

**PERFECTIONISM AT WORK: IMPACTS ON BURNOUT,  
JOB SATISFACTION, AND DEPRESSION**

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## Abstract

Perfectionism has been implicated with many forms of psychological adjustment (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). However, little is known about the role of perfectionism in work adjustment. The present study attempts to fill this void by investigating relationships between *self-oriented*, *other-oriented* and *socially prescribed perfectionism*, and dimensions of *burnout*, *job satisfaction* and *depression* in the work context. There was a specific interest to determine whether self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism are related to work adjustment in the context of trait-congruent job characteristics such as low *autonomy* and ambiguous *feedback*. In general, the results suggest that socially prescribed perfectionism is a vulnerability factor in the experience of burnout, job dissatisfaction and depression, and that this dimension operates independent of perceived job characteristics. No significant interactions were found. Overall, the study contributes to the fields of personality, clinical and organizational psychology by 1) addressing a long-standing need for rigorous research on perfectionism and burnout, 2) expanding the range of personality variables that are studied in the context of job satisfaction, and 3) demonstrating the impact that maladaptive cognitive-personality variables may have in lowering work adjustment. It is hoped that the results will inform human resource management practices such as personnel assessment and placement, job re-design, and employee assistance.

## Introduction

### *Perfectionism*

The last decade has seen a flurry of research on perfectionism and its impact of psychological adjustment (see Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Trait perfectionism involves tendencies to set unrealistic standards for performance and engage in exaggerated strivings to fulfill such standards (Hewitt & Flett, 1991a). As a cognitive-personality variable, it also involves selective attention, overgeneralization of failure, stringent self-evaluation, and all-or-nothing thinking whereby only total success or total failure is possible (Hamachek, 1978; Hewitt & Flett, 1991b; Pacht, 1984). Hewitt and Flett (1991a) have identified three dimensions of trait perfectionism. *Self-oriented perfectionism* involves setting unrealistic, exacting self-standards, as well as stringently evaluating and censuring one's behaviour. This dimension also entails a strong motivation to attain perfection and avoid failure. *Other-oriented perfectionism* involves setting unrealistic standards for significant others, placing importance on the perfection of others, and stringently evaluating others' performance. Individuals who are high in *socially prescribed perfectionism* perceive themselves to be the subjects of other people's perfectionistic expectations. They believe that others evaluate them stringently and apply pressure on them to be perfect.

A large body of research has established relationships between dimensions of perfectionism and multiple forms of adjustment (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Both self-oriented perfectionism (Hewitt & Dyck, 1986; Hewitt & Flett, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991a; Hewitt, Mittlestaedt, & Flett, 1990) and socially prescribed perfectionism (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Mosher, 1991; Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & O'Brien, 1991; Hewitt & Flett, 1990; Hewitt & Flett, 1991a; 1991b) have been associated with depression and anxiety states. Self-oriented perfectionism has been shown to interact with a number of variables to produce negative affect, including perceived failure and maladaptive coping styles (Burns & Beck, 1978; Hewitt & Dyck, 1986; Hewitt & Flett, 1993), life stress (Flett, Hewitt, & Dyck, 1989) and generalized performance importance (Hewitt, Mittlestaedt, & Flett, 1990). Socially prescribed perfectionism, in particular, has demonstrated the strongest and most significant relationships with a wide range of adjustment indices (Hewitt & Flett, 1991a; 1991b; Hewitt, Flett, & Turnbull-Donovan, 1992; Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Mosher 1991).

### *Purpose of the Study*

While much is known about the impact of perfectionism on general forms of adjustment, little is known of its impact on various forms of work-related adjustment (e.g., Flett, Hewitt, & Hallett, 1995). This oversight is conspicuous given the achievement implications of both perfectionism (a personality variable) and the workplace (an environment). Perfectionism has already been studied in other performance domains (e.g., scholastic, athletic, artistic). The current study was undertaken to address this limitation by examining relationships among dimensions of perfectionism and levels of *burnout*, *job satisfaction* and symptoms of *depression*. Perceived *job characteristics* were also investigated as correlates of perfectionism (Hackman & Oldman, 1975). Two of these characteristics, *autonomy* and *feedback*, were examined as moderating influences on

perfectionism-work adjustment relationships. These variables are expected to operate as proxies for work-related events and experiences. This is consistent with cognitive-behavioural theories of depression (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979) and diathesis-stress models of adjustment in general.

