational psychology research. One of these strands considers the variability of personality for assessment in personnel selection (see Lievens et al., 2018; Sosnowska et al., 2021). Another strand of research focuses on interpersonal dynamics, such as the covariation of personality states in leader-follower dyads (e.g., Dóci et al., 2021). Research on interventions is also emerging. For instance, Nübold and Hülsheger (2021) showed that a four-week mindfulness intervention increased employees' daily emotional stability and agreeableness across the study period. Moreover, both personality states mediated the intervention effect on daily job performance and job satisfaction. Furthermore, there is research on long-term changes in

personality at work, especially on reciprocal relationships between personality and job characteristics or vocational experiences (e.g., Holman & Hughes, 2021; Wille & De Fruyt, 2014) or on personality changes associated with transitions into new work roles (e.g., Li et al., 2021).

Traditionally, perfectionism has been defined as a fairly stable personality trait (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). However, there are approaches to perfectionism and research findings that suggest that perfectionism shows short-term variability as well. That is, Flett et al. (1998) offered a cognitive perspective on perfectionism that complements the traditional trait approach (Stoeber, 2018b). They developed the Perfectionism Cognitions Inventory to capture the weekly frequency of so-called *perfectionism cognitions*. In brief, perfectionism cognitions are perfectionism-related automatic thoughts about (im-)perfection and (not) attaining standards and goals that involve an ongoing cognitive activity. These include thoughts about the need to be perfect (e.g., "I should be perfect"), about striving defined in absolute (e.g., "I can always do better, even if things are almost perfect") and relative (e.g., "I have to be the best") terms involving social comparison, and about the awareness of being imperfect (e.g., "Why can't I be perfect?"; Flett et al., 1998; Flett et al., 2007). Perfectionism cognitions are thought to be state-like and might fluctuate due to recent experiences, for instance (Flett et al., 2007; Stoeber, 2018b).

Moreover, previous research showed that perfectionism can fluctuate from day to day. These daily within-person fluctuations can be experimentally induced (Boone et al., 2012b; Shafran et al., 2006) or can occur naturally (Boone et al., 2012a). We draw on this finding on the natural variability of perfectionism and on whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001) to propose that perfectionism fluctuates daily at work. We test this premise in Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation, in which we investigate antecedents and outcomes of *daily work-related*

perfectionism (i.e., work-related perfectionism showing within-person fluctuation from one working day to another). Accordingly, Study 1 and Study 2 focus on the dynamic aspects of perfectionism, whereas Study 3 focuses on the stable aspects of perfectionism.

Goals of This Dissertation

This dissertation has four central goals. The first goal of this dissertation is to improve understanding of perfectionism, its antecedents, and related processes at work. Because both a respective meta-analysis (Harari et al., 2018) and review (Ocampo et al., 2020) were published in recent years, one could assume that there is a broad knowledge and thorough understanding of perfectionism at work. However, this is not the case: As mentioned, it is still quite unclear whether perfectionism is desirable at work or not, a coherent understanding of perfectionism's impact at work is lacking, research on perfectionism in employees is sparse, and the majority of the existing literature has some important limitations (see Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018b).

Study 1 and Study 2 address this issue. Because previous research mainly examined perfectionism as an antecedent and focused on its consequences at work, it remains largely unknown whether perfectionism can also be considered as an outcome at work and, if so, which work-related factors can predict it (Ocampo et al., 2020). Study 1 aims to answer this question. More precisely, Study 1 investigates whether an employee's daily experiences of time pressure and criticism at work can precede their daily work-related perfectionism. Moreover, to date, it is largely unclear why perfectionism affects organizationally relevant variables, that is, through which mechanisms and processes (Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018b). Study 2 addresses this question by examining cognitions and behaviors that link perfectionism at work with relevant outcomes.

The second goal of this dissertation is to introduce a rather new, dynamic view on perfectionism. As mentioned, perfectionism has been traditionally defined as a fairly stable personality trait (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Accordingly, perfectionism (at work) has been mostly examined from a between-person perspective (Ocampo et al., 2020). However, building on findings on the daily variability of perfectionism (Boone et al., 2012a, 2012b; Shafran et al., 2006), the time has come to reconsider the nature of the perfectionism construct. Regarding this goal, Study 1 and Study 2 investigate whether perfectionism shows daily within-person fluctuations in the work context (i.e., daily work-related perfectionism). Furthermore, Study 1 aims to answer the question of whether employees' daily experiences at work can trigger their daily work-related perfectionism. Study 1 also examines well-being implications of daily work-related perfectionism. Study 2 focuses on possible consequences of daily fluctuations in perfectionism at work in that it investigates cognitive-behavioral processes driven by daily work-related perfectionism. Finding further support that perfectionism shows meaningful daily fluctuations could change the understanding of perfectionism and corroborate the worth of studying perfectionism also from a dynamic, within-person perspective.

The third goal of this dissertation is to provide a better understanding of domain-specific perfectionism and, specifically, of domain-crossing effects of domain-specific perfectionism. Previous research found that perfectionism in one domain relates to outcomes in this specific domain. However, it has been claimed that perfectionism could permeate boundaries between life domains and, consequently, that perfectionism in a specific domain could affect other life domains as well (Ocampo et al., 2020). Study 1 and Study 3 test this claim regarding the work-home interface. In detail, Study 1 focuses on domain-crossing processes of perfectionism from the work to the home domain and examines whether daily perfectionism at work relates to daily

well-being at home via affective spillover processes. Just the other way around, Study 3 focuses on domain-crossing processes of perfectionism from the home to the work domain and investigates whether parenting perfectionism relates to conflicts between family and work life as well as impaired job satisfaction. Showing whether and how perfectionism in one life domain affects another life domain offers important new insights and advances research on domain-specific perfectionism.

Finally, the fourth goal of this dissertation is to consider perfectionism in an interpersonal context. Even though some theories and models on perfectionism assume interpersonal effects of perfectionism, perfectionism is seldom studied in an interpersonal context (Sherry et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). Therefore, Study 3 studies both intra- and interindividual effects of perfectionism. In Study 3, a model is proposed and tested that examines intra- and interindividual conflict-laden processes driven by parenting perfectionism that harm employees' own as well as their partners' longer-term well-being and satisfaction. Besides, Study 1 implicitly considers perfectionism in an interpersonal context as it examines experienced criticism at work as an antecedent of daily work-related perfectionistic concerns. Because criticism is voiced by other people, Study 1 tests whether interpersonal experiences can trigger experiences of perfectionistic concerns. Figure 1.1 gives an overview of the three dissertation studies and their respective foci.

Figure 1.1

Overview of the Three Dissertation Studies and their Respective Foci

State Perfectionism:
Intraindividual Effects

Experiences at Work

Daily Work-Related Perfectionism

Well-Being at Work

Well-Being at Home

Study I

W O R K   D O M A I N

H O M E   D O M A I N

Trait Perfectionism:
Intraindividual Effects

Study II

Cognitions and Behaviors at Work

Self-Related Perceptions and Emotions at Work

Study III

Satisfaction at Work

Conflicts between Family- and Work-Life

Fulfilment of Parenting Role

Satisfaction and Well-Being at Home

Conflicts with Partner

Parenting Perfectionism

Satisfaction and Well-Being at Home

Trait Perfectionism:
Interindividual Effects

CHAPTER II

A DYNAMIC VIEW ON WORK-RELATED PERFECTIONISM: ANTECEDENTS AT WORK AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING (STUDY 1)[4]

Summary

Little is known about the role of perfectionism in employees' daily work. Our study aimed to provide a fine-grained view on perfectionism in work life by examining *daily* work-related perfectionism in terms of perfectionistic strivings and concerns. Drawing on whole trait theory and the principle of trait activation, we investigated experienced time pressure and criticism at work as antecedents of daily work-related perfectionism and in turn its implications for vigour[5] and negative affect. In the course of two working weeks, 72 employees completed surveys three times per day, resulting in a total of 461 days of data. Multilevel path modelling showed that daily time pressure was positively related to both perfectionistic strivings and concerns, and that criticism was positively related to perfectionistic concerns. Daily work-related perfectionistic strivings were positively indirectly related to vigour at bedtime via vigour at the end of the workday. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns were positively indirectly related to bedtime negative affect via end-of-workday negative affect. Our study shows that employees' daily experiences at work relate to within-person fluctuations in work-related perfectionism, which in turn matter

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[5] In Study 1, we use Oxford spelling according to the guidelines of the *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*.

for well-being both at work and at home. We conclude that a dynamic view broadens the

understanding of perfectionism at work.

Introduction

Perfectionism is a multidimensional personality characteristic that comprises striving for flawlessness, setting exceedingly high performance standards and tending to evaluate one's behaviour in an overly critical way (Frost et al., 1990; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). It has instigated an extensive amount of research in many fields of psychology (e.g., clinical, educational, and sports psychology; Reis & Prestele, 2020; Stoeber & Damian, 2016). However, work-related perfectionism (i.e., having very high standards for one's work performance and feeling that one falls short of them) is reckoned to be an under-researched area (Stoeber, 2018)[6]. This is a significant oversight because perfectionism is especially prevalent in the work domain (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). Moreover, perfectionism is assumed to affect employees' well-being, attitudes and behaviours (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020).

Perfectionism has been traditionally defined as a fairly stable personality trait (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Consequently, perfectionism at work has been examined from a between-person perspective (Ocampo et al., 2020). But perfectionism can also be examined from a dynamic perspective, given that perfectionism shows fluctuations from day to day (Boone et al., 2012)[7]. To date, however, it is largely unclear what causes these within-person fluctuations. We address this question and argue that situational cues at work trigger employees' daily work-related perfectionism (i.e., work-related perfectionism showing within-person fluctuations from one working day to another; Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Ocampo et al., 2020; Prestele et al., 2020). Specifically, we draw on whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001) and the principle of trait activation (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman,

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[6] In Study 1, we only cite the Stoeber (2018b) chapter. Accordingly, this chapter is cited as Stoeber (2018) in Chapter II of this dissertation.

[7] In Study 1, we only cite the Boone et al. (2012a) paper. Accordingly, this paper is cited as Boone et al. (2012) in Chapter II of this dissertation.

2000) to examine experienced time pressure and criticism at work as antecedents of daily work-related perfectionistic strivings (i.e., having very high standards for one's work performance) and concerns (i.e., feeling that one falls short of these high standards; Stoeber & Damian, 2016).

Furthermore, considering that personality states are not 'dead end states' (Judge et al., 2014, p. 216) but matter for employee well-being (e.g., Howell et al., 2017; Koopmann et al., 2016; Sosnowska et al., 2019), we study state vigour (i.e., a positive affective state of moderate arousal; Shirom, 2004) and state negative affect at the end of the workday and at bedtime as well-being outcomes of daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns (see Figure 2.1 for the research model). Focusing on a positive (i.e., vigour) versus a negative (i.e., negative affect) well-being state as outcomes of perfectionistic strivings versus perfectionistic concerns captures the duality of perfectionism in terms of both dimensions (see Flaxman et al., 2018).

As mentioned, perfectionism shows daily within-person fluctuations (Boone et al., 2012), as do time pressure (Baethge et al., 2019), criticism (Bono et al., 2013) and well-being (e.g., Koopmann et al., 2016). In this sense, all constructs that we investigate are dynamic. It is therefore crucial to investigate their interrelations from a dynamic, within-person perspective that considers their fluctuating nature (McCormick et al., 2020). More precisely, we investigate time pressure and criticism as situational antecedents of daily work-related perfectionism and, in turn, investigate the implications of daily work-related perfectionism for employee well-being. Because an employee's experiences of time pressure and criticism at work – and thus likely their work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns – vary from day to day, the implications of work-related perfectionism for an employee's well-being also vary on a daily basis (Debusscher et al., 2016a; Huang & Ryan, 2011; Judge et al., 2014).

To illustrate, imagine an employee who receives complaints about their work

performance (i.e., experiences criticism) on a specific day at work. We propose that this day-specific experience of criticism triggers feelings in the employee of falling short of their high performance standards at work (i.e., experiences of perfectionistic concerns). These experiences of perfectionistic concerns, in turn, harm well-being on that specific day. That is, the employee experiences negative affect at work. We suggest that this negative affective state does not end when leaving work but also continues later in the day. However, when experiencing no criticism (or other situational cues that trigger perfectionistic concerns) on a specific day, the employee does not experience perfectionistic concerns at work. Hence, their work-related perfectionism does not harm their well-being on that specific day.

We aim to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, we advance the literature on work-related perfectionism. Previous research tended to examine mainly consequences of perfectionism at work, neglecting its antecedents (Ocampo et al., 2020). In line with Ocampo et al. (2020), we propose that an employee's experiences at work (i.e., daily experienced time pressure and criticism) precede their daily work-related perfectionism, which in turn relates to their well-being. Thus, we focus on both antecedents and consequences of work-related perfectionism. Furthermore, we examine whether perfectionistic strivings and concerns have the same or different antecedents at work and whether both dimensions relate to different indicators of employee well-being (i.e., perfectionistic strivings to vigour vs. perfectionistic concerns to negative affect). By investigating whether these dimensions also have different antecedents at work, we add to previous research showing that the two dimensions of perfectionism tend to have different outcomes at work (Harari et al., 2018; Stoeber & Damian, 2016). Evidence that perfectionistic strivings and concerns have different antecedents would strengthen the notion that they are conceptually distinct constructs that reflect distinct aspects of perfectionism (Harari et al., 2018).

Second, by using a diary study to examine daily work-related perfectionism, we

respond to explicit calls to investigate within-person fluctuations in perfectionism and their antecedents at the day level (Boone et al., 2012; Ocampo et al., 2020). Whereas previous research identified experimentally manipulated cues that induce fluctuations in perfectionism (Shafran et al., 2006), it is largely unclear whether naturally occurring cues in an individual's environment can have the same effect (Boone et al., 2012). Thus, identifying daily at-work antecedents of perfectionism helps to understand how perfectionism can be shaped by peoples' day-to-day experiences (Stoeber, 2018). Moreover, a within-person view brings light into the daily processes associated with perfectionism, that is, its daily antecedents and its implications for daily affective well-being. Because short-term problems with affective well-being might develop into long-term impairments and chronic health outcomes (e.g., depression; see Venz et al., 2020), being aware of the daily antecedents of perfectionism might help to alleviate perfectionism and related undesired consequences in the short and long run (Beckmann & Wood, 2020).

Third, we aim to improve understanding of domain-specific perfectionism (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). Previous research showed that perfectionism in one domain relates to well-being in this specific domain (e.g., perfectionism in the home domain relates to parental distress, whereas perfectionism in the work domain relates to work-related burnout symptoms; Mitchelson & Burns, 1998). However, perfectionism might also permeate boundaries between domains (Ocampo et al., 2020). Accordingly, we investigate whether perfectionism at work on a specific day flows into the home domain via what are known as spillover processes (Judge & Ilies, 2004). Showing whether and how perfectionism in one domain (i.e., at work) affects employees in another domain (i.e., at home) advances research on domain-specific perfectionism (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009) and, because spillover processes occur on a daily basis (e.g., Ilies et al., 2007), further substantiates the value of studying daily fluctuations in perfectionism.

Fourth, we contribute to the broader literature on personality dynamics at work. Although perfectionism is an important personality characteristic at work, it was not previously considered in research on work-related personality dynamics. Understanding what elicits within-person fluctuation in personality at work is central to gain further insight into the role of personality in the workplace (Tett & Burnett, 2003). We answer the call for research on dynamics of personality characteristics and related cues that trigger them (Fleeson, 2001) by examining within-person fluctuations in work-related perfectionism and their potential antecedents.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

A Dynamic View on Work-Related Perfectionism

In recent years, new theoretical approaches to personality dynamics (e.g., whole trait theory; Fleeson, 2001) have found their way into organisational psychology (e.g., Debusscher et al., 2016a; Huang & Ryan, 2011; Judge et al., 2014; Koopmann et al., 2016; Minbashian et al., 2010). Whereas traditional personality trait approaches focus on how people generally think, feel and behave, dynamic approaches address within-person fluctuations in these general tendencies (Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Fleeson, 2017; Judge et al., 2014). Previous studies provided evidence that personality at work indeed shows within-person fluctuations that matter for work performance (e.g., Debusscher et al., 2016b; Minbashian et al., 2010) and well-being (e.g., Howell et al., 2017; Koopmann et al., 2016; Sosnowska et al., 2019).

According to whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001), each personality characteristic describes both a person in general (i.e., personality trait) and the person's attributes and behaviours at a specific moment (i.e., personality state). Consequently, a personality trait and its corresponding state share the same affective, behavioural and cognitive aspects (Fleeson, 2017; Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015). However, personality states refer to short periods (e.g., days; Judge et al., 2014) in which these states fluctuate within an individual. Personality

states can be activated by situational cues (Fleeson, 2017; Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015).

This assumption is in accordance with the interactionist principle of trait activation (Tett &

Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), which holds that the expression of a particular trait is

dependent on a situation that activates the trait by providing trait-relevant cues (i.e., matching

a specific trait) and opportunities for its expression. At work, such cues can, for instance,

originate from sources in the task domain (e.g., experienced time pressure) or social domain

(e.g., experienced criticism; Debusscher et al., 2016a; Minbashian et al., 2010; Tett &

Burnett, 2003). As previous studies showed, situational cues at work can indeed trigger

personality states (Huang & Ryan, 2011; Judge et al., 2014).

In summary, in line with whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001), we propose that

perfectionism has dynamic components that, according to the principle of trait activation

(Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), can be triggered by specific situational cues

(see Tett et al., 2021). We assume that experienced time pressure and criticism at work

provide situational cues that are relevant for perfectionism in particular. Accordingly, we

examine experienced time pressure and criticism as antecedents of daily work-related

perfectionism.

Experienced Time Pressure at Work and Daily Work-Related Perfectionism

Time pressure refers to employees' experience that they have to accomplish too many

tasks in too little time (Kinicki & Vecchio, 1994). Time pressure can fluctuate daily (Baethge

et al., 2019). We assume that the time pressure an employee experiences on a given day

activates both their daily work-related perfectionistic strivings (i.e., high standards for their

work performance) and their concerns (i.e., feelings of falling short of their high standards).

Previous research showed that perfectionism is related to the amount of time invested

in task completion (Harari et al., 2018; Stoeber & Eismann, 2007). Accordingly, (too little)

time for task completion is a critical factor. Furthermore, the sensitivity to stressors or

situations that imply possible personal failure is a typical feature of perfectionism (Dunkley et al., 2003; Flett et al., 2016). Experiencing time pressure can imply that one is not able to attain work goals (Baethge et al., 2019), which might constitute personal failure. For instance, an employee experiencing time pressure might become aware of the possibility of failing to meet their standards or of not having enough time to fulfil their tasks 'perfectly', which elicits feelings of a discrepancy between their standards and performance. These feelings will, in turn, activate the employee's trait of perfectionism. Thus, following the principle of trait activation (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), we propose that having too little time for completing one's work tasks provides specific situational cues that activate perfectionistic strivings and concerns. In other words, experienced time pressure at work should predict both dimensions of daily work-related perfectionism.

Hypothesis 1. On a daily basis, experienced time pressure at work is positively related to *a)* work-related perfectionistic strivings and *b)* work-related perfectionistic concerns.

Experienced Criticism at Work and Daily Work-Related Perfectionistic Concerns

There are two types of criticism: *Constructive* criticism refers to 'negative feedback that is delivered with a considerate tone and contains no threats' (Raver et al., 2012, p. 178), whereas *destructive* criticism refers to 'negative feedback that is inconsiderate in style and content that attributes poor performance to internal causes' (Raver et al., 2012, pp. 177–178). We focus on destructive criticism in the form of self-threatening negative social evaluations. More precisely, we refer to criticism at work as the inappropriate expression of disapproval of an employee's work performance – and thereby potentially of the employee's self (Koopmann et al., 2016; Raver et al., 2012) – by other people at work (e.g., colleagues, supervisors). For instance, an employee can experience criticism if their supervisor disapproves of their work results or if they overhear colleagues complaining about the employee's deficient work performance. Receiving criticism is a negative work event that

can occur on a daily basis (Bono et al., 2013; Koopmann et al., 2016).

We consider daily experienced criticism at work as a source of trait-relevant cues that trigger daily work-related perfectionistic concerns. The tendency to criticise oneself, preoccupation with one's self-worth and fear of negative evaluation are typical features of self-critical perfectionism (i.e., a form of perfectionism that involves harsh self-evaluation and concerns about others' expectations, similar to perfectionistic concerns; Dunkley et al., 2003). Another key feature of perfectionistic concerns is a heightened sensitivity to social events that may expose one's inability to live up to others' expectations and thereby imply a threat to one's self-worth (Dunkley et al., 2003; Hewitt & Flett, 1993). Drawing on these findings and the principle of trait activation (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), we propose that experiencing criticism at work provides specific situational cues that activate an employee's perfectionistic concerns.

In line with previous research, we do not expect a connection between experienced criticism and perfectionistic strivings (see Flett et al., 2016; Nepon et al., 2011). Whereas perfectionistic concerns are associated with a heightened sensitivity to social evaluation (Harari et al., 2018; Hewitt et al., 2017), perfectionistic strivings are not (Flett et al., 2016; Nepon et al., 2011). Accordingly, experienced criticism should provide cues that elicit the former, but not the latter.

Hypothesis 2. On a daily basis, experienced criticism at work is positively related to work-related perfectionistic concerns.

Immediate Well-Being Effects of Daily Work-Related Perfectionism

So far, we focused on antecedents of daily work-related perfectionism. However, personality states at work can have important implications for employee performance (e.g., Debusscher et al., 2016b; Minbashian et al., 2010) and well-being (e.g., Howell et al., 2017; Koopmann et al., 2016). Consequently, we also consider outcomes of daily work-related

perfectionism and, therefore, assess indicators of employee well-being. To capture the duality of perfectionism in terms of perfectionistic strivings and concerns (see Flaxman et al., 2018), we investigate vigour (i.e., a positive well-being state) as an outcome of daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and negative affect (i.e., a negative well-being state) as an outcome of daily work-related perfectionistic concerns.

Vigour is a positive affective state of moderate arousal that comprises 'a combination of a positive energy balance and pleasantness or contentment' (Shirom, 2011, p. 50). Despite being conceptualized as a work-related affective state, vigour can also be experienced away from work (Shirom, 2011). Indeed, vigour at bedtime is a well-being outcome often examined in research on occupational health and work-stress recovery (e.g., Demerouti et al., 2012; Xanthopoulou et al., 2018).[8] Negative affect is an unpleasant affective state that comprises feelings of distress, anger and nervousness (Watson et al., 1988). Whereas perfectionistic strivings are deemed to be positively related to well-being (e.g., being positively related to vigour; Childs & Stoeber, 2010; Ocampo et al., 2020), perfectionistic concerns are deemed to be negatively related to well-being (e.g., being positively related to negative affect; Dunkley et al., 2003; Ocampo et al., 2020). We propose that this duality also shows at the day level.

Perfectionistic strivings are positively related to goal progress (Moore et al., 2021; Powers et al., 2011, 2012). On days on which an employee's perfectionistic strivings are activated, the employee is focused on meeting their high performance standards. To that end, they work purposefully towards achieving their goals, which should lead to goal progress (Powers et al., 2012). Goal progress can lead to positive affective states (e.g., vigour; Carver

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[8] One might argue that vigour at bedtime is not an optimal outcome variable because the definition of vigour as being aroused is not consistent with what is conceptually thought to help sleep (i.e., relaxation). However, in studies that assessed vigour at bedtime, vigour scores were moderate (e.g., Xanthopoulou et al., 2018), which is in line with what we observed in the current study. We believe that moderate vigour scores will not likely have a negative impact on sleep.

& Scheier, 1990; Zohar et al., 2003), with the perceived rate of goal progress linking personality states to affective states (Wilt et al., 2017).

Hypothesis 3. Daily work-related perfectionistic strivings are positively related to vigour at the end of the workday.

Perfectionistic concerns are negatively related to goal progress (Moore et al., 2021; Powers et al., 2011, 2012). On days on which an employee's perfectionistic concerns are activated, the employee feels that they do not live up to their high performance standards. Focusing on this discrepancy likely distracts employees from working purposefully towards achieving their goals, which should hinder goal progress (Powers et al., 2011, 2012). Lack of goal progress can lead to negative affect (Wilt et al., 2017; Zohar et al., 2003).

Hypothesis 4. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns are positively related to negative affect at the end of the workday.

Spillover Effects of Daily Work-Related Perfectionism via Well-Being after Work

Personality states that employees experience at work might matter not only for their immediate well-being on a specific day but also for their well-being later that day (i.e., at home; e.g., Koopmann et al., 2016). Therefore, we investigate whether daily perfectionism experienced at work relates to well-being both at work and at home. More precisely, on the basis of research on affective spillover (Judge & Ilies, 2004), we examine whether an employee's daily work-related perfectionism has indirect effects on their affective well-being at home via affective well-being experienced at the end of the workday.

According to research on affective spillover, an employee is likely to experience a specific affective state at home that they have already experienced at work earlier that day (e.g., Ilies et al., 2007; Sonnentag & Binnewies, 2013) due to affect-congruent processes (Rusting & DeHart, 2000). When an employee experiences positive affect at work, they are more likely to recall specifically positive (and not negative) events that happened at work,

even in their free time after work. This recall of positive events can in turn prolong the

employee's positive affect, meaning that an affective spillover from the work to the home

domain occurs (Judge & Ilies, 2004). Accordingly, the level of vigour an employee

experiences at the end of the workday (work domain) should relate positively to this

employee's level of vigour at bedtime (home domain). This reasoning also applies to negative

affective states (e.g., Sonnentag & Binnewies, 2013). Thus, the level of negative affect an

employee experiences at the end of the workday should relate positively to this employee's

level of negative affect at bedtime.

Hypothesis 5. On a daily basis, vigour at the end of the workday is positively related

to vigour at bedtime.

Hypothesis 6. On a daily basis, negative affect at the end of the workday is positively

related to negative affect at bedtime.

Daily affective spillover processes from the work to the home domain are well

established (e.g., Ilies et al., 2007; Judge & Ilies, 2004; Sonnentag & Binnewies, 2013);

accordingly, Hypotheses 5 and 6 represent replication hypotheses. However, our study does

not focus on these affective spillover processes per se but on the indirect, domain-crossing

effects (i.e., from the work to the home domain) of daily perfectionism at work. More

precisely, we argue that affective spillover processes link daily perfectionism at work with

well-being experienced at home. That is, daily work-related perfectionistic strivings should

have a positive indirect effect on vigour at bedtime via vigour at the end of the workday and

daily work-related perfectionistic concerns should have a positive indirect effect on negative

affect at bedtime via negative affect at the end of the workday.

