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Future time perspective and older employees' motivation to continue working: the interaction effects of disruptive private life events and maintenance HR practices

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**Master's thesis**

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Project theme: Disruptive private life events

Specialization: Business Administration, Strategic Human Resources Leadership

Institute: Radboud University

Date: 14-06-2020

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## **Abstract**

While workforces are ageing, organizations require insight into how HR practices could contribute to the motivation of older employees. Motivating older employees is challenging, as these employees also have to deal with all kinds of events at home. This study explores to what extent older employees' future time perspective is associated with their motivation to continue working and whether this association is moderated by disruptive private life events and maintenance HR practices. It is expected that an open-ended future time perspective is positively associated with the motivation to continue working. Furthermore, it is expected that this association is weakened by disruptive private life events that older employees' have to cope with. Lastly, maintenance HR practices are anticipated to weaken the adverse effect of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. To test these hypotheses, quantitative data was collected via an online questionnaire resulting in a sample of 154 participants of 41 years or above. The results of this study indicated that older employees' FTP is positively associated with their motivation to continue working. Contrary to expectations, the disruptiveness of private life events did not significantly affect the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. Furthermore, the results showed that maintenance HR practices do not significantly weaken the effect of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working.

*Key words: future time perspective, disruptive private life events, maintenance HR practices*

## Preface

In front of you lies the thesis ‘Future time perspective and older employees’ motivation to continue working: the interaction effects of disruptive private life events and maintenance HR practices’. This study was conducted as part of the Master Business Administration, with a specialisation in Strategic Human Resources Leadership at the Radboud University Nijmegen.

The topic I chose to study was about disruptive private life events that employees have to deal with throughout their careers. My interest in studying these disruptive private life events originated from the experiences in my own private life. When I was a little kid, my mother was diagnosed with leukaemia and around the same time, my twin brother was diagnosed with autism. While growing up, I noticed how these events drastically changed my parents’ careers. I started to wonder how organizations could help employees who have to deal with disruptive private life events and how to keep these employees motivated. Writing this thesis allowed me to learn that employees’ private lives and careers are intrinsically linked and that organizations can definitely help employees to deal with problems in their private lives.

I would like to thank several people who helped me very well during the writing of my thesis. Primarily, I would like to thank my supervisor Karen Pak for her amazing support and constructive feedback throughout the writing of my thesis. During both my former Honours programme and this current Master’s programme, I have really enjoyed working with you. In addition, I would like to thank my second assessor, Marjolein Dennissen, for her valuable feedback which made reconsider some important decisions I made in my research proposal. Besides, I would like to thank my fellow group members: Demi Lensselink, Jikke Dulos and Paulien Weikamp. I really liked how we supported each other throughout this entire process. Finally, I would like to thank my parents, my twin brother, and my friends for their amazing support and inspiration.

Enjoy reading my thesis!

Koen Hofmann,  
Wijchen, June 2020

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## Introduction

Dutch organizations currently have to deal with an ageing workforce, since the average age of the working population in the Netherlands has increased (Akkermans, De Lange, Van der Heijden Kooij, Jansen & Dijkers, 2016; CBS, 2019). This increase is mainly due to the ageing of the population in Europe (United Nations, 2015). To avoid labour shortages, OECD countries (including The Netherlands) take several measures to delay employees' retirement and to support their labour participation (Van Dalen, Henkens & Schippers, 2010). For example, governments enact pension reforms to limit the possibilities of exiting the workforce early and implement legislation to prevent ageism (e.g. stereotyping based on one's age) (Van Dalen et al., 2010). Because of the ageing workforce, organizations currently struggle with designing work in such a way that older employees are motivated to continue working (Akkermans et al., 2016; Pak, Kooij, De Lange & Van Veldhoven, 2019). This refers to employees' intention to work until or beyond the retirement age (De Lange, Kooij & Van der Heijden, 2015; Pak et al., 2019).

Earlier research mainly studied what employers can do to influence older employees' motivation to continue working (Armstrong-Stassen & Schlosser, 2011; Midtsundstad, 2011). However, current research indicates that individual employees are also able to influence their motivation to continue working, since they could adjust their future time perspective (FTP) (Akkermans et al., 2016). FTP is defined as an individual's perception of (1) his/her remaining time and (2) the remaining opportunities within that time (Lang & Carstensen, 2002). When employees perceive they have plenty amount of remaining time and a future that offers many opportunities to reach new goals, they have an open-ended FTP (Akkermans et al., 2016). Contrary, when employees perceive little remaining time and remaining opportunities, they have a limited FTP (Akkermans et al., 2016). Employees' perceived available time and opportunities can be regarded as personal resources (Pennington & Roese, 2003). When employees have an open-ended FTP, they possess a personal resource that can be used to enhance their motivation to continue working (Akkermans et al., 2016; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Contrary, when employees have a limited FTP, they perceive less time and opportunities to develop themselves. This could lower their motivation to continue working (Akkermans et al., 2016; Kooij, Kanfer & Bal, 2014).

Whether older employees' FTP is a useful predictor of their motivation to continue working also depends on the demands these employees face at home (Pak et al., under review a). Employees experience all kinds of disruptive events in their private lives throughout their careers (Akkermans, Seibert & Mol, 2018; Pak, Kooij, De Lange, Meyers & Van Veldhoven,

under review a). These events can be positive or negative, such as the birth of a child and becoming chronically ill (Akkermans et al., 2018; Bakker, Du & Derks, 2019). Disruptive private life events can be seen as home demands that indirectly lower employees' motivation to continue working (Pak, Wang, Kooij, de Lange & Van Veldhoven, under review b; Pak et al., under review a). To cope with demands at home, employees make use of their personal resources. Using these personal resources in the home domain makes them unavailable to cope with other demands in the work domain (Bakker et al., 2019). This ultimately lowers employees' motivation to continue working (Pak et al., under review a; Ten Brummelhuis, Ter Hoeven, De Jong and Peper, 2013). Employees' FTP is such a personal resource. Therefore, it can be assumed that disruptive private life events put strain on older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working (Kooij et al., 2014b; Pak et al., under review a; Pennington & Roese, 2003). Thus, this research examines how both positive and negative disruptive private life events can weaken the positive association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working.

After clarifying employees' influence on their motivation to continue working, it is also relevant to discuss what organizations can do to influence this motivation. The disruptive private life events that employees experience can be seen as demanding challenges they face (Pak et al., under review b; Akkermans et al., 2018). Organizations can enact HR practices that help employees to cope with these challenges and thereby enhance their motivation to continue working (Akkermans et al., 2016; Kooij, Jansen, Dikkers & De Lange, 2014; Pak et al., under review b). In other words, HR practices could be able to counterbalance the negative effect of disruptive private life events on the association between employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. Specifically, maintenance HR practices can help employees in maintaining their current levels of functioning despite the challenges they face in their private lives (Conway, 2004; Kooij et al., 2014a). By enacting maintenance HR practices, organizations show that they support employees in dealing with these challenges (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004). This support allows employees to perceive less strain on their personal resources which they use to deal with the disruptive private life events (Hobfoll, 1989; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). As a result, employees can continue using their personal resources, such as FTP, to enhance their motivation to continue working (Kooij et al., 2014b; Pak et al., under review a; Pennington & Roese, 2003). Based on these associations, this research examines the interaction between maintenance HR practices, disruptive private life events and older employees' FTP, and their combined effect on the motivation to continue working.

Despite the plethora of research about the association between an individual's FTP and his/her motivation to continue working, little research has been conducted on the moderating effect of disruptive private life events on this association (Pak et al., under review b; Pak et al., 2019). The purpose of this research is twofold. The primary purpose is to examine the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working, when moderated by disruptive private life events. Secondly, this research will examine the three-way interaction between older employees' FTP, disruptive private life events, and maintenance HR practices and their effect on the motivation to continue working. Subsequently, the research question is:

*To what extent is older employees' future time perspective associated with their motivation to continue working and to what extent can disruptive private life events and maintenance HR practices moderate this association?*

Answering this research question is scientifically relevant, because although much is known about the positive effect of older employees' FTP on their motivation to continue working, little is known about the moderating effect of disruptive private life events (Akkermans et al., 2018; Kooij et al., 2014b). Besides, Pak et al. (2019) state that more research is needed on the effects of maintenance HR practices on older employees' motivation to continue working. Furthermore, the interaction of older employees' FTP, disruptive private life events, and maintenance HR practices on the motivation to continue working is overlooked in current literature. Earlier research mainly focused on the effects of maintenance HR practices on employees' motivation to continue working, without taking into account employees' FTP and home demands (Pak et al., 2019). In addition to the contribution to the literature, this research provides HR managers with practical understanding about how maintenance HR practices can diminish the potential impact of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. This is beneficial, because being able to maintain an open-ended FTP allows older employees to enhance their emotional well-being (Liao & Carstensen, 2018). Besides, the organization benefits as well since they will be better able to retain the older employees in their workforce. Retaining older employees until their retirement age could lead to more age-diverse teams within the organization, which could positively impact the overall organizational performance (Wegge, Roth, Neubach, Schmidt & Kanfer, 2008).

## **Theoretical framework**

Within this theoretical framework, the most important concepts of this research will be discussed. First the outcome variable motivation to continue working will be discussed, after which the predictor variable, future time perspective, will be defined. Next, disruptive private life events will be defined and its moderation effect will be explained. Lastly, maintenance HR practices will also be defined and its moderation effect will be discussed. All hypotheses will be presented in the conceptual model.

### **Motivation to continue working of older employees**

Motivation is a broad, widely used concept in existing literature and clarifies one's 'intention to behave' (Kooij, de Lange & Dijkers, 2008; Kanfer, Beier & Ackerman, 2013). Often a distinction is made between one's motivation to work, motivation at work, and the motivation to continue working (Kanfer et al., 2013). The latter, the motivation to continue working, refers to employees' intention to work until or beyond their retirement age (Kanfer et al., 2013; Pak et al., 2019). When studying the extension of older employees' working lives, the motivation to continue working is often recognised as the most relevant variable. This is due to the fact that when employees get older, the motivation to continue working starts to substitute both 'motivation to work' and 'motivation at work' (Kanfer et al., 2013; Pak et al., 2019). Besides, the motivation to continue working functions as an indicator of the actual retirement age, which makes it relevant when studying older employees (Solem et al., 2016).

Since this research examines the motivation to continue working of older employees, it is essential to define this group. Older employees tend to choose different strategies regarding the gains and losses of their resources in comparison to younger employees (Kooij et al., 2014a). As employees become older, retaining their resources and thereby maintaining their current levels of functioning, becomes their main strategy (Kooij et al., 2014a). This so-called maintenance strategy is mainly applied during the last stage of employees' careers (Conway, 2004). According to Conway (2004), employees in this last career stage are 41 years or over. Therefore, this research specifically focusses on the motivation to continue working of older employees who are 41 years old or over (Conway, 2004).

