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RESEARCH ARTICLE

It's got to be perfect? Differentiating the unique daily relationships of perfectionism and excellencism with employee effort, performance and fatigue

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Abstract

Employees are increasingly striving for perfection at work. Commonly deemed to be associated with more advantages than disadvantages for employees and organizations, this perfectionism is oftentimes societally and organizationally demanded, appreciated or rewarded. To date, however, research findings on this topic are inconclusive. Taking new theoretical developments in perfectionism research into account, we propose that the current view that perfectionism is an adaptive pursuit at work is probably distorted. Building on the recently developed *Model of Excellencism and Perfectionism* and using a daily diary design ($N = 127$ participants providing $n = 1018$ days of data), we examined how excellencism and perfectionism relate to employee effort, performance and well-being in daily work. As expected, results of multilevel path modelling showed that daily excellencism relates positively to both effort intensity and persistence and, via effort, to in-role performance. Unexpectedly, effort and, thus, excellencism, were unrelated to fatigue. Daily perfectionism did not show unique relationships over and above the respective relationships of daily excellencism. Accordingly, contrasted with excellencism, perfectionism seems to be an unneeded pursuit at work. As we discuss, the findings of our study are of both theoretical and practical criticality.

KEYWORDS

effort, excellencism, goals, perfectionism

Practitioner points

- Perfectionism at work is less adaptive than commonly assumed: supposed beneficial effects are likely driven by excellencism.
- When contrasted with excellencism, perfectionism is unneeded for employee effort and in-role performance in everyday work.

Pursuing perfection is not only an obligation to our community and constituents, it is also an obligation to us. … The mindsets of pride and perfection should influence our day-to-day and perhaps even moment-to-moment activities.

(Baer & Shaw, 2017, p. 1215)

Around the world, people strive for perfection (Flett & Hewitt, 2020). Over the last decades, the pursuit of perfection has linearly increased (Curran & Hill, 2019), a trend that is likely to continue. Especially at work, perfection is a widespread goal (Stoeber & Damian, 2016; Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009) and striving for perfection is oftentimes societally and organizationally demanded, appreciated or rewarded because it is commonly deemed to be associated with more advantages than disadvantages for employees and organizations (Baer & Shaw, 2017; Burns, 1980; Harari et al., 2018). Research findings to date, however, are inconclusive regarding the desirability of perfectionism at work. That is, Harari et al. (2018) concluded in their meta-analysis that 'in total, perfectionism is likely not constructive at work' (p. 1137). In contrast, Ocampo et al. (2020) agreed with Baer and Shaw (2017) and highlighted beneficial effects of perfectionism at work in their later review.

Given the prevalence and impact of perfectionism at work, this lack of a coherent understanding and the discrepancy between commonly held assumptions and research findings on this topic is unfortunate. In our study, we therefore examined whether this lack of coherence can be resolved by taking recent theoretical developments in perfectionism research into account and applying them to organizational research. To date, research on perfectionism at work has been largely based on the *two-factor model of perfectionism* (Frost et al., 1993; Stoeber, 2018a; Stoeber & Otto, 2006). In this model, two perfectionism dimensions are distinguished, mostly labelled as *perfectionistic strivings* (i.e., striving for flawlessness and having exceedingly high performance standards) and *perfectionistic concerns* (i.e., feeling that one falls short of these standards). While there is large consensus regarding the maladaptive nature of perfectionistic concerns, the (mal-)adaptiveness of perfectionistic strivings at work and in other life domains is still debated (Stoeber, 2018b).

According to the recently developed *Model of Excellencism and Perfectionism* (MEP; Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022), the inconsistent findings for perfectionistic strivings might arise due to the missing separation of the striving for *perfection* (i.e., "idealized, flawless, and excessively high standards") from the striving for *excellence* (i.e., 'very high yet attainable standards'; Gaudreau, 2019, p. 200). For instance, excellencism could drive relationships of perfectionism[1] with desirable outcomes at work or relationships of perfectionism to undesirable outcomes at work could be masked. For that reason, our study aimed to provide a refined understanding of perfectionism at work by answering the question if it is really perfection that employees should strive for in their day-to-day activities at work (Baer & Shaw, 2017). Correspondingly, based on the MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022), we investigated how perfectionism and excellencism relate to employee performance (i.e., in-role performance) and well-being (i.e., fatigue) in their daily work. Drawing on goal setting theory (Locke & Latham, 2002), we examined invested effort at work as a crucial mediating variable

[1]Perfectionism as conceptualized in the MEP is equivalent to perfectionistic strivings as conceptualized in the two-factor model of perfectionism. Because our study is based on the MEP, we use the term "perfectionism" throughout the manuscript.

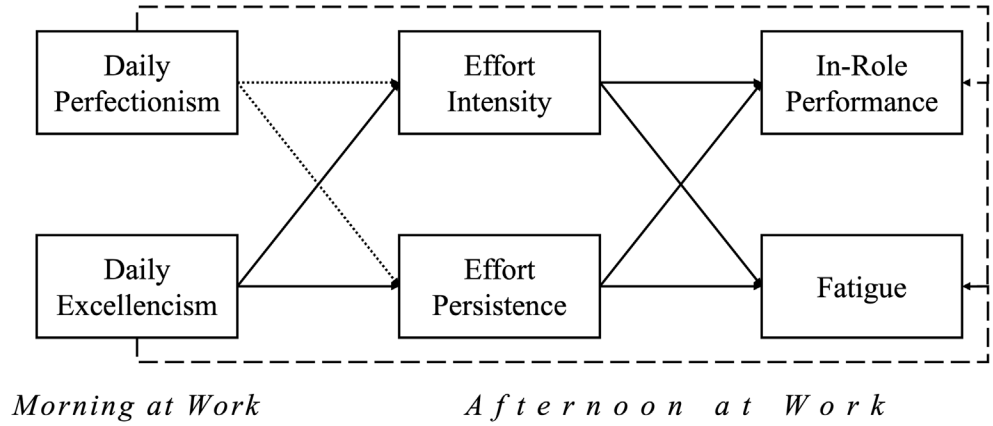

FIGURE 1 Conceptual model. Solid lines indicate hypothesized paths. Dotted lines indicate paths referring to research questions. Dashed lines indicate additional paths specified in the model. This figure does not include morning fatigue and the respective autoregressive path.

in these relationships (see Figure 1 for the research model). In our study, we did not investigate general (i.e., domain-unspecific) but work-related (i.e., domain-specific) perfectionism (see Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009) and excellencism. We also took a rather new, dynamic approach to work-related perfectionism (see Mohr et al., 2022, 2023) and excellencism that focuses on their daily relationships with effort, in-role performance, and fatigue.

