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Master's thesis

Does Work Feel Good? Ideal and Experienced Workplace Affect as Drivers of Younger and Older Employees' Work Motivation

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Abstract

Research has shown that positive affect at work is positively related to work motivation. However, while most studies have considered only valence of affect, largely ignoring level of activation, we assessed low-arousal positive (LAP) and high-arousal positive (HAP) workplace affect in the present study. Furthermore, we argue that the discrepancy between experienced levels of LAP and HAP affect at work and employees' ideal levels for each type of affect respectively is an important but so far neglected determinant of work motivation. To fill this gap, we investigated whether the discrepancy between levels of actual affect (LAP/HAP) and ideal affect is related to three types of work motivation (motivation to work, at work, and to continue working). In addition, we examined the moderating role of age as recent lifespan research has found age differences in ideal affect, actual affect, and their correspondence. The sample consisted of 126 employees aged 21 to 65 from a large hospital operator in Germany. After the baseline session, in which ideal affect was assessed, participants reported their daily actual workplace affect and motivation once a day across ten working days. Consistent with predictions, ideal-actual affect (either LAP or HAP) discrepancy was accompanied by decreases in all three types of work motivation. Unexpectedly, however, we found no empirical support for a moderating effect of age.

Keywords: ideal affect, positive affect, older workers, work motivation

Does Work Feel Good? Ideal and Experienced Workplace Affect as Drivers of Younger and Older Employees' Work Motivation

The experience of positive affect at work appears to be important for a number of work outcomes such as job satisfaction and job performance (Wagner & Ilies, 2008). A better understanding of the drivers and consequences of positive affect at work therefore will benefit both employees and organizations. Affective work experience could be particularly relevant in the context of work motivation (Kanfer & Stubblebine, 2008). Several experimental studies on affect and motivation have demonstrated beneficial effects of positive affect for intrinsic motivation (Isen & Reeve, 2005), effort and task persistence (Seo, Bartunek, & Barrett, 2010).

While the available research to date has only focused on the kind of positive affect people actually experience, the kind of affect people ideally want to experience (i.e., ideal affect) has been largely neglected (Tsai, Knutson, & Fung, 2006). However, ideal and actual positive affect can deviate from each other and there are important individual differences in both types of affect (Tsai et al., 2006). This challenges previous assumptions of the uniformity of positive affect across individuals and its effects on various outcomes. In particular, people differ regarding the degree of activation (i.e., arousal) of positive affect they find most pleasant. While some people prefer low-arousal positive (LAP) affect such as feeling relaxed, others prefer high-arousal positive (HAP) affective states such as feeling excited. The present study took such individual differences in preferred levels of arousal into account to develop a more nuanced understanding of the link between positive affect and work motivation.

This appears especially important in light of recent lifespan research which has shown that ideal affect varies systematically with age, such that older adults tend to prefer LAP over HAP affective states more than younger adults (Scheibe, English, Tsai, & Carstensen, 2013). Moreover, older adults were found to be more successful in reaching their ideal affect than younger adults, as indicated by a smaller discrepancy between ideal and actual affect (Scheibe et al., 2013). Extending these earlier findings to the work setting, the current study investigated age

differences in ideal and actual affect and the discrepancy between both in the daily lives of employees. Furthermore, considering the increased priority of affect goals with advanced age predicted by Socioemotional Selectivity Theory (SST; Carstensen, 2006), it is conceivable that the negative effects of failing to reach levels of ideal affect loom larger for older relative to younger adults. Therefore, this study also examined whether a large ideal-actual affect discrepancy is associated with a stronger reduction in work motivation in older relative to younger adults. In sum, the present research aims at providing new insights on the role of ideal and actual positive affect as drivers of older and younger employees' work motivation.

Positive Affect and Work Motivation

Work motivation refers to "a set of energetic forces that originate both within as well as beyond an individual's being, to initiate work-related behavior, and to determine its form, direction, intensity and duration" (Pinder, 2008, p.11). Although the importance of affect for employees' work motivation has been acknowledged by multiple organizational scholars (e.g., Kanfer & Stubblebine, 2008), surprisingly little research has investigated this relationship. However, there is some theoretical and experimental work outside the area of organizational psychology, which addresses the relationship between positive affective experience and motivation. Expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964), for instance, has been used and extended to explain the positive affect – motivation link. According to this theory, motivation is the product of evaluations of expected outcomes (i.e., effort leads to performance; *expectancy judgments*), the expectation that performance leads to rewards (i.e., *instrumentality judgments*) and the perceived attractiveness or value of these rewards (i.e., *utility judgments*).