Hypothesis 7. Daily work-related perfectionistic strivings have a positive indirect

effect on vigour at bedtime via vigour at the end of the workday.

Hypothesis 8. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns have a positive indirect

effect on negative affect at bedtime via negative affect at the end of the workday.

Method

Sample and Procedure

To test our hypotheses, we conducted an online daily diary study. To recruit participants, we used professional social online networks (e.g., xing.de) and flyers, which we distributed via email or in person. Our study was advertised as a research project on 'Stress at work, leisure time and recovery'. To take part in the study, participants had to be at least 18 years old and work at least 20 hours per week. Participants who completed both the general survey and at least 80% of the daily surveys could participate in a lottery and win one out of 25 vouchers from an online retailer (worth 10 euros each). We also provided a short general report on the study results for all participants.

After registration, we asked participants to complete a general survey capturing demographic and work-related background data. To collect daily data, we invited participants to complete a survey in the morning (accessible from 5 to 11 a.m.), at the end of the workday (accessible from 3 to 8 p.m.) and at bedtime (accessible from 8:30 p.m. to 2 a.m. the next morning) for two working weeks (Monday to Friday). The morning survey assessed participants' state vigour and state negative affect, which we used as control variables. The survey at the end of the workday assessed participants' daily work-related perfectionism, experienced time pressure and criticism at work, as well as their state vigour and state negative affect. The survey at bedtime assessed participants' state vigour and state negative affect.

Ninety-eight people signed up for our study, 86 of whom completed the general survey. In our final sample, we included only those participants who had completed the general survey and who had provided data on the study variables (i.e., survey at the end of the workday and at bedtime) for at least two full working days. Additionally, a time lag of at

least one hour was required between the surveys at the end of the workday and at bedtime. The final sample consisted of 72 participants, who together provided valid data for 461 days (i.e., on average 6.40 days per participant).

Participants were on average 44.69 years old ($SD = 13.22$), most of whom were female (62.5%). On average, participants worked 36.93 hours per week ($SD = 11.16$). Participants within our sample were highly educated; 53 participants held a university degree (73.6%). Participants worked in various industries, such as education and social work (20.8%), training and development (12.5%) and administrative occupations (11.1%).

To check for selective attrition, we tested whether these 72 participants differed from the 14 participants who completed the general survey but were excluded from our final sample because they did not provide enough valid day-level data (i.e., at least two days). Analyses revealed no significant differences with respect to gender, χ^2 $(1, N = 85) = 1.23$, $p = .268$ (one participant did not provide information regarding gender); educational level ($0 = $ *without university degree*, $1 = $ *with university degree*), χ^2 $(1, N = 86) = 0.51$, $p = .477$; age, $t(84) = -1.00$, $p = .319$; or average working hours per week, $t(84) = 0.42$, $p = .675$.

Measures

Unless stated otherwise, items had to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from $1 = $ *does not apply to me at all* to $5 = $ *fully applies to me*. All surveys were administered in German. If no German scale was available, we applied back-translation (Brislin, 1970) to translate the items into German.

Daily Work-Related Perfectionism

To assess participants' daily work-related perfectionism, we used the Short Almost Perfect Scale (Rice et al., 2014). Because perfectionism is domain-specific, it is necessary to assess it precisely in relation to the domain of interest (Harari et al., 2018; Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009). We therefore adapted the items to match the working context, and also adapted them

to match the daily assessment. Four items captured participants' daily work-related perfectionistic strivings (e.g., 'Today at work, I had high expectations for myself'), and four items captured participants' daily work-related perfectionistic concerns (e.g., 'My performance at work barely measured up to my standards today'). The response scale ranged from 1 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*. The scale proved to be reliable for both perfectionistic strivings (within-person ω = .82, between-person ω = .98) and perfectionistic concerns (within-person ω = .83, between-person ω = .99; Geldhof et al., 2014).

Experienced Time Pressure

To capture the time pressure participants experienced at work, we used three items of the Instrument for Stress-Oriented Task Analysis (Semmer et al., 1999) in a version adapted for daily assessment (Binnewies et al., 2009). A sample item is 'I faced time pressure at work today'. Within-person ω was .86, between-person ω was .96.

Experienced Criticism

To assess participants' experienced criticism at work, we used four items of the Direct Negative Co-Worker Subscale of the Job Feedback Survey (Herold & Parsons, 1985). The items of this subscale capture co-workers' negative messages about one's work performance. We adapted the items to capture daily criticism at work voiced by anyone at work that day, not just by co-workers. A sample item is 'People at work (e.g., supervisors, colleagues, customers) told me today that I am not doing a good job'. Within-person ω was .83, between-person ω was .98.

Vigour

To capture participants' state vigour both at the end of the workday and at bedtime, we used four items of the physical strength subscale of the German version of the Shirom-Melamed Vigour Measure (Shirom, 2004) in a version adapted for daily assessment (Venz & Pundt, 2021). A sample item is 'I feel full of energy'. For the measurement at the end of the

workday, within-person ω was .89 and between-person ω was .99. For the measurement at bedtime, within-person ω was .92 and between-person ω was .99.

Negative Affect

To assess participants' state negative affect at the end of the workday and at bedtime, we used six items (e.g., 'upset', 'distressed') of the German version (Breyer & Bluemke, 2016) of the PANAS scales (Watson et al., 1988). The response scale ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*. For the measurement at the end of the workday, within-person ω was .79 and between-person ω was .89. For the measurement at bedtime, within-person ω was .80 and between-person ω was .91.

Control Variables

We included morning vigour as a predictor of vigour at the end of the workday and morning negative affect as a predictor of negative affect at the end of the workday. Controlling for daily baseline levels of the outcome variables allows for predicting intra-individual changes in well-being (i.e., morning to end of workday) by daily work-related perfectionism (A. S. Gabriel et al., 2019). We assessed morning vigour and morning negative affect in the morning survey[9] with the same items that were used in the surveys at the end of the workday and at bedtime. For vigour, within-person ω was .89 and between-person ω was .99. For negative affect, within-person ω was .71 and between-person ω was .87. Removing the control variables from our analysis did not change the results with respect to the hypotheses.

Construct Validity

Using Mplus Version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2015), we conducted a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis to assess the construct validity of our measures. We ran the

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[9] Morning-survey data were missing on 26 days. We included these 26 days in our analysis, by using full information maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus.

analysis for all study variables (morning vigour, morning negative affect, work-related perfectionistic strivings, work-related perfectionistic concerns, experienced time pressure, experienced criticism, vigour at the end of the workday, negative affect at the end of the workday, vigour at bedtime, negative affect at bedtime). Accordingly, our measurement model comprised ten factors. We specified the model at the within-person level using person-mean centred items. Furthermore, we specified the stabilities of the vigour and negative-affect items across the three measurement points. This model showed an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2 (870) = 1484.42$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.89, TLI = 0.88, RMSEA = .04, SRMR$_{within}$ = .05.

We then tested this measurement model against plausible alternative models. Our measurement model showed a better fit than a model subsuming both perfectionism dimensions under one factor, $\chi^2 (879) = 1997.32$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.80, TLI = 0.78, RMSEA = .05, SRMR$_{within}$ = .07, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2 (9) = 398.74$, $p < .001$, and a model subsuming experienced time pressure and criticism under one factor, $\chi^2 (879) = 2010.59$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.80, TLI = 0.78, RMSEA = .05, SRMR$_{within}$ = .08, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2 (9) = 560.25$, $p < .001$. A one-factor model did not converge, so we could not test it against our model.

Data Analysis

Because our data has a two-level structure (days nested within participants), we tested our hypotheses with a multilevel path analytic approach following the recommendations of Preacher et al. (2010). Using Mplus Version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2015), we specified a multilevel path model with variance partitioning into within- and between-person parts for all variables. We modelled the same paths at the within-person and the between-person level. Means, standard deviations, intraclass correlation coefficients and intercorrelations among the study variables are displayed in Table 2.1. We tested all hypotheses in one overall model (Preacher et al., 2010). Intercepts were treated as random and slopes were fixed. We allowed correlations between morning vigour and morning

negative affect, between perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns, and between vigour and negative affect at the end of the workday at both levels. Vigour and negative affect at bedtime were correlated by default. We tested Hypotheses 7 and 8 with a 1-1-1 mediation model, specifying the indirect effects at the within-person level (Preacher et al., 2010). These were calculated by using the MODEL CONSTRAINT command in Mplus (see Preacher et al., 2010). That is, we specified within-person-level indirect effects by multiplying the predictor-mediator path with the mediator-outcome path. For the indirect effects, we calculated confidence intervals using the Monte Carlo method (Selig & Preacher, 2008), with 20,000 repetitions.

Results

Because all of our hypotheses refer to relationships at the within-person level, we subsequently focus on the results at that level. We additionally report results at the between-person level on an exploratory basis. Results for the direct effects at both levels are displayed in Table 2.2; results for the indirect effects at the within-person level are displayed in Table 2.3. All reported estimates are unstandardized.

Test of Hypotheses

Consistent with Hypotheses 1a and 1b, experienced time pressure at work positively predicted daily work-related perfectionistic strivings, $\gamma = 0.260$, $SE = 0.045$, $p < .001$, and daily work-related perfectionistic concerns, $\gamma = 0.165$, $SE = 0.054$, $p = .002$. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, experienced criticism at work positively predicted daily work-related perfectionistic concerns, $\gamma = 0.360$, $SE = 0.126$, $p = .004$. It did not predict daily work-related perfectionistic strivings, $\gamma = -0.013$, $SE = 0.105$, $p = .902$. In line with Hypothesis 3, daily work-related perfectionistic strivings positively predicted vigour at the end of the workday, $\gamma = 0.172$, $SE = 0.059$, $p = .004$. In line with Hypothesis 4, daily work-related perfectionistic concerns positively predicted negative affect at the end of the workday, $\gamma = 0.134$, $SE = $

0.043, $p = .002$. Corresponding to Hypotheses 5 and 6, vigour at the end of the workday

positively predicted vigour at bedtime, $\gamma = 0.302$, $SE = 0.074$, $p < .001$, and negative affect at

the end of the workday positively predicted negative affect at bedtime, $\gamma = 0.239$, $SE = 0.091$,

$p = .008$. In support of Hypothesis 7, daily work-related perfectionistic strivings had a

positive indirect effect on vigour at bedtime via vigour at the end of the workday, $\gamma = 0.052$,

$SE = 0.024$, 95% CI [0.012, 0.109]. In support of Hypothesis 8, daily work-related

perfectionistic concerns had a positive indirect effect on negative affect at bedtime via

negative affect at the end of the workday, $\gamma = 0.032$, $SE = 0.015$, 95% CI [0.006, 0.067].

Additional Analyses

We focus on the possible implications of daily work-related perfectionism for

employee well-being. Accordingly, we tested how perfectionism relates to immediate

(Hypotheses 3 and 4) and distal (Hypotheses 7 and 8) well-being. At the same time, it is

worthwhile to test the indirect effects of experienced time pressure and criticism on employee

well-being via perfectionism. Thus, we tested these indirect effects using the procedure

described above. Results are displayed in Table 2.3. Experienced time pressure had a positive

indirect effect on vigour at the end of the workday via work-related perfectionistic strivings, γ

$= 0.045$, $SE = 0.019$, 95% CI [0.013, 0.085], and on negative affect at the end of the workday

via work-related perfectionistic concerns, $\gamma = 0.022$, $SE = 0.010$, 95% CI [0.005, 0.045].

Experienced criticism had a positive indirect effect on negative affect at the end of the

workday via work-related perfectionistic concerns, $\gamma = 0.048$, $SE = 0.022$, 95% CI [0.010,

0.099]. Experienced time pressure had a positive serial indirect effect on vigour at bedtime

via work-related perfectionistic strivings and vigour at the end of the workday, $\gamma = 0.014$, SE

$= 0.007$, 95% CI [0.002, 0.030]. However, neither experienced time pressure, $\gamma = 0.005$, $SE =$

0.003, 95% CI [0.000, 0.012], nor experienced criticism, $\gamma = 0.012$, $SE = 0.007$, 95% CI

[0.000, 0.029], had an indirect effect on negative affect at bedtime via work-related

perfectionistic concerns and negative affect at the end of the workday.

Our data offer the opportunity to simultaneously examine the same relationships at the within- and between-person level. At the between-person level, experienced time pressure at work positively predicted work-related perfectionistic strivings, $\gamma = 0.563$, $SE = 0.145$, $p < .001$, and work-related perfectionistic concerns, $\gamma = 0.216$, $SE = 0.075$, $p = .004$. Experienced criticism at work positively predicted work-related perfectionistic concerns, $\gamma = 0.926$, $SE = 0.373$, $p = .013$, but not work-related perfectionistic strivings, $\gamma = -0.412$, $SE = 0.214$, $p = .055$. Work-related perfectionistic strivings did not predict vigour at the end of the workday, $\gamma = -0.016$, $SE = 0.068$, $p = .817$, and work-related perfectionistic concerns did not predict negative affect at the end of the workday, $\gamma = 0.055$, $SE = 0.041$, $p = .183$. Vigour at the end of the workday positively predicted vigour at bedtime, $\gamma = 0.802$, $SE = 0.088$, $p < .001$, and negative affect at the end of the workday positively predicted negative affect at bedtime, $\gamma = 0.762$, $SE = 0.105$, $p < .001$. Work-related perfectionistic strivings did not have a significant indirect effect on vigour at bedtime via vigour at the end of the workday, $\gamma = -0.013$, $SE = 0.054$, 95% CI [-0.116, 0.097]. Nor did work-related perfectionistic concerns have a significant indirect effect on negative affect at bedtime via negative affect at the end of the workday, $\gamma = 0.042$, $SE = 0.032$, 95% CI [-0.019, 0.108]. Thus, the results at the between-person level do not fully mirror the results at the within-person level. Whereas the relationships between work experiences and perfectionism are fairly similar at both levels, the relationships between perfectionism and well-being differ.

Discussion

We employed a diary study approach to better understand how perfectionism functions in employees' daily work. Specifically, we examined how experiences at work (i.e., experienced time pressure and criticism) relate to daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns and tested how daily work-related perfectionism, in turn, relates to employees'

experience of vigour and negative affect at work and at home.

We found that the time pressure an employee experienced at work related positively to both their daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns. Furthermore, criticism experienced at work related positively to employees' perfectionistic concerns. Daily work-related perfectionistic strivings were indirectly positively related to vigour at bedtime via vigour at the end of the workday. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns were indirectly positively related to negative affect at bedtime via negative affect at the end of the workday.

Theoretical Implications

Our study has theoretical implications for the study of personality dynamics at work. We introduce perfectionism as a personality characteristic at work that can be studied from a dynamic perspective. More precisely, we demonstrate that perfectionism at work has state components that fluctuate within short periods (i.e., days). These fluctuations are elicited by perfectionism-relevant cues at work (i.e., experienced time pressure and criticism) and have a bearing on employee well-being. Thus, our study further substantiates both the premises of whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001, 2017; Fleeson & Jayawickreme, 2015) and the principle of trait activation (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), and it underlines the benefit of studying personality at work from a dynamic viewpoint (Beckmann & Wood, 2020).

In addition, examining the two dimensions of perfectionism simultaneously allowed us to detect that not every situational cue or experience at work is equally relevant for every dimension of a personality state (e.g., experiencing criticism triggered perfectionistic concerns, but not perfectionistic strivings). Likewise, not every dimension of a personality state at work matters for the same outcome variables (i.e., perfectionistic strivings predicted vigour but not negative affect, whereas perfectionistic concerns predicted negative affect but not vigour). When investigating antecedents and outcomes of personality states at work,

scholars should be aware of the multidimensionality of many personality characteristics and hence examine the various dimensions simultaneously.

Our study also has specific theoretical implications for the study of perfectionism at work. The dynamic view we offer alters the prevailing understanding of work-related perfectionism. Up to now, scholars have conceptualized perfectionism as a fairly stable personality trait (Hewitt & Flett, 1991) and investigated it as an antecedent of work outcomes (Ocampo et al., 2020). However, this stable antecedent-focused view is limited because it neglects the possibility of perfectionism being both an antecedent *and* an outcome at work (McCormick et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018). That is, perfectionism might not only affect employees' (daily) work but also be affected by their (daily) work.

Most studies that examined perfectionism as an outcome focused on developmental changes due to experiences during childhood and adolescence (e.g., Damian et al., 2013). In all likelihood, however, dynamics in perfectionism do not arise solely during childhood and adolescence. On the contrary, it is plausible that dynamics in *work*-related perfectionism arise due to experiences at *work* (Ocampo et al., 2020). These work-related dynamics might also arise in the short term (e.g., daily). Indeed, our study showed that daily experiences of time pressure and criticism at work play a role as antecedents of daily fluctuations in work-related perfectionism. It is therefore useful to study antecedents at work that relate to short-term variability in perfectionism. Moreover, a dynamic view that considers antecedents of perfectionism at work might also help to better understand long-term variability or changes in perfectionism during adulthood (e.g., whether subordinates' perfectionism adjusts to their leader's perfectionism or whether newcomers' perfectionism changes over time due to the work context; see Ocampo et al., 2020). In conclusion, we deem it important to investigate perfectionism from a dynamic view and consider it as both an antecedent and an outcome at work.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Our study is not without limitations. The fact that we assessed experienced time pressure and criticism, work-related perfectionism, vigour and negative affect at the same time point each day using self-reports might raise concerns regarding the temporal sequence of these constructs and regarding common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012), especially when testing mediation (Aguinis et al., 2017). To allay these concerns, we took several measures. First, although we assessed experienced time pressure, criticism and work-related perfectionism retrospectively (i.e., with respect to the full working day), we instructed participants to rate vigour and negative affect with respect to how they felt *at the moment* (C. D. Fisher & To, 2012). These instructions help to establish a temporal order in which perfectionism states precede well-being states. Second, we assessed vigour and negative affect not only at the end of the workday but also later on at home. This allowed us to capture spillover effects of perfectionism, going beyond its simultaneously assessed immediate effects on well-being. Third, controlling for morning vigour and negative affect enabled us to predict intra-individual change in employee well-being contingent on daily work-related perfectionism (A. S. Gabriel et al., 2019). Finally, whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001) and the principle of trait activation (Tett, & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000) provide a strong theoretical basis for assuming that at-work experiences precede work-related perfectionism and not vice versa.

Nevertheless, we encourage future research to examine the temporal and causal relationships of work-related perfectionism, its at-work antecedents and its outcomes more closely. For example, one could measure employees' work experiences, perfectionism and well-being several times per day to gain a better understanding of their temporal relationships and to reduce retrospective biases (C. D. Fisher & To, 2012). In addition, one could implement an experimental design and manipulate the experience of time pressure or

criticism to approach causality. Because we were particularly interested in employees' experiences and perceptions, we consider our use of self-reports as justifiable. However, future research might use observer ratings to assess employees' daily work-related perfectionism or physiological measures to assess well-being (Stoeber, 2018).

Our study offers a few other starting points for future research on work-related perfectionism. We showed that work-related perfectionism can be conceptualized as a personality state that exhibits within-person fluctuations from day to day. Because this perspective is relatively new to the literature, we call for studies that investigate daily work-related perfectionism in more detail. For instance, researchers could examine whether people differ in the extent to which their perfectionism fluctuates from day to day (see Debusscher et al., 2016b). Investigating the interplay of state and trait perfectionism at work can be another fruitful avenue for future research (see Debusscher et al., 2016a; Judge et al., 2014; Minbashian et al., 2010). Because personality states at work also have implications for performance (e.g., Debusscher et al., 2016b), future research could investigate the relationship between perfectionism and performance at the day level. Furthermore, our study focused on intra-individual well-being effects of affective spillover processes related to daily perfectionism at work. It would be interesting to examine whether daily perfectionism-related spillover processes from the work to the home domain can have inter-individual (i.e., crossover) effects as well (e.g., on the well-being of family members).

We focused exclusively on experienced time pressure and experienced criticism at work as antecedents of work-related perfectionism, which represent perfectionism-relevant situational cues in the task and the social domain, respectively. There are likely other situational cues triggering work-related perfectionism that future research might consider. For instance, other kinds of pressure at work (e.g., performance pressure; Mitchell et al., 2019) might activate perfectionism. Situational cues may also originate from sources in the

organisational domain (e.g., from the organisational culture or climate; Tett & Burnett, 2003).

Given that perfectionistic strivings might even be beneficial at work, whereas perfectionistic

concerns are clearly harmful (Harari et al., 2018; Stoeber & Damian, 2016), it would be

valuable to identify situational cues that can trigger perfectionistic strivings without

triggering perfectionistic concerns simultaneously. It might also be relevant to examine

constructs that moderate the relationships between at-work antecedents and work-related

perfectionism (see Koopmann et al., 2016). For instance, it would be interesting to determine

whether there are specific conditions under which the experience of time pressure elicits only

one of the two perfectionism dimensions.

Practical Implications

The dynamic view on work-related perfectionism is relatively new to organisational

psychology, and empirical evidence is sparse. Therefore, caution is due regarding practical

implications. Nevertheless, the results of our study can provide a starting point for practical

action. Specifically, knowing that experiencing time pressure and criticism at work can

trigger perfectionism might prove helpful for organisations, employees and supervisors.

The observation that experiencing time pressure at work related positively to vigour

via perfectionistic strivings might lead one to argue that experiencing time pressure is

beneficial and that organisations or supervisors should, for instance, set tight deadlines

accordingly. In line with other scholars (Baethge et al., 2019), we refrain from endorsing this

practical implication. For one, we cannot rule out possible strain effects of time pressure: our

results show that experienced time pressure negatively predicted vigour and positively

predicted negative affect at the end of the workday. Moreover, experienced time pressure also

triggered perfectionistic concerns, which were related to enhanced negative affect.

Experiencing criticism at work triggered employees' perfectionistic concerns, but not

their perfectionistic strivings. Here, too, perfectionistic concerns were related to enhanced

negative affect. To prevent employees from experiencing perfectionistic concerns, supervisors and co-workers should avoid making derogatory comments about employees' performance. When employees experience perfectionistic concerns at work, it might prove useful for them to mentally distance themselves from the situation they are currently in, for instance by taking a break (Ocampo et al., 2020).

Our findings might also prove helpful for designing and implementing interventions that aim at decreasing perfectionistic concerns and related undesired consequences. Thanks to their malleability, personality states should be susceptible to intervention (Beckmann & Wood, 2020). Our results showed that perfectionistic concerns – which are often considered to be the detrimental side of perfectionism – fluctuate from day to day. This finding is encouraging insofar as it indicates that experiencing perfectionistic concerns in daily life might be avoided or reduced by providing an environment without cues (e.g., time pressure, criticism) that trigger such concerns. Moreover, as Beckmann and Wood (2020) note, targeting and changing state perfectionism and its consequences through daily interventions might, in the long run, help in shaping trait perfectionism and related consequences.

Conclusion

Our study showed that employees' daily experiences at work relate to fluctuations in their work-related perfectionism that matter for their well-being. We hope that our findings contribute to a better understanding of how this impactful personality characteristic functions at work and instigate further research on this topic. We conclude that a dynamic view on perfectionism helps broaden the understanding of perfectionism at work and concur with the observation that 'the workplace (…) represents a "perfect" context to understand the dynamics of perfectionism' (Ocampo et al., 2020, p. 156).

Figures and Tables

Figure 2.1

Conceptual Model
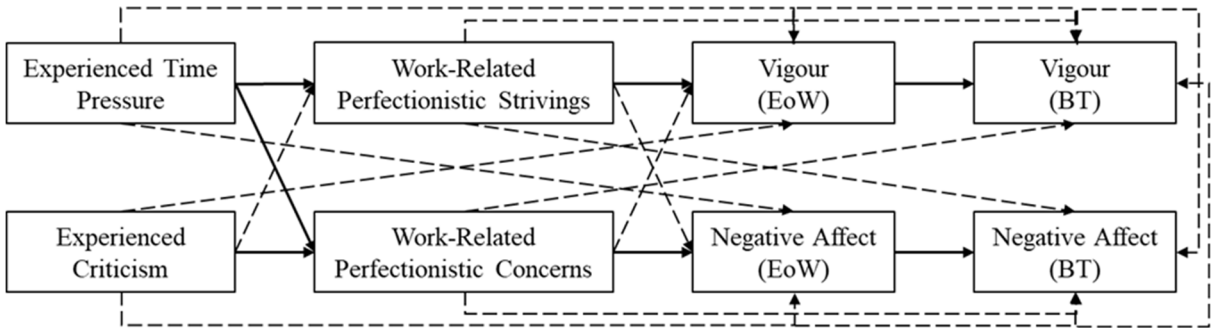
Note. Solid lines indicate hypothesized paths. Dashed lines indicate additional paths specified

in the model. This figure does not include the control variables (i.e., morning vigour and

morning negative affect). EoW = end of workday. BT = bedtime.