The findings of our study are of both theoretical and practical criticality. Most importantly, finding that relationships between perfectionism and relevant outcomes at work are confounded by excellencism would constitute a critical step towards a more thorough understanding of perfectionism and its implications at work. As the introductory quote illustrates, the view that perfectionism's positive aspects outweigh its negative aspects at work is not only widespread among employees but also among practitioners and organizational scholars as well (Baer & Shaw, 2017; Harari et al., 2018). Finding that perfectionism is unneeded or even harmful at work considering excellencism could fundamentally change the answer to the question of perfectionism's (mal-)adaptiveness at work. In the future, it might be excellencism and not perfectionism that should be organizationally and societally encouraged and promoted (Gaudreau et al., 2022). Moreover, up to now, the MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022) has only been tested in settings outside the work context (e.g., university, sports). Because perfectionism is domain-specific and especially prevalent at work (Stoeber & Damian, 2016; Stoeber & Stoeber, 2009), testing the model among employees with respect to work-relevant outcomes is crucial. Finally, we enrich the literature on work effort by broadening the scope of person-focused antecedents (i.e., perfectionism and excellencism) of effort expenditure at work (Van Iddekinge et al., 2023).

Differentiating perfectionism from excellencism

According to the MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022), perfection and excellence are two related but distinct goals that can be described and differentiated in terms of goal setting (i.e., forming a goal) and goal striving (i.e., trying to reach this goal by regulating affect, attention, effort and behaviour; see Kanfer et al., 2017). Regarding goal setting, perfection refers to goals that are idealized, excessively high, rigid and entail flawlessness, whereas excellence refers to goals that are very high but flexible and attainable. Regarding goal striving, people who strive towards perfection do so in a relentless manner, whereas people who strive towards excellence do so in an effortful, engaged and determined but also a flexible manner (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022). Thus, the goals of perfection and excellence differ with respect to both their difficulty and nature and with respect to

the intensity and way they are pursued. As mentioned, the goals of perfection and excellence are not independent from each other. More precisely, excellence can be viewed as an unplanned 'stopover' on the way to perfection. That is, people who aim at excellence (i.e., excellence strivers) will be satisfied and end their journey when reaching their goal (i.e., excellence), whereas people who aim at perfection (i.e., perfection strivers) will inevitably reach excellence during their journey (even if not directly intended) but continue their quest towards perfection, a destination they might never reach. Therefore, although excellence is attainable without attaining perfection, perfection is not attainable without attaining excellence (Gaudreau, 2019).

Accordingly, the effects of perfectionism can only be interpreted in relation to the effects of excellencism. Different scenarios can occur when contrasting the effects of perfectionism with the effects of excellencism. For instance, when investigating a desirable outcome, such as job satisfaction, perfectionism could show a positive, non-significant or negative relationship with job satisfaction over and above the respective relationship of excellencism. Assuming that excellencism relates positively to job satisfaction, perfectionism would consequently be beneficial (i.e., unique positive relationship), unneeded (i.e., no unique relationship) or harmful (i.e., unique negative relationship). When investigating an undesirable outcome such as burnout, perfectionism could again show a positive, non-significant or negative relationship with burnout over and above the respective relationship of excellencism. However, assuming that excellencism relates negatively to burnout, perfectionism would in that case be harmful if it shows a unique positive relationship, unneeded if it shows no unique relationship with burnout (as in the previous example), or beneficial if it shows a unique negative relationship (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022).

Because the MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022) is comparatively new, empirical studies examining its propositions are just emerging. Up to now, the results of these studies indicated that perfectionism is unneeded or harmful when contrasted with excellencism. For instance, perfection strivers did not experience more benefits in terms of life satisfaction and progress on personal goals or reduced harm in terms of depression than excellence strivers (Gaudreau et al., 2022). In the university context, students who were perfection strivers were found to perform worse on creative tasks than excellence strivers (Goulet-Pelletier et al., 2022). Similarly, students who were excellence strivers showed higher academic achievement and better mental health outcomes than perfection strivers and experienced an upward spiral of academic development, whereas perfection strivers experienced a downward spiral (Gaudreau et al., 2022; Tape et al., 2024). Students who were perfection strivers were also found to experience worse adjustment (e.g., higher anxiety, depression and stress), savoured positive school events less and had greater dropout intentions than excellence strivers (Gaudreau et al., 2024; Gaudreau & Schellenberg, 2024). In this regard, self-compassion was found to attenuate the positive relationships to distress in perfection strivers (With et al., 2024). Adolescents who were perfection strivers scored lower on openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and self-esteem and higher on neuroticism than excellence strivers (Bien et al., 2025). In the sports context, perfection strivers showed higher athletic achievement but experienced lower savouring and enjoyment when missing goals than excellence strivers (Gaudreau et al., 2024). Furthermore, sport fans who were perfection strivers had more positive attitudes towards cheating than excellence strivers (Gaudreau & Schellenberg, 2022).

Excellencism in daily work: Relationships with employee effort, performance and well-being

Goals are 'internal representations of desired states that direct attention, organize action and sustain effort aimed at achieving those states' (Kanfer et al., 2017, p. 343). As explained, excellence refers to very high goals that are pursued in an effortful, engaged and determined manner (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022). This effortful striving is in line with goal setting theory that ascribes high goals an energizing function and, thus, postulates a positive relationship between high goals and effort invested in

pursuing these goals (Locke & Latham, 2002). In our study, we investigated both effort intensity (i.e., how much effort employees exert) and persistence (i.e., how long employees persevere with their effort), two central dimensions of work-related effort (Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Following Locke and Latham (2002), we assumed that pursuing very high goals (i.e., excellencism) would positively relate to both effort intensity and persistence in daily work.

Hypothesis 1. *Daily excellencism in the morning at work relates positively to effort intensity and persistence in the afternoon.*

By mobilizing and sustaining effort (i.e., effort intensity and persistence), high goals are deemed to be positively related to performance (Kanfer et al., 2017; Locke & Latham, 2002; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Accordingly, we assumed that an employee's excellencism on a specific workday would positively relate to their in-role performance that day (i.e., completion of formally required and rewarded tasks and duties at work; Williams & Anderson, 1991) via effort intensity and persistence. However, exerting and sustaining effort at work might not only be beneficial for employee performance but might also be detrimental to employee well-being. In particular, when an employee exerts more effort on a specific workday or persists with their effort, they should feel more fatigued at the end of that workday because, according to the work-fatigue hypothesis (Hockey, 2013), mobilizing and sustaining effort at work should be draining. The assumption that exerting effort at work to accomplish tasks and goals is fatiguing is also at the core of the recovery literature (Demerouti et al., 2009; Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006). We therefore assumed that an employee's excellencism on a specific workday would positively relate to their feelings of fatigue at the end of that workday via effort intensity and persistence.