With respect to expectancy judgments, people in positive affective states may retrieve more memories of positive outcomes, which increase their expectancy to reach these states (Seo, Barrett, & Bartunek, 2004; Yeo, Frederiks, Kiewitz, & Neal, 2013). Stated differently, positive affect results in perceiving the link between effort and performance as stronger, which in turn increases motivation (Erez & Isen, 2002). Instrumentality judgments might be increased by

positive affect, as positive affect fosters cognitive flexibility, which improves the ability to make various, diverse associations (Isen, 2004). This in turn has been suggested to increase people's perceptions about the relatedness between performance and outcomes or rewards (i.e., instrumentality; Erez & Isen, 2002). With regard to utility judgments, positive affect might facilitate perceptions of the attractiveness of certain outcomes or rewards, thereby fostering motivation (e.g., Erez & Isen, 2002; Seo et al., 2004). In support of this idea, one experimental study has found that positive affect facilitates intrinsic motivation in a sample of students through increases in expected enjoyment and liking of the task (Isen & Reeve, 2005). Furthermore, research by Custers and Aarts (2005) has suggested that when goal states are associated with positive affect, they act as incentives for behavior and consequently, people have an increased desire to attain the state, which increases motivation.

In addition to its influence on expectancy, instrumentality and utility judgments, self-regulation theory posits that positive affect influences *progress judgments*, which pertains to the evaluation of progress made toward goal attainment (Carver & Scheier, 1998). When judging progress, people compare their current state to some standard (i.e., their goal; Carver & Scheier, 2000). Whereas negative affect might indicate that insufficient progress is made towards a goal (Carver & Scheier, 1998), positive affect can serve as a cue that someone is progressing in the right direction (Seo et al., 2004). Carver and Scheier (1998) have assumed that positive affect signals no more effort is needed, reducing motivation, while negative affect fosters motivation by signalizing that more effort is required. More recent research, however, has suggested that positive affect is associated with increased motivation (Foo, Uy, Baron, 2009; Seo et al., 2010). More specifically, positive affect on the one hand may result in more favorable progress judgments, which in turn increases the likelihood that people maintain their current approach (i.e., persistence; Seo et al., 2004). Negative affect, on the other hand, may result in less favorable progress judgments, increasing the likelihood to disengage from the current approach, thereby decreasing persistence. Taken together, expectancy theory and recent research on self-

regulation theory both predict that positive affect promotes motivation. So far, only one study has tested these underlying mechanisms and has revealed that positive affect is indeed associated with higher expectancies of positive outcomes as well as greater utility and progress judgments, which in turn related to behavioral indicators of motivation, namely direction, intensity and persistence (Seo et al., 2010). In sum, there is initial evidence for the positive relationship between positive affect and work motivation via increases in expectancy, utility, and progress judgments.

Individual Differences in Positive Affect

Existing theories on positive affect and work motivation implicitly assume that positive affect is equally rewarding for everyone. Research on affect goals, however, challenges this assumption by demonstrating that people differ in the extent to which they strive to experience certain kinds of positive affect (Tsai et al., 2006). These affect goals can be conceptualized as ideal affect, referring to affective states people ideally want to experience (Tsai, 2007). Drawing on the circumplex model of affect (Russel, 1980), Affect Valuation Theory (AVT; Tsai et al., 2006) maintains that ideal affect may not only be categorized according to its valence (i.e., positive versus negative valence) but also according to its level of arousal. That is, people's ideal positive affect might be high in arousal, such as wanting to feel elated, or low in arousal, such as wanting to feel calm.

