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## Adaptive or maladaptive perfectionism? The analysis of correlates of the PWSS of the Working Excessively Questionnaire (WEQ)

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### Abstract

This article presents the results of correlation studies on the Perfectionist Working Style Scale (PWSS) of the Working Excessively Questionnaire (WEQ), developed by Hornowska and Paluchowski (2007). The items of PWSS do not relate to consequences of excessive workload or work addiction, as much as to potential causes of these phenomena. The items pertain to a person's way / style of preparing and conducting work activities, which is characterized by a person's excessive strive for excellence. The aim of the study was to investigate the psychological correlates of the perfectionist working style. We formulated hypotheses that apply to the relationship between PWSS and constructs such as self-esteem, locus of control, temperamental traits, hope for success and need for achievement.

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## **Streszczenie**

W niniejszym artykule zaprezentowano wyniki badań korelacyjnych nad skalą Perfekcjonistyczny Styl Pracy (PSP) Kwestionariusza Objawowego Nadmiernego Obciążania się Pracą (KONOP) autorstwa Hornowskiej i Paluchowskiego (2007). PSP to skala obejmująca te pozycje kwestionariusza, które odnoszą się treściowo nie tyle do skutków obciążania się pracą, czy uzależnienia od pracy, ale do niektórych potencjalnych przyczyn tych zjawisk. Twierdzenia dotyczą sposobu / stylu przygotowywania i wykonywania czynności związanych z pracą, który odznacza się przesadnym dążeniem do doskonałości. Celem przeprowadzonych badań było określenie psychologicznych korelatów perfekcjonistycznego stylu pracy. Sformułowano i testowano hipotezy dotyczące związków PSP z miarami: samooceny, poczucia umiejscowienia kontroli, wymiarów temperamentu, nadziei na sukces oraz motywacji osiągnięć.

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The Working Excessively Questionnaire is an instrument to measure the excessive workload. It includes both causes and risk factors, as well as potential consequences of this phenomenon. The final version of the questionnaire is a result of the research carried out in the years 2001-2013 (Hornowska, Paluchowski, 2007, 2013; Paluchowski, Hornowska, 2003, 2013).

The instrument consists of 65 items. Based on the results of the factor analysis and the content of individual items, we have proposed the following four scales of the Working Excessively Questionnaire:

- 1) Lack of Control Over Work Scale - LCWS
- 2) Perfectionist Working Style Scale - PWSS
- 3) General Beliefs About Work Scale - GBWS
- 4) Perceived Oppressiveness of the Organization Scale – POOS

The Perfectionist Working Style Scale consists of 18 items; its content do not relate to consequences of excessive workload or work addiction, as much as to potential causes of these phenomena. The items pertain to a person's way / style of preparing and conducting work-related activities, which is characterized by a person's excessive strive for excellence.

We have distinguished three clusters for the Perfectionist Working Style Scale (see Figure 1) by conducting content analysis of individual scales (see: Hornowska, Paluchowski, 2013):