Hypothesis 2. *Effort intensity and persistence in the afternoon relate positively to (a) in-role performance in the afternoon and (b) fatigue at the end of the workday.*

Hypothesis 3. *Daily excellencism in the morning at work shows a positive indirect relationship with (a) in-role performance in the afternoon and (b) fatigue at the end of the workday via effort intensity and persistence in the afternoon.*

Perfectionism in daily work: Beneficial, unneeded or harmful?

As stated by the MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022), the relationships between perfectionism and outcomes of interest can only be interpreted in relation to the respective relationships of excellencism. Although the model does not make specific predictions and leaves it up to empirical scrutiny to determine whether perfectionism is beneficial, unneeded, or harmful with respect to specific outcomes, it is supposed that excellencism is likely a beneficial pursuit, whereas perfectionism is likely an unneeded or harmful pursuit (Gaudreau, 2019). As outlined above, this supposition has received initial empirical support (see, e.g., Gaudreau & Schellenberg, 2022; Gaudreau et al., 2022; Goulet-Pelletier et al., 2022).

With respect to our model, daily perfectionism could, firstly, show a unique positive relationship with effort over and above the assumed respective positive relationship of daily excellencism. That is, perfection refers to a higher and more difficult goal than excellence, and perfectionism is marked by relentlessness (Gaudreau, 2019). Therefore, it might be that an employee exerts more effort and also persists longer with their effort on workdays on which they strive for perfection. However, daily perfectionism could, secondly, show no unique relationship with effort. That is, it might be that the positive relationships between perfectionism and effort found in previous research (e.g., Stoeber & Eismann, 2007) were driven by excellencism and, thus, become non-significant when differentiating between perfectionism and excellencism. Therefore, we cannot make clear predictions on how daily

perfectionism relates to effort and, thus, via effort as a crucial mechanism, to in-role performance and fatigue over and above daily excellencism. We hence posed the following two research questions:

Research Question 1. Does daily perfectionism at work show a unique relationship with effort over and above the respective relationship of daily excellencism at work?
Research Question 2. Does daily perfectionism at work show unique indirect relationships with in-role performance and fatigue via effort over and above the respective relationships of daily excellencism at work?

For the correct understanding and interpretation of our study and its results, it is important to highlight that we investigated daily, within-person relationships. As described in detail in the Method section, we used a multilevel design that allows for examining both within-person as well as between-person relationships. We report results at the between-person level on an exploratory basis in the complementary analyses.

METHOD

Procedure and sample

To test our hypotheses and investigate our research questions, we collected data through an online daily diary study as part of a larger research project. We recruited participants via flyers distributed via email or in person, advertisements on respective websites (e.g., psychologie-heute.de), mailing lists and social online networks (e.g., Facebook). We advertised our project as a research project on 'Job demands and recovery from daily work'. Participants had to be of age (i.e., at least 18 years old) and work at least 30 h/week on at least 4 days/week (Monday–Friday); participants must not be self-employed or regularly working late or night shifts. We only included employees regularly working during the day to ensure that participants did not differ regarding their daily courses of work (e.g., being assigned work tasks, getting up in the morning). 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 14 vouchers from an online retailer (two vouchers worth 100 Euros, two vouchers worth 50 Euros, 10 vouchers worth 20 Euros). After participants had provided informed consent and registered for our study, we asked them to complete a general survey capturing demographic and work-related background data. We then invited participants to complete the daily diary surveys (i.e., morning survey, accessible from 5 to 10 AM; noon survey, accessible from 11 AM to 2 PM; end-of-workday survey, accessible from 3 to 7 PM) for two consecutive working weeks (Monday–Friday). Participants were instructed to answer the morning survey before starting to work, the noon survey in the morning at work and the end-of-workday survey at the end of their workday.

In total, 167 people registered for our project, 141 of whom completed the general survey. Based on our inclusion criteria outlined above, we excluded four participants indicating they were interns or working students and three participants working less than 30 h/week. In addition, we excluded two participants who did not provide any diary data and five participants who did not provide any data regarding our focal study variables, resulting in a final sample of 127 participants providing 1018 days of data. Regarding the daily survey data, we ensured that participants indicated that they had worked in the morning and in the afternoon before completing the respective surveys. Participants provided data on 953 morning surveys, data on 814 noon surveys and data on 797 end-of-workday surveys. We handled missing data by using full information maximum likelihood estimation in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017; Newman, 2014).

Most participants were female (69.3%; two participants could or did not want to assign themselves to the gender binary). Participants were on average 37.4 years old ($SD = 12.1$) and worked 39.2 h/week ($SD = 5.4$). Most participants held a master's degree (33.9%) or had finished vocational training (29.1%). Participants worked in various industries, such as administrative occupations (16.5%), working with

children and adolescents (15.7%), education (8.7%) and information technology (6.3%). To check for selective attrition, we compared the 14 participants who completed the general survey but were not included in our final sample with the 127 participants included therein. We found no differences with respect to gender, age, average weekly working hours or educational level. We collected the data for this study in Germany from mid-June 2023 to mid-October 2023. We provided all surveys in German.

Measures

As stated, we administered three daily surveys (i.e., morning survey, noon survey, end-of-workday survey) to the participants. In these daily surveys, we assessed our focal study variables. In the morning survey, we assessed state fatigue in the morning as a control variable. In the noon survey, we assessed daily perfectionism and excellencism in the morning at work. In the end-of-workday survey, we assessed effort intensity, effort persistence and in-role performance in the afternoon at work as well as state fatigue at the end of the workday.

Daily perfectionism and excellencism (noon survey)

We used the short version of the Scale of Perfectionism and Excellencism (SCOPE, Gaudreau et al., 2022; see also https://osf.io/y6jf5/) in its German version (Bien et al., 2025) to assess participants' daily perfectionism and excellencism in the morning at work. As recommended by Gaudreau et al. (2022), we slightly adapted the instruction and items to match the work context and the daily assessment. Five items captured participants' daily perfectionism (e.g., 'This morning at work, it is my goal to attain perfection') and five items captured participants' daily excellencism (e.g., 'This morning at work, it is my goal to reach excellence'). The response scale ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *completely*. The scale proved to be reliable for both perfectionism (within-person $\alpha = .89$, between-person $\alpha = .99$) and excellencism (within-person $\alpha = .81$, between-person $\alpha = .93$; Geldhof et al., 2014). This is the first study using a version of the SCOPE adapted to the work context and the daily assessment of perfectionism and excellencism.