This study addresses a long-standing need to examine perfectionism as a vulnerability factor in burnout. Past research on this topic has been limited in scope and methodology. For example, some burnout researchers have measured perfectionism as a unidimensional construct (e.g., Fry, 1995). Other research strongly suggests that perfectionism is multidimensional in nature (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b; Hewitt, Flett, Turnbull-Donovan, & Mikail, 1991). Past research on perfectionism and burnout has also been conducted on small samples (Fry, 1995) and relatively narrow populations such as clergy (Corrigan, 1998; Grosch & Olsen, 2000; Moore, 1984), tennis players (Gould, Tuffey, Udry, & Loehr, 1996; 1997), musicians (Dews & Williams, 1989), career mothers (Mitchelson & Burns, 1998) and females executives (Fry, 1995). The proposed study will attempt to rectify these limitations. Although these studies are limited, they provide general evidence of the relevance of perfectionism to burnout. For example, Mitchelson and Burns (1998) found a link between socially prescribed perfectionism at work and burnout.

The current study was also undertaken to expand the range of dispositional variables that are implicated with job satisfaction. Many studies in the past have focused solely on the role of affective disposition (e.g., Levin & Stokes, 1989; Necowitz & Roznowski, 1994; Pulakos & Schmitt, 1983; Staw & Ross, 1985; Watson & Slack, 1993). More recently, researchers have examined the impact of dysfunctional attitudes (Judge & Locke, 1993) and core self-evaluations on job satisfaction (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000; Judge, Locke, Durham, & Kluger, 1998). This emerging interest in cognitive-personality variables as predictors of job satisfaction suggests that perfectionism would be a relevant addition to the fold.

Finally, the study was intended to expand our knowledge of perfectionism and depression within the work context. Perfectionism has been identified as a vulnerability factor in depression. Consistent with Beck's cognitive-behavioural model of depression (Beck et al., 1979), dimensions of perfectionism have been shown to interact with trait-congruent events and experiences to produce elevated depressed mood (Hewitt & Flett, 1993). By demonstrating interactions among dimensions of perfectionism and job characteristics, Beck's model of depression may be leveraged as a model of work-related adjustment. Although depression is a context-free form of adjustment, its partial prediction from perfectionism-job characteristics interactions would contextualize it as a form of work-related adjustment. Additionally, such interactions would demonstrate the part-whole relationship that work has in determining overall levels of well-being.

In general, the rationale for studying perfectionism in the workplace is strengthened by research on workaholism. Studies suggest that perfectionism and workaholism share similar features. Some studies indicate that workaholics have perfectionistic tendencies (Burke, 1999a; 1999b; Spence & Robbins, 1992), while others suggest that perfectionism is a particular kind of workaholism (Scott, Moore, & Miceli, 1997). Additionally, workaholism has been implicated with variables that are similar or identical to those investigated in the current study, including job stress (Burke, 1999a; Spence & Robbins, 1992), job satisfaction (Burke, 1999b), and psychological well-being (Burke, 1999b). Given this body of work, it was expected that perfectionism has similar relationships with burnout, job satisfaction and depression in the work context. Since workaholism has been

deemed an important person variable in the maintenance of workplace adjustment, the time seemed ripe for a commensurate study of perfectionism.

### *Research Strategy & Hypotheses*

Relationships among dimensions of perfectionism, job characteristics and work adjustment were initially investigated through correlational analysis to determine the presence of bivariate, linear associations. Hierarchical regression analyses were then conducted to determine whether perfectionism-work adjustment relationships are moderated by perceptions of specific job characteristics.

For the most part, we chose to focus on a small subset of variables for regression analyses. Self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism were chosen because of their consistent and substantive relationships with general forms of adjustment (Flett & Hewitt, 2002). Their focus on personal performance also makes them especially relevant in the context of work-related adjustment. Among job characteristics, autonomy and feedback were chosen because of their strong empirical links to work adjustment. Perceptions of low autonomy and absent or ambiguous feedback have been associated with burnout (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler, 1986) and job dissatisfaction (Loher, Noe, Moeller, & Fitzgerald, 1985). In general, perceptions of control (Benassi, Sweeney, & Dufour, 1988) and interpersonal feedback (Joiner & Coyne, 1999) have long been implicated with depressive symptomatology.