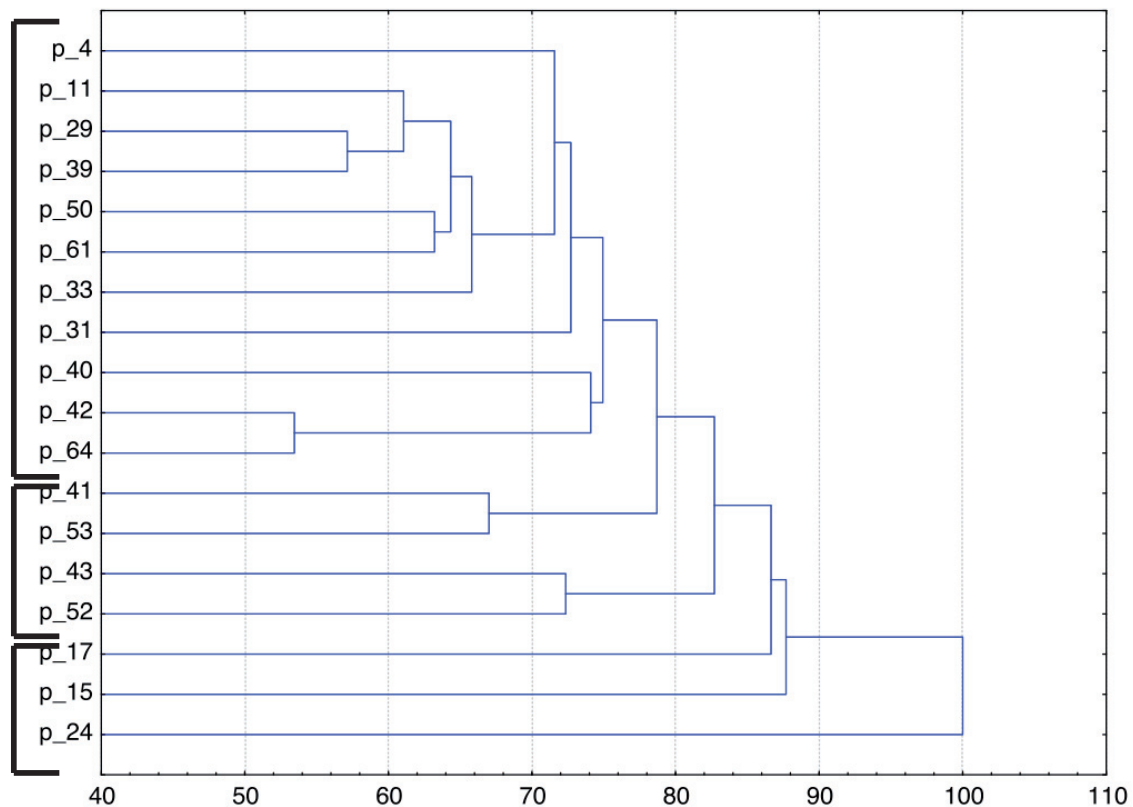


Figure 1. Horizontal Hierarchical Tree Plot of Euclidian Distances between items in Perfectionist Working Style Scale (linkage rule: unweighted pair-group method average)

- PWSS\_1 Non-delegation of tasks
- PWSS\_2 Strive for excellence
- PWSS\_3 Work and workplace planning

Individuals with a constant strive for excellence, which may manifest itself at work, are detail oriented when planning and carrying out professional activities; thus, they will obtain high scores on the PWSS. Consequently, excessive attention to detail and order in their workplace, as well as the desire to perform allocated tasks at the highest level, regardless of the tasks' type, may make optimal realization of their goals difficult.

Another important element of the perfectionist working style is an egotistic self-reliance and person's self presentation as a model employee in all work-related situations. Such individuals often find teamwork and delegating tasks difficult. Their strive for control and the belief that they alone can perform these tasks in the best possible way may make their cooperation with others impossible.

Although the perfectionist working style alone does not indicate work addiction, it can be considered a risk factor for it. By aiming for the best possible result and by self-oriented perfectionism, individuals characterized by excessive strive for excellence may choose to work excessively, of their own accord.

In research carried out on a sample of 2658 individuals, the results of the PWSS showed a satisfactory level of the internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83$ ) and correlations of individual items where the total score ranged between 0.21 and 0.56.

## **Hypotheses**

To investigate the psychological correlates of the perfectionist working style, we formulated the following hypotheses:

*H.1: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their high perceived self-control.*

Perfectionism at work manifests itself, among other things, in egotistic self-reliance and person's self presentation as a model employee. Therefore, it can be assumed that perfectionists will perceive themselves as disciplined, self-controlled and capable of controlling their impulses, which allows them to meet their self-imposed performance standards relating professional activities. Research on perfectionism as a personality trait demonstrated some relationships with the level of self-control, as positive correlations (Tangney, Baumeister, Boone, 2004; Trumpeter, Watson, O'Leary, 2006).

*H.2: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their internal locus of control*

Locus of control, described by J. Rotter (1966), stems from perception of a causal relationship between one's actions and their direct or indirect consequences. Individuals with internal LOC have a sense of control over their lives and their future. Perfectionism at work may be associated with a desire to control oneself and others; thus, we assumed that perfectionists will demonstrate internal locus of control; and that corresponds with the directions in research on adaptive perfectionism (see, e.g.: Periasamy, Ashby, 2002; Suddarth, Slaney, 2001).

*H.3: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their high need for achievement*

The need for achievement (McClelland, 1961; Murray, 1938) is the strive to achieve a distant goal that is difficult to accomplish and requires high determi-

nation and raised standards. Individuals characterized by the need for achievement undertake difficult tasks of which the results are uncertain and difficult to predict. A motive to avoid failure describes what lies at the opposite end of this continuum. Individuals whose characteristics fall near this end do not take risks and prefer less complicated tasks with a more easily predictable outcome; however, these tasks are less gratifying. Taking into consideration the tendencies of individuals with perfectionist working style, we assumed that they can be distinguished by their high need for achievement.