Effort intensity and persistence (end-of-workday survey)

To assess how intensely participants worked in the afternoon, we used five items developed by Brown and Leigh (1996). A sample item is 'This afternoon at work, I really exerted myself to the fullest'. The response scale ranged from 1 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*. Within-person α was .91, between-person α was .97. To assess how persistently participants worked in the afternoon, we used the three-item work effort persistence-subscale developed by De Cooman et al. (2009). A sample item is 'This afternoon at work, I did not give up quickly when something did not work well'. The response scale ranged from 1 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*. Within-person α was .70, between-person α was .80. We translated all eight effort items from English into German with the help of a professional translator.

In-role performance (end-of-workday survey)

We assessed participants' perceived in-role performance with four items developed by Williams and Anderson (1991); German version see Fritz and Sonnentag (2005). A sample item is 'This afternoon at work, I adequately completed assigned duties'. The response scale ranged from 1 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*. Within-person α was .93, between-person α was .99.

Fatigue (end-of-workday survey, morning survey)

To capture participants' state fatigue at the end of the workday, we used the 7-item (e.g., 'tired', 'exhausted') fatigue subscale of the Profile of Mood States (McNair et al., 1971) in its German short version (Albani et al., 2005). The response scale ranged from 1 = *not at all* to 5 = *extremely*. Within-person α was .93, between-person α was .99. To rule out that participants experienced more fatigue at the end of a workday on which they already experienced more fatigue before starting to work, we controlled for state fatigue in the morning (see Gabriel et al., 2019). We assessed fatigue in the morning as at the end of the workday; within α was .92, between-person α was .98. Removing this control variable from our analysis does not change the results with respect to the hypotheses and research questions.

Construct validity

We conducted a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis using Mplus Version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) to examine the construct validity of our focal measures (perfectionism, excellencism, effort intensity, effort persistence, in-role performance, end-of-workday fatigue). We specified homologous factor structures at the within- and between-person levels. This six-factor measurement model showed a reasonable fit to the data, $\chi^2(724) = 1813.16$, $p < .001$, CFI = .93, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .04, $SRMR_{within} = .05$, $SRMR_{between} = .12$,[2] a better fit than a model subsuming perfectionism and excellencism under one factor, $\chi^2(734) = 2422.27$, $p < .001$, CFI = .89, TLI = .88, RMSEA = .05, $SRMR_{within} = .05$, $SRMR_{between} = .14$, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 475.99$, $p < .001$, a better fit than a model subsuming both effort dimensions under one factor, $\chi^2(734) = 1916.84$, $p < .001$, CFI = .92, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .04, $SRMR_{within} = .05$, $SRMR_{between} = .12$, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(10) = 84.24$, $p < .001$, and a better fit than a one-factor model, $\chi^2(754) = 11026.45$, $p < .001$, CFI = .34, TLI = .29, RMSEA = .12, $SRMR_{within} = .24$, $SRMR_{between} = .33$, Satorra-Bentler $\Delta\chi^2(30) = 4572.09$, $p < .001$.

Data analysis

Because we repeatedly collected data from the same participants using a daily diary design, our data have a multilevel structure (i.e., days are nested within participants). We therefore tested our hypotheses and investigated our research questions with a multilevel path analytic approach using Mplus Version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017) following recommendations by Preacher et al. (2010; 1-1-1 mediation model with random intercepts and fixed slopes). In our main analyses, we focus on the daily, within-person level (i.e., Level 1) relationships. We also report results at the between-person level (i.e., Level 2) in the complementary analyses. Table 1 displays means, standard deviations, intraclass correlation coefficients and intercorrelations among the study variables. We tested all hypotheses and research questions in one overall model (model fit: $\chi^2(10) = 29.34$, $p = .001$, CFI = .99, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .04, $SRMR_{within} = .06$, $SRMR_{between} = .07$). To receive unbiased within-person estimates, we separated the within- and between-person variance of the daily assessed variables by

[2]As the comparatively high value for the $SRMR_{between}$ indicates, the measurement model did not fit the data well at the between-person level; thus, it is likely that the ideal measurement model is not homologous at the within- and between-person level of analysis. To further test whether the measurement model fits the data well at the within-person level, the main level of our analyses, we conducted another multilevel CFA. In this multilevel CFA, we used the "define" command and "center" option in Mplus to group-mean (i.e., person-mean) center (see Enders & Tofighi, 2007) all items and the "within" command to specify that all items are modelled only at the within-person level. Thereafter, we specified the measurement model at the within-person level; no measurement model was specified at the between-person level. When specifying the measurement model only at the within-person level using person-mean centered items, it showed a good and slightly improved fit to the data, $\chi^2(362) = 858.04$, $p < .001$, CFI = .95, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .04, $SRMR_{within} = .04$. Because our main analyses are at the within-person level, the inadequate fit at the between-person level does not threaten the validity of our main results.

TABLE 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
1	Daily perfectionism	3.04	1.55	.70	.83		.63***	.19**	.08	.13*	.05	−.04
2	Daily excellencism	4.11	1.23	.73	.74	.77***		.24***	.14**	.19***	−.02	−.09*
3	Effort intensity	3.71	.50	.71	.33	.41***	.58***		.70***	.48***	−.15***	−.14**
4	Effort persistence	3.71	.48	.68	.34	.39***	.62***	.83***		.53***	−.17***	−.15**
5	In-role performance	4.09	.54	.63	.42	.22*	.39**	.49***	.66***		−.19***	−.18***
6	Fatigue (eow)	2.11	.85	.64	.64	−.01	−.07	−.16	−.11	−.24*		.34***
7	Fatigue (m)	2.04	.74	.67	.56	.03	−.11	−.21	−.18	−.15	.82***	

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 ($n = 1018$), below the diagonal to the between-person level ($N = 127$). eow, end of workday; ICC, proportion of variance between persons; m, morning.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

simultaneously modelling the identical model at the within- and between-person level (i.e., 'implicit' person-mean centring, see Gabriel et al., 2019). Based on conceptual considerations, we allowed correlations between perfectionism and excellencism and between the residuals of effort intensity and persistence at both levels. The residuals of in-role performance and fatigue were correlated by default. We calculated confidence intervals for the indirect effects with the Monte Carlo method (Selig & Preacher, 2008) with 20,000 repetitions.

Transparency and openness

We describe our sample inclusion criteria, all data exclusions based on the stepwise application of these criteria and all measures in the study. Data on the focal study variables and the code for our main analysis are available at https://osf.io/p7ytf/. Research materials are available upon request from the corresponding author. Data were analysed using Mplus Version 8.6 (Muthén & Muthén, 1998–2017). This study was part of a larger research project on 'Job demands and recovery from daily work' approved by the ethics committee of Chemnitz University of Technology (#101614569). This manuscript is the first manuscript written based on this data set. This study was not preregistered.