These individual differences in ideal affect have been recently linked to age (Scheibe et al., 2013). More specifically, lifespan research has shown that age is related to changes in (1) affect goals (i.e., ideal affect), (2) affect goal attainment (i.e., ideal-actual affect discrepancy; Scheibe et al., 2013), and the relative importance of affect goals in relation to nonaffect goals (Carstensen, 2006). Affect goals pertain to peoples' mental representation of general affective states they want to attain (e.g., feeling pleasure; Mauss & Tamir, 2013). While some form of affect indirectly accompanies most goals (e.g., aiming at a promotion to feel pleasure), affect goals concern affective states as the endpoint (e.g., aiming at feeling pleasure). One experience

sampling study by Scheibe and colleagues (2013) has provided initial evidence for age-related differences in affect goals (i.e., ideal affect). These researchers found that while older age was associated with a relative preference for LAP (e.g., feeling calm) over HAP (e.g., feeling excited) states, younger age was unrelated to type of affect, indicating that younger adults have no clear preference for either LAP or HAP. Furthermore, studies have shown that older adults associate happiness with LAP emotions such as calm, while young adults associate it with HAP emotions such as excitement (Mogilner, Kamvar, Aaker, 2011; Mogilner, Aaker, Kamvar, 2012).

One explanation for these findings, proposed by the strengths and vulnerabilities integration model (SAVI; Charles, 2010), might be an increased difficulty for older relative to younger adults to regulate high arousal states, whether positive or negative. Since HAP states trigger a stronger physiological response than LAP states and older adults need more time and resources to regulate physiological arousal (Charles & Luong, 2013), they experience longer periods of physiological arousal when HAP affect is activated (Uchino, Birmingham, & Berg, 2010). Prolonged experience of high arousal, even if positive in valence, has been associated with a number of negative consequences for well-being (Charles & Luong, 2013; Pressman & Cohen, 2005). To summarize, older adults are assumed to have difficulties to regulate affect that is high in arousal and therefore may favor affect that is low in arousal. With regard to the work context, this suggests that there are important differences between employees' ideal workplace affect that are at least partly driven by age.

Ideal-Actual Positive Affect Discrepancy and Work Motivation

Individual differences in ideal affect imply that people perceive different types of affect (i.e., HAP/LAP) as more or less rewarding (valuable), which might influence the strength and direction of the positive affect motivation link. That is, positive affect might facilitate work motivation only to the extent that positive affective experience matches ideal affect (i.e. affect goals). According to the goal framework for emotion regulation proposed by Mauss and Tamir (2013), people compare their current affective experience to their ideal affect (affect goals) and

the perceived discrepancy triggers emotion regulation. Consistent with self-regulation theory (Carver & Scheier, 1998), in which progress judgment is based on a comparison between current state and desired state (i.e., goal); the output of the comparison between current and ideal affect might be either positive or negative emotions (Mauss & Tamir, 2013). When people notice a large discrepancy between both components, this might elicit negative affect such as discomfort. The notion that positive affect results in discomfort, hence negative affective experience might seem counterintuitive. However, if someone for instance aims at feeling relaxed but feels excited, negative affect may function as a signal that the discrepancy between both components is large and therefore, goals are not met (Carver & Scheier, 2000). This might have important implications for motivation. In terms of progress judgment, discomfort could signal insufficient progress in goal pursuit, decreasing motivation (Seo et al., 2004). Furthermore, large discrepancies between ideal and actual affect might reduce expectancy and utility judgments discussed above, which in turn could lower motivation (Erez & Izen, 2002). Based on this, the present study proposes that positive affect only increases work motivation if it matches people's ideal affect. In other words, a large ideal-actual affect discrepancy could diminish work motivation.

Age Differences in Ideal-Actual Affect Discrepancy

It is important to note that people consciously or automatically engage in emotion regulation in an attempt to decrease the discrepancy between ideal and actual affect (Mauss & Tamir, 2013). Thus, better emotion regulation should bring people closer to their ideal affect. There is accumulating evidence that older adults might be more motivated to engage in emotion regulation and more competent in regulating their emotions effectively (see Scheibe & Zacher, 2013, for a review). Consequently, they might be more successful in reducing their ideal-actual affect discrepancy. According to SST, the limited time perspective associated with increasing age results in a shift in goals such that older adults prioritize affect-related goals, such as optimizing positive affective experience over knowledge-related goals, such as knowledge

acquisition (Carstensen, 2006). Prioritizing affect-related goals may increase the motivation to engage in emotion regulation (Charles & Carstensen, 2007). In regard to emotion regulation competence, there is accumulating evidence that older adults use more adaptive and effective emotion regulation strategies (e.g., Urry & Gross, 2010, Cheung and Tang, 2010; Dahling and Perez, 2010).