### **Future time perspective**

According to the Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST), individuals select their (work-related) goals in accordance with their perceptions about the future (Lang & Carstensen, 2002). The future can be perceived as open-ended or limited and this refers to someone's future time

perspective (FTP) (Akkermans et al., 2016; Lang & Carstensen, 2002). FTP is a motivational and age-related construct which implies that individuals create perceptions about their (1) remaining time to live and (2) opportunities and goals that can be realized within that time (Akkermans et al., 2016; Zacher & Frese, 2009). As such, employees can perceive they have a considerable amount of time left, or that their remaining time is running out. Besides, employees can perceive that their future will offer lots of opportunities, or that their future will bring limitations and restrictions (Akkermans et al., 2016; Lang & Carstensen, 2002; Zacher & Frese, 2009).

The SST explains the differences between older and younger employees regarding their specific needs and motives (Veth, Korzilius, Van der Heijden, Emans & De Lange 2019). Generally, both dimensions of the FTP are assumed to be negatively related to one's age, because older employees perceive their remaining time as more limited and change their future-oriented development goals to more present-oriented maintenance goals (Veth et al., 2019; Zacher & Frese, 2009). Besides, older employees suffer from age-related losses of resources as they become older, such as having a more limited perspective of remaining time (Kooij et al., 2014b). Thus, both the amount of remaining time and remaining opportunities are generally fewer for older employees than for younger employees (Zacher & Frese, 2009).

However, not all older employees necessarily perceive a more limited FTP. According to Zacher and Frese (2009), favourable job characteristics and certain personality traits can attenuate the negative relationship between age and perceptions of remaining time and opportunities. When older employees experience that their job still offers enough complexity and decision making authority, they perceive more remaining opportunities. This could also compensate for their age-related loss of resources (Zacher & Frese, 2009). Besides, being an extravert and mentally stable person can also help older employees to perceive more remaining opportunities (Zacher & Frese, 2009). Thus, older employees can still perceive an open-ended FTP.

It can be argued that when older employees perceive an open-ended FTP, this will have a positive effect on their motivation to continue working. To explain this effect, the Work-Home Resources (W-HR) model by Ten Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) will be used. The W-HR model is a theoretical framework, derived from the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001), which shows the consequences of conflicting or enriching processes that happen because of employees' roles at home and at work. Both the home and work domain can have physical, social, or emotional challenges for employees. These are referred to as home demands (e.g. spousal conflicts) and work demands

(e.g. meeting deadlines) (Demerouti et al., 2001; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). To cope with these home and work demands, employees can make use of home and work resources, which are located in the home context (e.g. social support by spouse) and the work context (e.g. social support by supervisor). Furthermore, employees have access to personal resources in the home domain as well as in the work domain. These are personal traits (e.g. optimism) or energies (e.g. physical energy and time) that can be used to cope with demands at home or at work (Hobfoll, 2002; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

Several studies indicate that one's perception of his/her available time and opportunities can be seen as personal resources (Kooij et al., 2014b, Pennington & Roese, 2003; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Possessing such personal resources allows employees to mentally cope with challenges in the work domain and to put work-related problems into perspective, which subsequently enhances their motivation to continue working (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2013). Contrary, the loss of these personal resources could lead to a decrease in employees' motivation to continue working (Pak et al., under review a). Moreover, Topa and Zacher (2018) studied the effect of older employees' FTP on their motivation to continue working and found that perceiving many remaining opportunities increases the motivation to continue working. Based on these studies and the W-HR model, the following hypothesis will be examined:

*H1: A more open-ended future time perspective of older employees is positively associated with their motivation to continue working.*

### **Disruptiveness of private life events**

In this research, the moderating effect of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working will be studied. Disruptive private life events are the various types of impactful events in employees' private lives that happen throughout their careers (Akkermans et al., 2018). These events can be positively or negatively valenced (Akkermans et al., 2018). Examples of private life events are marriage, chronic illness, and divorce (Bakker et al., 2019). Disruptive private life events can happen unexpectedly, which implies that employees cannot proactively anticipate upon them or fully control them (Akkermans et al., 2018). According to Pak et al. (under review b), when these events are to some degree unexpected and uncontrollable, it is more likely that these events will have disruptive effects. Thus, the disruptiveness of the private life events may vary

depending on employees' evaluation of these events and their circumstances (Seibert, Kraimer, Holtom & Pierotti, 2013; Pak et al., under review b).

The W-HR model explains how disruptive private life events can weaken the positive association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. The personal resources that employees use to cope with demands at home and at work are limited, with the consequence that demands in one domain (e.g. home) can make it difficult to meet demands in the other domain (e.g. work). This is referred to as work-home conflict (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). In this research, disruptive private life events can be seen as employees' home demands. When employees utilize their personal resources to deal with disruptive private life events, they perceive strain on these personal resources (Pak et al., under review a). Subsequently, these personal resources are no longer available to effectively cope with demands in the work domain. Thus, if private life events are perceived as highly disruptive, it is likely that employees will have to use most of their personal resources in the home domain instead of the work domain (Akkermans et al., 2018; Bakker et al., 2019; Pak et al., under review a). This makes it harder to use these personal resources to enhance the motivation to continue working (Pak et al., under review a). Besides, Bakker et al. (2019) show that disruptive private life events can undermine employees' use of personal resources, indirectly resulting in lower work engagement. Furthermore, Ten Brummelhuis et al. (2013) indicate that high demands at home can impair employees' personal resources, because of more feelings of stress and rumination. This in turn decreases employees' motivation to continue working (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2013). Since one's perceived available time and available opportunities can be regarded as a personal resource, it is likely that disruptive private life events will weaken the positive association between one's FTP and his/her motivation to continue working. Based on these studies, the following hypothesis will be examined:

*H2: Disruptive private life events moderate the association between older employees' future time perspective and their motivation to continue working in such a way that when the disruptiveness of the private life event is perceived as high, the positive association between future time perspective and the motivation to continue working is weakened.*

### **Maintenance HR practices**

Since the workforce is ageing, organizations question if universally applied HR practices are suitable to retain older employees (Bal, Kooij & De Jong, 2013). Older employees try to maintain their current level of functioning, which means that the organization's HR practices

aimed at older workers should preferably contribute to this goal (Veth et al., 2019). Numerous studies have shown that it is indeed desirable for organizations to apply HR practices that are specifically beneficial for older employees (Kooij et al., 2014a, Pak et al., 2019). Kooij et al. (2014a) constructed a bundle of maintenance HR practices, which support employees in maintaining their current level of functioning and help them to deal with the challenges they face (i.e. disruptive private life events) (Veth et al., 2019). Examples of maintenance HR practices are performance appraisals and ergonomic adjustments (Kooij et al., 2014a; Pak et al., 2019).

A distinction can be made between the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices and the actual use of maintenance HR practices (Kooij et al., 2014a; Veth et al. 2019). This distinction is important, because both the perceived availability and the actual use of maintenance HR practices have different underlying theories that substantiate how they interact with the disruptiveness of private life events and older employees' FTP (Veth et al., 2019). First, the interaction of the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices with the disruptiveness of private life events and employees' FTP will be explained. Thereafter, the interaction of the actual use of maintenance HR practices with the disruptiveness of private life events and employees' FTP will be explained.

The perceived availability of maintenance HR practices refers to whether the organization offers certain HR practices to its employees (Kooij et al., 2014a). The availability of maintenance HR practices functions as a 'signal' of the organization's commitment to care for older employees' maintenance goals (Bowen & Ostroff, 2004; Kooij et al., 2014a; Veth et al., 2019). By offering maintenance HR practices, the organization shows its willingness and support to help employees in dealing with their challenges, such as disruptive private life events.

According to the WH-R model, it is also possible for employees to experience work-home enrichment (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). This is the process whereby resources in one domain can diminish strain on someone's personal resources that are used to cope with demands in the other domain (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Since the availability of HR practices signals organizational support towards employees, it can be regarded as a work resource (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). This implies that the availability of maintenance HR practices operates as a work resource that reduces strain on the personal resources that employees already possess, such as their FTP (Pak et al., under review a). Subsequently, employees are able to more effectively use their FTP in the work domain and can therefore enhance their motivation to continue working (Hobfoll, 1989; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012; Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2013). Based on the interaction between the perceived

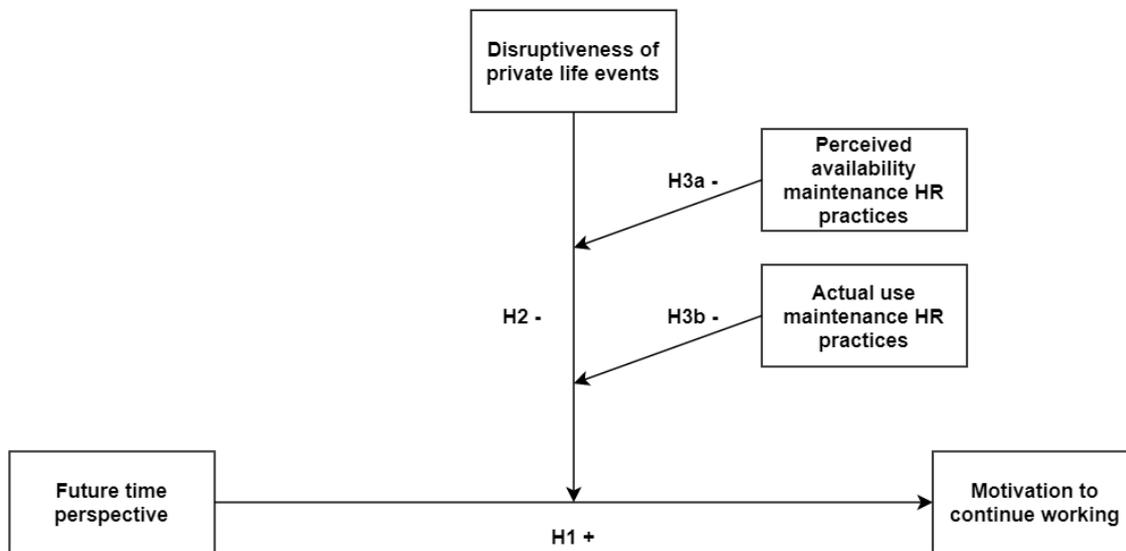
availability of maintenance HR practices, disruptive private life events, and employees' FTP, the following hypothesis will be examined:

*H3a: The detrimental effect of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' future time perspective and the motivation to continue working will be weaker when combined with high levels of perceived availability of maintenance HR practices.*

The actual use of maintenance HR practices can also help employees to cope with disruptive private life events. When employees make use of HR practices, they actually utilize work resources that are helpful to cope with events that require the use of personal resources (Pak et al., under review a). Contrary to the perceived availability, actual use of HR practices causes a more direct way of work-home enrichment, since employees will then instantly reduce strain on their personal resources (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). This instant reduction of strain can have stronger effects on employees' motivation to continue working compared to the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices (Ybema, Van Vuuren & Van Dam, 2017). An example of actual use could be when employees make use of the maintenance HR practice ergonomic adjustments, to improve the position of their desk and chair (Kooij et al., 2014a). Due to the improvements, these employees will instantly perceive less strain of physical demands on their personal resources (such as their physical health) (Pak et al., under review a). In a similar way, maintenance HR practices as flexible working times and working from home can reduce strain on employees' perceived available time and opportunities, as employees are better able to schedule their own time (Nakrošienė, Bučiūnienė & Goštautaitė, 2019; Kooij et al., 2014a). Thus, it is expected that the actual use of maintenance HR practices instantly relieves the strain on employees' personal resources, such as their FTP (Kooij et al., 2014b; Pak et al., under review a). Subsequently, employees can more effectively use their personal resources to enhance their motivation to continue working, despite the challenges they face in their private lives (Ten Brummelhuis et al., 2013). Based on the interaction between the actual use of maintenance HR practices, disruptive private life events, and employees' FTP, the following hypothesis will be examined:

*H3b: The detrimental effect of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' future time perspective and the motivation to continue working will be weaker when combined with high levels of actual use of maintenance HR practices.*

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model and the hypotheses that were drawn.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual model

## Methods

This section will explain the research design, the selected sample, and the procedure that was followed to gather the required data. Besides, the measuring instruments of the important concepts, the ethical considerations, and the statistical analysis will be explained.