RESULTS

Main analyses

Because our hypotheses and research questions focus on relationships at the daily, within-person level (i.e., Level 1), we subsequently refer to results at that level. We additionally report results at the between-person level (i.e., Level 2) on an exploratory basis in the complementary analyses. Results for the direct effects at both levels are displayed in Table 2. Figure 2 illustrates the path analytic results at the day level. All reported estimates are unstandardized. Supporting Hypothesis 1, daily excellencism in the morning at work related positively to both effort intensity, $\gamma = .21$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$, and persistence, $\gamma = .14$, $SE = .05$, $p = .01$, in the afternoon. In line with Hypothesis 2a, both effort intensity, $\gamma = .18$, $SE = .06$, $p = .001$, and persistence, $\gamma = .35$, $SE = .05$, $p < .001$, related positively to in-role performance in the afternoon. Neither effort intensity, $\gamma = -.06$, $SE = .05$, $p = .23$, nor persistence, $\gamma = -.08$, $SE = .05$, $p = .10$, related positively to fatigue at the end of the workday. Accordingly, Hypothesis 2b was not supported. In line with Hypothesis 3a, daily excellencism at work showed a positive indirect relationship with in-role performance both via effort intensity, $\gamma = .037$, $SE = .014$, 95% CI [.012, .068], and persistence, $\gamma = .048$, $SE = .020$, 95% CI [.011, .089]. Daily excellencism at work did neither show an indirect relationship with fatigue via effort intensity, $\gamma = -.011$, $SE = .009$, 95% CI [−.031, .008], nor via persistence, $\gamma = -.011$, $SE = .008$, 95% CI [−.030, .002]. Hence, Hypothesis 3b was not supported.

Research Question 1 investigated whether daily perfectionism at work shows a unique relationship with effort over and above the respective relationship of daily excellencism at work. As the results showed, daily perfectionism at work did neither relate to effort intensity, $\gamma = .05$, $SE = .07$, $p = .42$, nor persistence, $\gamma = -.01$, $SE = .06$, $p = .88$. Research Question 2 investigated whether daily perfectionism at work shows unique indirect relationships with in-role performance and fatigue via effort over and above the respective relationships of daily excellencism at work. As the results showed, daily perfectionism at work did neither relate indirectly to in-role performance via effort intensity, $\gamma = .009$, $SE = .012$, 95% CI [−.015, .034], nor via persistence, $\gamma = -.003$, $SE = .020$, 95% CI [−.043, .040]. Daily perfectionism at work did also neither relate indirectly to fatigue via effort intensity, $\gamma = -.003$, $SE = .005$, 95% CI [−.019, .004], nor via persistence, $\gamma = .001$, $SE = .005$, 95% CI [−.010, .013].

TABLE 2 Unstandardized within-person and between-person coefficients from multi-level path analysis predicting effort, in-role performance and fatigue.

	Effort intensity			Effort persistence			In-role performance			Fatigue (eow)		
	Est.	***SE***	***z***	**Est.**	***SE***	***z***	**Est.**	***SE***	***z***	**Est.**	***SE***	***z***
Within-person level												
Fatigue (m)										.30	.05	6.04***
Daily perfectionism	.05	.07	.81	−.01	.06	−.15	.01	.04	.13	.09	.06	1.45
Daily excellencism	.21	.06	3.79***	.14	.05	2.56*	.08	.04	1.77	−.02	.05	−.47
Effort intensity							.18	.06	3.19**	−.06	.05	−1.20
Effort persistence							.35	.05	6.73***	−.08	.05	−1.65
Residual variance	.48	.04	11.45***	.46	.04	12.01***	.28	.03	9.87***	.35	.04	9.30***
Between-person level												
Intercept	2.70	.18	15.29***	2.63	.16	16.86***	1.51	.48	3.15**	.01	.58	.01
Fatigue (m)										.94	.07	12.80***
Daily perfectionism	−.03	.04	−.73	−.06	.04	−1.49	−.02	.04	−.43	−.05	.06	−.75
Daily excellencism	.27	.06	4.64***	.31	.06	5.54***	.02	.09	.18	.05	.11	.46
Effort intensity							−.17	.23	−.73	−.09	.23	−.38
Effort persistence							.86	.22	3.92***	.12	.25	.49
Residual variance	.17	.04	4.67***	.14	.03	5.19***	.16	.03	4.77***	.23	.05	4.29***

Note: $N = 127$, $n = 1018$. Table shows unstandardized within-person (upper part) and between-person (lower part) estimates, resulting from an overall analysis including the prediction of effort intensity, effort persistence, in-role performance and fatigue in one model.

Abbreviations: eow, end of workday; Est., estimate; m, morning.

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

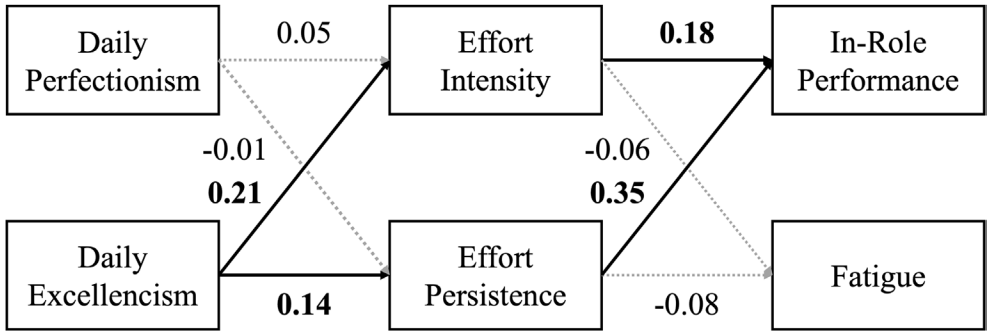

FIGURE 2 Path-analytic results at the day level. Only paths referring to hypotheses and research questions are depicted. Solid, black lines and bold coefficients indicate significant paths. Dotted, grey lines and non-bold coefficients indicate non-significant paths.