Although no study to date has explicitly tested these mechanisms in the context of ideal-actual affect discrepancy, research has shown that older adults' actual affect more closely resembles their ideal affect, namely higher levels of LAP compared to HAP affect. Kessler and Staudinger (2009), for instance, found that older adults reported higher levels of LAP affect than younger adults, but similar levels of HAP affect. An experience sampling study, in which adults between 18 and 93 years were asked to report their LAP and HAP affect five times per day for one week revealed that older adults experienced more LAP affect relative to younger adults but comparable levels of HAP affect (Scheibe et al., 2013). Relatedly, a recent online daily diary study has found that overall, older adults reported more LAP emotions such as relaxed than younger adults but similar levels of HAP affect (except for enthusiasm; English & Carstensen, 2014). Moreover, older adults were found to report more LAP and less HAP states in response to a discrete positive event, the victory of their preferred candidate in the 2008 U.S. presidential election (Scheibe, Mata, & Carstensen, 2012). So far, only one study has directly investigated age differences in ideal-actual affect discrepancy and observed that not only ideal-actual LAP but also HAP discrepancy was negatively related to age (Scheibe et al., 2013). Taken together, there is considerable support for age differences in ideal and actual affect, such that older adults prefer and experience more LAP affective states than younger adults. Furthermore, older adults might be more successful in reaching their affect goals (i.e., a smaller discrepancy between ideal and actual affect), which is likely to have its roots in age-related increases in motivation and competence in regulating emotions.

Age, Ideal-Actual Affect Discrepancy and Work Motivation

Given that older adults tend to prioritize affect over non-affect goals, as predicted by SST (Carstensen, 2006; Mauss & Tamir, 2013), it is conceivable that the negative effect of ideal-actual affect discrepancy on work motivation becomes stronger with increasing age. While work motivation generally does not decline with age (Kanfer, Beier, & Ackerman, 2013), research has found content-related changes in work motives with age (Kooij, de Lange, Jansen, Kanfer, & Dikkers, 2011). In line with SST, age has been found to be positively related to the importance placed on affective work values such as enjoyment and appreciation as opposed to extrinsic work values such as status and money (Hertel et al., 2013). One study has revealed that positive workplace affect is positively associated with intended retirement age, which might be an indicator of motivation to retire (Claes & Van Loo, 2011). Together, these findings suggest that affective experiences at work may gain in importance with advanced age. Based on this, it is likely that the ideal actual-affect match that work provides represents a stronger predictor of work motivation for older relative to younger employees. The current study investigated this proposition, testing whether age moderates the relationship between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work motivation.

To recapitulate, past research has suggested that positive affect is positively related to work motivation. The reason for that might be that positive affect is perceived as rewarding and positively linked to increased expectancy of positive outcomes, judgment of attractiveness, and progress in goal pursuit (Seo et al., 2004). However, past research on this issue has not attended to the possibility that the types of positive affect people find rewarding and attractive may differ between individuals. Therefore, one important but so far neglected concept in the context of positive workplace affect might be ideal affect. Particularly, the extent to which positive feelings match levels of ideal affective states may predict work motivation. Importantly, ideal and actual affect have been shown to vary with age, such that LAP affective states relative to HAP states are preferred and experienced more often by older adults than younger adults (e.g., Scheibe et al.,

2013). Moreover, prior research has found that the importance attached to positive affect at work tends to increase with age (e.g., Hertel et al., 2013).

The Present Study

The present study had three goals. The first goal was to investigate whether recent findings on age differences in ideal affect, actual affect, and their correspondence replicate in a sample of healthcare employees. Secondly, we aimed to examine how ideal-actual positive affect discrepancy is related to work motivation. The final goal was to investigate whether age moderates the relationship between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work motivation. We followed a recent call for the consideration of within-person variation in organizational psychology research (Beal, 2012) and employed a daily diary design in order to draw conclusions about interindividual as well as intraindividual differences. First, participants rated their ideal workplace affect in an online baseline survey. Following this, participants filled in an online daily diary questionnaire once a day for ten workdays, in which they indicated that days' actual workplace affect and work motivation.