In terms of work adjustment, we focused on exhaustion, satisfaction with work itself, global job satisfaction and symptoms of depression. As a component of burnout, exhaustion was chosen because of the central mediating role it is believed to play in the burnout syndrome (Lee & Ashforth, 1993; Leiter & Maslach, 1988) as well as the validity of its measurement compared to other components of burnout (i.e., cynicism and professional efficacy; Shirom, 1989). Satisfaction with work itself was chosen because of its apparent relevance for self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionists. Both personality traits and this facet of job satisfaction have a focus on task performance and achievement. Global job satisfaction was examined as a work adjustment outcome because it represents an overall evaluation of one's job and all of its facets (Spector, 1997). Global measures tend to capture more affective qualities of job satisfaction (Organ & Near, 1985). This would appear to make them more consistent with general measures of psychological distress. Additionally, since facet measures of job satisfaction and job characteristics may be confounded (Buckley, Carragher, & Cote, 1992; Crampton & Wagner, 1994; Pierce, McTavish, & Knudsen, 1986). Supplementing a facet measure with a global measure of job satisfaction in the study would address this problem.

In general, it was hypothesized that self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism would be positively correlated with dimensions of burnout and negatively correlated with dimensions of job satisfaction. It was further hypothesized that these relationships would be moderated by autonomy and feedback. A perceived lack of control over one's work efforts, and an absence of clear performance feedback may be exceptionally stressful for individuals with excessive needs to achieve and attain perfection on the job. Perfectionists may feel that having singular control over their work processes is essential to 'ensure' perfection in their end products. Additionally, in the absence of clear or frequent feedback, they may evaluate their performance more negatively, resulting in lower levels of work-related adjustment. These hypotheses are supported by prior research on perfectionism and performance (Mor, Day, Flett, & Hewitt, 1995).

It was also expected that self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism would interact with autonomy and feedback to predict symptoms of depression. As mentioned earlier, depression is considered to be a context-free form of adjustment. It may be viewed as a general organismic response to cumulative or combined stressors encountered across a variety of life domains (e.g., family, work, leisure). In much the same way that job satisfaction has been shown to have an impact on overall life satisfaction (Near, Rice, & Hunt, 1978; Rice, Near, & Hunt, 1980), the experience of negative experiences in the workplace is likely to contribute to overall levels of depression as a function of the part-whole relationship that work has with life in general (Judge & Locke, 1993). While there has been much research on the nature of affect and emotion within work settings (Fisher & Ashkanasy, 2000; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), emotional reactions to work (Marsella, 1994), and the impact of work on general forms of well-being (Kelloway & Barling, 1991; Warr, 1987), there has been little research on the contribution of work experiences to the onset and maintenance of depressive disorders. For example, a recent review of depression made little mention of risk factors, diagnosis and treatment of depression in the context of worklife (Richards & Perri, 2002).

Finally, it was hypothesized that all three dimensions of perfectionism would demonstrate incremental validity by predicting exhaustion, satisfaction with work, global job satisfaction, and depression symptoms once perceived job characteristics are controlled for. While perfectionistic traits likely have significant impacts on work-related adjustment in the context of trait-congruent job characteristics, prior research suggests that they may, on their own, lead to lower levels of work-related adjustment. The subjective experience of trait perfectionism includes a high frequency of automatic thoughts concerning the need to be perfect. These cognitions, alone, have been linked to psychological distress (Flett, Hewitt, Blankstein, & Gray, 1998). A similar analysis was planned with depression symptoms as the outcome variable. This was undertaken to demonstrate the impact that perfectionism may have on depression independent of job characteristic-related stressors.

## Method

### *Participants*

The total sample consisted of 279 employed Canadians who were working 20 or more hours per week. Of this total, 130 participants were continuing education students enrolled at York University. Eighty-three participants were employees of a human resources staffing and consulting firm that services the information technology sector. The remaining 66 participants were health care workers employed by non-profit organization supporting individuals with developmental disabilities.

The total sample was predominantly female (72%), married or co-habiting (67%), and had some college or university education (74%). Organizationally, most participants worked in the private sector (51%), occupied non-supervisory or non-management positions (65%), worked between 30 and 49 hours per week (76%) and earned between \$30,000 and \$59,999 gross income (54%). The majority of participants had been in their present job for more than 6 months (91%). The average participant age was 36.8 years. Multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs) were conducted to investigate group differences on variables slated for analysis. No significant differences were found for gender. Significant differences were found for participant source but were not substantive or

consistent enough across variables to warrant separate group analyses at this time. These differences will be investigated more thoroughly in a follow-up study<sup>1</sup>.