Complementary analyses

Discriminant validity

Albeit the results of our multilevel CFA's provided first evidence for the discriminant validity of our constructs, the high correlations between the perfectionism and excellencism scales ($r_{within} = .63$, $r_{between} = .77$) as well as between the effort intensity and persistence scales ($r_{within} = .70$, $r_{between} = .83$) call into question whether these scales and, thus, constructs are empirically distinguishable. To address these concerns, we followed recent recommendations (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022) and further investigated the discriminant validity of our constructs by using the CI_{CFA}(sys) technique. This technique requires to calculate the latent factor correlations, ρ_{CFA}(sys), and their respective confidence intervals. We adapted the Mplus syntax for unconstrained CFA's provided by Rönkkö and Cho (2022) to our multilevel data. In these CFA's, the first factor loadings of each scale are freed, and the factor variances of each scale are constrained to 1. We conducted two of these CFA's: one to assess the degree of discriminant validity of perfectionism and excellencism and one to assess the degree of discriminant validity of effort intensity and persistence, respectively.

At the within-person level, the results of these analyses showed a factor correlation of $\varrho_{CFAwithin} = .74$, 95% $CI_{CFAwithin}$ [.664; .810], between perfectionism and excellencism. At the between-person level, the results of these analyses showed a factor correlation of $\varrho_{CFAbetween} = .82$, 95% $CI_{CFAbetween}$ [.704; .938], between perfectionism and excellencism. At the within-person level, the results of these analyses showed a factor correlation of $\varrho_{CFAwithin} = .86$, 95% $CI_{CFAwithin}$ [.795; .923], between effort intensity and persistence. At the between-person level, the results of these analyses showed a factor correlation of $\varrho_{CFAbetween} = .93$, 95% $CI_{CFAbetween}$ [.875; .991], between effort intensity and persistence. For perfectionism and excellencism, the upper confidence interval limits of .810 and .938 indicate a marginal problem with discriminant validity at the within-person level and a moderate problem with discriminant validity at the between-person level, respectively. For effort intensity and persistence, the upper confidence interval limits of .923 and .991 indicate a moderate problem with discriminant validity at the within- and between-person levels, respectively (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022).

Multicollinearity

The high correlations between perfectionism and excellencism as well as between effort intensity and persistence also raise concerns regarding multicollinearity, that is, whether each of these variables provides added value in the model and shows substantial unique relationships with the outcome variables. To test for multicollinearity in our model, we used the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015) and the

performance package (Lüdecke et al., 2021) in R (Version 4.4.2; R Core Team, 2024) to examine the variance inflation factors (VIFs) for the predictor–mediator and mediator–outcome relationships in our model. As the results of these analyses showed, all VIFs fell below the conservative threshold of VIF < 3 (Zuur et al., 2010). Therefore, we conclude that multicollinearity is not an issue in our model. We provide a detailed description of the multicollinearity analyses in the Appendix S1.

Main analyses at the between-person level

In our study, we focus on relationships at the within-person level. However, our daily diary data can be used to examine the same relationships at both the within- and between-person levels simultaneously; examining the proposed relationships at the between-person level could provide valuable additional insights. The *p*-values and, thus, the results of these analyses should be interpreted cautiously because the analyses are likely underpowered due to the comparatively small sample size at the between-person level ($N = 127$ employees); moreover, the measurement model did not fit the data well at the between-person level. At the between-person level, excellencism at work related positively to both effort intensity, $\gamma = .27$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$, and persistence, $\gamma = .31$, $SE = .06$, $p < .001$. Only effort persistence related positively to in-role performance, $\gamma = .86$, $SE = .22$, $p = .001$; effort intensity did not significantly relate to in-role performance, $\gamma = -.17$, $SE = .23$, $p = .47$. Neither effort intensity, $\gamma = -.09$, $SE = .23$, $p = .71$, nor persistence, $\gamma = .12$, $SE = .25$, $p = .62$, related positively to fatigue. Excellencism at work did not show a significant indirect relationship with in-role performance via effort intensity, $\gamma = -.045$, $SE = .061$, 95% CI [−.169, .081], but via persistence, $\gamma = .264$, $SE = .090$, 95% CI [.109, .470]. Excellencism at work did neither show an indirect relationship with fatigue via effort intensity, $\gamma = -.024$, $SE = .064$, 95% CI [−.166, .098], nor via persistence, $\gamma = .037$, $SE = .076$, 95% CI [−.094, .185].

Perfectionism at work did neither relate to effort intensity, $\gamma = -.03$, $SE = .04$, $p = .46$, nor persistence, $\gamma = -.06$, $SE = .04$, $p = .14$. Moreover, perfectionism at work did neither relate indirectly to in-role performance via effort intensity, $\gamma = .005$, $SE = .009$, 95% CI [−.022, .034], nor via persistence, $\gamma = -.054$, $SE = .041$, 95% CI [−.146, .018]. Perfectionism at work did also neither relate indirectly to fatigue via effort intensity, $\gamma = .003$, $SE = .008$, 95% CI [−.020, .035], nor via persistence, $\gamma = -.008$, $SE = .017$, 95% CI [−.054, .026]. Accordingly, perfectionism did not show unique relationships over and above the respective relationships of excellencism at work at the between-person level as well. Thus, the results at the between-person level do largely mirror the results at the within-person level. Notably though, whereas effort intensity related positively to in-role performance at the within-person level, both constructs were not significantly related at the between-person level and, accordingly, there was no indirect relationship between excellencism and in-role performance via effort intensity at the between-person level.

Direct, non-mediated effects of excellencism and perfectionism on in-role performance and fatigue

In our model, we examine effort as a central mediating variable in the relationships between excellencism and perfectionism with in-role performance and fatigue. However, as the MEP is new to the literature on perfectionism at work, it is also worthwhile to examine the direct, non-mediated relationships between excellencism and perfectionism with the outcome variables. At the within-person level, the results of this model showed that daily excellencism at work related positively to in-role performance, $\gamma = .16$, $SE = .05$, $p = .003$; daily excellencism at work did not significantly relate to fatigue, $\gamma = -.04$, $SE = .05$, $p = .38$. Daily perfectionism at work did neither relate to in-role performance, $\gamma = .01$, $SE = .05$, $p = .82$, nor to fatigue, $\gamma = .08$, $SE = .06$, $p = .17$. The results were similar at the between-person level: excellencism at work related positively to in-role performance, $\gamma = .24$, $SE = .08$, $p = .002$, but did not

significantly relate to fatigue, $\gamma = .06$, $SE = .09$, $p = .50$. Perfectionism at work did neither relate to in-role performance, $\gamma = -.07$, $SE = .05$, $p = .14$, nor to fatigue, $\gamma = -.05$, $SE = .06$, $p = .40$.[3]

DISCUSSION

Given the discrepancy between widely held beliefs about the implications of perfectionism at work and research findings on this topic, our study aimed at a refined understanding of perfectionism at work. Building on the recently introduced MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022), we investigated the implications of excellencism and the unique implications of perfectionism in daily work for employee effort, performance and well-being. Again, we would like to highlight that the results of our study refer to the within-person level of analysis and need to be interpreted accordingly. In line with our expectations, our results showed that excellencism in daily work related positively to both effort intensity and persistence and, via effort, to in-role performance. Contrary to our expectations, neither effort intensity nor persistence related positively to fatigue; consequently, excellencism in daily work did not relate indirectly to fatigue. It might be that positive affective states (e.g., vigor) that likely accompany higher perceived in-role performance offset the effort-fatigue relationship. Furthermore, as Hockey (2013) stated, effort-related fatigue might only occur when externally imposed goals are pursued, pursuing self-imposed goals such as excellence or perfection can often be invigorating instead of fatiguing. Concerning our two research questions, daily perfectionism at work did not show a unique relationship with effort and, consequently, also no unique indirect relationships with in-role performance and fatigue over and above the respective relationships of daily excellencism.