### Research design

To answer the research question, a cross-sectional quantitative study was conducted. This research design was most appropriate, because quantitative data allows to statistically test the theory-driven expectations about the associations between the concepts of this study (Field, 2018). To visually clarify these expected associations, hypotheses were drawn and shown in the conceptual model (Figure 1). An online questionnaire was used to collect the quantitative data (Appendix 1). To gather as many respondents as possible, convenience sampling was used by reaching out to the researcher's personal contacts via social media, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and WhatsApp. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that respondents were put at ease as much as possible. This was realized by clarifying the purpose of this research, assuring the respondent's anonymity, and by starting with the most 'easy' questions in the questionnaire. This means the questionnaire did not immediately start with questions regarding

disruptive private life events, but it started with more general questions about one’s gender, age, and working hours per week.

### Sample

In total, 308 respondents filled in the questionnaire. Since this study is about older employees of 41 years or above, all employees younger than 41 years were removed from the sample. Besides, due to a technical error, some respondent’s answers were registered twice. These double answers were removed and this resulted in a total amount of 154 respondents for this study. All of these respondents received consistent work and payment from one employer. The number of working hours per week varied between 16 and 56 hours, with an average of 30.35 (SD = 7.58) hours per week. The average age was 52.55 years (SD = 5.27) and most of the respondents were female (71.4%,  $N = 110$ ). Besides, most of the respondents were highly educated with 37% holding a Bachelor’s degree and 18.8% holding a Master’s degree. In total, 94 (61%) respondents have experienced a private life event in the past year, of which 50 respondents experienced a positive event and 69 respondents experienced a negative event. This also implies that 25 respondents have experienced both a positive and a negative private life event during the past year. The type of events experienced by the respondents varied from having grandchildren, starting a new education, experiencing the death of a loved one and dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. The descriptive statistics of the sample are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics of the sample

Characteristics		Frequencies	Percentage (%)
Amount of respondents		154	100%
Gender	Male	44	28.6%
	Female	110	71.4%
Age	Mean	52.55	
	SD	5.27	
Weekly working hours	Mean	30.35	
	SD	7.58	

Tenure (years)	Mean	17.29	
	SD	11.43	
Level of education	Primary education	0	0%
	High school degree	26	16.8%
	Vocational education	42	27.3%
	University of applied sciences	54	35.1%
	Bachelor's degree	3	1.9%
	Master's degree	29	18.8%
	PhD	0	0%

### Measuring instruments

The concepts of this research, which were discussed in the theoretical framework, were measured using several validated scales. Since the data was collected among Dutch participants, all items were translated into Dutch. All scales were used in their original form. To assess the construct validity, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the scales of the motivation to continue working, FTP, and the disruptiveness of private life events. This means that the structure of the correlations of the items of every scale was studied (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2014). All scales were assessed on their Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) ( $> 0.5$ ), communality after extraction ( $> 0.20$ ), and their eigenvalues ( $> 1$ ) (Field, 2018). The maintenance HR practices were recoded into dichotomous dummy variables and were therefore not included in the exploratory factor analysis (Hair et al., 2014).

*Motivation to continue working.* This is the dependent variable within this research and it was measured by using the three-item scale of Armstrong-Stassen and Ursel (2009). The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree). One example of the items is: 'I expect to continue working as long as possible in this organization'. The exploratory factor analysis on this scale resulted in a KMO value of 0.71, which is above the required 0.5, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ). All communalities were well above .20, ranging from 0.70 to 0.80. Based on the eigenvalues and the scree plot, the solution provided one component which explained 75.85% of the variance. Subsequently, the reliability analysis was conducted and this resulted in a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .83, which indicates a high reliability (Field, 2018). Lastly, the mean score of the three items was calculated to be included in the analysis.

*Future time perspective.* This construct is the independent variable of this research and was measured using the six-item scale by Zacher and Frese (2009). The responses were rated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Very untrue) to 7 (Very true). Three items were about one's perceived available time (e.g. 'Most of my occupational life lies ahead of me') and three items were about one's perceived available opportunities (e.g. 'My occupational future is filled with possibilities'). One item about the perceived available time ('I begin to experience time in my occupational future as limited') was negatively formulated and therefore the answering options of this item were reverse coded in SPSS before conducting the factor analysis (Field, 2018). Subsequently, the exploratory factor analysis on this scale resulted in a KMO value of 0.83, which is above the required 0.5, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ). All communalities were above the required level of .20, except from the reverse coded item. This item was therefore deleted, since a low communality indicates this item is not correlated to the other five items (Hair et al., 2014). This deletion was conceptually not problematic, since two out of six items about the respondent's perceived available time were still left in the scale.

The second iteration of the exploratory factor analysis revealed a KMO value of 0.84 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was again found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ). All communalities were now well above the required level of .20 and the solution provided one component that explained 76.14% of the variance. The eigenvalue was greater than 1 and the scree plot also indicated one component. Subsequently, a reliability analysis was conducted containing the five items that were left after the factor analysis. This resulted in a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .92, which indicated a high reliability (Field, 2018).

*Disruptive private life events:* This construct is the moderator variable in this research. Respondents were first asked whether or not they had experienced a positive and/or negative disruptive private life event during the past 12 months. When respondents indicated they had experienced a disruptive private life event, they were given the possibility to clarify what kind of event they had experienced. Subsequently, four follow-up questions were asked regarding the disruptiveness of this specific event by using the four-item scale by Luhmann, Fassbender, Alcock, and Haehner (2020). The responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Does not apply at all) to 5 (Applies completely). One example of the items is: 'The event had a strong impact on my life'. When respondents indicated that they had not experienced a disruptive private life event during the past 12 months, they were automatically given a score of 1 on their disruptiveness scale. This method was used, since the score of 1 indicated that this respondent had not perceived any disruptiveness.

Whenever a respondent had experienced a positive as well as a negative disruptive private life event, the event which contained the highest total score on the four items regarding the disruptiveness was selected to be included in the analysis. Thereafter, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the four items regarding the disruptiveness and this resulted in a KMO value of 0.85, which is higher than the required value of 0.50. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was found to be significant ( $p < .001$ ) and all communalities were well above .20. The solution provided one component which explained 88.73% of the variance. This solution was also confirmed by a visual examination of the scree plot. Further, a reliability analysis was conducted resulting in a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of .96, indicating a high reliability (Field, 2018). Lastly, the mean score of the four items was calculated to be included in the analysis.

*Maintenance HR practices (perceived availability and actual use).* To measure the perceived availability and actual use of maintenance HR practices, the scale by Kooij et al. (2014a) was used. Seven maintenance HR practices were separately presented to the respondents. These are the following: ergonomic adjustments, compressed workweek, flexible benefits, flexible working times, performance pay, performance appraisal, and working from home. Every practice contained four answering options of which the respondent had to choose one. These were: (1) I used this practice, (2) The practice was available, but I did not use it, (3) This practice is unknown to me, but I would like to use it, and (4) This practice is unknown to me, but I am not interested in using it.

To be able to distinguish between actual use and perceived availability, SPSS was used to recode the answering options into dummy variables (Field, 2018). An 'actual use variable' was created by coding the answering options as 1 = 'used' and 0 = 'not used'. The first answering option was recoded to code 1, while the options two to four were recoded to the code 0. In a similar way, a 'perceived availability variable' was created by coding the answering options as 1 = 'perceived available' and 0 = 'unavailable'. The answering options one and two were recoded to code 1, while the options three and four were recoded to code 0. All seven maintenance HR practices were recoded in this way. Lastly, a sum score of the actual use and a sum score of the perceived availability was calculated to be included in the analysis.

*Control variables:* The demographic variables chronological age (in years) and gender (coded as 0 = 'male' and 1 = 'female') were used as control variables, as previous studies showed their significant association with motivation-related variables (Akkermans et al., 2016). Besides, the amount of working hours per week was included as a control variable as well. According to Lyonette (2015), the amount of working hours can influence the way employees balance their work life and private life. This influence was considered relevant when studying

the moderating effect of disruptive private life events on the association between employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working.

### **Research ethics**

Several ethical considerations were taken into account while conducting this research. As recommended by Sekaran and Bougie (2016), all information provided by the respondents was treated confidentially. The introduction part of the questionnaire was used to guarantee the respondents that their answers were anonymous and to inform them that they were given the freedom to withdraw from their participation at any moment in time. Besides, informed consent by the respondents was realized, as they had to give permission to use their answers for academic purposes before they could proceed to fill in the questionnaire. The respondents were also not forced to answer any questions that they did not want to answer (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This means that respondents were not obliged to indicate what kind of disruptive private life event they had experienced. Lastly, the collected data was not distorted in any way by the researcher (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Only minimal and necessary adjustments have been made to be able to carefully analyse the dataset.

### **Analysis**

The analysis of the data started with a check for outliers and missing values among the variables. No missing values and outliers were found and subsequently the moderated moderation-analysis was conducted by using Model 3 of the PROCESS add-on in SPSS (Hayes, 2013). This model allowed to test the three-way interaction which was shown in the conceptual model in Figure 1. To avoid multicollinearity between the independent variable and the moderators, PROCESS was set to mean center these variables (Hair et al., 2014). The analysis was performed twice because the actual use and the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices had to be tested separately in the three-way interaction. During the analyses, the control variables gender, age, and weekly working hours were included as covariates.