Table 2.1

Means, Standard Deviations, Intraclass Correlations and Intercorrelations among Study Variables

Variables	M	SD_b	SD_w	ICC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Time pressure	2.33	0.75	0.74	.51		.00	.35***	.23**	-.17**	-.04	.16***	-.01	.06	.07
2. Criticism	1.11	0.27	0.25	.54	.19*		-.01	.17**	-.14**	.00	.17**	.13	-.10	.16*
3. Perfect. strivings	3.46	0.84	0.54	.70	.48***	-.05		.07	.11*	.01	.03	-.06	.11	.04
4. Perfect. concerns	1.65	0.57	0.54	.52	.35**	.49***	.12		-.12*	-.02	.25***	.07	-.01	.05
5. Vigour (EoW)	3.01	0.74	0.54	.65	-.17	-.08	.05	-.33**		.26***	-.26***	-.17***	.21**	-.10*
6. Vigour (BT)	2.50	0.70	0.63	.55	-.24	-.04	-.14	-.28*	.82***		-.08	-.20**	.18**	-.06
7. NA (EoW)	1.28	0.29	0.36	.40	.39**	.40	-.09	.45***	-.31*	-.43***		.28**	.01	.26**
8. NA (BT)	1.21	0.26	0.33	.38	.26*	.64*	.00	.44***	-.09	-.22	.87***		-.05	.18*
9. Vigour (M)	3.20	0.72	0.53	.65	-.25	-.34***	.10	-.42***	.86***	.72***	-.51***	-.37***		-.33***
10. NA (M)	1.27	0.28	0.29	.48	.47***	.43*	.08	.44***	-.32*	-.42***	.96***	.87***	-.44***	

Note. Means and standard deviations displayed in columns 1 and 2 at the person level (i.e., between person; SD_b); standard deviations displayed in column 3 at the day level (i.e., within-person; SD_w). Correlations above the diagonal refer to the within-person level ($n = 461$), below the diagonal to the between-person level ($N = 72$). Perfect. = perfectionistic. NA = negative affect. EoW = end of workday. BT = bedtime. M = morning. ICC = percentage of variance between persons.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.2

Unstandardized Within-Person and Between-Person Coefficients from Multi-Level Path Analysis Predicting Work-Related Perfectionism, Vigour and Negative Affect

Predictors	Perfect. strivings Est. (SE)	z	Perfect. concerns Est. (SE)	z	Vigour (EoW) Est. (SE)	z	Vigour (BT) Est. (SE)	z	NA (EoW) Est. (SE)	z	NA (BT) Est. (SE)	z
Within-person level												
Vigour (M)					0.218 (0.066)	3.295**						
NA (M)							0.266 (0.106)	2.519*				
Time pressure	0.260 (0.045)	5.761***	0.165 (0.054)	3.067**	-0.168 (0.043)	-3.944***	0.009 (0.062)	0.150	0.055 (0.023)	2.436*	-0.017 (0.029)	-0.573
Criticism	-0.013 (0.105)	-0.123	0.360 (0.126)	2.856**	-0.246 (0.080)	-3.063**	0.087 (0.132)	0.660	0.153 (0.074)	2.058*	0.102 (0.081)	1.262
Perfect. strivings					0.172 (0.059)	2.912**	-0.032 (0.067)	-0.480	-0.024 (0.047)	-0.502	-0.034 (0.037)	-.934
Perfect. concerns					-0.057 (0.056)	-1.024	0.006 (0.062)	0.097	0.134 (0.043)	3.154**	0.001 (0.043)	0.013
Vigour (EoW)							0.302 (0.074)	4.099***				

Table continues

Chapter II: A Dynamic View on Work-Related Perfectionism

Table 2.2 *(continued)*

Predictors	Perfect. strivings		Perfect. concerns		Vigour (EoW)		Vigour (BT)		NA (EoW)		NA (BT)	
	Est. (*SE*)	*z*	Est. (*SE*)	*z*	Est. (*SE*)	*z*	Est. (*SE*)	*z*	Est. (*SE*)	*z*	Est. (*SE*)	*z*
Within-person level												
NA (EoW)											0.239 (0.091)	2.641**
Residual variance	0.260 (0.032)	8.235***	0.273 (0.041)	6.711***	0.257 (0.025)	10.429***	0.373 (0.041)	9.007***	0.110 (0.020)	5.523***	0.100 (0.023)	4.434***
Between-person level												
Intercept	2.606 (0.390)	6.683***	0.124 (0.411)	0.301	-0.472 (0.509)	-0.927	0.597 (0.443)	1.346	0.182 (0.265)	0.685	-0.186 (0.218)	-0.855
Vigour (M)					0.913 (0.073)	12.474***						
NA (M)									0.951 (0.128)	7.438***		
Time pressure	0.563 (0.145)	3.887***	0.216 (0.075)	2.881**	0.037 (0.090)	0.416	-0.018 (0.096)	-0.184	0.027 (0.028)	0.990	-0.067 (0.036)	-1.874
Criticism	-0.412 (0.214)	-1.920	0.926 (0.373)	2.481*	0.732 (0.284)	2.579*	-0.020 (0.329)	-0.062	-0.023 (0.188)	-0.124	0.388 (0.176)	2.201*

Table continues

Table 2.2 (*continued*)

Predictors	Perfect. strivings Est. (SE)	z	Perfect. concerns Est. (SE)	z	Vigour (EoW) Est. (SE)	z	Vigour (BT) Est. (SE)	z	NA (EoW) Est. (SE)	z	NA (BT) Est. (SE)	z
Between-person level												
Perfect. strivings					-0.016 (0.068)	-0.232	-0.146 (0.092)	-1.582	-0.069 (0.035)	-1.960	0.062 (0.034)	1.850
Perfect. concerns					-0.170 (0.131)	-1.294	0.031 (0.113)	0.275	0.055 (0.041)	1.332	-0.043 (0.079)	-0.540
Vigour (EoW)							0.802 (0.088)	9.082***				
NA (EoW)											0.762 (0.105)	7.280***
Residual variance	0.525 (0.095)	5.537***	0.222 (0.060)	3.673***	0.106 (0.034)	3.127**	0.146 (0.038)	3.871***	0.003 (0.014)	0.241	0.005 (0.006)	0.920

Note. $N = 72$, $n = 461$. Table shows unstandardized within-person (upper part) and between-person (lower part) estimates, resulting from an overall analysis including the prediction of work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns, and vigour and negative affect at the end of the workday and at bedtime in one model. Perfect. = perfectionistic. NA = negative affect. EoW = end of workday. BT = bedtime. M = morning.

Est. = Estimate.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 2.3

Within-Person Indirect Effects

	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI
Perfect. strivings → Vigour (EoW) → Vigour (BT)	0.052	0.024	[0.012, 0.109]
Perfect. concerns → NA (EoW) → NA (BT)	0.032	0.015	[0.006, 0.067]
Time pressure → Perfect. strivings → Vigour (EoW)	0.045	0.019	[0.013, 0.085]
Time pressure → Perfect. concerns → NA (EoW)	0.022	0.010	[0.005, 0.045]
Criticism → Perfect. concerns → NA (EoW)	0.048	0.022	[0.010, 0.099]
Time pressure → Perfect. strivings → Vigour (EoW) → Vigour (BT)	0.014	0.007	[0.002, 0.030]
Time pressure → Perfect. concerns → NA (EoW) → NA (BT)	0.005	0.003	[0.000, 0.012]
Criticism → Perfect. concerns → NA (EoW) → NA (BT)	0.012	0.007	[0.000, 0.029]

Note. Table shows unstandardized within-person estimates. Confidence intervals were calculated using the Monte Carlo method

(Selig & Preacher, 2008). Perfect. = perfectionistic. NA = negative affect. EoW = end of workday. BT = bedtime. CI =confidence

interval.

CHAPTER III

PLAN, PROCRASTINATE, OR BLAME YOURSELF? HOW PERFECTIONISM DRIVES DAILY COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL PROCESSES AT WORK (STUDY 2)[10]

Summary

Perfectionism at work is widespread, but it is largely unclear how perfectionism relates to processes and outcomes in daily work. In line with whole trait theory, we took a dynamic perspective to investigate how daily fluctuations in both dimensions of work-related perfectionism (i.e., perfectionistic strivings and concerns) relate to an employee's daily planning, procrastinating, and self-blaming at work. We examined possible implications of these cognitions and behaviors for work-related self-efficacy and feelings of shame and guilt. During two workweeks, 78 employees took part in a diary study and completed daily surveys that assessed perfectionistic strivings and concerns as well as planning, procrastinating, and self-blaming during work and work-related self-efficacy, shame, and guilt at the end of the workday. Multilevel path modeling of data from 514 workdays showed that daily work-related perfectionistic strivings related positively to planning and daily work-related perfectionistic concerns related positively to self-blaming. Self-blaming served as a mechanism linking perfectionistic concerns with shame and guilt. Our findings show that perfectionistic strivings tend to relate only to desirable processes at work, whereas perfectionistic concerns tend to relate only to undesirable processes at work. Thereby, our study helps to explain why perfectionism can be both beneficial and detrimental at work.

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[10] Study 2 is an earlier version of the original manuscript of an article by Mohr, Nesher Shoshan, & Sonnentag submitted to Taylor & Francis in "*European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*" on January 9th, 2023. Chapter III is not identical to the submitted manuscript.

Introduction

Researchers and practitioners dealing with perfectionism at work (i.e., a personality characteristic that comprises having very high standards for one's work performance and feelings of falling short of them; Frost et al., 1990) are concerned with one fundamental question: Is perfectionism desirable at work, or not? Given that the vast majority of studies has examined perfectionism in samples of people with clinical problems, pupils, students, or athletes paying far less attention to employees (Stoeber, 2018[11]; Stoeber & Damian, 2016), it seems that this question is not satisfactorily answered to date. This is unfortunate because perfectionism is prevalent (Stoeber & Damian, 2016; Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009) and also deemed to be highly influential at work (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020).

Perfectionism is multidimensional: *perfectionistic strivings* comprise "those aspects of perfectionism associated with striving for perfection and setting exceedingly high standards of performance", whereas *perfectionistic concerns* comprise "those aspects of perfectionism associated with concerns over making mistakes, fear of negative evaluation by others, feelings of discrepancy between one's expectations and performance, and negative reactions to imperfection" (Stoeber & Damian, 2016, p. 266). This distinction is crucial because these two perfectionism dimensions tend to show different patterns of relationships with organizationally relevant variables. For instance, perfectionistic strivings are positively but perfectionistic concerns are negatively related to outcomes such as job satisfaction or vocational efficacy (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020).

Previous studies provided valuable knowledge on possible (un-)desirable outcomes associated with both perfectionism dimensions at work. However, they provided little insight into why perfectionism is related to these outcomes and why both perfectionism dimensions

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[11] In Study 2, we only cite the Stoeber (2018b) chapter. Accordingly, this chapter is cited as Stoeber (2018) in Chapter III of this dissertation.

show different patterns of relationships with organizationally relevant variables. We aim to address these two questions. More precisely, building on approaches of personality variability (i.e., whole trait theory; Fleeson, 2001) and findings on the daily variability of perfectionism (Boone et al., 2012)[12], we take a dynamic, process-oriented perspective (Vantilborgh et al., 2018) to investigate whether perfectionism is desirable for employees in their daily work or not. Therefore, we examine how daily within-person fluctuations in an employee's perfectionism at work (i.e., *daily work-related perfectionism*) relate to their daily cognitive-behavioral processes at work.

In line with previous research (e.g., Flaxman et al., 2018), we draw on the duality of perfectionism by investigating different cognitive-behavioral processes for daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns, respectively. That is, we argue that daily perfectionistic strivings (i.e., having very high standards for one's work performance) predict planning at work, whereas daily perfectionistic concerns (i.e., feeling that one falls short of these high standards) predict procrastinating and self-blaming. In addition, we examine possible implications of these behaviors and cognitions for employees' self-related perceptions and emotions. Finally, we test whether planning, procrastinating, and self-blaming function as behavioral-cognitive mechanisms that link daily work-related perfectionism with work-related self-efficacy, shame, and guilt (see Figure 3.1 for the research model).

With our study, we make several contributions to the literature. First, we advance the understanding of work-related perfectionism. To date, it is largely unclear why perfectionism affects organizationally relevant variables, that is, through which mechanisms and processes (e.g., cognitions, behaviors; Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018). We take a dynamic, process-oriented perspective to study perfectionism-related behaviors and cognitions in daily

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[12] In Study 2, we only cite the Boone et al. (2012a) paper. Accordingly, this paper is cited as Boone et al. (2012) in Chapter III of this dissertation.

work as mechanisms that link perfectionism and organizationally relevant variables (Kuper et al., 2021; Vantilborgh et al., 2018). Thereby, our study responds to calls to bring to light the processes associated with perfectionism at work (Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018) and adds to prior research on perfectionism-related cognitive processes (i.e., worry, rumination, positive work reflection) during leisure time (Flaxman et al., 2012, 2018). In addition, by simultaneously investigating different cognitive-behavioral processes driven by perfectionistic strivings and concerns, we shed light on why both dimensions might be differently related to outcomes at work.

Second, we enrich the broader literature on perfectionism. By examining daily work-related perfectionism, we meet the recent call to study daily within-person fluctuations in perfectionism and their implications (Ocampo et al., 2020). An earlier study by Boone et al. (2012) already showed that perfectionism can fluctuate daily and that these fluctuations are meaningful in that they covary with daily eating disorder symptoms (e.g., binge eating) in adolescents. However, it is unclear whether daily fluctuations in perfectionism can also have other implications, specifically for behavior in other contexts. We address this issue and argue that daily fluctuations in perfectionism are likewise meaningful for employees' behaviors and cognitions at work.

Third, we contribute to a better understanding of personality and its implications at work. Organizational psychology scholars predominantly study personality traits (Beckmann & Wood, 2020). This focus on the stable components of personality implies that personality characteristics are largely and needlessly neglected as antecedents of daily processes at work (for exceptions see Debusscher et al., 2016[13]; Dóci et al., 2020). In accordance with the study of personality dynamics (Kuper et al., 2021) and as outlined below, we focus on the dynamic

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[13] In Study 2, we only cite the Debusscher et al. (2016c) paper. Accordingly, this paper is cited as Debusscher et al. (2016) in Chapter III of this dissertation.

components of personality and investigate daily work-related perfectionism as an antecedent of specific daily cognitive-behavioral processes at work.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

A Dynamic Perspective on Perfectionism and Cognitive-Behavioral Processes at Work

During the last two decades, the study of personality dynamics increasingly received attention in personality psychology, stimulating research in organizational psychology as well (Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Kuper et al., 2021). In a nutshell, the study of personality dynamics "concerns the investigation of intra-individual personality mechanisms, processes, and functioning" that "aims to provide an explanatory account of an individual's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and behaviors" (Kuper et al., p. 1; for an extensive review see Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Kuper et al., 2021). Therefore, the study of personality dynamics tries to explain how personality "works" and allows for a detailed investigation of personality-related mechanisms and processes (Kuper et al., 2021).

Whereas trait approaches focus on the stability of personality, dynamic approaches focus on short-term variability (e.g., daily fluctuations in perfectionism) or long-term changes (e.g., changes in perfectionism over the lifespan) in personality over time (Beckmann & Wood, 2020). Regarding short-term variability, whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001) states that personality characteristics comprise dynamic components – so-called *personality states* – that fluctuate within rather short periods (e.g., days; Boone et al., 2012). Personality traits and their corresponding states share the same content; however, traits apply to a longer period. Furthermore, whereas personality traits describe a person in general, states describe a person during a specific period (e.g., a workday). Thus, personality states allow to "zoom in" to everyday work and provide insights into how personality expresses itself at work and why personality-related behaviors, cognitions, and emotions may fluctuate across time (Beckmann & Wood, 2020).

In this study, we investigate three different cognitive-behavioral processes driven by daily perfectionism at work. In the first process, daily perfectionistic strivings are deemed to be indirectly positively related to work-related self-efficacy via planning at work (upper path in Figure 3.1). In the second process, daily perfectionistic concerns are deemed to be indirectly negatively related to work-related self-efficacy via procrastinating at work (middle path in Figure 3.1). In the third process, daily perfectionistic concerns are deemed to be indirectly positively related to negative self-conscious emotions via self-blaming at work (lower path in Figure 3.1).

Daily Planning as a Mechanism Linking Work-Related Perfectionistic Strivings and Work-Related Self-Efficacy

First, we turn to the process in which we propose that daily perfectionistic strivings relate to work-related self-efficacy via planning at work. Planning refers to employees' efforts to structure their work, for instance by preparing task lists, specifying and prioritizing tasks, and deciding how and when to accomplish them; these efforts can vary from day to day (Claessens et al., 2004; Parke et al., 2018). Planning is an important behavior at work because it helps to accomplish work tasks more efficiently by mobilizing and allocating time, attention, and energy and, thereby, approaching work goals (Claessens et al., 2004; Parke et al., 2018; Sitzmann & Johnson, 2012). Because it aims at approaching one's work goals, we consider planning as an achievement-related approach behavior at work driven by daily work-related perfectionistic strivings.

We hypothesize that on days on which an employee experiences a higher level of perfectionistic strivings (i.e., very high standards for their work performance) than the employee experiences on average, they engage in planning. According to previous research, perfectionistic strivings and achievement-related approach behaviors are positively related (Ocampo et al., 2020; Slade & Owens, 1998). We propose that this relationship also shows at

the day level with respect to daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and daily planning as a specific achievement-related approach behavior at work. More precisely, in line with whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001), we assume that on days on which an employee experiences higher levels of perfectionistic strivings at work, they should engage in behavior that helps them to meet their high performance standards (i.e., planning).

Hypothesis 1. On a daily basis, work-related perfectionistic strivings are positively related to planning at work.

Furthermore, we hypothesize that planning relates positively to an employee's experiences of work-related self-efficacy on a specific day. In a broader sense, "[p]erceived self-efficacy concerns people's beliefs in their capabilities to mobilize the motivation, cognitive resources, and courses of action needed to exercise control over events in their lives" (Wood & Bandura, 1989, p. 364). Accordingly, we consider self-efficacy as a self-related perception because it necessarily entails self-reflection and self-evaluation. Here, we focus specifically on self-efficacy beliefs related to work. Work-related self-efficacy refers to employees' perceptions that they are capable of performing the courses of action needed for accomplishing their tasks and goals at work and for being able to overcome obstacles; work-related self-efficacy can vary daily (Schmitt et al., 2017). Planning should help to attain daily tasks and goals at work (Claessens et al., 2004; Parke et al., 2018; Sitzmann & Johnson, 2012), yielding experiences of success. Because experiences of success are an important source of self-efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1977; Wood & Bandura, 1989), an employee's daily planning should be positively related to their work-related self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2. On a daily basis, planning at work is positively related to work-related self-efficacy.

In line with Kuper et al. (2021), we examine specific mechanisms (i.e., cognitions and behaviors) that link personality states at work with organizationally relevant variables.

Specifically, we consider planning at work as the mechanism that links daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and work-related self-efficacy. Accordingly, combining Hypotheses 1 and 2, we propose that

Hypothesis 3. Work-related perfectionistic strivings have a positive indirect effect on work-related self-efficacy via planning at work on a daily basis.

Daily Procrastinating as a Mechanism Linking Work-Related Perfectionistic Concerns and Work-Related Self-Efficacy

We now turn to the process in which we propose that daily perfectionistic concerns relate to work-related self-efficacy via procrastinating at work. Individuals procrastinate when they "voluntarily delay an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay" (Steel, 2007, p. 66). When employees procrastinate, they may voluntarily postpone decisions they have to make or put off beginning with or completing work tasks they have to do – even if they know that this may yield undesired consequences (e.g., missing deadlines); procrastinating varies daily (Kühnel et al., 2016). We consider procrastinating as a specific self-defeating avoidance behavior at work driven by daily work-related perfectionistic concerns (see Mushquash & Sherry, 2012). Because it risks attaining work goals (Kühnel et al., 2016), procrastinating is self-defeating (i.e., having "negative effects on the self or on the self's projects"; Baumeister & Scher, 1988, p. 3). Because it implies that employees avoid working on tasks or making decisions (Kühnel et al., 2016; Steel, 2007), procrastinating also entails avoidance.

We hypothesize that on days on which an employee experiences a higher level of perfectionistic concerns (i.e., feelings of falling short of their very high performance standards at work), they engage in procrastinating. Perfectionistic concerns are related to avoidance and self-defeating behaviors and cognitions (Bieling et al., 2003; Ocampo et al., 2020; Slade & Owens, 1998). In line with whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001), we propose that

this relationship also shows at the day level. When employees experience perfectionistic concerns, they worry about making mistakes or have the impression that they fall short of their high performance standards (Stoeber & Damian, 2016). These worries and perceptions may lead to postponing decisions or stopping to work on tasks, even when – or especially when – they are important (Smith et al., 2017). Rather than risk making a wrong decision or doing tasks imperfectly, employees may postpone decisions or tasks which possibly allows them to distance themselves from their worries of not being perfect (Flett et al., 2004; Mushquash & Sherry, 2012; Ocampo et al., 2020).

Hypothesis 4. On a daily basis, work-related perfectionistic concerns are positively related to procrastinating at work.

As mentioned, we assume that planning at work relates positively to work-related self-efficacy because it helps to accomplish tasks and goals at work, which should yield experiences of success that fuel self-efficacy. Quite on the contrary, we argue that procrastinating at work relates negatively to work-related self-efficacy on a specific day. When employees procrastinate, they do not complete work tasks or postpone decisions they have to make (Kühnel et al., 2016). Thus, procrastinating may interfere with the accomplishment of tasks and goals, accompanied by feelings of failure that should diminish work-related self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

Hypothesis 5. On a daily basis, procrastinating at work is negatively related to work-related self-efficacy.

Again, following the same rationale outlined above, we consider procrastinating at work as the mechanism that links daily work-related perfectionistic concerns and work-related self-efficacy (see Kuper et al., 2021). Accordingly, combining Hypotheses 4 and 5, we propose that

Hypothesis 6. Work-related perfectionistic concerns have a negative indirect effect on

work-related self-efficacy via procrastinating at work on a daily basis.

Daily Self-Blaming as a Mechanism Linking Perfectionistic Concerns and Negative Self-Conscious Emotions at Work

Finally, we turn to the process in which we propose that daily perfectionistic concerns relate to negative self-conscious emotions via self-blaming at work. Blaming refers to an attributional process in which individuals evaluate whether they themselves (i.e., internal attribution) or other people (i.e., external attribution) are responsible for negative happenings (Bunk & Magley, 2013; Tong et al., 2019). Accordingly, self-blaming, which varies daily at work, might express employees' felt responsibility for personal shortcomings, for getting into unfavorable situations, or for making mistakes, for instance (Troester & Van Quaquebeke, 2021). Based on previous research showing that self-blaming at work can yield negative consequences for the self (e.g., feelings of guilt, Troester & Van Quaquebeke, 2021; stress, Schilpzand et al., 2016), we consider self-blaming as a self-defeating (Baumeister & Scher, 1988) cognition at work driven by daily work-related perfectionistic concerns.

Perfectionistic concerns are related to self-defeat (Bieling et al., 2003; Mushquash & Sherry, 2012). More specifically, previous research found positive relationships between perfectionistic concerns and self-blame (Dunkley et al., 2003; Gilbert et al., 2006). That is, people who have higher levels of perfectionistic concerns tend to attribute blame to themselves. In line with whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001), we propose that this relationship also shows at the day level at work. That is, when an employee experiences higher daily work-related perfectionistic concerns on a specific day, they are likely to blame themselves for their current state or undesirable events and experiences. When employees experience perfectionistic concerns, they perceive a discrepancy between their high work-performance standards and their actual performance (Stoeber & Damian, 2016). This falling short of their standards might pose a personal shortcoming for which they blame themselves.

Hypothesis 7. On a daily basis, work-related perfectionistic concerns are positively related to self-blaming at work.

Self-conscious emotions are emotions evoked by self-reflection and self-evaluation (e.g., pride, shame; Tangney & Tracy, 2012). We hypothesize that self-blaming relates positively to an employee's experiences of negative self-conscious emotions (i.e., shame and guilt) on a specific day. Shame and guilt are both powerful but understudied emotions at work (Daniels & Robinson, 2019; Schaumberg et al., 2018). Whereas both emotions are unpleasant, painful, and self-related, shame tends to emanate from a negative evaluation of the self per se and guilt tends to emanate from a negative evaluation of specific behaviors (Tangney & Tracy, 2012). Attributing negative evaluations to oneself (i.e., self-blaming) is critical for experiencing shame and guilt (Bunk & Magley, 2013; Tong et al., 2019; Troester & Van Quaquebeke, 2021). In line with this reasoning, experimentally induced self-blame was shown to increase feelings of shame and guilt (Dickerson et al., 2004).

Hypothesis 8. On a daily basis, self-blaming at work is positively related to negative self-conscious emotions (i.e., shame, guilt).

Following the same rationale as for Hypotheses 3 and 6, we consider self-blaming at work as the mechanism that links daily work-related perfectionistic concerns and negative self-conscious emotions (see Kuper et al., 2021). Accordingly, combining Hypotheses 7 and 8, we propose that

Hypothesis 9. Perfectionistic concerns have a positive indirect effect on negative self-conscious emotions (i.e., shame, guilt) via self-blaming at work on a daily basis.

Method

Procedure and Sample

We collected data within an online daily diary study to test our hypotheses. We recruited participants via social online networks (e.g., xing.de), by placing advertisements on

respective websites for people interested in research in psychology (e.g., psychologie-heute.de), and by distributing flyers via email or in person. Our study was advertised as a research project on "Well-being in the workplace". Participants had to work at least 20 hours per week and be at least 18 years old. Participants who completed both the general survey and at least 70% of the daily surveys could take part in a lottery and win one out of seven vouchers from an online retailer (one voucher worth 100 Euros, one voucher worth 50 Euros, five vouchers worth 20 Euros). Furthermore, working participants studying psychology besides their job could earn ECTS credits.

After registration, we asked participants to complete a general survey capturing demographic and work-related background data. Afterward, we invited participants to complete the daily diary surveys (i.e., morning survey[14], noon survey, end-of-workday survey) for two working weeks (Monday to Friday). Each of the daily surveys was accessible for completion only within a specific time slot (i.e., the morning survey was accessible from 5 to 10 a.m., the noon survey was accessible from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the end-of-workday survey was accessible from 3 to 8 p.m.).

Hundred-nine people registered for our study, 91 of whom completed the general survey. In our final sample, we included participants who had completed the general survey and who met the participation criteria. Therefore, we excluded four participants working less than 20 hours per week and one participant who stated to be a student. In addition, we excluded six participants who did not provide any diary data and two participants who did not provide any data regarding our study variables.

Regarding the daily survey data, it was necessary to make sure that participants who completed the noon and the end-of-workday survey did work in the morning and in the

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[14] The data used in this study has been collected within a larger research project. Within this broader data collection, we aimed at investigating several separate research questions. The morning survey assessed constructs that are not relevant for examining this study's research question.

afternoon, respectively. Therefore, we only used survey data of days on which participants indicated that they had worked before completing the noon and end-of-workday survey, respectively. Based on these criteria, we excluded the data of six noon and two end-of-workday surveys. Our final sample included 78 participants, who together provided 514 days of data (i.e., on average 6.59 days per participant). Noon-survey data was missing on 73 days and end-of-workday-survey data was missing on 77 days. We handled this gap by using full information maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015; Newman, 2014).

A slight majority of the participants were female (53.8%; one participant did not provide information regarding gender). On average, participants were 40.59 years old ($SD =$ 11.46) and worked 37.86 hours per week ($SD = 8.75$). Most participants within our sample were well educated, with 66.6% holding a university degree. Participants worked in several industries, such as information technology (14.1%), administrative occupations (9.0%), chemistry (9.0%), and education and social work (7.7%).