### *Materials and Procedure*

The data were collected through a battery of self-report questionnaires. The instruments are well-known and possess adequate psychometric properties. Three dimensions of perfectionism were measured using the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS; Hewitt et al., 1991). Six dimensions of perceived job characteristics were measured using a revision of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS; Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Idaszak & Drasgow, 1987). Three dimensions of burnout were assessed using the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MGI-GS; Schaufeli, Leiter, Maslach, & Jackson, 1996). The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D) was used to measure affective and somatic symptoms of depression (Radloff, 1977). The Job Descriptive Index was used to measure satisfaction with five facets of one's job (JDI; Balzer et al., 1997) while the Job in General scale was used to measure global job satisfaction (JIG; Ironson, Smith, Brannick, Gibson, & Paul, 1989)<sup>2</sup>.

Two methods of data collection were used. The student participants were recruited in classrooms. They completed a hard copy version of the battery at home and returned it the following week. Incentives included a cash lottery. The organizational participants completed a web version of the battery. Both versions of the battery take approximately 30 minutes to complete. Few significant differences were found among hard copy and web-based participants on the study variables.

## Results

Table 1 contains the means, standard deviations, coefficient alphas and zero-order correlations for all measures (see Appendix 'B'). The internal consistency levels are acceptable for all measures (mean alpha = 0.86). As expected, socially prescribed perfectionism demonstrated the most robust relationships with work adjustment variables, being positively-correlated with exhaustion, cynicism, and depression symptoms, and negatively-correlated with work, supervision, co-worker, and global satisfaction. Other-oriented perfectionism was also negatively-correlated with co-worker satisfaction.

Tables 2 through 5 contain the summary results of hierarchical regression analyses conducted to test hypotheses that job characteristics moderate perfectionism-work adjustment relationships. Socially prescribed perfectionism was a significant predictor of all adjustment outcomes. With respects to exhaustion and depression, socially prescribed perfectionism continued to be a significant predictor in the context of autonomy and feedback variables. Autonomy was a significant predictor of all adjustment outcomes after controlling for perfectionism dimensions. Autonomy and feedback from the job also emerged as independent predictors of depressive symptoms. No interaction block contributed significant variance to any of the equations<sup>3</sup>. However, self-oriented perfectionism-autonomy interactions were either significant or approached significance for exhaustion and depression symptoms.

<sup>1</sup> A third sample of part-time MBA students was also studied (n=116). Their results differed significantly from the current sample on a number of variables. Their results will be reported in a follow-up study.

<sup>2</sup> More information on select subscales and dimensions can be found in Appendix 'A'.

<sup>3</sup> Interaction blocks are not included in the tables.

Tables 6 through 9 contain the summary results of hierarchical regression analyses conducted to examine the incremental validity of perfectionism dimensions as predictors of adjustment outcomes after controlling for job characteristics. In this context, socially prescribed perfectionism emerged as a significant predictor of exhaustion, global job satisfaction, and depression symptoms. Dimensions of perfectionism were not significant predictors of satisfaction with work after controlling for job characteristics.

## Discussion

In general, the results suggest that socially prescribed perfectionism is a vulnerability factor in the experience of burnout, job dissatisfaction and depression. The link between socially prescribed perfectionism and exhaustion was expected. Due to their high need for approval and fear of negative evaluation (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b), individuals who are high on this dimension may come to overextend themselves in an on-going attempt to meet what they perceive as the unattainable standards of others. The link between this dimension and cynicism also makes intuitive sense. Cynicism represents an attempt to gain distance from one's job as a means of coping with exhaustion (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Since socially prescribed perfectionism is associated with perceiving others' standards and evaluations as harsh and uncontrollable, individuals who are high on this dimension may withdraw from their jobs in a cynical fashion in the attempt to minimize their negative affect. In general, concerns about lack of control and lack of recognition are prevalent among people who score highly on socially prescribed perfectionism. Considering that low-control and low-recognition jobs are viewed as ripe conditions for burnout, irrespective of personality (Cordes & Dougherty, 1993; Jackson et al., 1986), socially prescribed perfectionism may play a significant role in the exacerbating this syndrome.

The links between socially prescribed perfectionism and various forms of job satisfaction are not surprising. Socially prescribed perfectionism often entails perceptions of helplessness (Hewitt et al., 1992), which have further been linked to low levels of job satisfaction (Loher et al., 1985). Socially prescribed perfectionists may also be more prone to job dissatisfaction as a function of burnout, which has been identified as a precursor to job dissatisfaction (Wolpin, Burke, & Greenglass, 1991). Socially prescribed perfectionism appears especially relevant for co-worker and supervisor satisfaction. This is understandable, given that other people in the workplace are likely viewed as sources of perfectionistic standards. Since socially prescribed perfectionism is also associated with a maladaptive interpersonal style (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b), individuals who are high on this dimension may be dissatisfied with others as a function of lower-quality relationships. The association between other-oriented perfectionism and co-worker satisfaction may be similarly explained, since other-oriented perfectionism is associated with its own profile of negative interpersonal behaviours (Hewitt & Flett, 1991b). In general, individuals who are other-oriented are prone to experience loneliness and unsatisfactory relationships (Burns, 1983; Hollander, 1965).