Age-related changes in ideal and actual affect. Past research has indicted an age-related increase in ideal and actual LAP affective states and decreases in ideal-actual affect discrepancy (Scheibe et al., 2013). These changes are probably rooted in increased motivation and competence to regulate emotions with age (Scheibe & Zacher, 2013). To our knowledge, no research to date has investigated age difference in ideal affect and its correspondence to actual affect with regard to the workplace. The working population has a lower age cut-off, is exposed to a higher number and variety of stressors, and shows higher levels of affective reactivity and variability than the population of already retired older adults (Brose, Scheibe, Schmiedek, 2013). Based on these differences, it is particularly interesting whether the age-differences found in earlier studies also hold in the present sample.

Hypothesis 1: Age is positively related to a relative preference for LAP over HAP workplace affect.

Hypothesis 2: Age is positively related to levels of actual LAP workplace affect, but unrelated to levels of actual HAP workplace affect across days.

Hypothesis 3: Age is negatively related to the daily discrepancy between ideal and actual HAP and LAP workplace affect.

Ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work motivation. To obtain a comprehensive picture of the link between affect and work motivation, we followed Kanfer and colleagues (2013) and assessed three types of motivation, which have been assumed to be interrelated but distinct: the motivation at work, to work, and to retire. We operationalized these as work engagement, work centrality, and motivation to continue working for many years. Work engagement has previously been shown to vary not only between individuals but also within individuals across days (e.g., Breevaart, Bakker, Demerouti, & Hetland, 2012). Extending these findings we investigated whether such daily variations would also be present in work centrality and motivation to continue working. We hypothesized that all three types of work motivation would fluctuate in correspondence with ideal-actual affect discrepancy. Thus, in contrast to earlier research suggesting that positive affect is universally beneficial for motivation (Seo et al., 2010), we argue that the effect of positive affect type (HAP/ LAP affect) on work motivation depends on its correspondence to ideal affect.

Hypothesis 4: Daily ideal-actual affect discrepancy is negatively related to daily work engagement, work centrality, and motivation to continue working.

While prior research has indicated that work motivation does not remarkably differ between employees of various ages (Kanfer, Beier, & Ackerman, 2013), there might be differential effects of affect on older and younger adults' work motivation. Since older adults tend to place more value on positive affective experience, a large discrepancy between how they would ideally like to feel at work and how they actually feel might be particularly detrimental to their work motivation.

Hypothesis 5: Age moderates the relationship between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and three types of work motivation such that the negative association between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and daily motivation is stronger for older than younger employees.

Method

Participants

Employees from four hospitals of one large hospital operator in Germany employing 2181 people in total were recruited by distributing fliers and posting them on the hospitals' intranet and in newsletter announcements. In addition, the management board asked the chief physicians of various hospital wards to inform their co-workers about the study. The baseline survey was completed by 153 participants. Drop out after the baseline session resulted in a final sample size of 126 adults. The final sample did not significantly differ from the group of participants who dropped out in terms of age, health, tenure, baseline motivation, workplace affect and ideal affect (all t's < 2, all p's > .05). The final sample ranged in age between 21 and 65 years (M = 46.54, SD = 10.01) and contained 74 (58.7 %) women and 52 (41.3 %) men. With regard to participants' highest educational level, 2.4 % responded they had completed lower secondary school, 30.2 % intermediate secondary school, 28.6 % higher secondary school, 21.4 % had a university degree and 17.5 % held a doctoral degree. On average, participants reported that they work 8.20 hours per day (SD = 1.73). Mean organizational tenure was 13.04 years (SD = 10.05). The sample consisted of 28 physicians, 53 nurses/ health care professionals, 27 administrative workers and 18 participants with other professions (e.g., pedagogics).

Participation was entirely voluntary. Upon completion of the baseline survey, 5 EUR per participant were donated to a charity chosen by the management (a foreign children's hospital). An additional 5 EUR were donated if participants also completed a minimum of seven daily diary entries. All participants had the opportunity to receive personal feedback about their work motivation, which they could access online with a self-generated code.