We checked for selective attrition by comparing the 13 participants who completed the general survey but were not part of our final sample with the 78 participants included therein. We found no significant differences with respect to gender, χ^2 (2, $N = 91$) = 2.47, $p =$ .290, average working hours per week, $t(12.96) = -1.75$, $p = .103$, or educational level (0 = *without university degree*, 1 = *with university degree*), χ^2 (1, $N = 91$) = 2.03, $p = .154$. On average, participants included in the final sample were older than those not included ($M =$ 32.23 years), $t(89) = -2.38$, $p = .019$.

Measures

We assessed our study variables in the daily noon and end-of-workday surveys. All surveys were administered in German. We back-translated (Brislin, 1970) a scale into German if no German version was available. Items had to be answered on a 5-point Likert

scale ranging from 1 = *does not apply to me at all* to 5 = *fully applies to me*, unless stated otherwise.

Noon Survey

Work-Related Perfectionism. We used the Short Almost Perfect Scale (Rice et al., 2014) to assess participants' work-related perfectionism during the morning. Because perfectionism is domain-specific (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009), we adapted this general measure of perfectionism to the work context. We also slightly adapted the phrasing to match the daily assessment. Four items captured participants' work-related perfectionistic strivings (e.g., "This morning at work, I expected the best from myself") and work-related perfectionistic concerns (e.g., "My performance at work barely measured up to my standards this morning"), respectively. The response scale ranged from 1 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*. The scale proved to be reliable for both perfectionistic strivings (within-person ω = .88) and perfectionistic concerns (within-person ω = .81; Geldhof et al., 2014).

Planning. We assessed participants' planning during the morning with five items capturing daily time-management planning at work developed by Parke et al. (2018). A sample item is "This morning, I determined the tasks I want to accomplish today at work". Within-person ω was .76.

End-of-Workday Survey

Procrastinating. To capture participants' procrastinating during the afternoon, we used four items developed by Kühnel et al. (2016). A sample item is "This afternoon at work, I needlessly delayed finishing tasks, even when they were important". Within-person ω was .81.

Self-Blaming. We used three items (see Dunkley et al., 2003) to assess participants' self-blaming during the afternoon. We slightly adapted the phrasing to match the work context and the daily assessment. A sample item is "This afternoon at work, I blamed myself

for having gotten into an unfavorable situation". Within-person ω was .79.

Work-Related Self-Efficacy. We assessed participants' state work-related self-efficacy at the end of the workday with six items from the New General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen et al., 2001). To match the work context and the daily assessment, we slightly adapted the phrasing. Items were worded prospectively with respect to the next workday. A sample item is "On my next workday, I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I have set for myself". Within-person ω was .87.

Negative Self-Conscious Emotions. To capture participants' state negative self-conscious emotions at the end of the workday, we used six items from the State Shame and Guilt Scale (Marschall et al., 1994). Three items captured shame (e.g., "I want to sink into the floor and disappear") and guilt (e.g., "I feel tension about something I have done"), respectively. Within-person ω was .66 for shame and .79 for guilt, respectively.

Control Variables

We controlled for baseline assessments of the three outcome variables (i.e., work-related self-efficacy, shame, and guilt). That is, we included work-related self-efficacy at noon as a baseline of work-related self-efficacy at the end of the workday, shame at noon as a baseline of shame at the end of the workday, and guilt at noon as a baseline of guilt at the end of the workday (A. S. Gabriel et al., 2019). We assessed participants' state work-related self-efficacy and state negative self-conscious emotions at noon with the same measures that we used in the survey at the end of the workday. Self-efficacy items were worded prospectively with respect to the forthcoming afternoon. The scales proved to be reliable for work-related self-efficacy (within-person ω = .93), shame (within-person ω = .77), and guilt (within-person ω = .75).

Construct Validity

To assess the construct validity of our measures, we conducted a multilevel

confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus Version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015). We ran the analysis for all study variables (noon work-related self-efficacy, noon shame, noon guilt, work-related perfectionistic strivings, work-related perfectionistic concerns, planning, procrastinating, self-blaming, work-related self-efficacy at the end of the workday, shame at the end of the workday, guilt at the end of the workday). We specified the model at the within-person level using person-mean centered items. Furthermore, we specified the stabilities of the self-efficacy, shame, and guilt items across the two measurement points. This eleven-factor measurement model showed a reasonable fit to the data, $\chi^2(835) = 1266.16$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = .03, SRMR$_{within}$ = .05, a better fit than a model subsuming both perfectionism dimensions under one factor, $\chi^2(845) = 1692.39$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.84, TLI = 0.82, RMSEA = .04, SRMR$_{within}$ = .07, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 227.27$, $p < .001$, a better fit than a model subsuming procrastinating and self-blaming under one factor, $\chi^2(845) = 1536.16$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.87, TLI = 0.85, RMSEA = .04, SRMR$_{within}$ = .07, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 137.87$, $p < .001$, and a better fit than a model subsuming noon shame and guilt and end-of-workday shame and guilt under one factor, respectively, $\chi^2(854) = 1327.71$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.91, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = .03, SRMR$_{within}$ = .05, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(19) = 48.04$, $p < .001$. A one-factor model did not converge, so we could not test it against our model.

Data Analysis

We repeatedly collected data from the same participants within a daily diary design. Therefore, our data is hierarchically organized (i.e., days are clustered within participants) and has a two-level structure. For testing relationships at Level 1 (i.e., within-person relationships), it is, therefore, necessary to partition the variance of all variables assessed at Level 1 into within- and between-person variance. Accordingly, we followed recommendations by Preacher et al. (2010) to specify a multilevel path model using Mplus

Version 7.4 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2015) for testing our hypotheses. We modeled

identical paths at both levels. Table 3.1 displays means, standard deviations, intraclass

correlation coefficients, and intercorrelations among the study variables. As can be seen in

Table 3.1, all variables show substantial within-person variance (ranging from 28.2% for

planning to 76.3% for end-of-workday guilt), justifying our choice of analysis.

Results

Analytic Approach

We tested all hypotheses in one overall model (Preacher et al., 2010) that showed a

reasonable fit to the data, $\chi^2(60) = 138.74$, CFI = 0.88, TLI = 0.78, RMSEA = .05.[15] Slopes

were fixed and intercepts were treated as random. We allowed correlations between

perfectionistic strivings and concerns, between procrastinating and self-blaming as well as

between noon shame and noon guilt at both levels. End-of-workday self-efficacy, shame, and

guilt were correlated by default. We tested hypotheses on indirect effects (i.e., Hypotheses 3,

6, and 9) with a 1-1-1 mediation model (Preacher et al., 2010) and calculated confidence

intervals for the indirect effects with the Monte Carlo method (Selig & Preacher, 2008) with

20,000 repetitions. Because all hypotheses refer to relationships at the within-person level,

we only describe results at the within-person level. However, we also report results at the

between-person level for the sake of completeness (see Tables 3.2 and 3.3). Tables 3.2 and

3.3 show results for the direct effects at the within-person and the between-person level.

Table 3.4 shows results for the indirect effects at the within-person level. We report

unstandardized estimates.

Test of Hypotheses

Supporting Hypothesis 1, work-related perfectionistic strivings positively predicted

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[15] Without controlling for the baseline levels of the outcome variables, the model shows a
very good fit to the data, $\chi^2(14) = 16.03$, CFI = 0.99, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = .017. Removing
the control variables does not change the results with respect to the hypotheses.

planning at work, $\gamma = 0.148$, $SE = 0.075$, $p = .048$. Planning at work did not predict work-related self-efficacy, $\gamma = -0.038$, $SE = 0.035$, $p = .279$, and work-related perfectionistic strivings did not relate indirectly to work-related self-efficacy via planning at work, $\gamma = -0.006$, $SE = 0.006$, 95% CI [-0.020, 0.005]. Accordingly, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were not supported.

Work-related perfectionistic concerns positively predicted procrastinating at work at $p < .10$, $\gamma = 0.108$, $SE = 0.062$, $p = 0.083$, providing limited support for Hypothesis 4. Consistent with Hypothesis 5, procrastinating at work negatively predicted work-related self-efficacy, $\gamma = -0.097$, $SE = 0.040$, $p = .015$. Work-related perfectionistic concerns did not relate indirectly to work-related self-efficacy via procrastinating at work, $\gamma = -0.010$, $SE = 0.008$, 95% CI [-0.030, 0.001], hence Hypothesis 6 was not supported.

In support of Hypothesis 7, work-related perfectionistic concerns positively predicted self-blaming at work, $\gamma = 0.159$, $SE = 0.075$, $p = .033$. Consistent with Hypothesis 8, self-blaming at work positively predicted negative self-conscious emotions, with $\gamma = 0.241$, $SE = 0.066$, $p < .001$ for shame and $\gamma = 0.361$, $SE = 0.073$, $p < .001$ for guilt, respectively. In support of Hypothesis 9, work-related perfectionistic concerns had a positive indirect effect on negative self-conscious emotions via self-blaming at work, with $\gamma = 0.038$, $SE = 0.019$, 95% CI [0.002, 0.078] for shame and $\gamma = 0.058$, $SE = 0.027$, 95% CI [0.005, 0.112] for guilt, respectively.

Discussion

Taking a dynamic, process-oriented perspective, we aimed at providing a better understanding of perfectionism's implications at work. To that end, we conducted a diary study examining daily cognitive-behavioral processes at work related to perfectionism. In detail, we investigated how daily fluctuations in work-related perfectionism relate to planning, procrastinating, and self-blaming during work and whether these behaviors and

cognitions are associated with work-related self-efficacy and feelings of shame and guilt at the end of the workday. Our results show that daily perfectionistic strivings related positively to planning, whereas daily perfectionistic concerns related positively to self-blaming at work. Self-blaming served as a mechanism linking perfectionistic concerns with experiences of shame and guilt.

Theoretical Implications

Our findings are in line with whole trait theory's (Fleeson, 2001) assumption that personality characteristics comprise dynamic components that show short-term within-person fluctuations. In particular, our results substantiate previous research findings on daily fluctuations in perfectionism (Boone et al., 2012). However, our study extends this prior research because it shows that daily fluctuations in perfectionism are also meaningful in the work context in that they matter for cognitive-behavioral processes at work. Thus, our study corroborates the worth of studying daily fluctuations in personality – and especially perfectionism – at work (Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Ocampo et al., 2020).

Moreover, our study shows that a process-oriented perspective (Vantilborgh et al., 2018) can help to advance understanding of perfectionism at work. Up to now, scholars have mostly studied perfectionism's main effects on outcomes at work (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020). Whereas this research provided important insights, it is limited because it only brought to light *if* perfectionism is related to organizationally relevant variables – but not *why* (Kuper et al., 2021; Vantilborgh et al., 2018). A process-oriented perspective allows for investigating explaining mechanisms and processes (e.g., cognitions, behaviors) at work driven by perfectionism and, thereby, helps to answer the "why" question (Kuper et al., 2021; Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018).

In addition, because we examined both perfectionism dimensions and related cognitive-behavioral processes simultaneously, we were able to show that daily fluctuations

in perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns relate differently to various cognitions and behaviors at work. Specifically, perfectionistic strivings were positively related to planning but unrelated to procrastinating and self-blaming. Quite on the contrary, perfectionistic concerns were negatively related to planning, tended to be positively related to procrastinating, and were positively related to self-blaming. Thus, it seems that perfectionistic strivings tend to relate only to desirable processes at work, whereas perfectionistic concerns tend to relate only to undesirable processes at work. This finding might explain why both perfectionism dimensions show different patterns of relationships with organizationally relevant variables (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020). Accordingly, distinguishing and simultaneously considering both dimensions of perfectionism when theorizing about perfectionism, related processes, and outcomes at work is crucial (Flaxman et al., 2018; Stoeber, 2018).

In a broader sense, our study highlights the benefits of incorporating the study of personality dynamics into organizational psychology research (Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Kuper et al., 2021). Traditionally, organizational psychology research focused on the *stable* components of personality characteristics (i.e., personality traits). Because stable constructs cannot predict within-person fluctuations in other constructs, this focus implied that personality has been largely neglected as an antecedent of, for instance, daily behaviors at work (for exceptions see Debusscher et al., 2016; Dóci et al., 2020). However, our results show that if scholars consider *dynamic* components of personality (i.e., personality states), personality characteristics can be meaningful antecedents of daily cognitive-behavioral processes at work. Therefore, organizational scholars should take personality states into account when theorizing about why employees behave the way they do in their daily work and why their behavior might vary from day to day.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our study has limitations that need to be considered. First, we assessed employees'

perfectionism, planning, procrastinating, and self-blaming retrospectively referring to their

morning or afternoon at work. Therefore, our results might be subject to retrospective biases.

To minimize retrospective biases, future research might implement more than two daily

assessments (C. D. Fisher & To, 2012). However, it needs to be considered that this would

further enhance participant burden which is already comparatively high in diary studies (A. S.

Gabriel et al., 2019).

Second, we did not fully separate the assessments of predictor, mediator, and outcome

variables which would help test mediation (Aguinis et al., 2017). Precisely, we assessed

planning in the noon survey (as recommended in previous research, see Parke et al., 2018)

concurrently with perfectionism. Similarly, we assessed procrastinating and self-blaming

concurrently with work-related self-efficacy, shame, and guilt in the end-of-workday survey.

We took two measures to reduce concerns regarding this concurrent assessment. First, we

instructed participants to rate procrastinating and self-blaming and the outcome variables

referring to different time frames (i.e., referring to their afternoon at work vs. referring to *at*

the moment; C. D. Fisher & To, 2012). Second, by controlling for noon work-related self-

efficacy, shame, and guilt, we were able to predict intra-individual change in the outcome

variables contingent on self-blaming and procrastinating (A. S. Gabriel et al., 2019).

Finally, we assessed all constructs using self-report; thus, our results might be inflated

by common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Because we were particularly interested in

constructs that require introspection (e.g., self-blaming as an internal attribution process;

work-related self-efficacy, shame, and guilt requiring self-reflection and self-evaluation), we

deem using self-reports appropriate. However, future research might, for instance, include

observer ratings to assess daily planning and procrastinating.

We would like to point out some directions for future research on work-related

perfectionism. Our results show that daily perfectionistic strivings relate to desirable

processes at work, whereas daily perfectionistic concerns relate to undesirable processes at

work. Therefore, future research should investigate what causes daily fluctuations in

perfectionistic strivings and concerns. Building on these insights, it can be possible for

organizations to promote daily perfectionistic strivings and related desirable processes and to

prevent daily perfectionistic concerns and related undesirable processes at work.

Furthermore, taking a process-oriented perspective could help to improve

understanding of the relationship between perfectionism and performance at work. In their

meta-analysis, Harari et al. (2018) found a near-nil relationship between perfectionism and

both job and task performance – an unexpected finding given the common assumption that

perfectionism is beneficial for performance. As our results show, it might be that

perfectionistic strivings and concerns give rise to different cognitions and behaviors at work:

perfectionistic strivings to such that help and perfectionistic concerns to such that hinder the

achievement of high performance standards, respectively. Accordingly, taking a process-

oriented perspective simultaneously investigating multiple possible cognitive-behavioral

mechanisms that link both perfectionism dimensions with performance at work might help to

better understand their relationship and to answer the question of why there is no overall

positive relationship (see Harari et al., 2018).

Besides, our study has a strong focus on the self and intra-individual processes.

However, daily processes at work related to perfectionism might not only be of importance

for employees themselves but also for other people at work (e.g., for their co-workers or

supervisors). For instance, our study showed that daily perfectionistic concerns positively

relate to shame and guilt via self-blaming. Despite its negative implications for employees

themselves, self-blaming can have positive interpersonal consequences at work such as

supportive behaviors towards co-workers (Tong et al., 2019) or helping towards supervisors

(Troester & Van Quaquebeke, 2021). Considering today's highly interdependent work, it might be fruitful for future research to apply an inter-individual approach to study interpersonal processes at work driven by daily perfectionism (Ocampo et al., 2020).

Practical Implications

Because the dynamic, within-person perspective on perfectionism is relatively new and, consequently, empirical evidence is sparse, caution is due regarding practical implications of our results. Nevertheless, knowing that individuals' cognitions, behaviors, and emotions can fluctuate from day to day due to changes in their daily experiences of perfectionism and identifying specific cognitive-behavioral processes associated with perfectionism provides valuable insights for practitioners. As Beckmann and Wood (2020) note, personality states are likely more amenable to intervention than traits. Accordingly, the variability of perfectionism can offer organizations a starting point for developing interventions that aim at changing perfectionism to attain organizational goals (see Ocampo et al., 2020). Besides, counseling approaches based on principles of cognitive-behavioral therapy that aim at reducing perfectionism and undesired consequences could be designed and implemented to target daily perfectionism and related processes (Bieling et al., 2003; Flaxman et al., 2018).

Moreover, our results indicate that only daily perfectionistic concerns – and not perfectionistic strivings – bring along undesirable implications for employees (i.e., self-blaming, feelings of shame and guilt). Therefore, the experience of perfectionistic concerns in daily work should be prevented. Because experiencing perfectionistic concerns is related to self-defeating cognitions and emotions, interventions to enhance self-compassion might prove helpful. Self-compassion comprises a kind and understanding attitude toward oneself when experiencing failure instead of being overly self-critical (Neff, 2003). Thus, instead of blaming oneself and feeling ashamed and guilty when experiencing a discrepancy between

their high performance standards and their actual performance at work, it might be better for employees to learn that not everything is their fault and to accept human imperfection. Various interventions to enhance self-compassion have been discussed in the literature (see Barnard & Curry, 2011).

Conclusion

With our study, we aimed to help toward a better understanding of perfectionism and its implications at work. Specifically, we took a dynamic, process-oriented perspective to examine daily perfectionism and related cognitive-behavioral processes. Our findings show that perfectionism can be both helpful and undesirable in daily work – depending on the dimension considered. We hope that our study instigates further research on this prevalent and influential personality characteristic at work.

Figures and Tables

Figure 3.1

Conceptual Model
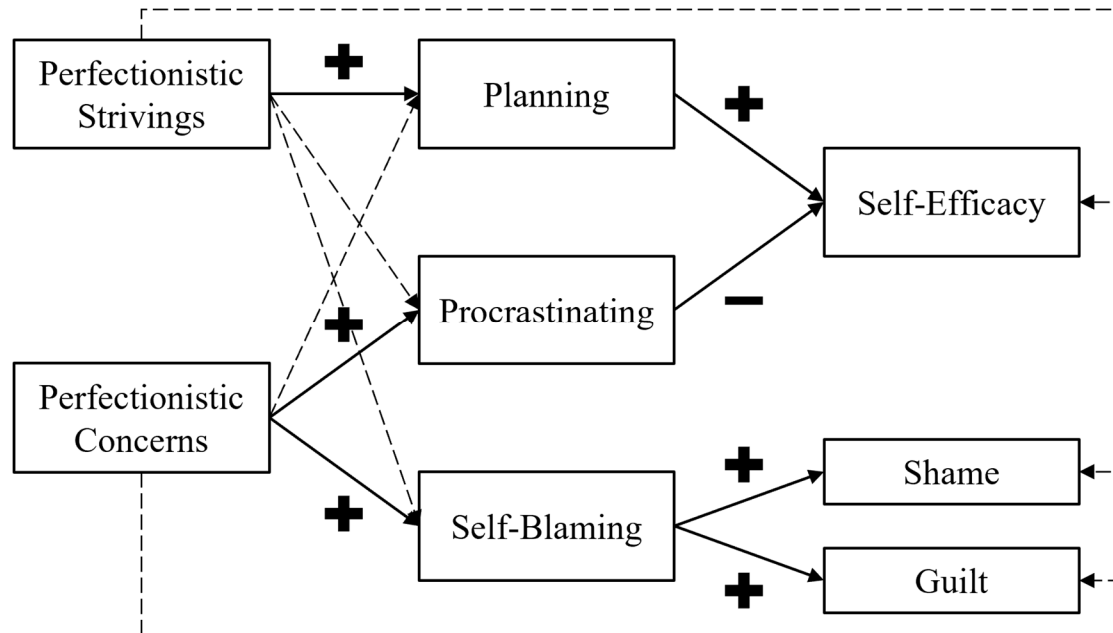
Note. Solid lines indicate hypothesized paths. Dashed lines indicate additional paths specified in the model. This figure does not include the control variables (i.e., noon work-related self-efficacy, noon shame, noon guilt).

Chapter III: Perfectionism in Daily Work

Table 3.1

Means, Standard Deviations, Intraclass Correlations and Intercorrelations among Study Variables

Variables	M	SD_b	SD_w	ICC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Self-efficacy (n)	3.81	0.49	0.57	.43		-.23***	-.19*	.11	-.16*	.06	-.10	-.05	.14*	-.02	-.02
2 Shame (n)	1.15	0.20	0.35	.26	-.39**		.62***	.05	.20**	-.08*	.02	.18*	.01	.22**	.21*
3 Guilt (n)	1.30	0.30	0.47	.30	-.35	.76**		.00	.16*	-.06	.00	.12†	-.03	.17*	.39***
4 Perfect. strivings	3.22	0.89	0.58	.71	.30	-.11	-.29		-.10†	.15*	-.04	-.02	.18**	-.02	-.04
5 Perfect. concerns	1.75	0.55	0.65	.42	-.52***	.68**	.48*	.28*		-.12*	.16*	.22**	-.15†	.07	.12†
6 Planning	2.74	0.99	0.62	.72	.09	.04	.06	.33*	-.02		-.13†	.05	.00	.00	.05
7 Procrastinating	1.45	0.48	0.46	.52	-.19	.48†	.40	.00	.45**	.12		.28***	-.14**	.08	.10
8 Self-blaming	1.28	0.36	0.49	.35	-.45*	.71†	.36	.09	.83***	-.09	.44*		-.18**	.34***	.36***
9 Self-efficacy	3.85	0.52	0.40	.62	.98***	-.47*	-.40*	.27†	-.58***	.05	-.14	-.52***		-.19†	-.12
10 Shame	1.17	0.27	0.37	.35	-.46***	.84†	.40	.09	.69***	.02	.38	.64***	-.50***		.64***
11 Guilt	1.30	0.29	0.53	.24	-.50*	.92*	.81**	-.02	.72***	.09	.55*	.56*	-.54**	.81***	

Note. Means and standard deviations displayed in columns 1 and 2 at the person level (i.e., between person; SD_b); standard deviations displayed in column 3 at the day level (i.e., within-person; SD_w). Correlations above the diagonal refer to the within-person level ($n = 514$), below the diagonal to the between-person level ($N = 78$). Perfect. = perfectionistic. n = noon. ICC = percentage of variance between persons.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3.2

Unstandardized Within-Person and Between-Person Coefficients from Multi-Level Path Analysis Predicting Planning, Procrastinating and Work-Related Self-Efficacy

Predictors	Planning			Procrastinating			Self-efficacy		
	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z
Within-person level									
Self-efficacy (η)				0.07	0.04	1.99*			
Perfectionistic strivings	0.15	0.08	1.97*	-0.02	0.05	-0.31	0.11	0.04	2.98**
Perfectionistic concerns	-0.10	0.05	-2.01*	0.11	0.06	1.73†	-0.07	0.04	-1.48
Planning							-0.04	0.04	-1.08
Procrastinating							-0.10	0.04	-2.43*
Residual variance	0.37	0.04	8.52***	0.21	0.04	5.77***	0.15	0.03	5.04***

Table continues

Chapter III: Perfectionism in Daily Work

Table 3.2 *(continued)*

Predictors	Planning			Procrastinating			Self-efficacy		
	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z
Between-person level									
Intercept	1.71	0.64	2.66**	0.96	0.26	3.69***	0.60	0.34	1.76
Self-efficacy (n)							0.87	0.08	10.75***
Perfectionistic strivings	0.42	0.18	2.30*	-0.09	0.07	-1.33	0.11	0.05	2.49*
Perfectionistic concerns	-0.19	0.23	-0.83	0.45	0.13	3.58***	-0.32	0.09	-3.54***
Planning							-0.05	0.03	-1.36
Procrastinating							0.19	0.08	2.31*
Residual variance	0.86	0.16	5.30***	0.17	0.05	3.50***	0.00	0.02	0.13

Note. $N = 78$, $n = 514$. Table shows unstandardized within-person (upper part) and between-person (lower part) estimates, resulting from an overall analysis including the prediction of planning, procrastinating, self-blaming, work-related self-efficacy, shame, and guilt in one model.

n = noon. Est. = Estimate.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3.3

Unstandardized Within-Person and Between-Person Coefficients from Multi-Level Path Analysis Predicting Self-Blaming, Shame and Guilt

Predictors	Self-blaming			Shame			Guilt		
	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z
Within-person level									
Shame (n)				0.23	0.07	3.24**	0.39	0.08	5.10***
Guilt (n)				-0.02	0.03	-0.63	-0.04	0.06	-0.64
Perfectionistic strivings	0.00	0.09	0.02	-0.03	0.05	-0.75	-0.04	0.05	-0.66
Perfectionistic concerns	0.16	0.08	2.14*	0.24	0.07	3.62***	0.36	0.07	4.96***
Self-blaming									
Residual variance	0.23	0.04	5.18***	0.12	0.04	3.10**	0.21	0.05	4.65***

Table continues

Chapter III: Perfectionism in Daily Work

Table 3.3 *(continued)*

Predictors	Self-blaming			Shame			Guilt		
	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z	Est.	SE	z
Between-person level									
Intercept	0.52	0.15	3.56***	-0.05	0.32	-0.15	-0.07	0.48	-0.15
Shame (n)				0.80	0.27	3.01**			
Guilt (n)							0.78	0.24	3.25**
Perfectionistic strivings	-0.08	0.04	-1.97*	-0.01	0.04	-0.13	0.00	0.06	0.00
Perfectionistic concerns	0.59	0.09	6.59***	0.25	0.25	1.02	0.31	0.36	0.85
Self-blaming				-0.08	0.40	-0.21	-0.13	0.57	-0.22
Residual variance	0.03	0.02	1.67†	0.02	0.02	0.89	0.01	0.02	0.58

Note. $N = 78$, $n = 514$. Table shows unstandardized within-person (upper part) and between-person (lower part) estimates, resulting from an overall analysis including the prediction of planning, procrastinating, self-blaming, work-related self-efficacy, shame, and guilt in one model.

n = noon. . Est. = Estimate.