*H.4: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their high hope for success*

The hope for success (Snyder, 2002) is a positive motivational state, associated with the way an individual copes with difficult situations. It is based on a perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, as well as on personal agency, which helps to bring a person's activity to completion. On one hand, these beliefs pertain to the ability to find solutions, on the other hand - to perseverance in working towards solutions. Perfectionist working style is associated, among other things, with self-reliance and confidence in one's skills and experience; thus, we assumed that individuals who manifest this style will demonstrate high hope for success.

*H.5: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their high activity*

The hypothesis about the relationship of the perfectionist working style and a temperamental trait - activity - was formed on the basis of the previous research performed with an older version of the WEQ (Hornowska, Paluchowski, 2007; Paluchowski, Hornowska, 2003). It demonstrated a significant positive correlation of PWSS with activity as measured by EAS temperament questionnaire ( $r = 0.38, p \leq 0.001$ ). As individuals with perfectionist inclinations are reluctant to delegate tasks, they will burden themselves with a large amount of work for which they may be predisposed due to their high activity. Therefore, we can expect a repeated confirmation of this hypothesis.

## **Participants**

In research on correlates of all WEQ scales, a total of 252 individuals were tested, 76 of whom did not provide complete demographic data. Participants completed different sets of questionnaires in paper version. Each set consisted of a WEQ and additional measures, which were matched with regard to the number

of items, as well as time and cognitive effort required to complete them. This procedure was strictly followed to prevent any potential artifact stemming from the characteristics of the tested sample; participants allocated their sets randomly.<sup>5</sup>

## **Measures**

Apart from the Working Excessively Questionnaire, the study used the following measures.

### *Multidimensional Self-esteem Inventory (MSEI)*

MSEI, developed by E. J. O'Brien and S. Epstein (1988) and adapted to Polish by Fecenec (2008) is a multidimensional questionnaire to measure self-esteem, which is understood as evaluative, affectively saturated beliefs about oneself. It consists of 116 items in 11 scales (O'Brien, Epstein, 1988; Fecenec, 2008):

- Global Self-esteem (10 items): global self-concept constituting self-description on a meta-level

Components of self-esteem (eight particular areas):

- (a) Competence (10 items) – evaluation of one's skills and efficacy
- (b) Lovability (10 items) – evaluation of forming of intimate relationships
- (c) Likability (10 items) – evaluation of being liked by others
- (d) Personal Power (10 items) – evaluation of one's ability to direct people and influence their behavior
- (e) Self-control (10 items) – evaluation of one's perseverance and ability to control impulses and emotions
- (f) Moral Self-Approval (10 items) – evaluation of the level of agreement between one's professed values and their application in life
- (g) Body Appearance (10 items) – evaluation of one's appearance and sexual attractiveness
- (h) Body Functioning (10 items) – evaluation of one's health and physical fitness
- (i) Identity Integration (10 items) – sense of coherence, having control over one's life in different areas and the effectiveness of self-esteem

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<sup>5</sup> The sizes of the samples tested for individual hypotheses will differ, due to the followed procedure.

- (j) Defensive Self-Enhancement (10 items) – tendency to worry excessively about one’s image in the society, combined with frequent self-presentation in a self-aggrandizing way, and individual’s seeking acceptance from others

Subject responds on the five-point scale. Raw score is computed by summing up points for every answer. Fifty-seven items are reversed – results must be converted by the formula (1 = 5, 2 = 4, 3 = 3, 4 = 2, 5 = 1). In ten scales, score ranges from 10 to 50, in DSE scale minimal score is 16 and maximal is 80. Even though, we used raw score in the study, for diagnostic purposes it should be converted into the sten scale.

High score on the Global Self-Esteem Scale and in each component of the Self-Esteem Scale indicates that individuals have positive feelings about their competencies. Low score, on the other hand, suggests negative self-evaluation in each of these areas.

High score on Identity Integration Scale indicates consistent identity and a sense of control over the individual’s life. Individuals with low scores have problems with defining their own identity, do not always know what they aim for and have difficulty with decision making.