Procedure

The study was conducted online. After providing informed consent, participants completed a baseline survey, which among other things assessed demographics, health status, work motivation, as well as ideal and actual workplace affect. The survey took approximately 25 minutes to complete. At the end of the survey, participants indicated their workdays and provided their email address, which was required in order to contact them for the daily diary part of the study. Participants were informed that they would receive a link to the daily surveys every morning at 11 a.m. for their upcoming ten workdays, each link being accessible for 24 hours. They were instructed to fill in the questionnaire at the end of their work shift or before going to bed. In the daily surveys, participants were first asked to indicate when they had started and finished their work on that particular day. Then they completed measures of that days' experienced workplace affect and work motivation. Completion of the daily dairy required approximately five minutes. In total, the 126 participants provided 1138 daily diary entries. A system error caused 16 participants to provide data for more than ten days, with a maximum of 13 entries. The number of diary entries ranged between 1 and 13 (M = 8.03, SD = 2.79).

Measures

Ideal workplace affect. To measure ideal workplace affect we used slightly adjusted instructions from the affect valuation index by Tsai, Knutson and Fung (2006). Participants were asked in the baseline survey to what extent they would ideally experience different emotions during a typical workweek. Responses were given on a 5-point scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *very often*). We assessed eight positively valenced emotions of an affect checklist composed by Kessler and Staudinger (2009), which measure high-arousal positive affect (ideal HAP, α = .67) and low-arousal positive affect (ideal LAP, α = .79). The four ideal HAP items were: "elated", "delighted", "excited", "euphoric"; and the four ideal LAP items were: "serene", "relaxed", "resting", "at ease".

Daily workplace affect. Daily actual workplace affect was assessed with a modified version of the affect checklist (Kessler & Staudinger, 2009). Participants indicated to what extent they had experienced two HAP ("elated", "delighted") and two LAP ("serene", "relaxed") emotions that particular day (1 = *never*, 5 = *very often*). To reduce participants' expenditure of time for the daily survey, we dropped four items of the original measure. Specifically, for each valence-arousal combination two items were selected, which according to a study by Kessler and Staudinger (2009) have the highest factor loadings. Importantly, the 2-item scales correlated highly with the 4-item scales that were used to assess general affect in the baseline session (both *r*'s > .85), supporting the appropriateness of the item reduction. Cronbach`s alpha for the HAP scale across ten days was on average .76, ranging from .67 to .83. Cronbach`s alpha across ten days for the LAP scale was on average .84, ranging from .76 to .91.

Daily motivation at work. We measured daily work engagement as an indicator of motivation at work. It was assessed using a shortened version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli et al., 2006). More specifically, for each of three subscales of the UWES, we selected one item. The three items were then adapted to the day-level by adding the word "today" (e.g., "Today I immersed in my work"). Responses were given on a 7-point scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). Previous research has demonstrated that the UWES is a valid measure for trait as well as state work engagement (Breevaart et al., 2012). Cronbach´s alpha across ten days was on average .82, ranging from .78 to .85.

Daily motivation to work. Daily motivation to work was operationalized as work centrality and assessed with a 3-item version of the work centrality scale (Hirschfeld & Feild, 2000). Previous research that used this shortened version has generally reported good reliability (e.g., Bal & Kooij, 2011). We adapted the three statements to day-level by adding the word "today" (e.g., "Today, my major satisfaction comes from my job"). Participants indicated to what extent they agree with the three statements on a 5-point Likert-scale (1= *strongly disagree*,

5= *strongly agree*). Cronbach´s alpha across ten days was on average .76, ranging from .66 to .82.

Daily motivation to continue working. To assess motivation to continue working, we used one modified item of the 2-item willingness to continue working scale (Van den Berg, 2011). Participants indicated on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) to what extent they agree with the statement: "On a day like today I could imagine to continue working after age 65".

Work ability. We included work ability as a control variable since a body of research has suggested that work ability is positively associated with early retirement intentions (e.g., Salonen, Arola, Nygard, Huhtala, & Koivisto, 2003; Sell, 2009) and work engagement (e.g., Hakanen, Bakker, & Schaufeli, 2006). Work ability was assessed with a short version of the Work Ability Index (Tuomi et al., 1998), which comprises seven questions capturing the mental and physical work demands and health of employees (for a detailed description, see Gould, Ilmarinen, Järvisalo, & Koskinen, 2008). One example item is "How do you rate your current work ability with respect to the physical demands of your work", rated on a 5 point scale (1= *very good*, 5 = *very poor*).