### **Results**

This section will discuss the results of this research. To first gain a better understanding of the data that was analysed, the means, standard deviations, and the correlations of the included variables will be discussed. Hereafter, the tested hypotheses and the additional analyses will be discussed.

## **Descriptive statistics**

The means, standard deviations and the correlations of the included variables are shown in Table 2. When examining the correlations, it can be seen that only five significant correlations are found between the independent variable, dependent variable and the moderators within this research ( $p < .05$ ). A significant correlation suggests a statistical association between two variables, but it does not indicate causality (Field, 2018). Firstly, FTP is significantly correlated with the motivation to continue working ( $r = .26, p < .01$ ). The disruptiveness of private life events does not significantly correlate with FTP ( $r = .08, p = .31$ ) and with the motivation to continue working ( $r = .12, p = .12$ ). The perceived availability of maintenance HR practices is significantly correlated with FTP ( $r = .42, p < .001$ ) and with the disruptiveness of private life events ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ), but not with the motivation to continue working ( $r = .10, p = .23$ ). Furthermore, the actual use of maintenance HR practices was not significantly correlated with the motivation to continue working ( $r = -.04, p = .61$ ) and the disruptiveness of private live events ( $r = .13, p = .11$ ). However, the actual use of maintenance HR practices is significantly correlated with the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices ( $r = .64, p < .001$ ) and FTP ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ). Regarding the control variables, gender is significantly correlated with the disruptiveness of private life events ( $r = .18, p < .05$ ) and age is significantly negatively correlated with FTP ( $r = -.50, p < .001$ ). Lastly, the weekly working hours are significantly correlated with FTP ( $r = .23, p < .01$ ), the disruptiveness of private life events ( $r = -.18, p < .05$ ) and the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices ( $r = .17, p < .05$ ).

**Table 2:** Means, standard deviations and correlations of the included variables

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>
1. Motivation to continue working	2.91	1.22	1						
2. Future time perspective	3.46	1.46	.26**	1					
3. Disruptiveness of private life events	2.48	1.42	.12	.08	1				
4. Perceived availability maintenance HR practices	4.21	1.88	.10	.42***	.27**	1			
5. Actual use maintenance HR practices	2.42	1.51	-.04	.33***	.13	.64***	1		
6. Gender	-	-	.07	-.09	.18*	-.08	-.02	1	
7. Age	52.55	5.27	-.07	-.50***	-.10	-.10	-.15	-.13	1
8. Weekly working hours	30.45	7.58	.02	.23**	-.18*	.17*	.11	-.61**	-.04

**Note:** \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$  Gender is a nominal variable and therefore has no mean and standard deviation

## **Hypothesis testing**

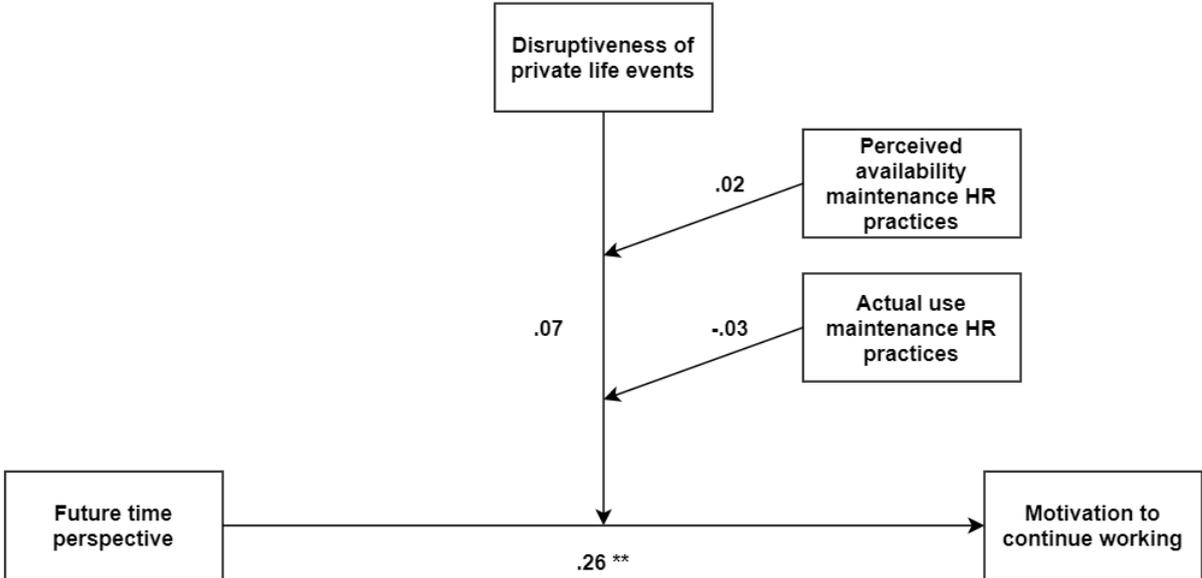
To be able to test the hypotheses of this research, Model 3 of the PROCESS add-on was used to conduct the three-way interaction analysis (Hayes, 2013). The analysis was conducted twice and the outcomes of both analyses are shown in Table 3. Firstly, according to Hypothesis 1, a positive association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working was expected. In line with this expectation, a significant positive association was found between FTP and motivation to continue working, as indicated by Table 3 ( $b = .26, p < .01$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Furthermore, according to Hypothesis 2, it was expected that the disruptiveness of private life events would moderate the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. Specifically, it was expected that when employees perceived the disruptiveness of private life events as high, the positive association between FTP and the motivation to continue working would be weakened. However, no significant interaction was found between the disruptiveness of private life events and FTP, as Table 3 indicates ( $b = .07, p = .24$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is not supported. Besides, no significant direct association was found between the disruptiveness of private life events and the motivation to continue working, as Table 3 indicates ( $b = .11, p = .21$ ). Moreover, according to Hypothesis 3a, it was expected that a high perceived availability of maintenance HR practices would weaken the adverse effect of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and the motivation to continue working. However, as Table 3 indicates, no significant three-way interaction was found ( $b = .02, p = .67$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 3a is not supported. Besides, no significant direct association was found between the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices and the motivation to continue working, as Table 3 indicates ( $b = .05, p = .23$ ). Based on Hypothesis 3b, it was expected that a high level of actual use of maintenance HR practices would weaken the adverse effect of disruptive private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and the motivation to continue working. However, the results in Table 3 indicate that this three-way interaction is also not significant ( $b = -.03, p = .50$ ). Therefore, Hypothesis 3b is not supported. Moreover, no significant direct association was found between the actual use of maintenance HR practices and the motivation to continue working, as Table 3 indicates ( $b = -.16, p = .12$ ). Finally, the effects of the control variables gender, age and, weekly working hours were all not found to be significant.

**Table 3:** Results of the moderated moderation analysis, controlled for gender, age and weekly working hours

<b>Outcome:</b> motivation to continue working			
Model Summary: $F(11,142) = 2.13, p < .05, R^2 = .13$			
<b>Predictors</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>P</b>
Constant	1.01	1.36	.46
FTP	.26**	.09	.00
Disruptiveness of private life events	.11	.09	.21
Perceived availability maintenance HR practices	.05	.09	.57
Actual use maintenance HR practices	-.16	.10	.12
FTP x disruptiveness of private life events	.07	.06	.24
FTP x perceived availability maintenance HR practices	-.01	.05	.90
FTP x actual use maintenance HR practices	.01	.07	.90
Disruptiveness of private life events x perceived availability maintenance HR practices	.03	.05	.54
Disruptiveness of private life events x actual use maintenance HR practices	-.02	.06	.77
FTP x disruptiveness of private life events x perceived availability maintenance HR practices	.02	.04	.67
FTP x disruptiveness of private life events x actual use maintenance HR practices	-.03	.05	.50
Gender	.37	.33	.27
Age	.02	.02	.39
Weekly working hours	.01	.09	.57

**Note:** \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Based on the results of the analysis, Figure 2 shows that only the older employees' FTP has a significant positive association with the motivation to continue working. All other hypothesized associations were not found to be significant.



**Figure 2:** Conceptual model containing the unstandardized regression coefficients \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

**Additional analyses**

The interactions between older employees' FTP, the disruptiveness of private life events, and the perceived availability of maintenance HR practices were not found to be significant in this research. Also, the interactions containing the actual use of maintenance HR practices were not found to be significant. To find a clarification for the lack of these interactions, two kinds of additional analyses were conducted. Firstly, a quantitative additional analysis was conducted containing a somewhat older sample of employees who were 50 years or over. This sample was chosen since a higher chronological age provides a more specific group of employees who have more similarities, making it more likely to find direct effects. However, the results of this analysis were similar to the main analysis of this research, as no significant interactions were found as well. Nonetheless, it was notable that the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working was a little stronger for the employees who were 50 years or over, compared to the employees who were 41 years or over. The outcomes of this quantitative analysis are presented in Appendix 2.

Secondly, a qualitative additional analysis was conducted by doing short semi-structured interviews with five respondents who filled in the questionnaire of this research. These respondents were asked about what kind of disruptive private life event they had experienced and how this affected their motivation to continue working. Further, attention was paid to how their employers had helped them to cope with these disruptive private life events to maintain their motivation to continue working. A small amount of questions were prepared beforehand, leaving enough flexibility for the researcher to ask spontaneous questions during the interviews (Bleijenbergh, 2015). These questions can be found in Appendix 3. The audio of these interviews was recorded and a summary of the conversation was written immediately afterward. The interview summaries can be found in Appendix 4.

Respondent 1 was a male of 63 years old who works as a back-office employee at a Dutch bank. Respondent 2 was a male of 64 years old who works as a logistic purchaser. Respondent 3 was a 65 years old female who used to work in the emergency room of a hospital. She was forced to permanently stop working about 25 years ago because she became chronically ill. Respondent 4 was a 46 years old female who works as a department manager at a supermarket. Finally, respondent 5 was a 50 years old female who works with elderly people in an emergency shelter.

Regarding their motivation to continue working, respondents 2, 3, 4, and 5 indicated that they like their job and this motivates them to continue working until their retirement age. Specifically, respondent 4 is motivated to continue working as her job allows her to have conversations with colleagues and customers at the supermarket. Respondent 5 is motivated to continue working as she can help a lot of elderly people and their relatives. Besides liking their job, respondents 1, 3, and 4 indicated that they are also motivated to continue working as their job enables them to build a decent pension. This enables them to provide for a living at their retirement age. Having fun and obtaining a decent level of income at the retirement age were therefore the most important reasons to be motivated to continue working.

Employers can generally take several measures to enhance the employees' motivation to continue working. According to respondents 1, 2, 3, and 4, frequent conversations with their supervisor enables them to express their needs, combine private life and work-related demands, and discuss mutual expectations. For example, respondents 3 and 4 used these conversations to alter their irregular shifts or their weekly working hours. In short, it turns out the supervisor has a decisive role in maintaining employees' motivation to continue working by talking to them regularly. Respondent 1 indicated: "I think the supervisor should keep offering opportunities to

employees to talk about their concerns (...), this creates a good atmosphere, which is a basis for a strong motivation”.