High score on Defensive Self-Enhancement Scale indicates a tendency to seek social approval and show one’s self in a positive light. Low scores suggest that individuals do not succumb to social influence, are independence and show no tendency to defensive self-enhancement.

#### *Internal-External Locus of Control at Work Scale*

Gliszczyńska’s (1984, 1990) questionnaire measures locus of control, a construct introduced by J. Ratter (1966) and associated with a skill situation (internal locus of control) or a chance situation (external locus of control). Rotter’s assumption “that the influence of generalized experiences decreases, as the number of experiences in a particular given situation increases” (Gliszczyńska, 1984) was the conceptual principle for the construction of the two scales. That is why locus of control associated with the work situation may differ from general locus of control. Scale consists of two sub-scales:

- (a) General Beliefs (GB)
- (b) Work Situation (WS)

GB scale consists of 12, and WS scale of 13 items. Every item contains 2 opposite statements that refer to Rotter’s established predictions regarding a particular situation (WS) and a general situation (GB); both are based on life experience. Sub-scale score is computed by summing up points for every answer (0-12 for

GB, 0-13 for WS) - answers are scored towards internal locus of control. In our study, we used raw score for both sub-scales.

High score on GB scale indicates a persons' belief that the world is righteous, understandable, easy, orderly and simple. Low score indicates quite the opposite.

Score on WS scale is associated with beliefs regarding self-efficacy at work. High score indicates that an individual perceives efficacy highly and shares an opinion that satisfactory results come from hard work. Low score is associated with an opinion that success does not arise from hard work, an individual has no influence on the organization, its climate or superiors' judgement, and that eventually results in person's submission to others.

#### *Temperament Survey for Adults (EAS-TS)*

A questionnaire developed by Arnold H. Buss and Robert Plomin, (1984) and adapted to Polish by Włodzimierz Oniszczenko (1997), measures temperament as a complex of genetically inherited traits, which may manifest already in early childhood. The instrument measures three basic traits: Emotionality (and its components - distress, fear, and anger), Activity and Sociability. Emotionality is linked to arousal of autonomic nervous system - responsiveness of sympathetic nervous system and the speed of inducing a physiological response, regardless of what emotion it applies to: distress, fear, anger. Activity is associated with behavior, physical energy and motor activities (on a continuum from stillness to energetic behavior). The components of activity are tempo (of activity - fast walking, running, speaking) and vigor (strength and intensity of reactions - loud laughter, loud walk, strong push while opening the door). Sociability is a tendency to seek contact with other people; it results in organizing activities that allow the individual to be surrounded by as many people as possible and to establish social interactions. A desire to be around people and avoid loneliness is the main motivation here.

Questionnaire consists of 5 scales:

- (a) Emotionality - distress
- (b) Emotionality - fear
- (c) Emotionality - anger
- (d) Activity
- (e) Sociability

Instrument contains 20 items (4 per each scale) concerning a person's behavior. Answers are scored from 1 to 5 (1- "totally disagree" 5 - "totally agree"),



towards, and sometimes away from higher level of trait (in the latter case one should reverse the score). Scale score is computed by summing up points for every answer (from 4 to 20). We used raw score in the study, however, for diagnostic purposes one should convert it into the sten scale.

High score on the sub-scales of Emotionality is linked to high responsiveness of sympathetic nervous system and high speed of inducing physiological response to stimuli. Additionally, high score on E-D, E-F, or E-A scale indicates the tendency to respond with distress, fear, or anger in most situation. Low score indicates low emotional responsiveness. High score on the Activity Scale indicates a high level of behavioral arousal (tempo and vigor) while performing daily activities. It can also indicate high need for tension release. Low score is linked to individuals who reduce their range and speed of activity. High score on the Sociability Scale indicates a tendency to seek contact with others, strong perception of social reinforcements, and low tolerance to loneliness. Individuals with high sociability tend to seek stimulation. Low on the S scale is linked to stimulation avoidance.