† $p < .10$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 3.4

Within-Person Indirect Effects

	Estimate	SE	95% CI
Perfectionistic strivings → Planning → Self-efficacy	-0.006	0.006	[-0.020, 0.005]
Perfectionistic concerns → Procrastinating → Self-efficacy	-0.010	0.008	[-0.030, 0.001]
Perfectionistic concerns → Self-blaming → Shame	0.038	0.019	[0.002, 0.078]
Perfectionistic concerns → Self-blaming → Guilt	0.058	0.027	[0.005, 0.112]

Note. Table shows unstandardized within-person estimates. Confidence intervals were calculated using the Monte Carlo method

(Selig & Preacher, 2008). CI = confidence interval.

CHAPTER IV

TO BE OR NOT TO BE A PERFECT PARENT? HOW THE STRIVING FOR PERFECT PARENTING HARMS EMPLOYED PARENTS (STUDY 3)[16]

Summary

More and more employees aim to be perfect parents. However, it is largely unclear what implications this striving might have. We integrated family-work and perfectionism research and investigated how employees' parenting perfectionism relates to overprotection in their role as a parent and whether this overprotection, in turn, relates to conflict between family and work life as well as to co-parenting conflicts with their intimate partners. We also examined possible implications for employees' own and their partners' well-being and satisfaction. We analyzed multi-wave (T0, T1 = one year later, T2 = two years later) survey data of 541 employed couples with parental obligation participating in The German Family Panel *pairfam*. Path analytic results showed that parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to a decrease in employees' positive mood and partnership satisfaction from T0 to T2 via overprotection at T0 and family-work conflict at T1. Parenting perfectionism was also indirectly related to a decrease in partners' positive mood and partnership satisfaction via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts. Our results highlight perfectionism's impact on oneself and others. Specifically, parenting perfectionism can permeate boundaries between family and work life and can impair intimate relationships. We discuss key theoretical insights of our findings for family-work and perfectionism research as well as implications for organizational practice.

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[16] Study 3 is an earlier version of the original manuscript of an article by Mohr & Sonnentag submitted to Elsevier in "*Journal of Vocational Behavior*" on November 21st, 2022. Chapter IV is not identical to the submitted manuscript.

Introduction

Little did I realize at that distant time what hubris was involved in these presumptuous

goals. Not trying to be the best possible parent within one's limited ability is

thoughtless, unkind, and irresponsible. Yet reaching for perfection in the rearing of

one's children is a self-defeating goal that can only lead to disaster. (Freud, 1988, p.

171)

Managing work roles (e.g., as an employee) and family roles (e.g., as an intimate

partner) can be difficult. This especially holds for employed parents who also have to take

care of their children's needs and handle their parenting role (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis,

2013). Nowadays, managing multiple roles becomes even more demanding as expectations to

be a *perfect* parent are on the rise (Lee et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2021). In line with this notion,

parenting perfectionism has recently received increasing attention in the media (e.g., Boyes,

2020; Cornwall, 2021). Despite this growing interest and urge to understand perfectionism in

the specific parenting role and its implications, this phenomenon is – from a research

perspective – not well understood to date (G. Fisher et al., 2021; Ployhart & Bartunek, 2019).

In this paper, we address this issue.

Perfectionism is a common personality characteristic that comprises striving for

flawlessness and setting exceedingly high standards for one's performance accompanied by

overly critical self-evaluations (Frost et al., 1990; Stoeber, 2018a). Perfectionism is domain-

specific; thus, it can arise to a varying degree in various life domains (Stoeber & Stoeber,

2009). For instance, one can be highly perfectionistic regarding the upbringing of one's

children but less perfectionistic at work – and vice versa. Parents high in parenting

perfectionism strive to achieve extremely high standards for their performance as parents and

tend to overly criticize their parenting abilities (Snell et al., 2005).

Our study aims at a better understanding of parenting perfectionism and its

implications for employed parents and their intimate partners. To this end, we draw on theoretical approaches and empirical evidence from family-work research (e.g., the conflict perspective; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) and perfectionism research (e.g., the Expanded Social Disconnection Model; Sherry et al., 2016) to develop a conceptual model that considers intraindividual, interindividual, and domain-crossing processes driven by perfectionism in the parenting role. More precisely, we argue that perfectionistic parents raise their children in an overprotective way which relates to conflicts between their family and work life and, in the end, to impaired mood as well as low relationship and job satisfaction (i.e., intraindividual, domain-crossing process; see the upper path in Figure 4.1). Furthermore, we presume an interindividual process in which parenting perfectionism ultimately relates to partners' impaired mood and relationship satisfaction via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts between both partners (see the lower path in Figure 4.1).

We aim to make several significant contributions to the literature. First, we contribute to the family-work literature, more precisely, to research on the role of personality in family-work conflict. In their groundbreaking work on family-work conflict, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) proposed that personality traits relate to the experience of conflict between domains because they can shape role expectations and role enactment. More than 35 years later, however, empirical corroboration for this important assumption is still scarce. Albeit previous studies showed that various personality traits (e.g., workaholism, Bakker et al., 2009; perfectionism, Mitchelson, 2009; proactive personality, Xie et al., 2018) relate to the experience of work-family conflict, they do not provide insights into why these constructs are related. In line with Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), we therefore explicitly test whether a specific personality trait (i.e., parenting perfectionism) can shape the fulfillment of a specific role (i.e., overprotection in the parenting role) which, in turn, relates to the experience of family-work conflict.

Second, we enrich the literature on perfectionism. Perfectionism scholars repeatedly lamented that perfectionism is seldomly studied in an interpersonal context (Sherry et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2022). Even though some theories and models on perfectionism such as the Expanded Social Disconnection Model (Sherry et al., 2016) explicitly assume and theorize about interpersonal effects of perfectionism (e.g., interpersonal problems), they are most often examined from an intraindividual perspective. Drawing on the Expanded Social Disconnection Model (Sherry et al., 2016), our study addresses this issue by explicitly proposing and testing interindividual effects of perfectionism. Moreover, by examining processes driven by perfectionism from both an intra- and an interindividual perspective, our study meets calls to investigate processes related to perfectionism and to go beyond self-reported consequences of perfectionism (Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018b).

Third, we advance knowledge on domain-specific perfectionism (Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009) and, specifically, on parenting perfectionism (Snell et al., 2005). Scholars have argued that perfectionism permeates boundaries between the home and the work domain (Ocampo et al., 2020). Accordingly, perfectionism regarding a specific role in the home domain should affect one's role in the work domain and vice versa. However, this claim still warrants empirical testing. Therefore, we investigate a domain-crossing process in which perfectionism in the parenting role indirectly relates to conflicts between family and work life as well as impaired job satisfaction. Moreover, as recently increasing coverage in the media (e.g., Boyes, 2020; Cornwall, 2021) shows, there is a growing urge to better understand parenting perfectionism and its implications. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research-based knowledge about this matter. We aim to reduce this discrepancy between theorizing and employees' life realities (G. Fisher et al., 2021; Ployhart & Bartunek, 2019).

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Perfectionism and the Parenting Role: Conflict Between Family and Work Life

First, we turn to the intraindividual, domain-crossing process in which we propose that parenting perfectionism relates to a decrease in well-being and satisfaction over time via overprotective parenting and family-work conflict. Overprotective parenting can be considered as a facet of the broader construct of overparenting which is colloquially known as 'helicopter parenting'. Overparenting is characterized by developmentally inappropriate parenting behaviors such as excessive involvement in decision-making, anticipatory problem-solving, or an unreasonable supply of assistance (Liu et al., 2019; Segrin et al., 2020). Being overprotective in the parenting role refers to the inappropriate, excessive provision of protection and involves smothering and parents' constant worries that something could harm their children (Klein & Pierce, 2009; Van Petegem et al., 2022).

Parenting perfectionism should relate positively to overprotection in the parenting role (Segrin et al., 2020). Parents high in parenting perfectionism aim to achieve extremely high standards for their performance as a parent (Snell et al., 2005). In line with Segrin et al. (2020), we argue that, for perfectionistic parents, their children's success and welfare directly reflect to what degree they succeed in being perfect parents. That is, children are the reference point for perfectionistic parents concerning the fulfillment of their perfect parenting standards: If they are going strong, perfectionistic parents feel that they meet the role requirements of being a perfect parent. Therefore, to ensure child success and welfare to meet their high standards, perfectionistic parents engage in overprotective parenting. To illustrate, perfectionistic parents might closely supervise their children when they do their homework and provide an inappropriate amount of assistance; they might even do the homework themselves. Doing so might protect their children from getting embarrassed at school because they didn't do their homework or because they made mistakes. Because children's failure at school would directly reflect perfectionistic parents' failure as parents, perfectionistic parents engage in overprotective parenting.

Hypothesis 1. Parenting perfectionism is positively related to overprotection.

The conflict perspective is one of the dominating perspectives in research on the work-family interface (Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). Based on the assumption that attention and energy are limited personal resources and that the fulfillment of roles in both domains draws from the same resources, this perspective implies that resources invested in the fulfillment of role requirements in one domain are lacking for the fulfillment of role requirements in the other domain, respectively (principle of resource drain; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). Consequently, roles in both domains conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus & ten Brummelhuis, 2013). The conflict between the work and the family domain can take two directions: either from the work to the family domain (e.g., thinking about unfinished work tasks limits the attention a parent gives their children at home; work-family conflict) or from the family to the work domain (e.g., parental strain experienced at home hinders parent's concentration at work; family-work conflict; Carlson et al., 2000).

We hypothesize that overprotection in the parenting role is positively related to family-work conflict. In their work, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) stressed the importance of personal characteristics for the work-family interface. They proposed that beliefs, values, and personality traits shape peoples' expectations of role requirements such that people high in parenting perfectionism expect that being a parent requires flawless parenting. These self-expectations, in turn, shape role enactment such as overprotection in the parenting role and role pressures, thereby leading up to conflict between the family and the work domain.

Overprotection involves that parents give their children attention beyond all measure and that they constantly worry about their children's safety and welfare (Klein & Pierce, 2009; Van Petegem et al., 2022). Accordingly, overprotective parenting should be strenuous and drain parents' resources (i.e., attention, energy) which are then – following the principle

of resource drain (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) – lacking for fulfilling their role requirements as employees which relates to the experience of a conflict between family and work life.

Hypothesis 2. Overprotection is positively related to family-work conflict.

Family-work conflict is a potential source of stress (Carlson et al., 2000). Accordingly, experiencing conflict between roles in these two important life domains is unpleasant and stressful and should have negative effects on well-being or satisfaction in both life domains, for instance. Indeed, many studies showed that family-work conflict can entail a variety of undesired consequences for the individual. These individual consequences can be classified into domain-unspecific, family-related, and work-related outcomes (Amstad et al., 2011). We consider all three kinds of potential individual outcomes of family-work conflict, namely positive mood (representing a domain-unspecific outcome), relationship satisfaction (a family-related outcome), and job satisfaction (a work-related outcome). Previous research extensively examined the relationships between family-work conflict and these three outcome variables. That is, meta-analytic results show a significant positive relationship between family-work conflict and depression[17] and significant negative relationships between family-work conflict and both relationship and job satisfaction (Amstad et al., 2011). Drawing on these established relationships, we propose that

Hypothesis 3. Family-work conflict is negatively related to *a)* positive mood, *b)* relationship satisfaction, and *c)* job satisfaction.

The primary aim of our study is to better understand processes driven by and implications related to parenting perfectionism. Therefore, we investigate an intraindividual, domain-crossing process in which parenting perfectionism is related to impaired mood, relationship satisfaction, and job satisfaction over time via overprotection in the parenting

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[17] In pairfam, positive mood was assessed with reversed-coded items taken from a depression scale. Therefore, Amstad et al.'s (2011) result is in line with Hypothesis 3a).

role and family-work conflict that results from drained resources (see Figure 4.1, upper path).

To better capture the detrimental processes driven by parenting perfectionism, we predict

decreases in positive mood, relationship satisfaction, and job satisfaction from T0 (i.e.,

assessment of parenting perfectionism and assumed onset of related processes) to T2. For

reasons elaborated above, we hypothesize that

Hypothesis 4. Parenting perfectionism predicts a decrease in *a)* positive mood, *b)*

relationship satisfaction and *c)* job satisfaction from T0 to T2 via overprotection and family-

work conflict.

Perfectionism and the Parenting Role: Co-Parenting Conflicts

Next, we turn to the interindividual process in which we propose that parenting

perfectionism relates to a decrease in partner well-being and satisfaction over time via

overprotective parenting and co-parenting conflicts. Focusing only on the individual and

intraindividual processes driven by parenting perfectionism would neglect the linked,

interdependent lives of family members (Elder, 1994). That is, family members affect each

other through how they behave in their intrafamilial relationships, for instance, as parents in

relationships with children (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Huinink et al., 2011).

Perfectionists are deemed to be prone to experience problems in interpersonal

relationships (Hill et al., 1997; Stoeber et al., 2021). According to the Expanded Social

Disconnection Model (Sherry et al., 2016), perfectionism is linked to psychopathology (e.g.,

depressed mood) via multiple different pathways. One of these pathways considers

interpersonal conflict and dyadic maladjustment. Previous research already supported this

pathway regarding conflicts in intimate relationships. Studies showed that being expected to

fulfill one's role as a partner perfectly relates to dyadic conflicts and, via this pathway, to

depressive symptoms in both partners (Mackinnon et al., 2012; Sherry et al., 2014).

We build on the Expanded Social Disconnection Model (Sherry et al., 2016) and these

findings and apply them to the parenting role. More precisely, we argue that parenting perfectionism can impair partner well-being and satisfaction via overprotection and related co-parenting conflicts. Co-parenting conflicts are interparental conflicts that comprise partners' disagreements about child-rearing (Dadds & Powell, 1991). We suppose that overprotection driven by perfectionism has the potential to lead up to co-parenting conflicts.

Perfectionists hold extremely high and very rigid standards (Egan et al., 2007). Accordingly, perfectionistic parents should have a clear idea of how children should be raised and how the parenting role should be fulfilled (e.g., in an overprotective manner) to meet these standards. To achieve their high standards of parenting, they might neglect their partner's view on that matter and might deny their partner's rearing practices that do not fit their idea of parenting. Therefore, it is likely that disagreements about child-rearing arise between partners. Furthermore, parents high in parenting perfectionism tend to overly criticize their parenting abilities (Snell et al., 2005). Because they are already very critical of their parenting, they might be highly sensitive regarding their partner's criticism of their rearing practices, leading up to a quick escalation of disagreements. Supporting our line of reasoning, Van Petegem et al. (2022) found a positive relationship between overprotective parenting and co-parenting conflicts.

Hypothesis 5. Overprotection is positively related to co-parenting conflicts.

Conflicts between intimate partners are repeated negative interactions that are characterized by hostility, criticism, rejection, and inconsiderateness (Mackinnon et al., 2012). Conflicts in intimate relationships can arise because of differences in opinion on various issues (e.g., parenting; Gordon & Chen, 2016). These conflicts should be detrimental to mood and satisfaction because they deprive the fundamental human need to maintain positive, non-aversive close relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Supporting this claim, intimate conflicts positively predict depressive symptoms (Choi & Marks, 2008) and

negatively predict relationship satisfaction (Gordon & Chen, 2016). Therefore, we hypothesize that co-parenting conflicts as a specific kind of conflict between intimate partners negatively relate to partner positive mood and relationship satisfaction.

Hypothesis 6. Co-parenting conflicts are negatively related to partner *a)* positive mood and *b)* relationship satisfaction.

Integrating Hypothesis 1 on the positive relationship between parenting perfectionism and overprotection with Hypotheses 5 and 6 and in line with the Expanded Social Disconnection Model (Sherry et al., 2016), we examine an interindividual process in which parenting perfectionism is related to impaired partner mood and relationship satisfaction over time via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts (see Figure 4.1, lower path). Again, to better capture the detrimental processes driven by parenting perfectionism, we predict decreases in partner positive mood and relationship satisfaction from T0 (i.e., assessment of parenting perfectionism and assumed onset of related processes) to T2.

Hypothesis 7. Parenting perfectionism predicts a decrease in partner *a)* positive mood and *b)* relationship satisfaction from T0 to T2 via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts.

Method

Procedure and Sample

To test our hypotheses, we used data from The German Family Panel *pairfam* ("Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics"; Huinink et al., 2011; see also https://www.pairfam.de/en/). Pairfam is a long-term, multidisciplinary panel survey on family and living arrangements in Germany. Its core topics are, for instance, partnership processes, parenting, and intergenerational relationships. However, it also covers a broad range of other topics, such as education and employment, personality, well-being, or satisfaction and preferences.

In terms of study design, pairfam is a multi-cohort, multi-actor panel. That is, data

collection started in 2008 (Wave 1) with a nationwide random sample of three age cohorts (born in 1971-73, 1981-83, or 1991-93) from the German population registers. Thus, at the onset of data collection, participants in the initial sample were 35-37, 25-27, or 15-17 years old, respectively. The initial sample included more than 12,000 participants, so-called *anchor respondents*. Anchor respondents' intimate partners were surveyed in every wave. In some waves, data was also collected from anchor respondents' parents or some of their children. Our analyses are based on data from Wave 5 (i.e., T0 in our analysis), collected from mid of October 2012 to mid of April 2013, Wave 6 (i.e., T1), collected from mid of October 2013 to the beginning of May 2014, and Wave 7 (i.e., T2), collected from mid of October 2014 to the beginning of May 2015. We used data from release 12.0 (Brüderl et al., 2021).

In pairfam, anchor respondent and partner data were collected via interviews. Anchor respondents were surveyed with computer-assisted personal interviews that lasted for about one hour. Anchor respondents received 10 euros cash for every completed interview. Partners were surveyed with paper-and-pencil interviews (20 to 30 pages). Partners received a lottery ticket worth 5 euros up to Wave 6; since Wave 7, they received 5 euros cash.

We included participants in our sample based on several criteria. Anchor respondents in our sample had to be employed, had to be in an intimate relationship and cohabitating with their employed partner, had to complete the interview survey, and had to cohabitate with at least one child. These criteria applied to all three waves. We also ensured that anchor respondents cohabitated with the same partner during the three waves. Partners had to complete the survey at least at T1 or T2. We checked anchor respondents' and partners' weekly working hours and ensured that participants cohabitated with at least one underage child throughout data collection. A detailed overview of the sample development based on the stepwise application of these criteria can be found in the Appendix.

Our final sample comprised 541 couples. All couples in our sample were

heterosexual, with 52.1% of anchor respondents being female. Most anchor respondents (84.1%) and partners (84.3%) were German natives. On average, anchor respondents were 38.48 years old ($SD = 3.80$), and partners were 39.39 years old ($SD = 5.11$). Most couples were married (85.2%) and cohabitated with two children (54.7%); 30.9% cohabitated with one child, 12.9% with three children, 1.1% with four children, and 0.4% with five children. On average, the youngest cohabitating child was 6.87 years old ($SD = 3.64$). Most anchor respondents (49.2%) and partners (52.7%) had finished vocational training or had graduated from a vocational school. More than half of the anchor respondents (55.4%) and partners (60.3%) were full-time employed, 34.6% of the anchor respondents and 29.4% of the partners were part-time employed, and 10.0% of the anchor respondents and 10.3% of the partners were self-employed.

Measures

All study and control variables were assessed in the anchor respondent and partner surveys at T0, T1, and T2. All surveys were administered in German. Table 4.1 displays means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among the study variables.

Anchor Respondent Surveys

Parenting Perfectionism. To assess anchor respondent's parenting perfectionism at T0, three items adapted from the Multidimensional Parenting Perfectionism Questionnaire (Snell et al., 2005) were used. A sample item is "You are a bad mother [male respondent: father] if you don't set the highest standards for yourself in child rearing". Items had to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *disagree completely* to 5 = *agree completely*. Cronbach's Alpha was .65.

Overprotection in Parenting Role. Three items from an adapted and shortened version of a scale of Engfer (1984) were used to capture anchor respondent's overprotection at T0. A sample item is "I am always worrying that something could happen to my

child/children". Items had to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *absolutely*. Cronbach's Alpha was .70.

Family-Work Conflict. Two items adapted from a German version (Wolff & Höge, 2011) of the multidimensional work-family conflict measure developed by Carlson et al. (2000) were used to assess anchor respondent's family-work conflict at T1. The two items "Because I am often under stress in my private life, I have problems concentrating on my work" and "Conflicts in my personal life reduce my work performance" capture strain-based family interference with work. Items had to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *absolutely*. The two items were significantly correlated with $r = .51$, $p < .001$.

Positive Mood. To capture anchor respondent's positive mood at T2, five items of the State-Trait-Depression Scales (Spaderna et al., 2002) were used. A sample item is "I feel good". Items had to be answered on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 4 = *almost always*. Cronbach's Alpha was .85.

Relationship Satisfaction and Job Satisfaction. Anchor respondent's relationship satisfaction at T2 was assessed with the item "All in all, how satisfied are you with your relationship?" taken from the German version (Sander & Böcker, 1993) of the Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988). Anchor respondent's job satisfaction at T2 was captured with the item "How satisfied are you with your career?". Items had to be answered on an 11-point Likert scale ranging from 0 = *very dissatisfied* to 10 = *very satisfied*.

Partner Surveys

Co-Parenting Conflicts. Conflicts regarding parenting between anchor respondent and partner at T1 were assessed with three items from an adapted and shortened German version (B. Gabriel & Bodenmann, 2006) of the Parent Problem Checklist (Dadds & Powell, 1991). Co-parenting conflicts were partner-rated. A sample item is "How often did

discussions regarding caring and parenting issues end in fights between you and [name of anchor respondent] recently?". Items had to be answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *never* to 5 = *very often*. Cronbach's Alpha was .81.

Positive Mood. Partner's positive mood at T2 was captured with the same scale as used in the anchor respondent survey. Cronbach's Alpha was .82.

Relationship Satisfaction. Partner's relationship satisfaction at T2 was assessed with the same item as used in the anchor respondent survey.

Control Variables

We predicted intra-individual changes (i.e., from T0 to T2) in the five outcome variables (positive mood, relationship satisfaction, job satisfaction, partner positive mood, partner relationship satisfaction). Therefore, we included anchor respondent's positive mood at T0 as a predictor of anchor respondent's positive mood at T2, anchor respondent's relationship satisfaction at T0 as a predictor of anchor respondent's relationship satisfaction at T2, anchor respondent's job satisfaction at T0 as a predictor of anchor respondent's job satisfaction at T2, partner's positive mood at T0 as a predictor of partner's positive mood at T2, and partner's relationship satisfaction at T0 as a predictor of partner's relationship satisfaction at T2. All variables at T0 were assessed with the same measures that were used at T2. Cronbach's Alpha for anchor respondent's and partner's mood scales at T0 was .86 and .82, respectively.

To ensure that our results are not dependent on specific anchor respondent or family characteristics, we included anchor respondent's age and gender (1 = *male*, 2 = *female*), age of the youngest cohabitating child, and the number of cohabitating children at T0 as predictors of overprotection and family-work conflict. We also included anchor respondent's weekly working hours at T1 as a predictor of family-work conflict (DiRenzo et al., 2011). Age of the youngest cohabitating child and the number of cohabitating children were also

included as predictors of co-parenting conflicts.

Construct Validity

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus Version 8.7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017) to examine the construct validity of our multi-item measures (parenting perfectionism, overprotection, positive mood, and partner positive mood at T0, family-work conflict and co-parenting conflicts at T1, positive mood and partner positive mood at T2). This eight-factor measurement model showed an acceptable fit to the data, $\chi^2(406) = 943.88$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = .05, a better fit than a model subsuming parenting perfectionism and overprotection under one factor, $\chi^2(413) = 1136.21$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.89, TLI = 0.88, RMSEA = .06, $\Delta\chi^2(7) = 192.33$, $p < .001$, and a better fit than a model subsuming both types of conflict under one factor, $\chi^2(413) = 1139.11$, $p < .001$, CFI = 0.89, TLI = 0.87, RMSEA = .06, $\Delta\chi^2(7) = 195.23$, $p < .001$. A one-factor model did not converge, so we could not test it against our model.

Data Analysis

We handled missing data by using multiple imputation in Blimp Version 3.0.54 (Keller & Enders, 2021). We imputed 50 data sets. Missing data rates ranged from 0.18% for job satisfaction at T0 to 10.54% for partner positive mood at T0. Parenting perfectionism, overprotection, family-work conflict, positive mood at T0, positive mood and job satisfaction at T2, gender, age, age of the youngest cohabitating child, number of cohabitating children, and weekly working hours had no missing values.

We specified a path model using Mplus Version 8.7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017) for testing our hypotheses. We tested all hypotheses in one overall model, showing a reasonable fit to the data, $\chi^2(99) = 204.91$, CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.90, RMSEA = .04. We allowed correlations between family-work conflict and co-parenting conflicts, between positive mood, relationship satisfaction, and job satisfaction at T0, as well as between partner

positive mood and partner relationship satisfaction at T0. The outcome variables at T2 were correlated by default.

We used the MODEL CONSTRAINT command to calculate indirect effects that we specified by multiplying the predictor-mediator path with the mediator-outcome path. We calculated confidence intervals for the indirect effects with the Monte Carlo method (Selig & Preacher, 2008) with 20,000 repetitions.[18] To properly test for indirect effects, we specified paths from parenting perfectionism to family-work conflict and co-parenting conflicts as well as from parenting perfectionism and overprotection to the outcome variables. Tables 4.2 and 4.3 show results for the direct effects. Table 4.4 shows results for the indirect effects.

Transparency and Openness

We describe our sample inclusion criteria and all measures in the study and we adhered to the journal's methodological checklist. A detailed overview of the sample development and all data exclusions based on the stepwise application of the inclusion criteria can be found in the Appendix. Data and research materials are available to the scientific community at https://www.pairfam.de/en/data/data-access/. Analysis codes are available upon request from the corresponding author. Missing data were imputed using Blimp Version 3.0.54 (Keller & Enders, 2021). Data were analyzed using Mplus Version 8.7 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2017). Based on a code written and publicly shared (see https://readyblog.netlify.app/post/2021-05-09-multiple-imputation-madness/) by Dr. Andrea Howard, we calculated a pooled asymptotic covariance matrix using R Version 4.1.2 (R Core Team, 2021) to get the variances and covariances needed to create confidence intervals for the indirect effects using the Monte Carlo tool (Selig & Preacher, 2008). This study was not preregistered.

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[18] We calculated a pooled asymptotic covariance matrix from our 50 imputed datasets using R Version 4.1.2 (R Core Team, 2021; see Howard, 2021) to get the variances and covariances necessary for using this tool.