Data Transformation

In order to generate indices of daily ideal-actual affect discrepancy, we first computed the ideal HAP (delighted, elated) and LAP (relaxed, serene) scales, averaging the two items that matched the actual emotions assessed on the day level. Next, average scores for daily actual HAP and LAP were computed. Finally, daily discrepancy scores of ideal and actual affect were calculated, by subtracting actual affect from ideal affect. A positive discrepancy score reflects the extent to which participants failed to meet their ideal affect that particular day while a negative score reflects the extent to which ideal affect was excelled. The correlation between the LAP and HAP discrepancies was of moderate size with an average correlation of .42 across ten days, ranging from .39 to .45. This is in line with earlier findings by Scheibe et al. (2013) and suggests

that the LAP and HAP discrepancy indicator variables are distinct from each other, though related.

Analyses

First, following the statistical approach of Scheibe et al. (2013), we examined age differences in ideal workplace affect at baseline using multivariate general linear models (GLM) and regression analysis. The former analysis was carried out to investigate the relative ideal HAP and LAP level in relation to age, the latter to examine age differences for each affect type separately. Subsequently, we used multilevel modelling to examine the daily diary data. The reason for choosing multilevel analyses was that we obtained data of participant's motivation and affect for multiple days and therefore cannot assume independence of observations (Hox, 2005, p. 5). In the present study, days (Level 1: within-subject level) were nested within participants (Level 2: between-subject level). The multilevel analyses were conducted in SPSS. We first tested whether the relative level of daily actual affect and ideal-actual LAP and HAP discrepancy varies as a function of age using 3-level models, in which affect type was nested in days, which in turn were nested in persons. To test whether ideal-actual affect discrepancy is associated with three types of motivation at the day level, we conducted three 2-level models. For each model, we also investigated whether age moderates the relationship. Interaction effects were further tested with simple slope tests, using a computational tool for probing interactions in multilevel data developed by Preacher, Curran and Bauer (2006).

In all models, time was included as a covariate with the first diary entry set zero. Furthermore, following conventions in lifespan research, age was examined with both, linear and quadratic age terms. However, if age square was not significant, it was removed from the model. Following suggestions by Nezlek (2012), the Level 2 predictors were grand mean centered and the Level 1 predictors person-mean centered in all analyses. Effects were considered as significant at $p < .05$.

Results

Analyses of the Baseline Data

Age differences in ideal workplace affect. We ran a multivariate GLM to test Hypothesis 1 stating that increasing age is associated with valuing LAP more strongly relative to HAP. We entered affect type (LAP, HAP) as the within-subject factor, linear and quadratic age as the between-subject factor. In addition, we included age x affect type and quadratic age x affect type interaction terms in the model. The reference category for affect type was LAP. Results are presented in Table 2. We found a main effect of affect type, indicating that LAP is overall valued more highly than HAP. Results further revealed a marginally significant effect of linear age, suggesting that the value placed on both types of affect tends to decrease with age. However, in contrast to expectations both interaction terms were nonsignificant, suggesting that the relative importance of LAP over HAP did not differ by age.

Next, we tested age difference for each ideal affect type separately. We conducted a hierarchical regression analysis predicting ideal LAP by linear and quadratic age. Against expectations, neither linear ($\beta = -.114$, $p = .26$) nor quadratic age emerged as a significant predictor of ideal LAP ($\beta = -.122$, $p = .227$). We repeated the analysis for ideal HAP. Results revealed a marginally significant effect of age ($\beta = -.178$, $SE = .01$, $p = .08$), suggesting that ideal HAP tends to decrease with age. Again, there was no significant effect of quadratic age ($\beta = -.060$, $SE < .01$, $p = .55$). In sum, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Analyses of the Daily Diary Data

Descriptives. Prior to testing our hypotheses for the daily diary data, we estimated the intraclass correlations (ICC) from the null (i.e., no predictor) models of the outcome variables in order to determine whether multilevel modelling is appropriate to use for the present data. ICC's ranged between .45 and .56 indicating that approximately half of the variance is between-person. Vice versa, about half of the variance is within-person, indicating that using multilevel and taking into account both levels is appropriate. Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, ICC's

and within- and between-person correlations. At both the between- and within-person levels there were negative associations between ideal-actual HAP discrepancy and all three types of work motivation. Moreover, there was a significant negative relationship between ideal-actual LAP match and motivation, though motivation to work was only significantly related to ideal-actual LAP at the within-person level. Noteworthy, Table 1 also shows that the three types of work motivation correlated moderately positive with each other.