Implications for theory and practice

Our findings have significant implications for the study and handling of perfectionism at work. First and foremost, our study emphasizes the importance of considering excellencism to answer the question of perfectionism's (mal-)adaptiveness at work. In line with the MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022), our results showed that perfectionism and excellencism at work should be simultaneously considered when investigating relationships to relevant outcomes at work. In particular, both daily perfectionism and excellencism at work correlated positively with effort intensity. However, when simultaneously considered, only excellencism emerged as a significant predictor of effort intensity. Likewise, only excellencism showed a positive indirect relationship with in-role performance via effort. Previous studies on perfectionism at work did not measure excellencism separately nor did they estimate its unique effects. As a result, the positive effects attributed to perfectionism at work in past research may have been confounded with those actually associated with excellencism, implying that perfectionism at work is not a beneficial but an unnecessary pursuit (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022). This finding aligns well with previous studies in other domains that have shown that perfectionism is unneeded or even harmful when contrasted with excellencism (e.g., Gaudreau et al., 2022; Gaudreau & Schellenberg, 2022; Goulet-Pelletier et al., 2022). Accordingly, just like previous research highlighted the need to differentiate perfectionistic strivings from perfectionistic concerns and to study their impact simultaneously (Stoeber & Gaudreau, 2017), (organizational) scholars need to differentiate and simultaneously study perfectionism and excellencism in future work to better understand perfectionism's unique impact.

Furthermore, our study showed that theoretical and conceptual developments in other research areas such as personality psychology can fundamentally change the understanding of organizational phenomena. Accordingly, it is important for organizational scholars to keep up with such developments. Especially perfectionism research seems to be in constant flux: Earlier research on the two-factor model

[3]We report the results of additional analyses in the Appendix S1.

of perfectionism (Frost et al., 1993; Stoeber, 2018a; Stoeber & Otto, 2006) denoted a turning point regarding the conceptualization of perfectionism (i.e., from a one- to a multidimensional construct). Now, the MEP (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022) could denote a turning point regarding the (mal-)adaptiveness of perfectionism. Previous research on perfectionism at work has been largely based on the two-factor model. Although we refrain from proposing to replace the two-factor model with the MEP from now on, we think that future research might benefit from an integration of both models (for a suggested approach, see Gaudreau, 2021).

Finally, our study also provides helpful insights for the study of effort at work. As Van Iddekinge et al. (2023) pointed out, work effort is a central, yet not well understood concept. Especially its relationships with other constructs at work are largely unclear. We therefore enrich research on work effort and contribute to the development of its nomological network by examining perfectionism and excellencism as person-focused antecedents of effort expenditure at work. As our results showed, daily excellencism can be considered both an antecedent of effort intensity and persistence, whereas daily perfectionism did not show a unique relationship with effort. Accordingly, and in line with Locke and Latham (2002), pursuing excellence, a very high but flexible and attainable goal, seems to be beneficial for effort and, thus, performance, whereas pursuing perfection, an idealized, excessively high and rigid goal, is not. Moreover, previous research showed that very high goals at work can be detrimental to well-being if they are assigned (Welsh et al., 2020). Our research suggests that very high goals at work are not necessarily detrimental to well-being if they are rooted in oneself.

The theoretical implications of our research are directly relevant for practice. Perfectionism is becoming increasingly legitimized in today's workplaces, and more and more employees are encouraged to strive for perfection (Ocampo et al., 2020). As stated in the introductory quote, many organizational scholars as well as practitioners believe in the positive aspects of perfectionism at work (Baer & Shaw, 2017; Harari et al., 2018). However, this picture is probably distorted: As our results suggest, the assumed beneficial effects (e.g., for employee effort and performance) of perfectionism at work are likely driven by excellencism. Thus, given our results and considering the downsides of perfectionism found in previous work (e.g., Harari et al., 2018), it seems to be unneeded to strive for perfection, especially for 'day-to-day' (Baer & Shaw, 2017) activities and performance at work (see also Hrabluik et al., 2012). Accordingly, employees could benefit from learning how to disengage from unrealistic goals and how to set high but attainable goals in their day-to-day work (Hrabluik et al., 2012; Wrosch et al., 2003).

Furthermore, practitioners should refrain from demanding perfection and from promoting employees' perfectionism. This implication does seem to apply more broadly as well. Given our results and the findings of previous research (e.g., Gaudreau et al., 2022; Gaudreau & Schellenberg, 2022; Gouleet-Pelletier et al., 2022), individuals do likely not benefit from perfectionism, be it at work or in other life domains. Because perfectionism is not only organizationally but also societally encouraged, there is a need to raise societal awareness of its missing benefits and possible downsides. This awareness could help to lessen societal pressures to strive for perfection.

Instead of striving for perfection, our results suggest that it is beneficial if employees strive for excellence in their daily work as excellencism was positively related to effort and performance without negative implications for employee well-being. Increasing employee effort and performance is a crucial concern to managers (Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Correspondingly, it might be tempting to advise employees to strive for excellence and to advise practitioners to encourage employees' excellencism at work. However, we feel that this advice would be premature given the lack of empirical findings on excellencism at work.

Limitations and future research directions

Our study has limitations that need to be discussed. First, we tested a mediation model in which the assessments of the mediator and outcome variables were not temporally separated, which can raise concerns regarding their temporal order (see Aguinis et al., 2017). More precisely, we assessed effort, in-role

performance and fatigue concurrently in the end-of-workday surveys. To allay concerns regarding the concurrent assessment of effort and in-role performance, there is a strong theoretical basis for assuming that effort precedes performance (Locke & Latham, 2002; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Moreover, regarding the concurrent assessment of effort and fatigue, we asked participants to report their experiences referring to different time frames (see Fisher & To, 2012). That is, participants reported on their effort expenditure referring to their afternoon at work, whereas we used a state measure to assess participants' fatigue at the end of the workday.