In total, 4 respondents experienced a disruptive private life event. Only 1 event was positive, while the other 3 events were negative. Furthermore, 1 respondent experienced a disruptive event at work which negatively influenced her private life. To cope with the disruptive private life events and enhance the motivation to continue working, conversations between the employee and the employer were mentioned by 4 out of 5 respondents. Specifically, respondent 5 mentioned that clear communication by the supervisor is needed to take away uncertainties and respondents 1 and 2 mentioned the supervisor should listen to employees’ concerns. Moreover, respondent 2, 4, and 5 mentioned the supervisor has to facilitate training and education programmes to be able to cope with work-related demands. Furthermore, respondents 2 and 4 indicated that the supervisor could alter the employees’ weekly working hours, which enables employees to align their work situation with their private life situation and subsequently enhance the motivation to continue working.

In summary, the additional interviews show that negative disruptive private life and work-related events can decline employees’ motivation to continue working. It became clear the supervisor has a decisive role in maintaining older employees’ motivation to continue working. Generally, the interviews show that frequent conversations between the supervisor and employee allow to discuss employees’ concerns and help to clarify mutual expectations. Regarding disruptive private life and work-related events, clear communication by the supervisor becomes even more important as it can take away uncertainties which impede employees’ motivation. Besides, the interview results show that facilitating training and education programmes helps older employees to stay motivated to continue working. Lastly, the employer can enhance the motivation by altering the amount of working hours or by offering less (physically) demanding tasks.

## **Discussion**

Currently, it is of great interest for organizations and their HR managers to gain insight into how to motivate older employees to continue working, due to the increased retirement age. Hence, this research examined to what extent older employees’ FTP was associated with their motivation to continue working and whether disruptive private life events and maintenance HR practices moderated this association. Subsequently, the following research question was examined:

*To what extent is older employees' future time perspective associated with their motivation to continue working and to what extent can disruptive private life events and maintenance HR practices moderate this association?*

To answer this research question, a cross-sectional research among 154 employees of 41 years or over was conducted. The results indicated that older employees' FTP is positively associated with their motivation to continue working. This finding is in line with earlier research on the association between employees' FTP as a personal resource and the motivation to continue working (Akkermans et al., 2016; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). Besides, this finding also corresponds with studies about the W-HR model, which mention that employees can use their personal resources (such as their FTP) to cope with challenges in the work domain (Hobfoll, 2002; Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012).

However, the results indicate that no evidence was found for a moderating effect of the disruptiveness of private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. This finding could be explained by the COVID-19 pandemic, as this caused extra home demands that the respondents had to cope with in addition to their regular work demands. The COVID-19 pandemic is a contextual factor that heavily influenced the society during the year 2020 (Akkermans, Richardson & Kraimer, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic can be seen as a 'career shock', which is a disruptive event experienced in the work domain (Akkermans et al., 2018; Akkermans et al., 2020; Rudolph & Zacher, 2020). The disruptiveness of the COVID-19 pandemic is high since it comes with social distancing and a high degree of anxiety and job insecurity (Akkermans et al., 2020). Besides, as a result of this pandemic, most Dutch employees were forced to work from home (Kramer & Kramer, 2020). Working from home could have been difficult for the respondents in our sample, since 74% of them still had children living at home. This implied that a lot of their home demands, such as taking care of these children, had to be combined with the usual work-related tasks. Therefore, regardless of whether or not respondents indicated they had experienced a disruptive private life event, they still had to deal with the challenging combination of home and work demands due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This might explain why no significant influence of disruptive private life events on the association between FTP and the motivation to continue working was found.

Besides, the lack of a moderating effect of the disruptiveness of private life events can also be explained by the recovery theory. This theory states that when employees are able to mentally detach themselves from the disruptive private life event, they are better able to utilize

psychological resources at work (Bakker et al., 2019). This helps them to feel motivated at work while they still have to cope with the disruptive private life event. It could be argued that the older employees in our sample, due to having more life experience, are better able to mentally detach themselves from the disruptive private life events, as older individuals are generally better able to put things into perspective (Thomas et al., 2016). Moreover, older employees are mostly very capable in using effective cognitive strategies to emotionally cope with stressors (Carstensen, Fung & Charles, 2003). These cognitive skills could explain why no moderating effect was found of the disruptiveness of private life events on the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working, while such an effect might be present for younger employees.

Furthermore, the results indicated that the perceived availability and actual use of maintenance HR practices were not significantly associated with the motivation to continue working. Besides, no three-way interaction was found between older employees' FTP, the disruptiveness of private life events, and the perceived availability or actual use of maintenance HR practices. An explanation for the lack of this three-way interaction can be found in the type of HR practices that were included in this study. In addition to the maintenance HR practices, Kooij et al. (2014a) also constructed accommodative HR practices. These practices are aimed at reducing older employees' job demands, which enables them to function properly on a lower level. This can be helpful when it is impossible to maintain the current level of functioning (Kooij et al., 2014a). Examples are early retirement, demotion, and additional leave. In the study of Pak et al. (under review a), the participants believed that the accommodative HR practices were helpful to cope with disruptive events in their private lives. Specifically, the accommodative HR practices were useful in balancing the increase of demands in one's private life and the associated loss of resources (Pak et al., under review a). Since this research included the disruptiveness of private life events as a moderator variable, accommodative HR practices might have been more helpful for older employees instead of the maintenance HR practices. For this reason, future research on older employees could benefit from studying a similar model including accommodative HR practices instead of maintenance HR practices.

Another explanation for the lack of a three-way interaction effect can be found in the attribution theory. According to Nishii, Lepak, and Schneider (2008), employees make internal attributions about the organization's intentions for facilitating certain HR practices. These attributions subsequently influence employees' behaviour (Nishii et al., 2008). A distinction is made between two types of internal attributions, which are (1) commitment-focused and (2) control-focused attributions. When employees create commitment-focused attributions they

perceive that HR practices are intended by the organization to enhance employee well-being. Subsequently, employees are more likely to reciprocate positively to these HR practices. Contrary, when employees make control-focused attributions, they believe the organization's intentions are about cost reduction. This will lower employees' commitment and satisfaction towards the organization (Nishii et al., 2008). It could be possible that employees in our sample mainly created control-focussed attributions regarding the organization's intention of facilitating the maintenance HR practices. This would explain why even though employees made use of maintenance HR practices, this did not positively affect their motivation to continue working.

Lastly, the qualitative additional analysis conducted within this research could explain the lack of a three-way interaction effect as well. The results of the interviews showed that supervisors fulfil an essential role in helping older employees' to cope with their disruptive private life events and thereby enhance their motivation to continue working. For example, regular conversations between employees and their supervisor could make it possible to adjust working hours, follow training and education programmes, and above all provide an opportunity to receive supervisor support. It could be that receiving supervisor support is even more important for older employees when coping with disruptive private life events, instead of using (maintenance) HR practices. While HR practices can be regarded as formal and regulated measures, conversations could enable supervisors to adopt the employees' perspective (Las Heras, Van der Heijden, De Jong & Rofcanin, 2017). During this perspective-taking, the supervisor tries to understand the employees' preferences and needs in order to provide tailored advice about how to deal with a specific situation (Las Heras et al., 2017). Receiving tailored support could explain why regular conversations between employees and the supervisor might be more successful in diminishing the adverse effect of disruptive private life events, compared to maintenance HR practices.

### **Limitations and directions for future research**

Several limitations have to be taken into consideration when interpreting the results of this research. The first limitation concerns the sample of this research. With a total amount of 154 respondents, this research has a relatively small sample size when taking into account the complexity of the estimated conceptual model. The small sample could have reduced the statistical power of the conducted moderated moderation analysis, which is the ability to detect effects between the variables (Hair et al., 2014). This would explain why only one hypothesis was found to be statistically significant. Future research could therefore test a similar conceptual

model using a larger sample size, which provides larger statistical power to test the three-way interaction effects.

Secondly, convenience sampling was used to get in touch with the respondents. This implies that respondents were selected within the researcher's own network and subsequently were reached out to via social media. This non-random sampling method could have affected the results of this research since the respondents are generally part of the same socioeconomic class and live in the same geographic location (Emerson, 2015). Future research about older employees' motivation to continue working could therefore benefit from a random sample, as this reduces the bias because of using a convenience sample (Emerson, 2015).

The third limitation has to do with the moderating variable, as this research only examined the disruptive events that occurred in employees' private lives during the past 12 months. However, employees can also experience disruptive events in the work domain (e.g. getting promotion or losing one's job) (Holtom, Mitchell & Inderrieden, 2005). These events were not included in this research. However, including disruptive work events when examining older employees' motivation to continue working is essential, as these events are frequently linked to employee turnover (Holtom et al., 2005). High turnover rates can be seen as a signal of employee-dissatisfaction, which does not make it likely that employees are willing to continue to work until their retirement age. Besides, the theory regarding the W-HR model that was used in this research indicates that both home demands and job demands can deplete employees' personal resources (Ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012). This implies that a disruptive event at work can require an excessive amount of employees' personal resources, leaving insufficient of these resources available to properly complete the everyday-tasks at work (Bakker et al., 2019). In short, it is recommended to include disruptive work events in future research, since this could result in a more comprehensive understanding regarding older employees' motivation to continue working.

Fourth, this research was conducted using a cross-sectional research design, which implies that all the variables were measured at one moment in time (Wright, Gardner, Moynihan & Allen, 2005). This enabled to study the associations between variables, but it was not possible to determine any causal relations. Thus, when two variables were associated with each other, it was not possible to conclude what variable was the cause and what variable was the effect. A recommendation for future research would be to make use of a longitudinal research design containing multiple measuring moments (Wright et al., 2005). This would make it possible to obtain a thorough understanding of the increase or decrease of older employees' motivation to continue working.

Finally, the outcomes of the qualitative additional analysis suggested that regular conversations between the employee and supervisor could provide a tailor-made approach to deal more effectively with disruptive private life events. To test whether or not a tailor-made approach is more effective than regulated HR practices, future research could include idiosyncratic deals (i-deals) besides HR practices and subsequently test a similar model as was included within this study. I-deals are tailor-made employment conditions that are negotiated between individual employees and their supervisors (Las Heras et al., 2017).