#### *The Formal Characteristics of Behavior - Temperament Inventory (FCB-TI)*

Inventory FCB, developed by Bogdan Zawadzki i Jan Strelau (1997), measures temperament. They based their concept on the Regulative Theory of Temperament (RTT) which presents temperament as a set of relatively stable personality traits that manifest mostly through the formal characteristics of behavior in its temporal and energetic aspects (Strelau, Zawadzki, 1993; Zawadzki, Strelau, 1997, p.12). The energetic aspects include Sensory Sensitivity - the sensitivity to environmental stimuli that include emotional stimuli and perceptiveness; Emotional Reactivity - that indicates emotional arousability, responsiveness of sympathetic nervous system and the level of tolerance to distress; Endurance - the ability to adapt to adverse circumstances and to continue the undertaken activity in highly stimulating environment; Activity - tendency to seek stimulation and highly involving and stimulating tasks. The temporal aspects include: Briskness - tendency to react quickly and maintain a high tempo of activity; Perseverance - tendency to relive stimuli which no longer affects the person.

Inventory FCB contains 6 scales corresponding to aspects of temperament described above:

- (a) Sensory Sensitivity
- (b) Emotional Reactivity
- (c) Endurance

- (d) Activity
- (e) Briskness
- (f) Perseverance

Instrument consists of 120 items (20 per scale) concerning formal aspects of behavior, individual responds either “yes” or “no” to all the items. Every scale score ranges from 0 to 20. The items are positively and negatively keyed. We used raw score in the study, however, for diagnostic purposes one should convert it into the stanine scale.

High score on the Sensory Sensitivity Scale indicates high responsiveness to sensory and emotional stimuli and high alertness. Low score is linked to low levels of these abilities. High score on the Emotional Reactivity Scale is linked to low arousal threshold and low inhibition of impulses. Individuals with a high level of ER tend to manifest uncontrolled, emotional reactions, and experience severe tension in stressful situations. Low score indicates lower excitability and higher stability. High score on the Endurance Scale is linked to the ability to adapt to highly demanding and stimulating environment. Individuals with high endurance tend to work excessively and efficiently under adverse conditions. Low score indicates low ability to endure high stimulation. High score on the Activity Scale indicates that person seeks high stimulation, has the tendency to take a risk, and shows impulsive behavior. Individuals obtaining a high score on AC scale are searching for sources of stimuli to maintain an optimal level of arousal while having a high level of impulse inhibition. Low score is connected to a decreasing tempo and range of person’s activity. High score on the Briskness Scale is linked to adaptiveness and resiliency at a high tempo activity. It is also associated with high impulse control. Low score indicates a low level of the above abilities.

Individuals who obtain a high score on the Perseverance Scale tend to re-live stimuli which no longer affects them. It is associated with parasympathetic nervous system and low level of impulse inhibition. High score indicates that a person keeps looking back and ruminates over past events, is hesitant and emotionally unstable. Low score is linked to stability and optimal level of impulse inhibition.

#### *The Hope Scale*

The Hope Scale was developed by C.R Snyder (2002) and adapted to Polish by Łaguna, Trzebiński and Zięba (2005). It is a questionnaire that measures the hope for success and is based on C.R Snyder’s (2002; Snyder et al., 1991) Hope Theory.

Hope is a positive motivational state that bases on two types of beliefs (Łaguna, Trzebiński, Zięba, 2005, p. 5-7):

- First: a belief in the ability to complete undertaken tasks despite any obstacles, fatigue and doubt. It is called the belief in person's agency.
- Second: a perception of self as competent and able to complete the intended tasks effectively. It is known as the capability to derive pathways to desired goals.

The questionnaire consists of 12 items: 4 measure agency, 4 measure capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and 4 serve as buffer items. Subject responds on the eight-point scale. Raw score is computed by summing up points for every answer (total score) and each separate component - Agency and Pathways. Total score ranges from 8 to 64. We used raw score in the study, however, for diagnostic purposes one should convert it into the sten scale. High score indicates a person's high hope for success.

High level of hope positively correlates with positive emotions, good mood, psychological adjustment, declaration of higher self-esteem (when compared to individuals with lower level of hope), lower level of depression, better social functioning: quality of relationships, positive attitude towards relationships, social competencies, tolerance, perception of social support, as well as higher academic achievements for students and better coping with illnesses.

#### *Need for Achievement Questionnaire*

Need for Achievement Questionnaire was developed by Widerszal-Bazyl (1978); it is an instrument to measure the need for achievement as opposed to the motive to avoid failure. By answering the 20 of the questionnaire, one can score between the minimum of 21 and a maximum of 100 points (each response is scored according to the key – from 1 to 5 points). Total score is calculated by summing up the points received for every answer. High score indicates high need for achievement and low tendency to avoid failure.