The findings from regression analysis both solidified and clarified the nature of socially prescribed perfectionism's relationship to work adjustment outcomes. While this dimension is implicated with a number of adjustment outcomes, the results suggest that it has its most robust impacts on levels of exhaustion and depressive symptoms. Additionally, socially prescribed perfectionism appears to exert an influence on levels of exhaustion and depressive symptoms in a way that is not explained by perceptions of job

characteristics. This is noteworthy, given that socially prescribed perfectionism is correlated with perceived job characteristics (see Table 1). These findings would suggest that socially prescribed perfectionism is a unique or independent source of burnout and depression symptoms, at least in the context of the other measured variables. This supports past findings that socially prescribed perfectionism, as a main effect, has its own impacts on psychological distress (Flett et al., 1998). Additionally, with respect to depression, these findings help to demonstrate the part-whole relationship that each life domain has on life in general. That is, the unique effect of socially prescribed perfectionism on depression may represent the impact of unmeasured events and experiences that occur outside of the workplace<sup>4</sup>.

The findings on socially prescribed perfectionism and job satisfaction are more equivocal. Socially prescribed perfectionism predicted global job satisfaction, but not satisfaction with work itself when analyzed in the context of job characteristics. It may be ventured that global job satisfaction, as an affective reaction to one's job, may be lower among individuals with high levels of socially prescribed perfectionism due to higher levels of negative affect and dysphoria that typically accompany this dimension. Negative affect states may have the effect of colouring feelings of satisfaction more so than cognitive evaluations of one's job (Bower, 1981).

Currently, little can be said about the role of self-oriented perfectionism and work adjustment. It was hypothesized that this dimension would be correlated with levels of burnout, job satisfaction and depression symptoms. It was further hypothesized that this dimension would interact with autonomy and feedback perceptions to predict work adjustment outcomes. Although some weak interactions were detected, they were part of non-significant interaction blocks. At the very least, these isolated findings point to an area for further study with these variables.

The absence of effects for self-oriented perfectionism is not unusual. Past research has shown that self-oriented perfectionism leads to psychological distress primarily in the context of other state or experiential variables (Flett et al., 1991; Hewitt & Flett, 1993; Hewitt, Flett, & Endler, 1995). Although self-oriented perfectionism did not interact with autonomy and feedback in the present study, it may do so with other measured, as well as unmeasured job characteristics (e.g., Campion & Thayer, 1985). Additionally, since perceived job characteristics were chosen to represent proxies of negative events and experiences in the workplace, future research should entail the measurement of actual trait-congruent events and experiences. It is also possible that relationships among self-oriented perfectionism and levels of work adjustment are more substantive within certain populations. This will be investigated in a follow-up study based on some initial analyses with another sample. Many of these expectations for self-oriented perfectionism also hold for socially prescribed perfectionism, which also failed to interact with autonomy and feedback variables in the current study<sup>5</sup>.

The implications of this study are plentiful. However, only a few of these will be highlighted here. One over-arching implication concerns the finding that socially prescribed perfectionism has unique influence on levels of work adjustment. If socially prescribed perfectionism affects burnout, job dissatisfaction and workplace depression in a

<sup>4</sup> As well as other, unmeasured work events or experiences.

<sup>5</sup> It should also be pointed out that we tested only for moderated relationships. Prior studies have demonstrated that job characteristics also mediate personality-work adjustment relationships (Judge et al., 1998).

way that is relatively independent of job or work features, then potentially, the detection, treatment, and prevention of work-related adjustment problems should take this personality factor into consideration. For example, because socially prescribed perfectionism has so often been associated with only context-free forms of adjustment (e.g., anxiety, depression), clinicians may neglect to assess and treat a client based on his/her commensurate level of work adjustment (e.g., burnout). The failure to do so may lead to further erosion of the client's occupational and general mental health. At the very least, socially prescribed perfectionism should be treated in the full context of its impact on work, family and leisure.