### **Practical implications**

This study provides insights that HR managers and supervisors can use when they intend to motivate their older employees to continue working until their retirement age. It is recommended to enhance older employees' perceived available time and available opportunities, since the results of this research indicate that FTP is positively associated with the motivation to continue working. According to Zacher and Frese (2009), two kinds of work characteristics can positively influence employees' perceived remaining opportunities. Jobs should be high in (1) complexity and (2) control, especially when the workforce is ageing. High complexity and control can be seen as job resources that allow older employees to adjust their work to their own capabilities and to utilize their knowledge and experience (Kanfer & Ackerman, 2004; Zacher & Frese, 2009). This results in more perceived available opportunities for older employees. Furthermore, Kooij and Zacher (2016) studied older employees and found that having a high work centrality is positively associated with perceiving more available time. A high work centrality means older employees can identify with their role at work and perceive it as an important aspect of their life (Kooij & Zacher, 2016). With this knowledge in mind, supervisors could schedule regular conversations with the older employees to discuss their role at work and the extent to which they are still able to identify with this role. As already became clear in the section about the additional qualitative analysis, the supervisor and employee can also use these conversations to discuss the need for training programmes and the adjustment of the working hours. This way, these regular conversations could enable older employees to deal more easily with disruptive private life events and simultaneously maintain their perceived available time, resulting in a higher motivation to continue working.

### **Conclusion**

This research examined the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working and the extent to which disruptive private life events and maintenance HR

practices could moderate this association. A distinction was made between the perceived availability and the actual use of maintenance HR practices. The results show that older employees' FTP is significantly positively associated with their motivation to continue working. Contrary to expectations, the disruptiveness of private life events does not significantly moderate the association between older employees' FTP and their motivation to continue working. Furthermore, no three-way interaction was found between older employees' FTP, disruptive private life events, and the perceived availability or actual use of maintenance HR practices. Despite the lack of a three-way interaction effect, this study provides useful insights into enhancing older employees' motivation to continue working via their FTP. Besides the ageing workforces, societies are currently challenged with all kinds of new disruptive phenomena. Therefore, let's hope this study inspires researchers to more deeply study the effects of disruptive events and FTP on older employees' motivation to continue working.

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## Appendix 1: Questionnaire main quantitative analysis

<b>Motivatie om door te werken</b>	
<p>Armstrong-Stassen, M., &amp; Ursel, N. D. (2009). Perceived organizational support, career satisfaction, and the retention of older workers. <i>Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology</i>, 82(1), 201–220.</p>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Schaal</b>
Ik verwacht zo lang mogelijk te blijven werken	1 ('Helemaal niet mee eens') tot 5 ('Helemaal mee eens')
Onvoorziene omstandigheden daargelaten, zou ik tot na de pensioensgerechtigde leeftijd willen blijven werken	1 ('Helemaal niet mee eens') tot 5 ('Helemaal mee eens')
Als ik volledig vrij was om te kiezen, dan zou ik tot na de pensioensgerechtigde leeftijd willen blijven werken	1 ('Helemaal niet mee eens') tot 5 ('Helemaal mee eens')

<b>Ingrijpende gebeurtenis in privéleven</b>	
<p>Luhmann, M., Fassbender, I., Alcock, M., &amp; Haehner, P. (2020). A Dimensional Taxonomy of Perceived Characteristics of Major Life Events. <i>Journal of Personality and Social Psychology</i>, <a href="http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000291">http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000291</a>.</p>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Schaal</b>
<p>Heeft u in de afgelopen 12 maanden een ingrijpende gebeurtenis meegemaakt in uw privéleven? (Deze kan zowel positief als negatief zijn, denkt u hierbij aan het krijgen van</p>	<p>0 = Nee 1 = Ja</p>

(klein)kinderen/trouwen, of chronisch ziek worden/het overlijden van een familielid).	
De gebeurtenis zorgde voor veranderingen in mijn sociale-, familie- en werkgerelateerde rollen.	1 ('Helemaal niet van toepassing') tot 5 ('Volledig van toepassing')
Als gevolg van de gebeurtenis, moest ik mijn leven veranderen.	1 ('Helemaal niet van toepassing') tot 5 ('Volledig van toepassing')
Het evenement had een grote impact op mijn leven.	1 ('Helemaal niet van toepassing') tot 5 ('Volledig van toepassing')
De gebeurtenis had veel gevolgen voor mijn dagelijks leven.	1 ('Helemaal niet van toepassing') tot 5 ('Volledig van toepassing')

<b>Toekomstig tijdsperspectief</b>	
Zacher, H., & Frese, M. (2009). Remaining time and opportunities at work: Relationships between age, work characteristics, and occupational future time perspective. <i>Psychology and Aging, 24</i> (2), 487–493. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015425">https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015425</a>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Schaal</b>
Er wachten mij nog veel kansen in mijn toekomstige loopbaan.	1 ('Helemaal onwaar') tot 7 ('Helemaal waar')
Ik verwacht dat ik nog veel nieuwe doelen zal stellen in mijn toekomstige loopbaan.	1 ('Helemaal onwaar') tot 7 ('Helemaal waar')
Mijn toekomstige loopbaan zit vol mogelijkheden.	1 ('Helemaal onwaar') tot 7 ('Helemaal waar')

Het grootste deel van mijn loopbaan ligt nog voor me.	1 ('Helemaal onwaar') tot 7 ('Helemaal waar')
De toekomst van mijn loopbaan lijkt oneindig.	1 ('Helemaal onwaar') tot 7 ('Helemaal waar')
Naarmate ik ouder word, ervaar ik de tijd in mijn toekomstige loopbaan steeds meer als beperkt.	1 ('Helemaal onwaar') tot 7 ('Helemaal waar')

<b>HR praktijken gericht op 'behoud'</b>	
Kooij, D., Jansen, P., Dijkers, J., & de Lange, A. (2014a). Managing aging workers: a mixed methods study on bundles of HR practices for aging workers. <i>The International Journal Of Human Resource Management</i> , 25(15), 2192-2212.	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Schaal</b>
Flexibele arbeidsvoorwaarden	1 'In het afgelopen jaar gebruik van gemaakt'; 2 'Aanwezig, maar geen gebruik van gemaakt'; 3 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb wel interesse'; 4 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb geen interesse'
Ergonomische aanpassingen van de werkplek	1 'In het afgelopen jaar gebruik van gemaakt'; 2 'Aanwezig, maar geen gebruik van gemaakt'; 3 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb wel interesse';

	4 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb geen interesse'
Pay for performance (beloning die afhankelijk is van de prestatie)	1 'In het afgelopen jaar gebruik van gemaakt'; 2 'Aanwezig, maar geen gebruik van gemaakt'; 3 Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb wel interesse'; 4 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb geen interesse'
Verkorte werkweek (4x9)	1 'In het afgelopen jaar gebruik van gemaakt'; 2 'Aanwezig, maar geen gebruik van gemaakt'; 3 Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb wel interesse'; 4 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb geen interesse'
Beoordelingsgesprekken	1 'In het afgelopen jaar gebruik van gemaakt'; 2 'Aanwezig, maar geen gebruik van gemaakt'; 3 Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb wel interesse'; 4 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb geen interesse'
Flexibele werktijden	1 'In het afgelopen jaar gebruik van gemaakt'; 2 'Aanwezig, maar geen gebruik van gemaakt'; 3 Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb wel interesse';

	4 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb geen interesse'
Vanuit huis werken	1 'In het afgelopen jaar gebruik van gemaakt'; 2 'Aanwezig, maar geen gebruik van gemaakt'; 3 Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb wel interesse'; 4 'Onbekend voor mij, maar ik heb geen interesse'

<b>Controle variabelen</b>	
<p>Ten Brummelhuis, L. L., ter Hoeven, C. L., De Jong, M. D. T., &amp; Peper (2013). Exploring the linkage between the home domain and absence from work: Health, motivation, or both? <i>Journal of Organizational Behavior</i>, 34(3), 273-290.</p> <p>Lyonette, C. (2015), Part-time work, work–life balance and gender equality. <i>Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law</i>, 37(3), 321-333</p>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Schaal</b>
Geslacht	0 = Man 1 = Vrouw 2 = Zeg ik liever niet
Leeftijd	In jaren:...
Werkuren per week	In uren:...

## Appendix 2: Results of the additional quantitative analysis

The table below shows the results of the additional quantitative analysis that was conducted with a sample containing employees who were 50 years or over.

**Table 4:** Results of the additional moderated moderation analysis, controlled for gender, age and weekly working hours

<b>Outcome:</b> motivation to continue working			
Model Summary: $F(11,95) = 4.74, p < .001, R^2 = .27$			
Predictors	B	SE	P
Constant	1.00	2.02	.59
FTP	.35*	.11	.00
Disruptiveness of private life events	.07	.11	.52
Perceived availability maintenance HR practices	.12	.10	.26
Actual use maintenance HR practices	-.13	.11	.06
FTP x disruptiveness of private life events	.04	.08	.60
FTP x perceived availability maintenance HR practices	.09	.05	.12
FTP x actual use maintenance HR practices	.10	.08	.20
Disruptiveness of private life events x perceived availability maintenance HR practices	.03	.06	.54
Disruptiveness of private life events x actual use maintenance HR practices	.02	.08	.84
FTP x disruptiveness of private life events x perceived availability maintenance HR practices	.00	.04	.93
FTP x disruptiveness of private life events x actual use maintenance HR practices	-.03	.05	.56
Gender	.60	.39	.13
Age	.02	.04	.52
Weekly working hours	.02	.02	.39

**Note:** \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

## Appendix 3: Interview guideline

### Introductie

Allereerst bedankt voor het invullen van onze enquête. Deze ging over de invloed van 'ingrijpende levensgebeurtenissen' op uw functioneren op het werk en over hulpmiddelen die uw werkgever aanbiedt om te zorgen dat u uw werk goed kunt blijven uitvoeren. In dit korte gesprek graag gaan wij het hebben over uw motivatie om door te blijven werken tot aan de pensioengerechtigde leeftijd en wat uw werkgever hierin volgens u kan betekenen. Ook gaan we het eventueel hebben over invloedrijke gebeurtenissen die wellicht hebben plaatsgevonden in uw privésituatie, en hoe deze uw motivatie om door te blijven werken hebben beïnvloed.

Dit interview blijft volledig anoniem en de door u gegeven informatie wordt vertrouwelijk verwerkt. De antwoorden kunnen dus niet naar u of uw werkgever herleid worden. U bent niet verplicht de vragen te beantwoorden als u dat niet wilt.

### Algemene openingsvraag

Wat motiveert u om tot de pensioengerechtigde leeftijd door te werken?

- Wat kan uw werkgever hieraan bijdragen?
- Wat dat u zelf om uw motivatie op peil te houden?

### Ingrijpende levensgebeurtenis privé

Heeft er bij u het afgelopen jaar een ingrijpende gebeurtenis plaatsgevonden in uw privéleven? (denk aan trouwen, (klein)kinderen krijgen, verhuizen, chronisch ziek worden, een dierbare die ziek word/overlijdt, scheiding etc.)

- Wat voor invloed heeft deze gebeurtenis gehad op uw motivatie om door te blijven werken (tot aan de pensioengerechtigde leeftijd)?
- Wat heeft uw werkgever in deze periode gedaan om u te ondersteunen?
- Wat had u gewild dat uw werkgever (nog meer) had gedaan om u te ondersteunen?