Results

Test of Hypotheses

Supporting Hypotheses 1 and 2, parenting perfectionism positively predicted overprotection, $\gamma = 0.37$, $SE = 0.05$, $p < 0.001$, and overprotection positively predicted family-work conflict, $\gamma = 0.15$, $SE = 0.04$, $p < 0.001$. Consistent with Hypotheses 3a and 3b, family-work conflict negatively predicted positive mood, $\gamma = -0.07$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = 0.007$, and relationship satisfaction, $\gamma = -0.41$, $SE = 0.12$, $p < 0.001$. Family-work conflict did not predict job satisfaction, $\gamma = -0.16$, $SE = 0.10$, $p = .101$. Accordingly, Hypothesis 3c was not supported. In terms of the indirect effects proposed in Hypotheses 4a, 4b, and 4c, parenting perfectionism predicted a decrease in positive mood, $\gamma = -0.004$, $SE = 0.002$, 95% CI [-0.007, -0.001], and relationship satisfaction, $\gamma = -0.023$, $SE = 0.009$, 95% CI [-0.036, -0.010], from T0 to T2 via overprotection and family-work conflict, respectively. Parenting perfectionism did not predict a decrease in job satisfaction from T0 to T2 via overprotection and family-work conflict, $\gamma = -0.009$, $SE = 0.006$, 95% CI [-0.020, 0.002]. Accordingly, Hypotheses 4a and 4b were supported, whereas Hypothesis 4c was not supported.

Supporting Hypothesis 5, overprotection positively predicted co-parenting conflicts, $\gamma = 0.09$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.020$. Consistent with Hypotheses 6a and 6b, co-parenting conflicts negatively predicted partner's positive mood, $\gamma = -0.11$, $SE = 0.03$, $p = 0.001$, and relationship satisfaction, $\gamma = -0.59$, $SE = 0.11$, $p < 0.001$. In terms of the indirect effects proposed in Hypotheses 7a and 7b, parenting perfectionism predicted a decrease in partner's positive mood, $\gamma = -0.004$, $SE = 0.002$, 95% CI [-0.006, -0.001], and relationship satisfaction, $\gamma = -0.019$, $SE = 0.009$, 95% CI [-0.027, -0.011], from T0 to T2 via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts, respectively. Accordingly, Hypotheses 7a and 7b were supported.

Test of Control Variables

Anchor respondent's gender did neither predict overprotection, $\gamma = 0.14$, $SE = 0.07$, p

= 0.051, nor family-work conflict, $\gamma = -0.01$, $SE = 0.08$, $p = 0.921$. Anchor respondent's age negatively predicted overprotection, $\gamma = -0.02$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = 0.026$, but not family-work conflict, $\gamma = 0.01$, $SE = 0.01$, $p = 0.189$. Age of the youngest cohabitating child did not predict overprotection, $\gamma = 0.001$, $SE = 0.001$, $p = 0.079$, but negatively predicted family-work conflict, $\gamma = -0.003$, $SE = 0.001$, $p < 0.001$. The number of cohabitating children did neither predict overprotection, $\gamma = -0.05$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.311$, nor family-work conflict, $\gamma = -0.06$, $SE = 0.04$, $p = 0.205$. Anchor respondent's weekly working hours did not predict family-work conflict, $\gamma = 0.003$, $SE = 0.003$, $p = 0.315$. Neither age of the youngest cohabitating child, $\gamma = 0.001$, $SE = 0.001$, $p = 0.379$, nor the number of cohabitating children, $\gamma = 0.052$, $SE = 0.043$, $p = 0.219$, predicted co-parenting conflicts. When not controlling for job satisfaction at T0, family-work conflict negatively predicts job satisfaction at T2, $\gamma = -0.25$, $SE = 0.11$, $p = .018$. Apart from this finding, removing the control variables does not change the results regarding the hypotheses.

Discussion

With our study, we aimed toward a better understanding of parenting perfectionism, an increasingly important but understudied phenomenon. To achieve this goal, we drew on the family-work and perfectionism literature to develop a model that helps to explain both intra- and interindividual implications of parenting perfectionism for employees. Testing this model using multi-wave, multi-source panel survey data from employed couples with parental obligation showed that parenting perfectionism relates to processes that can impair employees' own as well as their intimate partners' longer-term well-being and satisfaction. That is, parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to a decrease in employees' own positive mood and relationship satisfaction over two years via overprotection in the parenting role and family-work conflict. Furthermore, parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to a decrease in partners' positive mood and relationship satisfaction over two years via

overprotection and co-parenting conflicts.

Theoretical Implications

Our study has several significant theoretical implications for research on the family-work interface and perfectionism research. First, our study enhances knowledge on parenting perfectionism (Snell et al., 2005) and overparenting (Liu et al., 2019; Segrin et al., 2020) and further emphasizes that (parenting) perfectionism and (over)parenting are relevant constructs worth receiving further attention in organizational psychology research. Parenting perfectionism has been linked to impaired well-being before (e.g., parental burnout, Lin et al., 2021). However, our study extends these findings as it unravels intra- and interindividual processes through which parenting perfectionism relates to decreases in one's own (i.e., via overprotection and family-work conflict) as well as one's partner's (i.e., via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts) positive mood and relationship satisfaction. These results highlight the impact parenting perfectionism can have: It might not only ultimately impair one's own and others' well-being but can also permeate boundaries between family and work life (Ocampo et al., 2020) in that it relates to experiences of conflict between both domains.

Moreover, research on overparenting has largely focused on its manifold negative implications for children (Segrin et al., 2020). Less attention has been paid to implications for parents themselves and, specifically, to work-related implications for employed parents. Regarding work-related implications, Liu et al. (2019) found that overparenting harms adolescent leader emergence. Our study shows that overprotection, a facet of overparenting, can have implications for parents' work as well in that it positively relates to family-work conflict, indicated by concentration problems at work and feelings of reduced work performance. In addition, we found that parenting perfectionism is not only related to employees' own experiences of family-work conflict but also to partners' experiences of co-parenting conflicts via overprotection. Previous research showed that conflicts at home can

spill over to work. That is, family-work conflict and interpersonal conflicts (e.g., with one's intimate partner) at home relate to destructive phenomena at work, such as interpersonal conflicts at work (Sanz-Vergel et al., 2015) or abusive supervision (Dionisi & Barling, 2019). Accordingly, parenting perfectionism, related overparenting tendencies, and negative, conflict-laden family experiences can affect the work life of both partners.

Second, our results shed light on why personality traits, specifically perfectionism, are associated with experiences of conflict between family and work life. Our findings support Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) theoretical assumption that personality traits can shape role enactment. Indeed, our results show that parenting perfectionism relates to overprotection in the parenting role and, thus, is associated with the fulfillment of the parenting role. Moreover, in line with Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to the experience of family-work conflict via overprotection. Thereby, our study highlights the importance of perfectionism for the family-work interface. However, it extends the knowledge gained from previous studies (e.g., Mitchelson, 2009) in that it not only shows that perfectionism is associated with family-work conflict but brings to light *why* perfectionism and family-work conflict are related. We deem it important that organizational scholars not only investigate whether various personality traits relate to the experience of conflicts between family and work but – drawing on Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) work – theorize about and examine why a specific trait should impact the family-work interface in a certain way via the enactment of various roles in both domains.

Third, we advance research on the interpersonal implications of perfectionism. According to the Expanded Social Disconnection Model (Sherry et al., 2016), perfectionism can impair health and well-being via interpersonal conflicts. Because interpersonal conflicts are per se at least a dyadic experience, it is logical that they can affect all conflict parties. Therefore, perfectionism should not only impair one's own well-being via negative social

interactions but that of others as well (Ocampo et al., 2020). Whereas there is abundant empirical support for detrimental intraindividual well-being effects of perfectionism (for an overview see Sirois & Molnar, 2016) and also for the assumption that perfectionism harms one's own well-being via interpersonal conflicts (Sherry et al., 2016), interindividual well-being effects of perfectionism are rarely considered.

Our findings extend the Expanded Social Disconnection Model (Sherry et al., 2016) in that they show that perfectionism drives negative social interactions that can harm the well-being of significant others (e.g., intimate partners). Thus, perfectionists cannot only be authors of their own but also of others' misery. Consequently, scholars should study perfectionism from both an intra- and an interindividual perspective, investigating it in interpersonal contexts to ascertain what implications it has in the outside world (Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). In addition, our study refines previous research on perfectionism and interpersonal conflicts (e.g., Mackinnon et al., 2012; Sherry et al., 2014) in that it sheds light on why these conflicts might arise. That is, perfectionism in a specific role (i.e., parenting perfectionism) can relate to conflicts in a specific area (i.e., co-parenting) via the enactment of this specific role (i.e., overparenting in the parenting role).

These insights can be applied to examine perfectionism and its interpersonal implications in the work domain. That is, work-related perfectionism could drive negative social interactions in work relationships as well that might harm colleagues' well-being or impede the successful accomplishment of interdependent work tasks. To illustrate, perfectionistic employees who hold very high and rigid (Egan et al., 2007) performance standards at work should have a clear idea of tasks and goals at work and of how to accomplish them. They might be determined to push their procedures through to achieve their standards, regardless of their colleagues' ideas and approaches. Therefore, it is likely that interpersonal conflicts such as task (i.e., conflicts about ideas and disagreements regarding

group work tasks) or process conflicts (i.e., conflicts regarding the procedure of how to accomplish group work tasks; Jehn & Mannix, 2001) at work arise. In addition, work-related perfectionism could shape the enactment of work roles and, thereby, affect other people at work. In this regard, Guo et al. (2020) found that leader perfectionism relates to abusive behaviors toward subordinates.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Despite its strengths, such as the use of multi-source panel data collected at three measurement points over several years, our study has some limitations that need to be discussed. One limitation concerns the assessment of parenting perfectionism, relationship satisfaction, and job satisfaction. Parenting perfectionism is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct (Snell et al., 2005). In pairfam, parenting perfectionism was assessed with a shortened overall measure that did not differentiate between its various dimensions. Thus, it might be that the measure did not capture all relevant aspects of parenting perfectionism. Taking the multidimensionality of parenting perfectionism into account might help future research to paint a more detailed picture. Comparably, relationship and job satisfaction were assessed with one item, respectively, which might raise concerns regarding the psychometric properties of these measures. However, as several scholars (e.g., G. G. Fisher et al., 2016; Wanous et al., 1997) showed, it is acceptable to assess satisfaction in specific areas of life with single-item measures.

Co-parenting is a coordination process between adults sharing parental responsibility (Van Petegem et al., 2022). Therefore, parenting, co-parenting, and co-parenting conflicts might be affected by personality traits (i.e., parenting perfectionism) and ways of parenting (i.e., overprotection) of at least two interacting parents. Accordingly, the partner's level of parenting perfectionism and overprotection might be of relevance in the processes under study here. Because both constructs were only assessed from anchor respondents, we could

unfortunately not consider them in our study. Future research might turn to this issue.

We aimed to ensure that our study findings apply to various types of families by using the age of the youngest cohabiting child and the number of cohabiting children, for instance, as control variables. As the results show, the processes under study are largely independent of specific anchor respondent or family characteristics. Nevertheless, most of the couples in our study represent the "traditional" family type (i.e., heterosexual, married, cohabiting with two children). Taking the growing diversity of family types into account, it might be worthwhile to study parenting perfectionism and related processes in single parents, homosexual couples, or multigenerational households, for instance (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002).

We would like to offer some directions for future research on perfectionism and its relationship with processes and outcomes relevant for organizations. First of all, we call for a closer examination of parenting perfectionism's work-related implications. Our study showed that parenting perfectionism can be indirectly related to experiences of family-work conflict, indicated by concentration problems at work and feelings of reduced work performance. However, parenting perfectionism might impact more objective work-related outcomes as well, such as career ambitions and success, parental leave duration, decisions to work full- or part-time, or labor market participation. For instance, Meeussen and Van Laar (2018) showed that feeling pressure to be a perfect mother is associated with lower career ambitions. Berrigan et al. (2021) supposed that mothers who experience societal pressure for perfect parenting might take longer parental leaves from work to meet these standards. In addition, parenting perfectionism might affect whether employees choose to work full- or part-time or even whether they decide to leave the labor market. Because perfectionistic parents hold very rigid standards (Egan et al., 2007), they will be reluctant to give up their high parenting standards and to reduce the resources invested in parenting. Instead, when experiencing

conflicts between domains, they might choose to invest fewer resources into the work domain, for instance by reducing their working hours or deciding to leave the labor market. It might also be that parents' parenting perfectionism affects their children's work-related outcomes (e.g., career development and success) later on. Future research should address these issues.

Another fruitful avenue for future research could be to further investigate the domain-crossing effects of perfectionism (Ocampo et al., 2020). Our results show that perfectionism in a specific role in the family domain (i.e., parenting perfectionism) can permeate the boundary between family and work life via the enactment of the parenting role and family-work conflict. Similarly, work-related perfectionism might permeate the boundary between work and family life via the enactment of one's role as an employee (e.g., employees high in work-related perfectionism might invest many resources in perfectly fulfilling their work, leading up to drained resources and related experiences of work-family conflict). That way, perfectionism in the work domain might not only affect employees' family lives as well as their family members but also organizationally relevant variables via the experience of work-family conflict.

Finally, as our results show, parenting perfectionism can cross the boundary between family and work life and relates to detrimental processes that can impair employees' and their employed partners' well-being and satisfaction. Consequently, one core task for future research would be to identify moderating variables in the family or the work domain that help to interrupt the negative processes driven by parenting perfectionism or to mitigate associated negative implications. For instance, social support at home and at work might be of help to perfectionistic parents.

Practical Implications

Our study findings have implications for practical action. Most importantly, we think

that there are ways how organizations can support perfectionistic parents and, thereby, lessen the negative implications of parenting perfectionism. First of all, organizations should be aware that for some of their employees fulfilling the parenting role and juggling family and work can be especially strenuous. Accordingly, they could ensure that parents have the possibility to manage their demanding roles as a parent and an employee the best possible, for instance, by providing the opportunity of flexible work arrangements (i.e., flextime, flexplace; Allen et al., 2013). Moreover, organizations could set up high-quality corporate day-care centers and kindergartens to reassure especially employees who are perfectionistic parents that their children get the best possible care and lessen their worries about their children's welfare and success. Offering homework supervision, tutoring, or supervised leisure time activities for older children could also be of help to perfectionistic parents. Another option could be to offer counseling services that address both work- and family-related issues and help employees manage conflicts (see Sanz-Vergel et al., 2015).

In addition, because parenting perfectionism relates to detrimental processes, an obvious implication of our findings is that parenting perfectionism should be decreased. In this regard, it might prove helpful to raise societal awareness regarding possible negative implications of aiming to be a perfect parent among employees. Assuming that parenting perfectionism can develop via social learning processes (Flett et al., 2002), colleagues are peers that can act as role models for employees. Accordingly, if colleagues give the impression that they are or aim to be perfect parents, employees might strive to live up to this ideal. Raising awareness of the downsides of parenting perfectionism could help to reduce societal pressures to be a perfect parent. Parenting perfectionism could also be decreased by psychological interventions (Suh et al., 2019). To lessen the negative implications of parenting perfectionism, employees' perfectionism-related parenting practices and related co-parenting conflicts could be targeted. Measures of cognitive-behavioral therapy with a focus

on parent education and instruction could help parents to overcome their overprotective tendencies and to learn more adaptive parenting practices (Flett et al., 2002; Suh et al., 2019). Besides, couple therapy could help to resolve co-parenting conflicts and to reduce related mood and relationship satisfaction impairments (Snyder et al., 2006).

Conclusion

We set out to better understand the phenomenon of parenting perfectionism and its implications for employees. Our study shows that aiming to be a perfect parent is not only a self-defeating (Freud, 1988) but also an other-defeating goal in that it relates to intra- and interindividual conflict-laden processes that can negatively affect oneself and others. We conclude that parenting perfectionism is a problematic phenomenon that is on the rise among employed parents. Accordingly, it is important to examine parenting perfectionism more closely and to find ways how employees and organizations can effectively handle it.

Figures, Tables, and Appendix

Figure 4.1

Conceptual Model
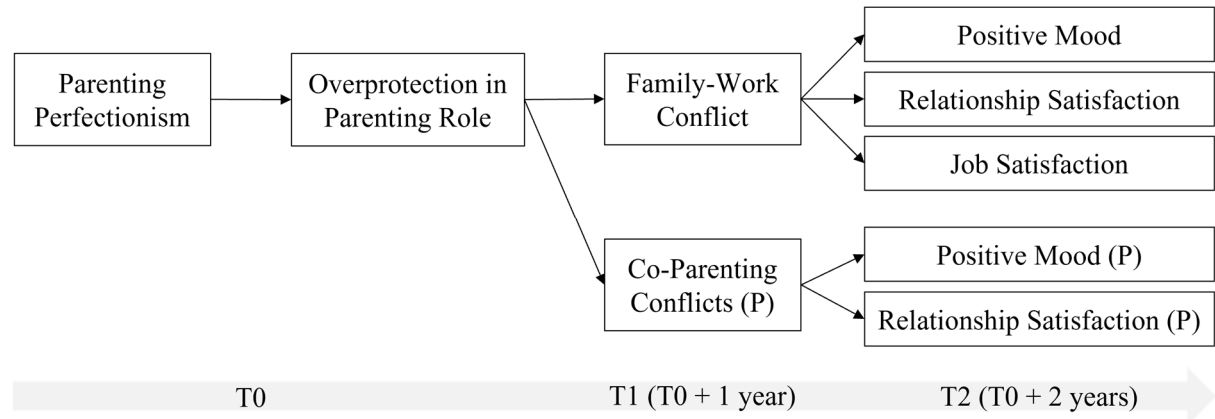
Note. P = partner-rated. T = measurement point. This figure does not include the control

variables. Only hypothesized paths are depicted.

Table 4.1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations among Study Variables

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Parenting perfectionism	2.27	0.73								
2 Overprotection	2.30	0.83	.31***							
3 FWC	1.60	0.71	.03	.16***						
4 Co-parenting conflicts (P)	1.98	0.67	.00	.10*	.15**					
5 Positive mood	3.06	0.55	-.05	-.26***	-.26***	-.14**				
6 Relationship satisfaction	7.68	2.12	-.03	-.09*	-.20***	-.13**	.30***			
7 Job satisfaction	7.53	1.73	.00	-.08	-.13**	-.04	.34***	.17***		
8 Positive mood (P)	3.23	0.52	.02	-.10*	-.14**	-.26***	.15**	.14**	.08	
9 Relationship satisfaction (P)	7.84	1.80	-.01	-.03	-.13**	-.33***	.14**	.31***	.14**	.40***

Note. N = 541. FWC = family-work conflict. P = partner-rated.

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Table 4.2

Intraindividual Process: Path-Analytic Results

Predictors	Overprotection		FWC		Positive mood		Relationship satisfaction		Job satisfaction	
	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z
Intercept	2.10 (0.41)	5.15***	1.11 (0.42)	2.67**	1.52 (0.14)	11.15***	5.87 (0.47)	12.39***	4.84 (0.43)	11.18***
Gender	0.14 (0.07)	1.95	-0.01 (0.08)	-0.10						
Age	-0.02 (0.01)	-2.22*	0.01 (0.01)	1.31						
Age youngest child	0.001 (0.001)	1.76	-0.003 (0.001)	-3.55***						
Number children	-0.05 (0.05)	-1.01	-0.06 (0.04)	-1.27						
Weekly working hours			0.003 (0.003)	1.00						
Positive mood (T0)					0.59 (0.03)	18.51***				
Relationship satisfaction (T0)							0.36 (0.04)	9.43***		
Job satisfaction (T0)									0.40 (0.04)	10.27***
Parenting perfectionism	0.37 (0.05)	7.81***	-0.04 (0.04)	-0.83	-0.01 (0.03)	-0.34	-0.03 (0.12)	-0.21	0.05 (0.10)	0.55
Overprotection			0.15 (0.04)	4.03***	-0.07 (0.02)	-2.88**	-0.12 (0.11)	-1.16	-0.09 (0.09)	-1.07
FWC					-0.07 (0.03)	-2.69**	-0.41 (0.12)	-3.51***	-0.16 (0.10)	-1.64

Table continues

Table 4.2 (*continued*)

Predictors	Overprotection		FWC		Positive mood		Relationship satisfaction		Job satisfaction	
	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z
Residual variance	0.61 (0.04)	16.45***	0.47 (0.03)	16.45***	0.16 (0.01)	16.43***	3.60 (0.22)	16.38***	2.45 (0.15)	16.38***

Note. N = 541. Table shows unstandardized estimates, resulting from an overall analysis including the prediction of overprotection, family-work conflict, positive mood, relationship satisfaction, job satisfaction, co-parenting conflicts, partner positive mood and partner relationship satisfaction in one model. Est. = Estimate. FWC = family-work conflict. T = measurement point.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Table 4.3

Interindividual Process: Path-Analytic Results

Predictors	Co-parenting conflicts (P)		Positive mood (P)		Relationship satisfaction (P)	
	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z	Est. (*SE*)	z
Intercept	1.70 (0.15)	11.46***	1.72 (0.18)	9.39***	5.16 (0.49)	10.53***
Age youngest child	0.001 (0.001)	0.88				
Number children	0.05 (0.04)	1.23				
Positive mood (P, T0)			0.54 (0.04)	12.84***		
Relationship satisfaction (P, T0)					0.47 (0.04)	12.12***
Parenting perfectionism	-0.03 (0.04)	-0.71	0.03 (0.03)	1.14	-0.02 (0.10)	-0.17
Overprotection	0.09 (0.04)	2.33*	-0.03 (0.03)	-1.28	0.05 (0.09)	0.57
Co-parenting conflicts (P)			-0.11 (0.03)	-3.32**	-0.59 (0.11)	-5.44***
Residual variance	0.44 (0.03)	15.66***	0.18 (0.01)	15.17***	2.17 (0.14)	15.29***

Note. N = 541. Table shows unstandardized estimates, resulting from an overall analysis including the prediction of overprotection, family-work conflict, positive mood, relationship satisfaction, job satisfaction, co-parenting conflicts, partner positive mood and partner relationship satisfaction in one model. Est. = Estimate. FWC = family-work conflict. P = partner-rated. T = measurement point.

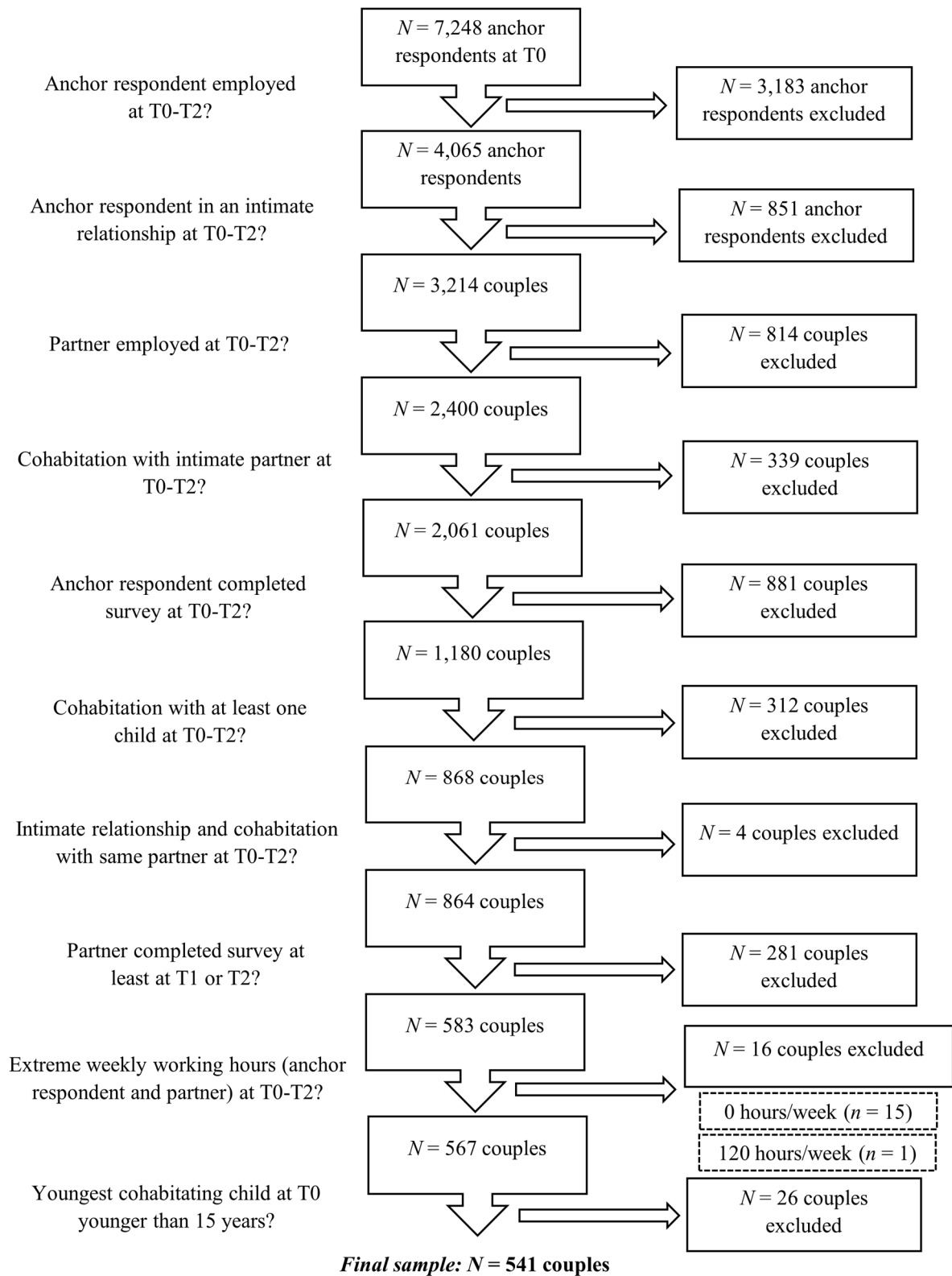* *p* < .05. ** *p* < .01. *** *p* < .001.