Individuals characterized by a high need for achievement prefer tasks with moderate levels of risk, raise their aspirations after success and lower them after a failure; they also engage in activities and tend to exaggerate their expectations of success.

Individuals characterized by their high motive to avoid failure choose tasks which are either too easy or too difficult, lower their aspirations after success, tend to procrastinate completing their tasks, underestimate their chances of success and tend to be submissive.

## Results and Discussion

### *H.1 Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their high perception of self-control*

To test the hypothesis about the relationship of perfectionism at work with self-control, we calculated correlations of the scores on the PWSS and its sub-scales with the results from the S scale of the MSEI.

The hypothesis was tested on a sample of  $N = 69$  individuals, in the age range of 21 to 58 years ( $M = 30$ ,  $SD = 8.3$ ). The data did not confirm the predicted relationship; correlations were found to be insignificant: for PWSS and S  $r = 0.78$ ,  $p = 0.53$ ; PWSS\_1 and S  $r = 0.56$ ,  $p = 0.65$ ; PWSS\_2 and S  $r = 0.56$ ,  $p = 0.64$ ; PWSS\_3 and S  $r = 0.10$ ,  $p = 0.4$ . Thus, the assumed relationship may exist only in case of the extreme perfectionists as compared to individuals with low levels of perfectionism at work. In order to test this hypothesis we dichotomized the results for the PWSS and its sub-scales into “low” and “high,” relative to the third quartile. We then conducted the Levene’s homogeneity of variance test. As the variance was found to be homogeneous in both groups (Levene’s  $F_{68} = 0.64$ ,  $p = 0.43$ ), a one-way analysis of variance was used. Similarly, as in the case of correlations, the assumed hypothesis was not confirmed ( $F_{68} = 0.96$ ,  $p = 0.33$ ).

However, significant correlations were noted for perfectionism and other dimensions of self-esteem (see Table 1), which can be significant for a construction of a complete image of a person with perfectionist attitude towards work activities.

By interpreting these results, we can conclude that individuals with a perfectionist working style perceive themselves as competent, effective and adapting

**Table 1.** Coefficients of correlation between PWSS and MSEI Sub-Scales

		PWSS	PWSS_1	PWSS_2	PWSS_3
Competence	Coefficients $r$	0,35	0,29	0,24	0,38
	$p$ values	0,003	0,015	0,051	0,001
Personal Power	Coefficients $r$	0,27	0,25	0,16	0,25
	$p$ values	0,023	0,038	0,175	0,038
Moral Self-Approval	Coefficients $r$	0,13	0,03	0,14	0,28
	$p$ values	0,309	0,834	0,257	0,019
Body Appearance	Coefficients $r$	0,2	0,18	0,25	0,05
	$p$ values	0,100	0,136	0,038	0,707

well to current demands. They believe that they possess personal power, have genuine influence on other people in their work environment and perceive themselves as authority figures. Therefore, it seems that we should seek the connection to their reluctance in delegating tasks and relying mostly on their own experience and knowledge which may result in excessive workload and, consequently, loss of control over work (see: Burke, Davis, Flett, 2008). Also, the correlation between the PWSS\_3 sub-scale with moral self-approval seems interesting. Therefore, we can assume that the fondness for order and planning that apply to all work activities, as well as the entire career, accompany the fondness for order in the ethical and moral dimension. Strive for excellence is associated with body appearance and people's attention to their own appearance; it is indicated by items of the PWSS\_2 sub-scale.

Summarizing the results of correlations between perfectionism at work and dimensions of self-esteem, we can conclude that strive for excellence, fondness for order, detailed oriented analyses before the performance of work tasks, as well as having confidence in self and personal professional experience, may manifest general perfectionist tendencies (see: e.g. Hill et al., 2004; Stobel, 1998) as indicated by their relationships with body appearance and moral self-approval. Setting high standards for oneself and constant self-development will characterize perfectionist individuals, both at work and outside work. The obtained results allow us to infer that most likely it is not a maladaptive perfectionism (Szczycka, 2010), with the indications being the neurotic concerns about failure, lability of self-esteem (Bieling, Israeli, Antony, 2004; Saboonchi, Lundh, 1997), and doubts regarding personal actions (Atroszko, 2010).