From an organizational perspective, socially prescribed perfectionism should be considered as a context for understanding and detecting workplace depression. Increasingly, managers are being taught to recognize symptoms of depression among their staff (Johnson & Indvik, 1997). This information could be supplemented with information on depressogenic personality traits such as socially prescribed perfectionism to round out the profile of the typical 'depressed worker'. Given that depression tends to be underdiagnosed in the workplace and abroad (Hirschfeld et al., 1997) this additional information may assist concerned managers and co-workers in identifying and addressing colleagues that are in need of employee assistance or other forms of counseling.

Understanding socially prescribed perfectionism as a vulnerability factor in work adjustment may also inform the therapeutic modalities and interventions that are used to treat these problems within employee assistance programs. Specifically, since dimensions of perfectionism is considered to be cognitive vulnerability factors in anxiety and depression, there may be some value in administering cognitive-behavioural forms of therapy in the context of employee assistance (e.g., Beck et al., 1979). Although there are a number of treatment considerations associated with perfectionism (Flett & Hewitt, 2002), CBT has shown some efficacy in this area (Ferguson & Rodway, 1994).

Finally, by increasing awareness of the traits that are associated with levels of burnout, job dissatisfaction, and workplace depression, human resource managers may design talent management systems that are partially aimed at reducing or preventing these problem states. A profile for socially prescribed perfectionism may be identified on standard personality inventories that are used for generating personnel decisions (e.g., 16PF; Russell & Karol, 1994). While it may not be advisable to use such profiles for selection and outplacement, they may be used to help place recent hires in positions or on teams that provide the best fit. For example, recent hires who are high on socially prescribed perfectionism may excel in environments where performance feedback is clear and frequent (as well as fair and constructive). Awareness of traits may also inform the need to re-design jobs and engage in more comprehensive organizational development to be better accommodate employees who possess these traits. This may be especially relevant for occupations, sectors and/or industries that typically attract and employ a large number of individuals with perfectionistic tendencies.

The importance of understanding and addressing burnout, dissatisfaction, and depression in the workplace does not stem entirely from humanistic concerns. Studies are quickly mounting to show the deleterious effect that these states have on organizational effectiveness. Burnout and satisfaction have proven costly to organizations through eroded performance, higher absenteeism, and turnover (Harter, Schmidt, & Keyes, 2003; Harter, Schmidt, & Hayes, 2002; Lee & Ashforth, 1996). Depression, in particular, has been estimated to cost the North American economy billions of dollars each year in lost

productivity (Finkelstein, Berndt, Greenberg, 1995). Much of these costs are shouldered by employers (Hirschfeld et al., 1997). Although the effect sizes from this and other studies may be small to moderate at best, past studies shows that even small research effects can translate into substantive financial impacts on governments and organizations (Abelson, 1985; Sechrest & Yeaton, 1982).

## Conclusion

The current study provides initial evidence for the role of perfectionism in work maladjustment. Specifically, socially prescribed perfectionism has been established as a potential vulnerability factor in burnout, job dissatisfaction, and depression in the work context. The relationship of this dimension of perfectionism to burnout and depression symptoms were especially robust. Furthermore, the impact of socially prescribed perfectionism on adjustment outcomes was evident both when observed alone and in concert with perceptions of relevant job characteristics. This singular impact suggests that socially prescribed perfectionism may warrant closer attention in the detection, treatment and prevention of workplace adjustment. Future research will be undertaken to examine this and other dimensions of perfectionism in the context of other job and work variables and in specific employee populations. In general, the study addressed limitations of past research, including a dearth of studies on perfectionism and burnout, and the need to study a wider range of personality variables in the context of job satisfaction.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Select Instrument Subscales and Dimensions

<b>Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS)</b>	
<i>Skill Variety</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The degree to which a job requires the performance of a variety of different activities and enables the employee to apply a wide range of personal skills and talents.</li> </ul>
<i>Task Identity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The degree to which a job requires the employee to complete a whole, identifiable piece of work from beginning to end.</li> </ul>
<i>Task Significance</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which a job has significant impact on the lives or work of others.</li> </ul>
<i>Autonomy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The degree to which a job allows freedom and independence such as determining procedures and scheduling work.</li> </ul>
<i>Feedback from the Job Itself</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The extent to which engaging in job activities provides clear and direct feedback regarding effectiveness.</li> </ul>
<i>Feedback from Agents</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The degree to which employees receive clear feedback about their effectiveness from supervisors or co-workers.</li> </ul>
<b>Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey (MBI-GS)</b>	
<i>Exhaustion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feelings of emotional and physical fatigue, overextension, and exhaustion from one's work.</li> </ul>
<i>Cynicism</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An indifference or distant attitude towards one's work.</li> </ul>
<i>Professional Efficacy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual expectations of continued effectiveness at work.</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Tables