Table 4.4

Indirect Effects

	Estimate	SE	95% CI
Parenting perfectionism → Overprotection → FWC → Positive mood	-0.004	0.002	[-0.007, -0.001]
Parenting perfectionism → Overprotection → FWC → Relationship satisfaction	-0.023	0.009	[-0.036, -0.010]
Parenting perfectionism → Overprotection → FWC → Job satisfaction	-0.009	0.006	[-0.020, 0.002]
Parenting perfectionism → Overprotection → Co-parenting conflicts (P) → Positive mood (P)	-0.004	0.002	[-0.006, -0.001]
Parenting perfectionism → Overprotection → Co-parenting conflicts (P) → Relationship satisfaction (P)	-0.019	0.009	[-0.027, -0.011]

Note. Table shows unstandardized estimates. Confidence intervals were calculated using the Monte Carlo method (Selig & Preacher, 2008).

FWC = family-work conflict. P = partner-rated. CI = confidence interval.

Appendix

Overview of Sample Development

	$N = 7{,}248$ anchor respondents at T0	
Anchor respondent employed at T0-T2?		$N = 3{,}183$ anchor respondents excluded
	$N = 4{,}065$ anchor respondents	
Anchor respondent in an intimate relationship at T0-T2?		$N = 851$ anchor respondents excluded
	$N = 3{,}214$ couples	
Partner employed at T0-T2?		$N = 814$ couples excluded
	$N = 2{,}400$ couples	
Cohabitation with intimate partner at T0-T2?		$N = 339$ couples excluded
	$N = 2{,}061$ couples	
Anchor respondent completed survey at T0-T2?		$N = 881$ couples excluded
	$N = 1{,}180$ couples	
Cohabitation with at least one child at T0-T2?		$N = 312$ couples excluded
	$N = 868$ couples	
Intimate relationship and cohabitation with same partner at T0-T2?		$N = 4$ couples excluded
	$N = 864$ couples	
Partner completed survey at least at T1 or T2?		$N = 281$ couples excluded
	$N = 583$ couples	
Extreme weekly working hours (anchor respondent and partner) at T0-T2?		$N = 16$ couples excluded
		0 hours/week ($n = 15$)
		120 hours/week ($n = 1$)
	$N = 567$ couples	
Youngest cohabitating child at T0 younger than 15 years?		$N = 26$ couples excluded

Final sample: N = 541 couples

Data Transparency Appendix

The data reported in this manuscript were obtained from data that are available to the scientific community for scholarly analyses, see The German Family Panel *pairfam*, https://www.pairfam.de/en/. A bibliography of publications using the pairfam data is available at https://www.pairfam.de/en/publications/bibliography/. To the best of our knowledge, the variables and relationships examined in the present article have not been examined in any previous articles using the pairfam data.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL DISCUSSION

This dissertation aimed to provide a better understanding of employees' perfectionism in different life domains and its implications for employees' (everyday) lives. Toward this aim, my co-authors and I conducted three independent empirical studies on domain-specific perfectionism. Study 1 and Study 2 investigated perfectionism in the work domain. Study 3 investigated perfectionism in the parenting domain. In the following, I will first briefly summarize the findings of the three studies. Next, I will elaborate on the theoretical contributions of this dissertation. After that, I will turn to practical implications that can be drawn from the findings of the three studies. Then, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the three studies and describe open research questions and directions for future research. Finally, I will present some concluding thoughts on perfection and its pursuit.

Summary of Findings

Study 1 examined at-work antecedents and well-being implications of daily work-related perfectionism. Drawing on whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001), findings on the daily variability of perfectionism (Boone et al., 2012a), and the principle of trait activation (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000), we hypothesized that work-related perfectionism fluctuates daily due to employees' day-to-day experiences at work. These daily within-person fluctuations in perfectionism should matter for employees' daily well-being both at work and at home. Findings of a two-week daily diary study supported these assumptions. Daily experienced time pressure at work was positively related to daily work-related perfectionistic strivings and concerns. Daily experienced criticism at work was positively related to daily work-related perfectionistic concerns. Daily work-related perfectionistic strivings had a positive indirect effect on vigor at bedtime via vigor at the end of the workday. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns had a positive indirect effect on negative affect at bedtime via

negative affect at the end of the workday. Thus, Study 1 showed that daily within-person fluctuations in work-related perfectionism are meaningful in that they relate to daily fluctuations in employee well-being at and away from work.

Study 2 took a dynamic perspective on perfectionism at work as well. In detail, Study 2 built on the findings of Study 1 and investigated cognitive-behavioral processes at work associated with daily work-related perfectionism. That is, Study 2 examined daily cognitions and behaviors during work driven by daily work-related perfectionism and, in turn, implications of these daily cognitions and behaviors for employees' self-related perceptions and emotions at the end of the workday. As hypothesized, findings of a two-week daily diary study showed that daily work-related perfectionistic strivings positively related to daily planning at work and daily work-related perfectionistic concerns positively related to daily self-blaming at work. Contrary to expectations, daily work-related perfectionistic concerns did not predict daily procrastinating at work. As expected, daily work-related perfectionistic concerns had a positive indirect effect on feelings of shame and guilt via self-blaming at work. Neither the hypothesized indirect effect of daily work-related perfectionistic strivings on work-related self-efficacy via planning at work nor the hypothesized indirect effect of daily work-related perfectionistic concerns on work-related self-efficacy via procrastinating at work received support. Study 2 replicated the finding on the daily variability of perfectionism at work from Study 1 and provided further support that these daily within-person fluctuations are meaningful in the work context in that they are associated with daily cognitive-behavioral processes at work. Accordingly, Study 1 and Study 2 offer a dynamic, within-person view on perfectionism at work that is quite new but, apparently, quite fruitful.

Study 3 took the traditional trait view on perfectionism to investigate parenting perfectionism and its implications more closely. Integrating perfectionism research with family-work research, we hypothesized that parenting perfectionism relates to the fulfillment

of the parenting role and, thereby, indirectly to conflict-laden intra- and interindividual processes that harm employees' own as well as their intimate partners' longer-term well-being and satisfaction. Analyzing multi-source, multi-wave survey data of employed couples with parental obligation from the pairfam panel largely supported this claim. Parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to a decrease in employees' own positive mood and partnership satisfaction over two years via overprotection in the parenting role and family-work conflict. Furthermore, parenting perfectionism was indirectly related to a decrease in partners' positive mood and partnership satisfaction via overprotection and co-parenting conflicts. Contrary to expectations, parenting perfectionism was not indirectly related to a decrease in employees' job satisfaction via overprotection and family-work conflict. All in all, Study 3 showed that perfectionism in the parenting domain is quite undesirable – not only for employees themselves but also for their intimate partners.

Theoretical Contributions

This dissertation makes several significant theoretical contributions to the perfectionism literature that can alter the prevailing understanding of perfectionism and guide future research. In the following, I will discuss six important theoretical insights for perfectionism research gained from the three studies. First, perfectionism can be studied from a dynamic, within-person view. Second, a process-oriented view on perfectionism can help to answer the question of why perfectionism is related to such manifold relevant outcomes. Third, perfectionism can both affect and be affected by work. Fourth, perfectionism at work can be both beneficial and detrimental – depending on the dimension considered. Fifth, domain-specific perfectionism can cross boundaries between life domains. Sixth, domain-specific perfectionism can have interindividual effects.

Perfectionism Can Be Studied From a Dynamic, Within-Person View

For the most part, perfectionism is conceptualized as a fairly stable personality trait

(Hewitt & Flett, 1991) that is usually studied from a between-person perspective (Ocampo et al., 2020). Nevertheless, a few studies found that perfectionism can show short-term (i.e., daily) within-person variability (Boone et al., 2012a, 2012b; Shafran et al., 2006). Building on these studies and whole trait theory (Fleeson, 2001), Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation offered a rather new, dynamic view on perfectionism that considers perfectionism's daily variability. Study 1 corroborated previous findings and whole trait theory's (Fleeson, 2001) premise that personality comprises dynamic state components that fluctuate within short periods by showing that perfectionism fluctuates from one workday to the other. Study 2 replicated this finding. Moreover, both studies showed that these fluctuations are meaningful in employees' everyday lives in that they can have a bearing on well-being (Study 1) and relate to cognitive-behavioral processes at work (Study 2).

Study 1 further substantiated the principle of trait activation (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000) in that it showed that state perfectionism can be activated by perfectionism-relevant situational cues. Study 1 extended previous research on experimentally induced state perfectionism (Boone et al., 2012b; Shafran et al., 2006) because it showed that naturally occurring cues in an individual's environment can induce fluctuations in perfectionism as well. Thus, perfectionism cannot only be shaped in the long term by experiences during childhood and adolescence (e.g., parental expectations; Damian et al., 2013) but also in the short term by peoples' day-to-day experiences (Stoeber, 2018b).

Following these insights, the time has come to reconsider the nature of the perfectionism construct and to study perfectionism from a dynamic, within-person perspective as well. To be clear, this is not a call for replacing the traditional trait view on perfectionism with the dynamic state view on perfectionism. Rather, because both perspectives have different foci (i.e., the trait approach focuses on the stable components of perfectionism, and the dynamic approach focuses on the changing, variable components of

perfectionism), they do both provide valuable insights and complement each other (Beckmann & Wood, 2020) and should, thus, both be considered in future research on perfectionism.

A Process-Oriented View on Perfectionism Can Help to Answer the "Why" Question

A second important contribution of this dissertation is that it unravels mechanisms and processes that link perfectionism and relevant outcome variables. The majority of previous studies focused on perfectionism's correlates, answering the question of whether perfectionism and specific variables are related or not. However, these studies are limited because they can only show *if* perfectionism and variables of interest are related – but not *why* they are related (Kuper et al., 2021; Vantilborgh et al., 2018). Thus, the mechanisms and processes that might underlie these relationships are largely unclear. As Stoeber (2018b) and Ocampo et al. (2020) note, researching mediating variables and processes associated with perfectionism is necessary to understand how perfectionism affects relevant outcome variables.

Study 2 and Study 3 turned to this issue. Previous research showed that perfectionistic concerns and negative self-conscious emotions (i.e., shame, guilt) are related (e.g., Stoeber et al., 2007). Refining this knowledge, Study 2 found that daily perfectionistic concerns at work relate to feelings of shame and guilt via daily self-blaming at work. Similarly, perfectionism is associated with the experience of family-work conflict (e.g., Mitchelson, 2009). Again, Study 3 refined that knowledge in that it showed that parenting perfectionism and family-work conflict are related via the fulfillment of the parenting role. Furthermore, Study 3 found that parenting perfectionism relates to longer-term mood and satisfaction impairments via the fulfillment of the parenting role and related inter-role and interpersonal conflicts. Accordingly, both studies showed that perfectionism can have significant implications for employees' (everyday) lives via perfectionism-related cognitions, role fulfillment, or

conflictual processes, for instance.

Both the findings of Study 2 and Study 3 highlight the worth of studying perfectionism from a process-oriented perspective (Vantilborgh et al., 2018). Taking this perspective can help future research toward a better understanding of *why* perfectionism is related to such manifold relevant outcome variables in various domains of life. This knowledge can then be applied to design measures and interventions that aim at reducing undesired consequences associated with perfectionism.

Perfectionism Can Both Affect and Be Affected by Work

To date, research on perfectionism in the work context focused on perfectionism's consequences and, accordingly, investigated whether perfectionism affects organizationally relevant variables (Ocampo et al., 2020). This antecedent-focused view limits, again, the understanding of perfectionism at work because it neglects the possibility that perfectionism might be affected by work as well (e.g., by experiences at work) and can, accordingly, also be studied as an outcome variable in the work context (Stoeber, 2018b). Indeed, Study 1 provided evidence for this notion. More precisely, Study 1 showed that employees' daily experiences of time pressure and criticism at work predict their daily work-related perfectionism.

Accordingly, Study 1 supports the idea that the antecedent-focused view on perfectionism at work is too narrow and limits the understanding of perfectionism in the work context. Work-related perfectionism can be both antecedent and outcome and should be, consequently, considered this way in future research. Regarding this issue, Ocampo et al. (2020) already discussed several theoretical approaches that could be used to investigate perfectionism's antecedents at work. Following Ocampo et al. (2020), we drew on the trait activation approach (Tett & Burnett, 2003; Tett & Guterman, 2000) to show that at-work experiences can predict perfectionism at work. In another vein, scholars could draw on social

learning processes to investigate whether perfectionistic tendencies in employees increase because their perfectionistic leaders function as role models, for instance (see Ocampo et al., 2020).

Knowledge of work-related antecedents of perfectionism could also be of relevance to scholars investigating changes in perfectionism over the life course. Previous research focused on developmental antecedents (e.g., the parent-child relationship) and related developmental changes in perfectionism during childhood and adolescence (e.g., Damian et al., 2013), leaving the question regarding perfectionism's development in later years and its causes unanswered (Stoeber, 2018b). Employees' perfectionism might change (i.e., increase or decrease) over the long term due to factors related to their work itself, experiences at work, or the context they are working in (see Woods et al., 2013, 2019).

Perfectionism at Work Can Be Both Beneficial and Detrimental – Depending on the Dimension Considered

The question of whether perfectionism is a desirable personality characteristic at work or not bothers scholars and practitioners alike (Harari et al., 2018). Previous research showed that, to answer this question, it is crucial to differentiate between perfectionistic strivings and perfectionistic concerns because these two perfectionism dimensions tend to show different patterns of relationships with organizationally relevant variables (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020). Consequently, we distinguished and simultaneously examined both dimensions in both of our studies on perfectionism in the work domain (i.e., Study 1 and Study 2).

Study 1 showed that the two perfectionism dimensions relate differently to daily affective well-being at work, that is, daily work-related perfectionistic strivings related to vigor, whereas daily work-related perfectionistic concerns related to negative affect. Perfectionistic strivings did not predict negative affect and perfectionistic concerns did not predict vigor. Moreover, experienced time pressure was found to be an antecedent of

perfectionistic strivings and concerns, whereas experienced criticism was found to be only an antecedent of perfectionistic concerns. In addition, Study 2 showed that both perfectionism dimensions relate differently to daily cognitions and behaviors at work. That is, daily work-related perfectionistic strivings were positively related to planning but unrelated to procrastinating and self-blaming. Daily work-related perfectionistic concerns were negatively related to planning, tended to be positively related to procrastinating, and were positively related to self-blaming. Only daily perfectionistic concerns were indirectly related to feelings of shame and guilt via self-blaming.

Thus, the findings of this dissertation further highlight the importance of distinguishing and simultaneously examining both dimensions of perfectionism at work. However, our findings show that this differentiated examination is not only crucial when examining outcomes of perfectionism at work, but likewise when examining antecedents of perfectionism (Study 1) and perfectionism-related processes at work (Study 2). This insight can help researchers to answer the question of why perfectionism can be both beneficial and detrimental at work in the future.

Domain-Specific Perfectionism Can Cross Boundaries Between Life Domains

Previous research on domain-specific perfectionism largely focused on domain-specific effects, that is, how perfectionism in one life domain affects processes and outcomes in this specific domain (e.g., Mitchelson & Burns, 1998; Stoeber & Yang, 2015). Only recently, scholars argued that perfectionism in one life domain might permeate boundaries between life domains and affect other life domains as well (Ocampo et al., 2020). To advance knowledge on domain-specific perfectionism in this regard, Study 1 and Study 3 researched such domain-crossing effects of perfectionism with respect to the work-home interface.

Study 1 found that daily perfectionism at work relates to affective well-being at home via affective well-being at work. Thus, perfectionism at work relates to well-being at home

via affective spillover processes. Study 3 found that parenting perfectionism relates to conflicts between family and work life, indicated by concentration problems and feelings of reduced performance at work, via the strenuous, overprotective fulfillment of the parenting role.

Thus, both studies showed that domain-specific perfectionism can indeed permeate boundaries between life domains (e.g., between family and work life) and affect other life domains. Moreover, these domain-crossing effects can take, at least in the case of the work-home interface, both directions: In Study 1, work-related perfectionism flowed from the work into the home domain; in Study 3, parenting perfectionism flowed from the home into the work domain. Thereby, this dissertation offers important new insights into domain-specific perfectionism as it provides evidence for domain-crossing effects and identifies possible pathways (i.e., spillover processes, role-related conflicts between domains) that underlie these effects. These insights have further implications that need to be tested. One implication is that perfectionism might even affect domains in which one is not at all perfectionistic. For instance, work could be affected by perfectionism – even if one's work-related perfectionism is very low. Another implication could be that treating perfectionism in one domain might also help to reduce negative implications in other domains.

Domain-Specific Perfectionism Can Have Interindividual Effects

The final insight of this dissertation is that domain-specific perfectionism cannot only have intraindividual (domain-specific or domain-crossing) effects but interindividual effects as well. Although some theories and models (e.g., the Expanded Social Disconnection Model; Sherry et al., 2016) on perfectionism assume and theorize about interindividual effects of perfectionism, perfectionism is seldomly studied in an interpersonal context (Sherry et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). Therefore, Study 3 addressed this issue and explicitly proposed and tested interindividual effects of perfectionism.

Study 3 found that parenting perfectionism indirectly harms partner well-being and satisfaction via interpersonal conflicts. Besides, Study 1 showed that interpersonal experiences (i.e., criticism) can trigger perfectionistic concerns. According to these findings and in addition to investigating intraindividual effects of perfectionism, scholars should study perfectionism in interpersonal contexts from an interindividual perspective to ascertain interindividual effects on (Study 1) and of (Study 3) perfectionism.

In conclusion, the theoretical insights gained from the three dissertation studies can benefit research on perfectionism in general and research on perfectionism at work in particular. Specifically, taking a dynamic, process-oriented perspective, considering that perfectionism can both affect and be affected by work, differentiating between perfectionistic strivings and concerns, and researching domain-crossing effects as well as intra- and interindividual implications of perfectionism can broaden the understanding of perfectionism.

Practical Implications

In addition to their theoretical contributions, the three studies of this dissertation offer insights into perfectionism in employees that are relevant for practical action as well. First of all, perfectionism is commonly considered to be a personality characteristic that carries more advantages than disadvantages for employees and organizations. In selection interviews, for instance, applicants oftentimes state that their biggest weakness is perfectionism – a strategic response given that perfectionism's positive impact at work is supposed to outweigh its negative aspects. This view is also widespread among practitioners and organizational scholars, some of whom even advise that employees should strive for perfection in everything they do (see Baer & Shaw, 2017; Harari et al., 2018).

However, as the results of Harari et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis and Ocampo et al.'s (2020) review showed, this view should be handled with caution. According to their research, perfectionism can indeed have positive implications at work – but these benefits are far from

balancing or outweighing its potential drawbacks. The three studies of this dissertation

further support and refine this observation. In Study 1, daily perfectionistic strivings at work

were only related to the positive – and not to the negative – affective state at work. Similarly,

in Study 2, daily perfectionistic strivings at work were only related to the desirable – and not

to the undesirable – processes at work. On the contrary, daily perfectionistic concerns at work

were only related to the negative affective state at work in Study 1 and to the undesirable

processes at work in Study 2. In Study 2, perfectionistic concerns were even found to be

negatively related to the desirable process (i.e., planning at work). In Study 3, perfectionism

in the parenting domain was related to harmful processes for employees and their employed

partners.

        These findings have several implications for practical action. They show that

perfectionism in employees is neither overall beneficial nor overall detrimental. Accordingly,

it is inappropriate for practitioners or organizations to praise perfectionism at work and to

demand perfection from employees. Instead, both perfectionism dimensions should be

differentially considered and treated in practice. Our findings suggest that practical action

should be targeted at fostering perfectionistic strivings and their positive implications at work

and at impeding perfectionistic concerns and their negative implications at work. However,

this conclusion might be premature. To reliably delineate recommendations for practical

action, more research differentiating and simultaneously considering both perfectionism

dimensions and their implications at work is needed. Nevertheless, bearing this in mind, the

three studies have practical implications for organizations, supervisors, co-workers, and

employees themselves.

Practical Implications for Organizations

        First of all, there might be ways how organizations could reduce employees'

perfectionistic concerns and associated undesirable outcomes and processes at work (Study 1

and Study 2). Nowadays, many organizations set ever-increasing, exceedingly high performance standards for their employees (Mitchell et al., 2018). What is more, the attainment or miss of these standards is oftentimes tied to significant consequences for employees: If employees meet or exceed their organization's high performance expectations, they receive benefits such as raises or promotions. On the contrary, if employees fail to meet these expectations, they are more likely to be demoted or even terminated. These conditions create a perception of pressure for outstanding performance in employees, so-called *performance pressure* (Mitchell et al., 2018, 2019).

Daily experiences of performance pressure (Mitchell et al., 2019) at work could trigger employees' perceptions that they fall short of their organization's high performance standards (Mitchell et al., 2018; see Study 1). Similarly, a *perfectionistic climate* (i.e., "informal cues and goal structures aligned with the view that performances must be perfect and less than perfect performances are unacceptable"; Hill & Grugan, 2019, p. 263) in organizations might intensify undesirable processes related to perfectionistic concerns. Accordingly, organizations should refrain from setting lofty performance standards and from establishing a perfectionistic climate.

In addition, organizations could provide counseling services. These counseling services could aim at helping employees to deal with perfectionism-related issues both at work and at home. For instance, employees could learn how to conquer perfectionistic concerns and related self-defeating cognitions at work (e.g., self-blaming; Study 2) or could get advice on how to manage conflicts between their family and work life as well as interpersonal conflicts at work and at home (Study 3).

In the long term and as remarked by Ocampo et al. (2020), it will be important for organizations to design and implement strategies and interventions that can foster desirable implications of perfectionism at work and reduce or effectively manage its undesired

implications (see Study 1 and Study 2). Developing such evidence-based organizational strategies and interventions clearly is a central task for future research. However, the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 on the daily variability of perfectionism at work might prove helpful in this regard. Thanks to their malleability, personality states are likely more amenable to intervention than traits (Beckmann & Wood, 2020). Therefore, developing and implementing daily interventions at work that aim to change daily perfectionism and its implications might help to attain organizational goals and to shape trait perfectionism and its implications in the long run (Beckmann & Wood, 2020; Ocampo et al., 2020).

Practical Implications for Supervisors

Even though the role of supervisors was not explicitly researched in this dissertation, our results might also offer insights that are of practical relevance for supervisors. As the results of Study 1 showed, experiencing destructive criticism (i.e., "negative feedback that is inconsiderate in style and content that attributes poor performance to internal causes"; Raver et al., 2012, pp. 177-178) and time pressure at work can trigger employees' daily perfectionistic concerns which are related to enhanced negative affect. Accordingly, to prevent experiences of perfectionistic concerns and related negative affective experiences, supervisors should become more sensitive to how they provide negative feedback to their subordinates. That is, supervisors should not express criticism at work in a derogatory, disdainful manner. Rather, it could be better if supervisors express their criticism in a considerate tone without becoming personal (i.e., *constructive* criticism; Raver et al., 2012). Similarly, supervisors should set realistic deadlines to reduce employees' experiences of time pressure.

In this vein, to avoid or reduce subordinates' experiences of perfectionistic concerns and related negative implications at work (Study 1 and Study 2), it might also prove helpful if supervisors set realistic goals and performance standards instead of demanding perfection

from their subordinates. Communicating tolerance for some mistakes and encouraging to not

overinvest in perfecting work tasks instead of requiring flawless work might help in this

regard, too (Harari et al., 2018). To make it easier for subordinates high in parenting

perfectionism to juggle their roles as both an employee and a parent and to avoid or reduce

conflicts between these two roles (Study 3), supervisors might communicate tolerance

regarding the handling of family affairs while being at work (e.g., granting the opportunity to

answer children's phone calls or to interrupt work in case of urgent family matters). Showing

family supportive supervisor behaviors (Hammer et al., 2013) such as emotional or

instrumental support regarding employees' family roles might also be of help.

Practical Implications for Co-Workers

The findings of this dissertation have implications for co-workers as well. Employees

might regularly evaluate each other's performance, for instance, when working on

interdependent or group work tasks. If these evaluations are negative because employees fail

on specific tasks or do not perform as well as they are expected, co-workers might express

negative feedback regarding these employees' deficient performance. Again, based on the

findings of Study 1 and as recommended in the practical implications for supervisors, co-

workers should appropriately express their criticism and avoid destructive criticism (Raver et

al., 2012) to prevent employees' experiences of perfectionistic concerns and related negative

affective experiences.

Another implication refers to social learning and upward comparison processes

among employees. According to Flett et al. (2002), perfectionism can develop via social

learning processes. Co-workers as peers might act as role models for employees.

Accordingly, if their co-workers strive for perfection (be it at work or parenting), employees

might adopt this ideal and develop perfectionistic tendencies as well. Similarly, employees

might compare themselves with more successful co-workers who appear to be perfect

employees or parents. To reach their level of success, employees might decide to aim at perfection more strongly. If employees become aware of the drawbacks that striving for perfection entails, social pressures to be perfect at work or in parenting could be decreased. Moreover, to avoid creating social pressure to reach for perfection, co-workers should refrain from perfectionistic self-presentation (i.e., attempts to create an image of perfection in public, for instance by proclaiming and displaying one's perfection or by concealing one's imperfections; Hewitt et al., 2003).

Lastly, co-workers could help employees to deal with experiences of perfectionistic concerns at work (Study 1 and Study 2) and with perfectionism-related conflicts between family and work life (Study 3). When employees feel that they cannot meet their high standards at work or that they fall short of their role as an employee, co-workers could offer instrumental support to help with work tasks or could stress that it is not the aim of a group work task to attain perfection. Furthermore, when employees experience perfectionism-related family-work conflicts, co-workers could show compassion and offer emotional support.

Practical Implications for Employees

Finally, the results of this dissertation can offer a starting point for employees themselves to handle their perfectionism. Experiencing perfectionistic concerns should be per se an unpleasant experience. Furthermore, as our results showed, daily perfectionistic concerns at work are related to enhanced negative affect (Study 1) and feelings of shame and guilt via self-blaming at work (Study 2). Therefore, at best, experiencing perfectionistic concerns in daily work should be prevented. However, because it is unlikely to completely avoid perfectionistic concerns at work, employees could find ways how to handle experiences of falling short of their perfectionistic standards. One option to lessen their concerns could be to distance themselves from the situation they are currently in or to distract themselves, for

instance by taking a break to go for a walk or to talk to colleagues about non-work topics (Ocampo et al., 2020).

Another option how employees could lessen their concerns that they do not live up to their high standards as an employee (Study 1 and Study 2) or as a parent (Study 3) and related self-defeating cognitions and emotions could be to enhance their self-compassion (see Barnard & Curry, 2011, for an overview of self-compassion interventions). Self-compassion comprises a kind and understanding attitude toward oneself when experiencing failure (Neff, 2003). Thus, when employees feel that they fall short of their standards, they could learn to accept that imperfection is part of human nature and to be less self-critical. Self-compassion could also help to deal with experiences of criticism at work (Study 1).