Indien **géén gebeurtenis**: in hoeverre verwacht u dat een ingrijpende gebeurtenis in uw privéleven invloed zou kunnen hebben op uw motivatie om te blijven werken?

- Waarom?
- Wat zou uw werkgever hierin voor u kunnen betekenen?

## Appendix 4: Interview reports

### Summary interview 1

Male

63 years old

**Disruptive private life event: child was graduated last year**

Quote: ‘I think the supervisor should keep offering opportunities to employees to talk about their concerns (...) this creates a good atmosphere, which is a basis for a strong motivation.’

#### What could motivate to continue working till retirement age?

The respondent indicated that he wants to be able to provide for a living (also in the future). And he also wants to maintain his income at the level he is used to, even after the age of 65. Besides: work offers opportunities to keep thinking and using your brain, e.g. daily processes and cognition: keeping your brain active. And in addition: work is important if you want to mean something to somebody else. And work offers opportunities to help other people, like colleagues and clients.

So:

- Continue working provides and maintains a certain level of income/pension
- Continue working helps you to stay cognitively active
- Continue working offers opportunities to help other people

#### What could the employer do to make it easier to continue working?

His current supervisor listens every 2 weeks in a personal conversation about how it goes. And he asks for the needs of the respondent.

The respondent’s employer offers a lot of opportunities to follow trainings/education: and if employees don’t want to do a (long) education, then this is also okay. Employees have the freedom to make choices in how to develop themselves.

So:

What helps to stay motivated to continue working is:

- Conversations between employee and his/her supervisor in a structural/frequent manner.
- Being able to develop yourself, facilitated by the employer

What does he do himself to stay motivated?

If you are happy in what you do, this helps. It could also help to change your function or the organization you work for after several years to stay motivated to continue working. Or you could change your function within the organization.

This respondent chose to keep the job he already had: this feels most comfortable and the employer appreciates this positively.

So, what the respondent does himself to stay motivated to continue working:

- Check for yourself if it feels comfortable to keep your current position or to make a change (employee has to do what fits him the most)
- The supervisor of this respondent also helps to find a balance between the work domain/private life.

During the past 12 months, did you experience a disruptive private life event? (could be either positive/negative)

Several positive things have happened: one of his sons graduated for his education. This made the respondent happy and it was a positive experience → all positive experiences help him to feel better overall, which could also help at the work domain. He carried the positive feelings from the private domain to the work domain. This also applied for other positive life events, e.g. his other son has a great job and lives on his own. This also positively affects his mood in the work domain, because if this was not the case this would create all kinds of concerns. These concerns will deplete his energy at times he wants to do his work at the work domain. In summary: it can work in two ways.

About negative events: the respondent did not recently experience a negative private life event, but it happened a long time ago during the span of his career.

What does the respondent think about disruptive events that happened (or could happen) in the work domain?

The respondent's work situation is relatively stable, he did not mention very disruptive positive or negative events at work during the past years.

The respondent has a good relationship with his colleagues and his supervisor. This positively affects a relaxed atmosphere at work. Both his relationships with colleagues and the good atmosphere are important for him to stay motivated to continue working. Because if both were not the case, he wanted to quit working a lot earlier he mentioned.

So, what would also help to stay motivated to continue working:

- A good relationship between the employee and his/her supervisor
- A great atmosphere at work in which the employee feels comfortable

What could his supervisor do, knowing the relationships and atmosphere are important?

The supervisor has to provide opportunities for his employees to tell their stories and share their concerns. Further, it is important to have good interactions, but this is not necessarily something you can fully control as an employee or supervisor, since everyone has different characteristics. This implies a factor of luck is involved as well. Luck can contribute to a situation for employees in which good interactions with colleagues and the supervisor are possible. If this is not the case, employees and the supervisor can work on it, but the respondent prefers a situation in which this is natural. He adds that when this is natural, this is a good 'basis' to be able to discuss your concerns.

Could the recruiting process be a moment to find out if an employer wants to work with the employee on a long-term relationship?

The respondent thinks this 'finding out' does not only happen during the recruiting process, but it happens continuously during the employer-employee relationship. Both parties have to maintain this relationship actively.

How can employers/supervisors do this?

It can easily be maintained by frequent conversations between the employee and the employer/supervisor.

## **Interview 2**

**Male**

**64 years old**

**Disruptive private life event: moved to another city (and gave up his permanent contract)**

What is mainly his motivation to continue working until the retirement age?

To happily go to work and enjoy it. Especially for those last couple of years that are left in his career. He thinks that if he has to go to work with a feeling of regret, that would be a shame. His biggest motivation is about enjoying work and having a good time.

What could his employer do to help him to stay motivated to continue working these last years?

He feels comfortable at his job. But if his employer would suddenly make adaptations, like expanding the tasks at work, the respondent would not like that. The respondent thinks that employees in general, at a relatively older age, don't have the same level of ambition to develop themselves (compared to employees who just start their careers).

He is happy he found his current (new) job, after he moved to another city years ago, even though this job is way less paid than his former job.

So, what can the employer do to maintain the motivation to continue working?

- Regarding his motivation to continue working, he is happy at his current job.
- His motivation can be maintained if his employer does not alter the work tasks

His current employer is his first employer in 30 years in which he has to work the full amount of 40 hours per week. Before, he mainly worked 36 or 38 hours per week, so this is a little more demanding: he is not used to work this amount of hours. However, he is happy with it because the happy-feeling about actually having a job prevails.

What also is important, is the social contact with colleagues and the mutual respect they have for each other. His current relationships with his colleagues are okay at the moment, but he does not perceive his current job to be an important place for social interactions. This used to be the case in his former job, but not anymore.

So, what could also help to maintain the motivation to continue working?

- Social interactions between the employee and his/her colleagues

Disruptive private life events: what kind of disruptive private life event can the respondent think of, that has influenced his motivation to continue working?

Years ago, he moved from a smaller village in the Netherlands to a big city. He therefore switched jobs. His former new employer wanted to hire him as soon as possible, but when the respondent actually started at the new job, he was not trained and properly introduced to the organization during the first five weeks. As a consequence, he felt abandoned these first five weeks as nobody gave him proper explanations about his new job. So, that former employer wanted him to arrive as soon as possible, but did not have people available to properly train and introduce him. This made him very disappointed. This happened 15 years ago. But luckily, after those years, he is happy now.

He moved, started at his new job, and was abandoned for five weeks: could this event/experience make him appreciate his current job even more?

He does not know. It was a tough period, because the decision he made back then really resulted in a disappointing outcome. It was the second job in his career, and he experienced it as disappointing. Even though it worked out after a while, it is still on his mind sometimes.

So:

- He moved from a village to a city, therefore switched jobs, and he explains this had (and sometimes still has) a large impact on his mental health.

What has helped him, during that specific period, to mentally cope with his situation? And to feel better?

He took rest and tried to put things into perspective. He spoke to himself like: everything will be alright in the future. And after a while, when he actually moved to the city (because he switched jobs before he actually moved, and therefore had to travel a lot), he was able to focus more on his family. They had to rebuild everything.

So:

- Putting things into perspective, spending time with family and distraction helped him to cope with the mentally tough move to another city/employer

Looking at the specific period he started his new job at the new employer, what could his employer have done differently?

The respondent would have liked a proper training program, perhaps combined with a training officer who could have told him what the employer expected of him. Besides, the person who actually hired the respondent (and indicated that the organization badly needed the respondent) was on a five-week holiday. So this could have gone differently. He was the supervisor back then, but was later fired.

So:

- The respondent would have liked a colleague that provided a proper training and introduction to the organization. This could have made a positive difference regarding his motivation

The respondent finally adds that the decision to move to another city, and to switch jobs, was made in consultation with his wife and children. This made the disappointing outcome at his former new employer extra hard to accept. The respondent indicates that at an older age it is hard to make the impactful decision to switch jobs. He would not recommend such a move to younger employees with the knowledge and experience he has now.

### **Summary interview 3**

**Woman**

**65 years old → emergency room**

**Disruptive private life events: became chronically ill**

Quote: “My supervisor was in shock as well, so she wanted to do everything to prevent me from being permanently rejected to work”

This respondent did not fill in the questionnaire, since she did not work anymore (due to a disruptive private life event experienced earlier in her career)

The interviewer explained what the questionnaire was about: the motivation to continue working and the influence of disruptive private life events. The interviewer also explained this interview was confidential, just like the questionnaire was.

What would motivate you to continue working until the retirement age, when you would still have worked?

The respondent worked at the emergency room in a hospital, which was (and still is) her big passion. She liked to medically help people who urgently went to the hospital and to calm them down. She wanted to make sure she could help as well as possible, together with her colleagues. She intended to work as long as possible during her career, because she wanted to receive a good pension (not having a ‘pension gap’). She also wanted to enjoy her retirement at an older age, and enjoy her pension.

When she became older, her employer helped her to stay motivated and enabled her to still do the heavy, demanding work. The work was heavy, because of the irregular shifts. Sometimes the so-called ‘late shifts’ lasted until 11:00 in the evening, when she had to start 07:00 o clock the next morning for an early shift. At a certain age, she was not able to do that anymore, also because of work/life balance (husband + 2 children). So she talked to her supervisor and asked: I want to work as long as possible, but I would like more calm shifts and less irregular shifts. This was possible.

So:

- During her working period, her supervisor was willing to think along and willing to facilitate alternative shifts, to enable the respondent to continue working and have better work/life balance.

Working at the emergency room was also physically demanding: e.g. putting patients in special kinds of beds by using pulley systems. This kind of heavy physical tasks were taken over by younger colleagues when the respondent became older. Colleagues helped each other out. But this was mainly because the respondent asked them (and the supervisor) for it. She had to actively ask for this kind of help, and this resulted in less physically demanding work. She also mentions this is especially important nowadays since the retirement age has been increased.

So:

- The motivation to continue working mainly built on the fact she loved her work and that she wanted a safe pension
- The employer/supervisor was able to alter the irregular shifts and provide less physically demanding work, to maintain the employees' motivation to continue working
- The respondent had to actively ask for these 'tools' to receive them

Disruptive private life events: when the respondent still worked, and had children, did this influence her motivation to continue working?

It made differences, because the respondent had kids at a little later age. She always had the intention to continue working, but she wanted fewer hours and she arranged this with her man. But then she received the news she expected twins. So they asked the grandparents as babysitters, and also day-care was available. So everything was arranged well. Then she had to talk to her employer about the fact she got twins. Her supervisor asked: this will be busy for you (two babies), can you still handle this? Do you want to stay home to take care of the babies? Then the respondent mentioned she really wanted to continue working and then arranged to work 80%, so 1 day less. She also had a colleague who was pregnant as well, they both arranged that when one of them had a shift, the other could bring her baby to the colleague. They both took care of each other's babies.