Second, the high perfectionism-excellencism and effort intensity-persistence correlations at both levels raise questions about whether our results are biased by a lack of discriminant validity and, relatedly, by multicollinearity or common method bias. Both perfectionism and excellencism as well as effort intensity and persistence have been conceptualized as closely related but distinct constructs (Gaudreau et al., 2022; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023); therefore, it is important to treat them as separate constructs on theoretical grounds. The results of our multilevel CFA comparisons provided first evidence that the constructs are empirically distinguishable by showing that the models that differentiated between perfectionism and excellencism and between effort intensity and persistence fitted the data significantly better than the respective one-factor solutions. Results of a closer investigation using the CI_{CFA}(sys) technique (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022) showed a marginal problem regarding discriminant validity with respect to the measurements of perfectionism and excellencism at the within-person level, our main level of analysis. In face of this marginal problem, it is probably safe to interpret these scales as representations of distinct constructs at the within-person level (see Rönkkö & Cho, 2022).

However, there were also moderate discriminant validity problems in our data (i.e., perfectionism vs. excellencism at the between-person level, effort intensity vs. persistence at both levels). It is recommended to discuss the high correlations found in our study with reference to the interrelationships found in prior studies and to discuss possible causes for the high correlations (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022). We are not aware of any previous studies investigating the perfectionism–excellencism or effort intensity-persistence relationships at the within-person level; thus, we cannot compare our correlations at this level. The between-person correlation of perfectionism and excellencism in our study ($r = .77$) was higher than correlations reported in previous work (e.g., $r = .64$ in Bien et al., 2025; $r = .51$ in Goulet-Pelletier et al., 2022, Study 1). As other studies investigated this interrelationship in contexts outside the workplace, it might be that perfectionism and excellencism are more closely interrelated and, thus, less clearly distinguishable in the work context. However, it might also be that the between-person correlations differ because they were gained from a repeated, daily assessment referring to a specific timeframe (i.e., one's morning at work) and not to a one-time assessment of perfectionism and excellencism in general. This might apply to the effort intensity and persistence relationship ($r = .83$) as well, which was also found to be lower in previous research ($r = .65$; De Cooman et al., 2009). To conclude, albeit our discriminant validity findings do not indicate a problem that would require a fundamental reconceptualization of the constructs and their measurement in future research (Rönkkö & Cho, 2022), they raise doubts regarding the applicability of these constructs and, thus, their theoretical foundations (see Gaudreau et al., 2022; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023), across different contexts, study designs and timeframes.

Regarding multicollinearity, the results of our complementary analyses showed that multicollinearity is not an issue in our model. Thus, we are confident that each variable in our model provides added value and shows substantial unique relationships with the outcome variables. We acknowledge that all of our measures share common method variance due to the use of same-source self-reports. Accordingly, our results might be affected by common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). We took several measures to mitigate possible method biases, such as ensuring participants' anonymity and aiming to reduce evaluation apprehension as well as partly temporally separating the assessments of our focal variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Furthermore, we specified a two-level model with identical paths at the within- and between-person level, thereby person-mean centring our variables at the within-person level. Due to this person-mean centring, the relationships at the within-person level cannot be affected by between-person differences that are common sources of method bias (e.g., social desirability; Gabriel et al., 2019). Albeit the assumed factor structure of our measures was reasonable and we excluded some

of the commonly known sources of method bias to minimize its impact, it is not possible to completely rule out that our results were in- or deflated by common method bias.

Our study prepares the ground for fruitful future research. Given the prevalence and impact of perfectionism at work, more research on the differentiation between perfectionism and excellencism and related implications in the work context is imperative. Although our results indicated that perfectionism is an unnecessary pursuit at work, future research is needed to replicate or refine this finding. As research in other domains suggested (e.g., Gaudreau et al., 2022; Gaudreau & Schellenberg, 2022; Goulet-Pelletier et al., 2022), it might be that perfectionism can also be a harmful pursuit at work or that—under specific circumstances—it even turns out to be a beneficial pursuit (Gaudreau et al., 2022). For instance, our study focused on day-to-day performance of employees working in various industries. It might be that perfectionism only shows unique performance benefits for specific occupations such as musicians or heart surgeons for which performing close to perfection is part of their daily work. Furthermore, whereas perfectionism might be unneeded for successfully performing everyday or mundane tasks (Gaudreau, 2019), it might be beneficial for tasks that require employees' maximum performance. Relatedly, it would be insightful to research perfectionism and excellencism in relation to other indicators of performance (e.g., creativity, Goulet-Pelletier et al., 2022) and (un-)desired behaviour at work (e.g., cheating, Gaudreau & Schellenberg, 2022; counterproductive work or organizational citizenship behaviour). Future research could also focus on objective performance indicators (e.g., promotions) or on performance within other time frames (e.g., long-term career success). Perfectionism and excellencism both showed substantial variance at the day level (i.e., 17% and 26%, respectively); however, most of their variance was at the between-person level. Therefore, future research should examine both within-person variability and between-person differences of perfectionism and excellencism.

We also call for a closer examination of excellencism in the work context. Our results point to possible beneficial effects (i.e., for daily effort and in-role performance) of excellencism at work. However, there might also be a 'dark side' to excellencism at work (Gaudreau, 2019; Gaudreau et al., 2022). For instance, high levels of excellencism within work teams could lead to unhealthy competition or successful excellence strivers might feel the pressure to aim higher and higher and, thus, turn into perfectionists. Future research should turn to these issues.

Finally, it might be worthwhile to further investigate the relationship between perfectionism, excellencism, and effort in various contexts. As previous research has shown, people striving for perfection might not reveal that they invested effort to achieve their goals; instead, they might emphasize that they reached their goals without investing effort (i.e., *effortless perfectionism*, Travers et al., 2015). Therefore, it might be that the relationships between perfectionism, excellencism and effort differ when using objective indicators to assess effort instead of self-reports. In this regard, scholars could also take up the recently proposed differentiation between *flexible* (i.e., pursuing goals with an open and broad focus that allows one to attend to other goals) and *rigid* persistence (i.e., pursuing goals with a narrower focus that facilitates reaching some goals, but not others; Vallerand et al., 2023). It is likely that excellencism, with its focus on determined but flexible goal pursuit, relates to flexible persistence, whereas perfectionism, with its focus on relentless goal pursuit, relates to rigid persistence.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Monique Mohr: Conceptualization; data curation; investigation; formal analysis; project administration; methodology; writing – original draft. **Carolin Dietz:** Investigation; project administration; writing – review and editing.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors report no conflict of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data on the focal study variables and the code for our main analysis are available at https://osf.io/p7ytf/.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

Appendix S1

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