Employees could also take therapeutic offers to get to the root of the problem, that is, decrease their perfectionism through psychological interventions (see Suh et al., 2019). Besides, measures of cognitive-behavioral therapy could help to mitigate negative perfectionism-related implications. For instance, employees could learn how to overcome their overprotective parenting tendencies and adopt more adaptive parenting practices or learn how to resolve interpersonal conflicts (Study 3; Flett et al., 2002; Suh et al., 2019). Furthermore, measures of cognitive-behavioral therapy could help employees to replace their self-defeating cognitions (i.e., self-blaming, Study 2) with more adaptive self-related cognitions.

Final Note on Practical Implications

In conclusion, there are several ways how individuals might handle perfectionism and its negative implications. Regarding the work context, these individual practical recommendations apply to supervisors, co-workers, and employees themselves. However, because individuals are embedded in larger organizational and societal contexts, perfectionism is not only an individual responsibility: As long as perfection is

organizationally and societally demanded, appreciated, and rewarded (see Harari et al., 2018), more and more individuals will strive for perfection and perfectionism will continue to increase over time (Curran & Hill, 2019). To stop this presumably harmful trend, broader societal changes would be needed. Raising societal awareness regarding perfectionism's drawbacks would be a critical first step in this regard.

Strengths and Limitations

In the following section, I will discuss some strengths as well as limitations of the three dissertation studies. First, I will begin by highlighting the strengths of the three studies. That is, I will elaborate on the benefits of integrating theoretical approaches stemming from other literatures into perfectionism research and on the strong study designs of the three studies. Next, I will discuss the strengths and limitations of the studies in terms of their samples and the assessment of study variables. Finally, I will turn to issues of temporal precedence and causation.

Integrating Theoretical Approaches from Other Literatures into Perfectionism Research

In all three studies of this dissertation, we did not solely draw on theoretical approaches and empirical evidence from the perfectionism literature. Instead, we integrated theoretical approaches from other literatures into perfectionism research to develop our conceptual models and to advance knowledge on domain-specific perfectionism. That is, in Study 1 and Study 2, we draw on the study of personality dynamics (specifically, on whole trait theory; Fleeson, 2001) originating from personality psychology (see Kuper et al., 2021) to substantiate our assumption that perfectionism shows daily fluctuations at work. In Study 3, we integrated theoretical approaches from the family-work literature (i.e., the conflict perspective; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; the principle of resource drain; Edwards & Rothbard, 2000) with a theoretical model from perfectionism research (i.e., the Expanded Social Disconnection Model; Sherry et al., 2016) to develop a conceptual model that

comprehensively considers intraindividual, interindividual, and domain-crossing effects of parenting perfectionism.

The findings of all three studies highlight the worth of integrating other literatures into perfectionism research to gain a better understanding of perfectionism, associated processes, and implications. As Smith et al. (2022) observed, many perfectionism studies lack theoretical rigor in that their hypotheses are not well-grounded in theory. This problem could be tackled by further integrating theoretical approaches from perfectionism research with those from other literatures to build well-reasoned conceptual models in the future. In addition, this approach is beneficial in that it allows for (theoretical) contributions that go beyond perfectionism research. For instance, our three studies contributed not only to the perfectionism literature but also to the literature on personality dynamics at work (Study 1 and Study 2) and the family-work literature (Study 3).

Study Designs

Their respective study designs are another strength of all three studies of this dissertation. As most perfectionism studies apply cross-sectional designs, scholars repeatedly bemoaned that perfectionism research lacks methodological rigor and demanded the application of more sophisticated study designs (e.g., diary studies, multi-wave designs; Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). This dissertation responds to these claims in that all three studies go beyond cross-sectional research and apply more intensive study designs. More precisely, Study 1 and Study 2 applied two-week daily diary designs to study daily within-person fluctuations in perfectionism and their antecedents and implications at work. Study 3 made use of multi-source panel survey data collected at three measurement points over several years to study perfectionism in employed couples.

In addition, the designs of the three studies complement each other. That is, to replicate the finding on meaningful daily fluctuations in work-related perfectionism gained

from Study 1, Study 2 made use of a daily diary design as well. Study 1 and Study 3 both provide evidence for domain-crossing effects of domain-specific perfectionism. However, Study 3 adds to Study 1's finding on the domain-crossing effect from the work to the home domain as it shows that the domain-crossing effect can take the opposite direction as well (i.e., from the home to the work domain). Besides, Study 1 and Study 3 show that finding domain-crossing effects of perfectionism is not dependent on the use of a specific study design.

Samples

In terms of their samples, all three studies sampled employed adults. In perfectionism research, this is not a matter of course but rather a distinguishing feature of this dissertation as most research studies perfectionism in samples of pupils, students, people with clinical problems, or athletes (Stoeber & Damian, 2016). Therefore, all three studies contribute to the under-researched area of perfectionism in employees (Stoeber, 2018b) and expand knowledge on perfectionism in this specific group of people. Moreover, all three studies included employees working in various jobs and industries. Consequently, the findings of this dissertation are not bound to employees working in specific occupations (e.g., nurses, Chang, 2012; academics, Flaxman et al., 2012; schoolteachers, Horan et al., 2021; musicians, Kobori et al., 2011) as results of some prior studies are. Besides, the samples of all three studies were almost gender-balanced, with 62.5%, 53.8%, and 52.1% of employed participants being female in Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3, respectively. This enhances the representativeness of the three samples compared to samples of prior perfectionism research that mostly consist of more women than men (Smith et al., 2022).

Despite these strengths, the samples of the three studies also share some limitations. That is, whereas Study 3 investigated the implications of perfectionism in total in 1,082 employees, the sample sizes of Study 1 ($N = 72$) and Study 2 ($N = 78$) were comparatively

small. However, both studies applied a multilevel approach to research perfectionism at work and investigated exclusively its relationships at the day level (i.e., Level 1). Accordingly, the person-level (i.e., Level 2) sample sizes are less meaningful than the day-level sample sizes which were quite informative (Study 1: $n = 461$ days; Study 2: $n = 514$ days; see Arend & Schäfer, 2019). Nevertheless, when examining relationships at the person level or cross-level interaction effects, bigger sample sizes might be needed. Another limitation refers to the generalizability of our findings. Participants in Study 1 and Study 2 were very well educated, with 73.6% and 66.6% of participants holding a university degree, respectively. Therefore, the findings of our studies might not be generalizable to less educated samples.[19] Furthermore, only employees who were able to access the online surveys (e.g., via computer or smartphone) could participate in Study 1 and Study 2 which excluded employees without regular access to the internet. This might especially apply to Study 2, in which it was necessary to complete one of the daily online surveys during work. Finally, all three studies sampled employees from Germany, which is a western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic (i.e., *WEIRD*, Henrich et al., 2010) society. Consequently, our findings might not apply to employees living and working in non-WEIRD societies. Because perfectionism is a global phenomenon (Flett & Hewitt, 2020), studying perfectionism in employees from various societies and conducting cross-cultural research on perfectionism could provide interesting new insights (Smith et al., 2022). For instance, scholars could aim to replicate the findings of this dissertation in non-WEIRD societies.

Assessment of Study Variables

There are also strengths and limitations concerning the assessment of the study variables, especially perfectionism, that need to be discussed. Perfectionism is a

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[19] This limitation might apply to a lesser degree to the sample of Study 3, in which the majority of participants (i.e., 49.2%) did not hold a university degree but had finished vocational training or had graduated from a vocational school.

multidimensional, domain-specific construct (Stoeber, 2018b). Nevertheless, many

perfectionism studies disregard these conceptual characteristics and study, for instance, only

perfectionistic concerns while neglecting perfectionistic strivings or assess perfectionism

with global, domain-unspecific measures that do not take its domain-specificity into account

(Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018b). In Study 1 and Study 2 of this

dissertation, we considered perfectionism's multidimensionality and explicitly distinguished

and simultaneously examined the two higher-order dimensions of perfectionistic strivings and

perfectionistic concerns. The results of both studies corroborate the importance of

considering perfectionism's multidimensionality in future studies. In Study 3, parenting

perfectionism was unfortunately assessed with an overall measure; thus, we could not

differentiate between perfectionistic strivings and concerns and disentangle their unique

effects. However, we considered perfectionism's domain-specificity in all three studies. That

is, we assessed perfectionism in relation to work in Study 1 and Study 2; in Study 3,

perfectionism was assessed with respect to parenting. Another distinguishing feature of our

research is that we met calls to study daily fluctuations in perfectionism, their antecedents,

and implications from a within-person perspective (Boone et al., 2012a; Ocampo et al.,

2020). Accordingly, we repeatedly assessed perfectionism in Study 1 and Study 2 on a daily

basis. Thereby, we were able to provide a quite new, dynamic view on perfectionism that

complements the traditional trait view.

One limitation that largely applies to all three studies is the use of self-report data.

Because almost all study variables were assessed via self-reports, the found relationships

might be inflated by common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). The use of self-reports to

assess the study variables fitted the constructs under study very well (e.g., employees'

experiences and affective states in Study 1, processes involving introspection in Study 2,

mood and satisfaction in Study 3). Nevertheless, future research might benefit from assessing

multi-source data (e.g., via informant reports or observer ratings) and from studying more objective, observable variables (e.g., physiological measures, career decisions; Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). Another limitation refers to the nature of the assessments in all three studies. Albeit all three studies went beyond single-timepoint assessments, only the outcome variables in Study 1 and Study 2 were assessed with momentary assessments. Consequently, the assessments of the other study variables might be subject to retrospective biases (C. D. Fisher & To, 2012). However, in Study 1 and Study 2, we assessed all study variables with respect to specific, suitable time frames, thereby reducing retrospective biases. Nevertheless, if suitable for the constructs under study and practicable, future research could use momentary assessments to reduce retrospective biases.

Temporal Precedence and Causation

In all three studies of this dissertation, we proposed and tested mediating effects. To establish a temporal sequence in which the predictor variables affect the mediator variables which, in turn, affect the outcome variables, it is important to temporally separate the assessments of all three kinds of variables when testing mediation (Aguinis et al., 2017). For reasons of practicability, we did not fully separate these assessments in our studies. This issue applies to all three studies but to a varying degree: In Study 3, only parenting perfectionism (the predictor) and overprotection (a mediator) were assessed concurrently. In Study 2, daily work-related perfectionism (the predictor) and planning (a mediator) as well as procrastinating, self-blaming (mediators), and the outcome variables were assessed concurrently. In Study 1, all variables but the affective states at bedtime were assessed concurrently. In Study 1 and Study 2, we took measures to allay concerns regarding these concurrent assessments. To establish a temporal order, we used instructions referring to different time frames when assessing the respective variables (C. D. Fisher & To, 2012). We also controlled for the baseline levels of the outcome variables and predicted intra-individual

changes in the outcomes in both studies (A. S. Gabriel et al., 2019). However, if practicable, future research should fully temporally separate the assessment of predictor, mediator, and outcome variables when testing mediation.

What's more, all three studies used correlational designs and are, thus, unable to address causation. To draw causal conclusions, experimental designs would be needed. Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation could be experimentally replicated. Concerning Study 1, the experience of time pressure or criticism during work could be manipulated (see for example Wirth & Carbon, 2017) to induce state perfectionism. State perfectionism in terms of perfectionistic strivings and concerns could also be induced via specific instructions (see Boone et al., 2012b; Shafran et al., 2006). Concerning Study 2, participants' planning, procrastinating, and self-blaming while working on tasks could then be assessed. However, because of their undesirable implications, state perfectionistic concerns cannot be induced in a field experiment. If strictly adhering to ethical standards and debriefing participants in detail, both studies could be replicated in lab experiments. Furthermore, experimental research could be used to investigate whether and how state perfectionistic concerns can be reduced. Knowledge gained from these experiments can then be used to design interventions that aim to decrease state perfectionistic concerns and associated undesirable implications at work.

Directions for Future Research

In the following section, I will build on the findings of the three studies to discuss open research questions and avenues for future research that can broaden the understanding of perfectionism. Specifically, I will expound on the examination of daily perfectionism and long-term changes in employees' perfectionism. Next, I will discuss the need to identify moderators, develop perfectionism interventions for employees, and study perfectionism in an interpersonal context. Finally, I will elaborate on how methodological advancements can

help to develop perfectionism research further.

Examining Daily Perfectionism More Closely

One fruitful avenue for future research results directly from the finding of Study 1 and Study 2 that work-related perfectionism shows natural daily within-person fluctuations and that, consequently, domain-specific perfectionism can also be conceptualized and studied as a personality state. Up to now, perfectionism is largely conceptualized and studied as a personality trait. Therefore, the daily view on perfectionism offers a new direction for perfectionism research. To begin with, daily perfectionism in a specific domain, its antecedents, and implications should be further examined. Study 1 and Study 2 focused on daily perfectionism in the work domain, its at-work antecedents (i.e., experiences of time pressure and criticism), and implications for employees' daily cognitions and behaviors at work, their self-related perceptions and emotions, and their affective well-being.

On the one hand, future research should broaden the scope of daily perfectionism at work. For instance, other at-work antecedents in the task, social, or organizational area (see Tett & Burnett, 2003) that trigger perfectionism could be investigated. In this regard and building on the results of Study 1 and Study 2, it would be crucial to identify situational cues at work that trigger only perfectionistic strivings and related desirable processes but not perfectionistic concerns. Moreover, other meaningful implications of daily perfectionism at work and related processes should be studied, such as implications for daily performance or interpersonal processes driven by daily work-related perfectionism. On the other hand, future research should examine whether the finding on perfectionism's daily variability applies to other kinds of domain-specific perfectionism (e.g., parenting perfectionism) as well. As with daily work-related perfectionism, situational cues that trigger, for instance, daily parenting perfectionism and its implications could be investigated.

Related open research questions are whether people differ in the extent to which their

perfectionism fluctuates from day to day (see Debusscher et al., 2016b) and how daily and trait perfectionism relate to each other (see Debusscher et al., 2016a; Judge et al., 2014; Minbashian et al., 2010). In Study 1, we found domain-crossing effects of daily domain-specific perfectionism. Extending this finding, it would be interesting to investigate whether the antecedents of daily perfectionism are domain-specific or whether they can also be domain-crossing (e.g., whether daily experiences at home can trigger employees' daily perfectionism at work and vice versa).

Long-Term Changes in Employees' Perfectionism

The dynamic view that we took in Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation referred to daily fluctuations and, thus, to short-term variability in perfectionism. However, a dynamic view on perfectionism can also refer to long-term changes (e.g., changes over the lifespan) in perfectionism over time (Beckmann & Wood, 2020). To date, there is unfortunately very little known about how perfectionism develops or changes across the lifespan and on factors that drive these long-term dynamics (Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). Because previous studies focused on the development and changes in perfectionism and their antecedents during childhood and adolescence (e.g., Damian et al., 2013), it is unclear whether and how perfectionism develops during adulthood. Moreover, as work is a central aspect of adulthood, work-related aspects might relate to changes in perfectionism during adulthood.

Accordingly, future research should study long-term changes in employees' perfectionism and whether these changes are driven by work-related factors. In this regard, interesting research questions could be whether newcomers' perfectionism increases over time due to working in a perfectionistic climate (Hill & Grugan, 2019), whether employees' perfectionism adjusts to their leader's or co-workers' perfectionism due to social learning processes, or whether perfectionism changes across different career stages (e.g., student, newcomer, professional, retiree), for instance (see Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022).

Furthermore, building on work by Woods et al. (2013, 2019) on the long-term reciprocal relationships between personality and work, it could be insightful to study how perfectionism and work-related aspects affect each other. Similarly, future research could also examine the development of and long-term changes in employees' parenting perfectionism and their causes (e.g., whether parenting perfectionism decreases with children's age or an increasing number of children).

Identifying Moderators

As the results of the three studies show and in line with previous research, perfectionism in employees can have desirable as well as undesirable implications. Accordingly, it would be worthwhile to study moderating variables (e.g., individual characteristics, job characteristics, organizational characteristics) that intensify perfectionism-related desirable processes and moderating variables that buffer perfectionism-related undesirable processes (Ocampo et al., 2020; Stoeber, 2018b). Having knowledge of such moderators can prove helpful for taking practical action. With respect to the findings of Study 1, future research could identify factors that moderate the relationships between at-work antecedents and daily work-related perfectionism (see Koopmann et al., 2016), specifically such factors that weaken the criticism-perfectionistic concerns relationship. In this regard, it would be also interesting to know whether there are specific conditions (e.g., high vs. low job autonomy) under which experiencing time pressure triggers only perfectionistic strivings or concerns at work. With respect to the findings of Study 2, scholars should search for moderators that strengthen the relationship between daily perfectionistic strivings and planning at work and that weaken the relationship between daily perfectionistic concerns and self-blaming at work (e.g., high trait self-efficacy). With respect to the findings of Study 3, future research should identify moderators that buffer the harmful processes driven by parenting perfectionism. For instance, social support at home could weaken the relationship

between overprotection and co-parenting conflicts.

Developing, Implementing, and Evaluating Perfectionism Interventions for Employees

Given their possible negative implications found in Study 1 and Study 2 of this dissertation and previous studies, measures should be taken to lessen employees' work-related perfectionistic concerns. A review and meta-analysis by Suh et al. (2019) showed that there are interventions that successfully reduce perfectionism and associated problems (e.g., anxiety and depression symptoms) in clinical (i.e., individuals with a diagnosis) and subclinical (i.e., individuals with elevated perfectionism levels) samples. However, it remains unclear whether these interventions are readily transferable to employees, leading Ocampo et al. (2020) to call for research on interventions that specifically target perfectionism in employees. Hence, there is a need for future research to develop targeted, evidence-based interventions that can be implemented in organizational settings. Importantly, these interventions have to be empirically evaluated and gradually adjusted.

Perfectionism interventions are largely based on cognitive-behavioral approaches (Suh et al., 2019). Therefore, using measures of cognitive-behavioral therapy and adapting them to the work context could be a good starting point. The results of Study 2 show that perfectionism is associated with specific cognitions and behaviors at work (i.e., planning, procrastinating, self-blaming). These perfectionism-specific cognitions and behaviors could be explicitly targeted. For instance, measures of cognitive-behavioral therapy could help to replace self-defeating cognitions and behaviors at work with more adaptive ones. As mentioned, targeting variables that intensify or buffer undesirable perfectionism-related processes at work via interventions would also be helpful. Furthermore, as our results on the daily variability of perfectionism at work (Study 1 and Study 2) suggest, perfectionism interventions at work could be implemented on a daily basis. Thus, for instance, rather short daily interventions delivered via online modalities (Suh et al., 2019) could be designed and

implemented in organizational practice to shape work-related perfectionism, reduce its undesirable implications, and attain organizational goals in the short and long run (Beckmann & Wood, 2020).

Perfectionism in an Interpersonal Context

Another fruitful avenue for future research would be to study perfectionism in an interpersonal context. Several theories and models on perfectionism consider it in an interpersonal context – however, perfectionism is seldomly studied in an interpersonal context (Sherry et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b). There might be at least three ways to consider perfectionism in an interpersonal context. First, scholars could study the interindividual effects of perfectionism; Study 1 and Study 3 provided evidence for such effects. That is, Study 1 showed that interpersonal experiences (i.e., experiencing criticism at work) can trigger experiences of work-related perfectionistic concerns. Study 3 found that parenting perfectionism can impair intimate partners' well-being and satisfaction via interpersonal conflicts. Future research should further investigate the effects that individuals' perfectionism can have on other people. For instance, work-related perfectionism could drive negative social interactions at work that harm work relationships and thereby co-workers or customers.

Second, Hewitt and Flett's (1991) two perfectionism dimensions of socially prescribed (i.e., beliefs that others expect oneself to be perfect) and other-oriented perfectionism (i.e., demanding perfection in others) explicitly incorporate other people. Again, however, both dimensions are seldomly studied in an interpersonal context (Smith et al., 2022). Thus, it would be interesting to examine whether individuals who experience socially prescribed perfectionism are put under pressure to accomplish perfection by significant others who are high in other-oriented perfectionism or whether an individual's other-oriented perfectionism can change others' perfectionism levels.

Third, perfectionistic self-presentation (Hewitt et al., 2003) is another aspect that represents an interpersonal expression of perfectionism (Stoeber, 2018a). Perfectionistic self-presentation refers to attempts to create an image of perfection in public, for instance by proclaiming and displaying one's perfection or by concealing one's imperfections (Hewitt et al., 2003). Again, perfectionistic self-presentation could be examined in an interpersonal context. To illustrate, it could be investigated how other employees' self-presentation of being a perfect parent affects employed parents or how candidates' perfectionistic self-presentation during selection processes shapes employers' impressions of the candidates.

Beyond Self-Reported Perfectionism and Its Intraindividual, Self-Reported Implications

The vast majority of perfectionism research assesses perfectionism via self-reports and studies intraindividual, self-reported implications of perfectionism (Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022). As discussed in the section on Strengths and Limitations, the three studies of this dissertation are not an exception to this rule as perfectionism and the other study variables were almost exclusively assessed via self-reports. Furthermore, except for Study 3 which also examined interindividual effects of perfectionism, the studies strongly focused on intraindividual, self-reported implications of perfectionism. Undoubtedly, self-reports are invaluable for investigating perfectionism-related processes that focus on individuals' experiences, perceptions, thoughts, emotions, or behaviors (Stoeber, 2018b). However, going beyond self-reports and intraindividual implications would clearly help to broaden the understanding of perfectionism.

Toward this aim, scholars should study more objective, observable perfectionism-related implications, such as promotions, actual turnover, broken interpersonal relationships, or physiological measures to assess stress, health, and well-being. These implications cannot only be studied in perfectionistic individuals themselves, but also in their significant others. Moreover, future research could apply informant reports to assess perfectionism or observer

ratings to assess behavioral manifestations of perfectionism. In addition, perfectionism could also be assessed via indirect (e.g., projective or implicit) measures (see Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b).

Using Diverse and More Rigorous Study Designs

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the need to use diverse and more rigorous study designs to study perfectionism. As mentioned, most studies on perfectionism at work (see Harari et al., 2018; Ocampo et al., 2020) and on perfectionism in general (see Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b) apply cross-sectional designs that do not allow for conclusions regarding temporal precedence (and thus, for properly testing mediation) and causation. All three studies of this dissertation made progress in this regard as they applied a diary (Study 1 and Study 2) and a multi-wave panel design (Study 3), respectively. However, the three studies are still limited with respect to temporal and causal aspects in that they test mediating processes without completely separating the assessments of the study variables (see the section on Strengths and Limitations) and in that all designs are correlational.

In line with other scholars (see Ocampo et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2022; Stoeber, 2018b), I think that the understanding of perfectionism and its implications (at work) could be very much improved by applying various and more rigorous study designs, such as longitudinal studies, lab or field experiments, or qualitative approaches. For instance, scholars could apply a longitudinal design to examine the long-term reciprocal relationships between perfectionism and work-related aspects or randomized, controlled field experiments to test whether perfectionism interventions at work have the intended effects or not. In addition, qualitative approaches can help to gain a deeper understanding of how employees experience their own perfectionism and whether they deem it to be helpful or burdening.

Concluding Thoughts on the Pursuit of Perfection

With this dissertation, I set out to provide a better understanding of perfectionism in

employees. The three empirical studies showed that perfectionism is an important personality characteristic in employees that has meaningful implications for their (everyday) lives. In this last subchapter, I want to take the opportunity to reflect on perfection and the supposed benefits of pursuing perfection. As discussed, perfection is a widespread goal that is organizationally and societally demanded, appreciated, and rewarded (see Burns, 1980; Harari et al., 2018). Indeed, some scholars even claim that one should strive for perfection anytime: For instance, Baer and Shaw (2017) state that "pursuing perfection is not only an obligation to our community and constituents, it is also an obligation to us" and advise other scholars that a mindset of perfection "should influence our day-to-day and perhaps even moment-to-moment activities" (p. 1215).

However, as the findings of this dissertation and previous research showed, reaching for perfection can entail a variety of undesirable consequences. Moreover, as discussed in the opening of this dissertation, attaining perfection might even contradict human nature, making perfection an impossible, undesirable goal (Pacht, 1984). Therefore, a crucial question arises: Is it really the pursuit of *perfection* that should be encouraged and promoted? In earlier writings on perfectionism, scholars stressed that it is the unremitting, compulsive pursuit of impossible goals rather than the striving for very high standards that is problematic (Burns, 1980; Frost et al., 1990). In line with this notion, Gaudreau (2019) and his colleagues (2022) recently highlighted the importance of distinguishing the pursuit of *perfection* from the pursuit of *excellence*. According to their work, perfection and excellence are two related but distinct goals. Consequently, it is important to distinguish the pursuit of perfection which entails a "tendency to aim and strive toward idealized, flawless, and excessively high standards in a relentless manner" from the pursuit of excellence (i.e., *excellencism*, entailing a "tendency to aim and strive toward very high yet attainable standards in an effortful, engaged, and determined yet flexible manner"; Gaudreau, 2019, p. 200).

Gaudreau et al.'s (2019, 2022) work has the potential to alter the understanding of perfectionism, more precisely, that of perfectionistic strivings. Whereas perfectionistic concerns are widely deemed to be maladaptive, the (mal-)adaptiveness of perfectionistic strivings is passionately debated. Following Gaudreau et al.'s (2019, 2022) theoretical deliberations and empirical results, the missing separation of the pursuit of perfection from the pursuit of excellence masks the maladaptiveness of perfectionistic strivings and overestimates their positive implications. Indeed, when simultaneously investigating both constructs, Gaudreau et al. (2022) showed that perfectionistic strivings are not associated with additional benefits (e.g., life satisfaction) or reduced harms (e.g., depression) over and above excellencism. Moreover, students striving for perfection achieved worse grades than students striving for excellence. In fact, perfectionistic strivings and excellencism were related to a downward and an upward spiral of academic development, respectively. Therefore, Gaudreau et al. (2022) concluded that perfectionistic strivings are either unneeded or harmful.

Clearly, future research that separates the striving for perfection from the striving for excellence is needed. However, if receiving further support, this distinction could not only alter the understanding of perfectionistic strivings and their (mal-)adaptiveness but would have far-reaching practical implications as well. That is, if it is the pursuit of excellence that comes along with desirable consequences and not the pursuit of perfection, then the pursuit of excellence should be organizationally and societally promoted, and not the pursuit of perfection (Gaudreau et al., 2022). In the future, thus, it might be that scholars will advise humankind to strive for *excellence* anytime – only time will tell.

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