Her motivation to continue working as long as possible also came from the fact she studied for years to become a nurse. After this main education, she did a lot of additional studies. She

taught it was a shame not to utilize all these studies and educations. Therefore, she wanted to combine continue to continue to combine work and her two children.

So:

- There was an ambition to combine work and private life, it was a certain ambition.
- She also mentioned she wanted to continue working to keep in touch with her colleagues  
→ work also provided a social life.

Her supervisor also did not want to miss the respondent. So she tried to facilitate as well as possible when the respondent got children

Disruptive private life event: chronic illness → what could the employer have done to keep the respondent still able to do her job?

The respondent's illness was discovered accidentally during a check-up when they took a blood sample. She had some complaints about being tired, but she thought this was because of combining work and private life: e.g. less sleep because of feeding the children during the night. She became extremely ill, like she never experienced before. Then they found out she had leukaemia. This was acute at first, with the result that she was not able to work for a longer period. After a while, it went a little better. Her employer did everything to keep the respondent in the emergency room. Her supervisor told the respondent: if you don't feel well sometimes at certain moments, you can just do some less-demanding administrative tasks instead, e.g. registering new patients.

So:

- The employer actively contributed to adjusting the work-related tasks, in order to retain the respondent.

Her supervisor was shocked by this event as well and really cared about the respondent. Due to this good relationship, she wanted to do everything to retain the respondent. Though, after a while, the illness became worse, so the respondent had to frequently take time off. Her colleagues supported her by coming over a lot, as she lived close to the hospital. The relationship with colleagues was really well.

After a certain period, the medical examiner of the hospital the respondent was treated, had contacted the hospital the respondent worked at. Together they had decided that it was better for the respondent to quit working permanently. The leukaemia could, after a while, become chronic and it was impossible to combine this illness with continuing to work in the emergency room. So, after two years, the respondent was permanently rejected of doing paid work.

So:

- The employer could not have done any more than what they already did to retain the respondent in the organization.

When the respondent was ill, she still went to her work to do some tasks. However, this was noticed by the HR department and they said: you are not allowed to do this, because when something happens during work there is no insurance for you. This was hard to accept for the respondent, as she really wanted to continue working during her retirement age. And because she was not allowed to go to work, there was less distraction for her (even though she had to take care of their children). So in the end, she was very disappointed that she was not allowed to go to her work anymore.

## **Summary interview 4**

**Female**

**46 years old**

**Disruptive private life event: Divorced to her husband**

The respondent works at a supermarket as department manager of all the ‘fresh’ products (e.g. vegetables, fruit, and meat).

### What is her motivation to continue working until the retirement age?

The respondent indicated that she has worked at supermarkets during her entire career, from an early age, and this is something she always liked to do. This is still the case. Even though not every day is as much fun as she would like to, her current employer is definitely one where she wants to stay until her retirement age. She can talk to customers and colleagues every day, even during the current COVID-19 pandemic. The supermarket she works at also facilitates her to build up a pension, which is a certain amount above her salary. She thinks it is important to already think about her ‘old age’, as she does not consider herself to be the youngest person anymore. The respondent does not think her pension will be enormous, but it is an important reason to keep working as she does now. She adds that if money would have been the most important factor, she probably would have worked elsewhere.

### What does her employer do to motivate her to continue working at the supermarket?

The respondent indicated her employer does a lot to keep all employees motivated. The supermarket has a staff association which employees can join voluntarily. This staff association regularly organizes parties and actively tries to involve all employees to participate in the events that are organized. She adds that this creates a ‘group feeling’, as everyone feels involved. This is one of the main reasons she likes to work at the supermarket. Besides, the supermarket she works at is a franchise store and part of a large concern. This concern facilitates an online learning platform that enables them to follow education programs. Some educations are mandatory, but most of them are not. The respondent thinks this could help to feel motivated to continue working because colleagues regularly use this platform when they switch to another department. The online learning platform makes it easier to learn a wide variety of tasks and this is something she thinks is important to keep fun at work.

So:

- She likes her job, but building up a pension is an important motivation to continue working until her retirement age as well
- The 'group feeling' and conversations with colleagues also motivate her to continue working
- She thinks the employer does well in facilitating learning opportunities that allow to switch between departments from time to time

Have you experienced a disruptive private life event recently? And how did this influence your motivation to continue working?

The most 'disruptive' example she could think of did not happen recently, as it happened already in 2011. She was divorced from her husband, with which she has a son and a daughter. When they still lived together, she worked part-time at the supermarket she currently works at. Her husband was the breadwinner. Financially, she did not even have to work back then but she did not want to stay home for the whole week. When they ended their relationship, her husband stayed in their house as he was able to pay the monthly charges. She stayed with him until she managed to find her own place, which was much smaller than she was used to. The respondent indicated that she was lucky in quickly finding her own house in the same city as she already lived in. She experienced more stress than she had ever dealt with before, as she had to arrange everything herself regarding her new home. She also had to make arrangements with her husband about the kids, this went smoothly as the kids had more or less decided themselves they wanted to live with the respondent. Both her kids now lived with her, but she had to work more hours to be able to pay the bills.

What did your employer do to support you during that time?

The respondent indicated that she worked at the department of 'shelf-stabled products' during that time. That department allowed to easily raise the weekly amount of hours she had to work. This made her feel relieved because almost instantly the worries about money were taken away from her. Regarding her feelings of sadness about the divorce, she did not ask her supervisor for extra conversations. She says she is just not the type of person to just talk to everyone about her feelings. And at home, she did not want to bother the children too much with her feelings of sadness. They were already adolescents and understood well what both mom and dad had to go through.

How did the period of divorce actually influence your motivation to continue working?

The respondent indicated that, even though it might sound strange, but she was very motivated to go to work as this was a good distraction to her. She was able to empty her head and to some of her colleagues (which are also good friends), she talked about what she went through. Her supervisor back then knew about the divorce, as the respondent had indicated this when she wanted to work more hours. He regularly asked her how she felt and if there was something he could do, but the respondent always refused any help from him. Their relationship was good, but pragmatic, she did not feel comfortable enough to share any personal details with him. But this was not problematic to her, as she indicated: “I felt happy he [the supervisor] was there for me, but I had other people at work who I knew for a much longer period and it was just easier for me to talk to them instead of him.”

What more did she want her supervisor to do, besides asking for her feelings?

She thinks she already did enough, as she always refused most of his help. She does not know what kind of help other colleagues of her would demand in a similar situation. Especially if people have a problem in their private life, instead of at work.

## Summary interview 5

Female

50 years old

**Disruptive private life event: Feelings of stress in private life about a major transition at work**

Quote: “All my concerns back then had to do with communication I think”

The respondent currently works at an emergency shelter for the elderly, who are not able to live with their own family anymore. The elderly stay for a maximum amount of six weeks, which often leads to hectic situations.

What could motivate to continue working till retirement age?

The respondent works with the elderly in an emergency shelter. In this setting, the elderly are registered of which friends and family are not able to take care of anymore. This can be quite hectic, but the respondent likes to ease the burden of the family and to take care of the patient himself/herself. The fact she can contribute to the well-being of multiple people and really make a difference keeps her motivated to continue working. Even though that the work is sometimes physically and mentally hard. The respondent also indicated some of her colleagues are really good friends that she also sees outside of work. This makes it more fun for her to go to work.

So:

- She is motivated to continue working, because she likes the fact her job allows to help a lot of people
- The fact that most of her colleagues are also friends contributes to her motivation as well

During the past 12 months, did you experience a disruptive private life event? (could be either positive/negative)

Just over a year ago, in February 2019, she experienced a major transition in her job. Even though this was an event at work, she carried negative feelings to her private life for quite a long period. At the beginning of 2019, the department she worked at changed from a ‘closed psychogeriatrics department’ to an ‘emergency shelter. The whole team of colleagues she used to work with was divided, as not everyone felt capable and comfortable enough to work at an

emergency shelter. For the respondent, this transition was mentally hard: she already worked in elderly care for 25 years and normally she treated the same patients for a longer period; because of the transition, the patients she treats now do constantly change. She had to get used to doing other tasks and not being able to build a strong bond with patients anymore.

#### How did the transition at work affected her private life?

During the period when the transition was announced, before it even had started, she did not feel well. She found out she now had to work with aggressive patients as well and she was not used to do this. This was new to her and this gave her feelings of stress. It was even difficult for her to feel relaxed at home. Besides, there was a lot of uncertainty about what the new work would look like and what tasks he had to do. This caused a lot of rumours to spread around the workplace. One of the rumours was she had to be ready all the time to immediately go to work because of an emergency (when a new patient who suddenly comes in). Even when she has an evening off. She worried a lot about how she could combine this kind of work with having 2 children at home and a husband who works fulltime as well.

So:

- The uncertainty of the announced transition at her job made her feel very stressed, as she did not know much about her new tasks and the consequences for her private life
- The feelings of stress were also taken home, with the consequence it was hard for her to feel relaxed

#### What did she do to cope with the feelings of stress she experienced in her private life?

She talked to her husband every day about the way she felt about her job. And what his opinion was on the uncertainties, e.g. about having to immediately leave for work on a free evening. Her husband also did not know how to deal with this, as he had to work fulltime himself. They tried to support each other, but this did not take away all the stress because they missed answers to important questions.

Despite the long-lasting uncertainty about what her new job would look like, she tried to give her opinion to her supervisor about aspects of the transition. She had certain demands, such as a very clear explanation about the change of everyday-tasks (with clients). The respondent also wanted her employer to facilitate trainings and supervision. She trusts her supervisor really

well. She has open communication with her supervisor and this allowed her to ask for her demands.

What did her supervisor do after the respondent asked for her demands?

The respondent and her colleagues needed trainings about how to work in an emergency shelter. And more specifically; how to deal with aggressive elderly who are forced to stay in the emergency shelter. The respondent's supervisor listened well to the needs of the team and several trainings were provided. The supervisor also started to communicate more clearly about the transition over time. According to the respondent, this was something her supervisor had to learn as well. The respondent was happy about the clear communication, as this took a lot of concerns away. The respondent indicates: "All my concerns back then had to do with communication I think". Even the concerns about combining her new work and her private life were largely taken away. It became clear she did not have to come back to work at midnight, but she still has to stay prepared between 6 in the evening until 12:00 midnight. This is something she can arrange with her husband and children. She also arranged with her husband that if the job does not fit anymore in the future, she will search for something else. But knowing it was quite achievable to combine the new job with her private life made her feel better. When the stress levels were lower, she even started to feel more curious about what the work would be like. This motivated her to not quit her job and go on. Up to the present day, she is happy with this decision, as she likes her job now.

So:

- The supervisor provided trainings about how to handle aggressive patients, as this was demanded by the whole team of the respondent
- Over time, the communication of the supervisor became more clear, which took away a lot of uncertainties. This reduced the respondent's stress levels, also at home.