Table 1  
Intercorrelations and Coefficient Alphas  
for Measures of Perfectionism, Job  
Characteristics, Burnout, Job  
Satisfaction and Depression

	Mean	S.D.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.
1. Self-Oriented Perf	71.85	14.61	<b>87</b>																		
2. Other-Oriented Perf	60.66	12.51	59	<b>79</b>																	
3. Socially-Prescribed Perf	51.10	13.33	47	41	<b>83</b>																
4. Skill Variety	5.33	1.47	-02	-10	-13	<b>85</b>															
5. Task Identity	4.92	1.49	06	03	-05	25	<b>81</b>														
6. Task Significance	5.73	1.21	00	-09	-08	64	14	<b>80</b>													
7. Autonomy	5.57	1.20	04	-07	-17	54	28	52	<b>82</b>												
8. Feedback-Job	4.98	1.28	-02	-03	-16	43	50	41	45	<b>82</b>											
9. Feedback-Agents	4.23	1.60	02	00	-19	27	20	24	29	42	<b>91</b>										
10. Exhaustion	2.49	1.44	07	07	27	-17	-08	-24	-26	-21	-15	<b>90</b>									
11. Cynicism	1.95	1.50	05	11	26	-48	-12	-50	-46	-37	-30	59	<b>87</b>								
12. Professional Efficacy	1.08	0.83	-11	00	15	-48	-22	-53	-47	-44	-25	21	42	<b>75</b>							
13. Satisfaction with Work	38.84	14.22	-06	-12	-20	74	25	64	61	48	38	-35	-67	-52	<b>92</b>						
14. Satisfaction with Pay	29.35	16.59	-05	-02	-12	12	15	09	27	16	11	-20	-18	-03	23	<b>86</b>					
15. Satisfaction with Promotion	18.95	15.17	-06	-06	-06	23	19	13	21	23	33	-28	-37	-14	34	35	<b>86</b>				
16. Satisfaction with Supervision	38.68	14.00	-03	-05	-24	20	17	13	31	27	51	-29	-31	-22	33	31	33	<b>91</b>			
17. Satisfaction with Co-Workers	38.91	12.46	-12	-22	-28	35	19	34	34	28	33	-37	-44	-32	52	31	33	43	<b>89</b>		
18. Global Job Satisfaction	40.89	13.24	-01	-09	-21	57	21	57	57	37	35	-43	-63	-47	75	35	38	45	64	<b>94</b>	
19. Depression	10.40	9.50	04	05	32	-31	-24	-33	-32	-29	-16	51	47	36	-39	-24	-16	-18	-33	-41	<b>92</b>
			1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.

Note. N = 279. Coefficient alphas are presented along the diagonals. Decimals of *r*s omitted.  
For  $r_s \geq |0.12|$ ,  $p < 0.05$  (two-tailed);  $r_s \geq |0.16|$ ,  $p < 0.01$  (two-tailed);  $r_s \geq |0.21|$ ,  $p < 0.001$  (two-tailed).

Table 2.  
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Perfectionism, Job Characteristics, and Perfectionism x Job Characteristics Interactions Predicting Exhaustion

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.08	
Self-oriented Perf	-.01	.01	-.07		
Socially Prescribed Perf	.03	.01	.30***		
Step 2				.13	.05
Self-oriented Perf	-.00	.01	-.03		
Socially Prescribed Perf	.03	.01	.24***		
Autonomy	-.22	.08	-.18**		
Feedback-Job	-.10	.08	-.09		
Feedback-Agents	-.02	.06	-.02		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 3.  
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Perfectionism, Job Characteristics, and Perfectionism x Job Characteristics Interactions Predicting Satisfaction with Work Itself

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.04	
Self-oriented Perf	.04	.07	.05		
Socially Prescribed Perf	-.24	.07	-.22***		
Step 2				.45	.41
Self-oriented Perf	-.06	.05	-.06		
Socially Prescribed Perf	-.03	.06	-.03		
Autonomy	5.56	.61	.47***		
Feedback-Job	2.21	.59	.20***		
Feedback-Agents	1.39	.45	.16**		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 4.  
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Perfectionism, Job Characteristics, and Perfectionism x Job Characteristics Interactions Predicting Global Job Satisfaction