#### *H.2: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their internal locus of control*

To verify the hypothesis about the relationship of perfectionism at work with the locus of control, we calculated Pearson's  $r$  coefficient for the results of the PWSS and its three sub-scales, the results of the General Beliefs and Work Situation scales of the Internal-External Locus of Control at Work Scale.

89 individuals, in the age range of 19 to 59 ( $M = 31$ ,  $SD = 7.62$ ), participated in the study. Correlations were found to be insignificant (see Table 2), and thus, we concluded that there was no linear relationship between the perfectionist working style and locus of control.

Next, we tested the hypothesis about the non-linear relationship between the LOC and the PWSS since it can be assumed that placing on the extreme ends of the LOC continuum may be associated with two types of perfectionism. Individuals with the extreme external locus of control may manifest the maladaptive

**Table 2.** Coefficients of correlation between PWSS and I-E Scale

		PWSS	PWSS_1	PWSS_2	PWSS_3
General Beliefs	Coefficients <i>r</i>	-0,029	0,018	-0,053	-0,079
	<i>p</i> values	0,78	0,86	0,62	0,46
Work Situation	Coefficients <i>r</i>	-0,014	-0,006	0,032	-0,075
	<i>p</i> values	0,89	0,95	0,76	0,48

perfectionism at work, orientation on meeting the criteria, ingratiation with the superiors and work, and evaluating their competence based on the opinions of others. Individuals with extreme internal locus of control may, on the other hand, be driven by the need to meet their own internal standards, by their self-oriented perfectionism. Therefore, we divided the results of the Internal-External Locus of Control at Work Scale into “high” and “low,” relative to the 25th and 75th percentile. However, the data did not reflect the predicted relationship (see Table 3). Therefore, we can assume that there is no relationship between perfectionism at work and locus of control.

**Table 3.** Coefficients of nonlinear dependency between PWSS and I-E Scale

		PWSS	PWSS_1	PWSS_2	PWSS_3
General Beliefs	Eta	0,073	0,108	0,004	0,026
	Eta-squared	0,005	0,011	0,00001	0,0006
Work Situation	Eta	0,064	0,154	0,051	0,034
	Eta-squared	0,004	0,023	0,002	0,001

*H.3: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by a their higher need for achievement*

Subsequently, we tested the hypothesis about the relationship between the perfectionist working style and the need for achievement. For this purpose, we calculated the correlations between the results of the PWSS (and its sub-scales) and the results of the Need for Achievement Questionnaire.

The sample consisted of  $N = 66$  individuals, in the age range of 19 to 51 years ( $M = 31.2$   $SD = 7.15$ ). Correlations were found to be statistically significant and equaled, respectively: for PWSS  $r = 0.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; PWSS\_1  $r = 0.41$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ; PWSS\_2  $r = 0.36$ ,  $p = 0.003$ ; PWSS\_3  $r = 0.26$ ,  $p = 0.035$ .

Accordingly, individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by a high need for achievement; it is perceived as their strive for excellence. More than likely, such individuals will not avoid more complex and difficult tasks and will constantly strive to raise their level of competence. It is highly likely that they will exhibit a high level of engagement in their work, as well as devote a large amount of time to its planning, preparation and constant improvement; they also continue to raise the bar for themselves. These behaviors and beliefs about a person's functioning in the work environment may favor excessive workload in its quantitative and qualitative aspects, which additionally may lead to work addiction when enhanced by the enabling environment.

*H.4: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their high hope for success*

To test the hypothesis about the relationship between the perfectionist working style and hope for success, we calculated Pearson's  $r$  correlations between the results of the PWSS (and its sub-scales) and the total score on the Hope Scale.

The results were obtained from a sample of women and men ( $N = 70$ ) in the age range of 21 to 54 years ( $M = 31.6$ ,  $SD = 7.94$ ). The analysis of data confirmed the predicted relationships as the correlation coefficients were found to be significant. <sup>6</sup>: for PWSS  $r = 0.28$ ,  $p = 0.19$ ; PWSS\_1  $r = 0.27$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ; PWSS\_2  $r = 0.29$ ,  $p = 0.016$ ; PWSS\_3  $r = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.47$ .

The obtained results allow us to conclude that individuals characterized by a perfectionist attitude towards work are well-adjusted and confident about their competencies and it allows them to function effectively at work. We should also note that their strive for excellence, which stems from perfectionism, correlates with the belief in personal agency and ability to overcome obstacles to complete the task at hand. This also corresponds with their confidence about personal competencies (see: H.1).