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.06	
Self-oriented Perf	.10	.06	.11		
Socially Prescribed Perf	-.26	.07	-.27***		
Step 2				.37	.32
Self-oriented Perf	.01	.05	.01		
Socially Prescribed Perf	-.10	.06	-.10		
Autonomy	5.19	.60	.47***		
Feedback-Job	.79	.59	.08		
Feedback-Agents	1.33	.45	.16**		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 5.  
Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Perfectionism, Job Characteristics, and Perfectionism x Job Characteristics Interactions Predicting Depression Symptoms

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.12	
Self-oriented Perf	-.09	.04	-.14*		
Socially Prescribed Perf	.27	.05	.38***		
Step 2				.20	.09
Self-oriented Perf	-.06	.04	-.10		
Socially Prescribed Perf	.22	.05	.31***		
Autonomy	-1.54	.49	-.19**		
Feedback-Job	-1.22	.48	-.17*		
Feedback-Agents	.13	.36	.02		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 6.  
 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Job Characteristics and Perfectionism  
 Predicting Exhaustion

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.10	
Skill Variety	.08	.09	.08		
Task Identity	.03	.07	.03		
Task Significance	-.18	.10	-.15		
Autonomy	-.21	.09	-.18*		
Feedback-Job	-.12	.09	-.10		
Feedback-Agents	-.03	.06	-.04		
Step 2				.15	.05
Skill Variety	.08	.08	.08		
Task Identity	.018	.07	.02		
Task Significance	-.19	.10	-.17*		
Autonomy	-.17	.09	-.15		
Feedback-Job	-.09	.09	-.08		
Feedback-Agents	-.01	.06	-.01		
Self-oriented Perf	.00	.01	-.02		
Other-Oriented Perf	.00	.01	-.03		
Socially Prescribed Perf	.03	.01	.25***		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 7.  
 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Job Characteristics and Perfectionism  
 Predicting Satisfaction with Work Itself

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.66	
Skill Variety	4.28	.48	.44***		
Task Identity	.01	.40	.00		
Task Significance	2.30	.58	.20***		
Autonomy	2.37	.54	.20***		
Feedback-Job	.76	.53	.07		
Feedback-Agents	1.12	.35	.13**		
Step 2				.66	.01
Skill Variety	4.23	.48	.44***		
Task Identity	.07	.40	.01		
Task Significance	2.34	.58	.20***		
Autonomy	2.34	.54	.20***		
Feedback-Job	.67	.53	.06		
Feedback-Agents	1.08	.36	.12**		
Self-oriented Perf	-.04	.05	-.04		
Other-Oriented Perf	-.01	.05	-.01		
Socially Prescribed Perf	-.04	.05	-.04		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 8.  
 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Job Characteristics and Perfectionism  
 Predicting Global Job Satisfaction

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.48	
Skill Variety	2.05	.55	.23***		
Task Identity	.21	.45	.02		
Task Significance	2.73	.66	.25***		
Autonomy	3.10	.62	.28***		
Feedback-Job	-.32	.61	-.03		
Feedback-Agents	1.25	.40	.15**		
Step 2				.49	.01
Skill Variety	2.02	.55	.23***		
Task Identity	.24	.46	.03		
Task Significance	2.81	.66	.26***		
Autonomy	2.94	.62	.27***		
Feedback-Job	-.40	.61	-.04		
Feedback-Agents	1.13	.41	.14**		
Self-oriented Perf	.02	.05	.03		
Other-Oriented Perf	.00	.06	.00		
Socially Prescribed Perf	-.11	.05	-.11*		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001

Table 9.  
 Hierarchical Regression Analysis Summary for Job Characteristics and Perfectionism  
 Predicting Depression Symptoms

Variable	<u>B</u>	<u>seB</u>	<u>β</u>	r <sup>2</sup>	Δ r <sup>2</sup>
Step 1				.17	
Skill Variety	-.38	.50	-.06		
Task Identity	-.83	.41	-.13*		
Task Significance	-1.38	.60	-.18*		
Autonomy	-1.00	.56	-.13		
Feedback-Job	-.49	.55	-.07		
Feedback-Agents	-.09	.37	-.02		
Step 2				.25	.08
Skill Variety	-.33	.48	-.05		
Task Identity	-.88	.39	-.14*		
Task Significance	-1.58	.57	-.20**		
Autonomy	-.68	.54	-.09		
Feedback-Job	-.32	.53	-.04		
Feedback-Agents	.19	.35	.03		
Self-oriented Perf	-.03	.05	-.05		
Other-Oriented Perf	-.07	.05	-.09		
Socially Prescribed Perf	.24	.05	.34***		

n = 279; \* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001