*H.5: Individuals who manifest the perfectionist working style are characterized by their high activity*

To verify a hypothesis about the relationship between the perfectionist working style and activity, which is a dimension of temperament, we examined the results obtained from a sample of  $N = 109$  individuals, in the age range of 22 to 55 years ( $M = 31.8$ ;  $SD = 7.81$ ). Apart from the WEQ, the participants also filled out the EAS questionnaire.

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<sup>6</sup> We found an insignificant correlation for the sub-scale PWSS\_3.

During data analyzes, we calculated correlations between the PWSS (and its sub-scales) and the EAS Activity Scale. The hypothesis that individuals with a perfectionist attitude towards their work are characterized by a high level of activity was confirmed and the correlations were found to be statistically significant: for PWSS  $r = 0.40$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; PWSS\_1  $r = 0.37$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; PWSS\_2  $r = 0.32$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ; PWSS\_3  $r = 0.24$ ,  $p = 0.01$ .

The obtained results allow us to conclude that due to their high need for stimulation to maintain the optimal arousal level, individuals who strive for excellence demonstrate a high tempo of performed activities. Therefore, in the work situation, perfectionists should perform their tasks quickly and willingly. These people would not mind performing several types of activities simultaneously.

However, these results are contradictory to those obtained in a study of another sample.<sup>7</sup> ( $N = 60$ ) of individuals in the age range of 22 to 62 years ( $M = 34.7$ ;  $SD = 9.03$ ), who have filled out the FCB Temperament Inventory, apart from the WEQ. The results of the PWSS significantly correlated with the results of the Activity Scale. However, the noted correlation was negative ( $r = -0.28$ ,  $p = 0.03$ ). According to the theoretical assumptions and empirical findings, the theoretical constructs of "Activity," described by both authors of the temperament theories, should correlate positively (see Strelau, Zawadzki, 2012, p. 96; Zawadzki, Strelau, 1997, p. 83). It should also be noted that we found the correlation of the PWSS with the Perseverance dimension to be significant ( $r = 0.29$ ,  $p = 0.025$ ). We can formulate a hypothesis in an attempt to explain these contradictory results. A hypothetical explanation could refer to the maladaptive perfectionism that was present in the second sample. Fear of mistakes, doubts about quality and accuracy of personal actions, belief that work can always be done better, excessive self-criticism and ruminating over failures may result in limiting the work activity to a minimum and narrowing the field of action to known, reliable schemes.

## **Conclusion**

The conducted research has provided a relatively coherent image of an individual with a perfectionist attitude towards work. It proved that perfectionists demonstrate confidence in their competencies, efficacy, ability to learn quickly and adapt to demanding work circumstances. We found the results of the MSEI Scales of Competence and Personal Power to correspond with hope for success (Hope Scale) and need for achievement. Perfectionists are driven by their internal standards and strive for excellence in their field of work; additionally, when com-

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<sup>7</sup> This study was carried out by Ilona Gniadek-Czaińska, as a part of her Master's Thesis.



pleting work tasks at hand, they show personal agency and perseverance. They have a well-established self-esteem and rather than delegate tasks they tend to rely on themselves.

Perfectionists are fond of the order; they also manifest behaviors that directly follow clear ethical principles. Their high need for stimulation causes high vigor and high tempo of performing tasks which constitute the basis for the temperamental predisposition towards multitasking.

Our predictions regarding the relationship between perfectionism at work with the locus of control (LOC) and self-control (S MSEI) were not confirmed.

In conclusion, the perfectionist working style is associated with adaptive perfectionism, as indicated by the research on its relationship with, among other things, the hope for success (Ashby, Dickinson, Gnilka, Noble, 2011) and temperament (Shimotsu, Mottet, 2009). The only uncertainty arises from the contradictory results of the FCB-TI and EAS questionnaires.

No one must forget that perfectionism at work does not necessarily indicate workaholism. Nevertheless, excessive strive for excellence and ever raising standards for a person's functioning at work, may lead to a situation where effective action and optimum performance of professional responsibilities will become impossible. Additionally, the inability to delegate tasks to coworkers may contribute to individual's excessive workload. For this reason, an extremely perfectionist working style may be considered one of the causes of control loss and may lead to work addiction (Clark, Lelchok, Taylor, 2010; Mudrack, Naughton, 2001; Scott, Moore, Miceli, 1997).

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