Age differences in actual workplace affect. We next examined Hypothesis 2, stating that age is positively related to daily actual LAP affect but unrelated to HAP affect. Similar to Scheibe et al. (2013), we tested our hypothesis using a three-level random intercept model, in which affect type was nested within days and days were nested within persons. LAP was set zero and therefore represented the reference category. Fixed effects are presented in Table 3 (Model 1). Results revealed a significant negative effect of time. That is, reported affect decreased over the course of the study. Furthermore, affect type emerged as a significant predictor, such that reported levels of daily HAP affect were lower than for daily LAP affect. The linear and quadratic age terms were not significantly related to actual affect. In line with predictions, the interaction terms between age (linear, quadratic) and affect type were both significant. As can be seen in Figure 1, actual LAP increased at older ages, while HAP remained relatively stable across ages. In sum, these findings provide support for Hypothesis 2.

Age differences in ideal-actual affect discrepancy. Subsequently, we tested Hypothesis 3, proposing that the daily ideal-actual affect discrepancy decreases as a function of age. Similar to the previous analysis, we ran a three-level model to test whether the relative level of ideal-actual HAP and LAP discrepancy varies as a function of age. Again, LAP represented the reference category. As displayed in Table 3 (Model 2), there was a significant effect of time, suggesting that the ideal-actual HAP discrepancy increased over time. Furthermore, results revealed no main effect of affect type, indicating that the ideal-actual affect discrepancies were comparable for HAP and LAP. The linear and quadratic age terms were both significant

predictors of ideal-actual affect discrepancy, but the effect was stronger for quadratic age. In addition, there was a significant age x affect type interaction (Table 3, Model 2). Figure 2 shows that ideal-actual LAP discrepancy decreased with increasing age, while the ideal-actual HAP frequency showed a small curvilinear pattern, with a slight decrease HAP discrepancy at middle age. To quantify this pattern, we carried out simple slope analysis (Preacher et al., 2006), revealing that ideal-actual LAP discrepancy was negatively related to age ($\beta = -.012$, $SE = .01$, $p < .05$) while ideal-actual HAP discrepancy did not differ across age ($\beta = -.002$, $SE = .01$, $p = .70$). Taken together, Hypothesis 3 was partly supported by the data, which showed a decrease in ideal-actual LAP discrepancy with age, but no significant age differences in ideal-actual HAP discrepancy.

Ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work motivation. Next, we tested Hypothesis 4 stating that ideal-actual affect discrepancy predicts work motivation, such that on days where people experience a higher discrepancy between ideal and actual workplace affect they also report lower levels of motivation to work (work centrality) , at work (work engagement), and to continue working. Person-mean centered ideal-actual LAP and HAP variables were included at Level 1. At Level 2, we added work ability and ideal affect to the model. Results are displayed in Table 4. Work ability predicted lower mean levels of work engagement across days (see Model 1). Furthermore, higher levels of ideal HAP were related to higher mean levels of work engagement. Consistent with predictions, daily ideal-actual HAP and LAP discrepancies were significantly related to decreased daily work engagement. In other words, on days with higher ideal-actual affect discrepancy, motivation at work was significantly lower than on days with lower discrepancy.

With regard to work centrality (i.e., motivation to work, see Table 4, Model 2), results showed a significant effect of time, indicating that work centrality decreased during the time of the study. Work ability and ideal affect (LAP/HAP) did not emerge as significant predictors. As expected, ideal-actual HAP discrepancy significantly predicted a decrease in work centrality.

Thus, on days with a higher ideal-actual HAP discrepancy, work centrality was lower compared to days with a lower discrepancy. Against expectations, however, ideal-actual LAP did not emerge as a significant predictor of work centrality. (Table 4, Model 2).

With regard to motivation to continue working, results revealed that work ability is positively related increased levels of motivation to continue working across days (Table 4, Model 3). In line with hypothesis, daily ideal-actual LAP and ideal-actual HAP were both negatively related to the daily motivation to continue working. Thus, overall we found support for Hypothesis 4.

The moderating effect of age. Hypothesis 5 stated that age moderates the negative relationship between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work motivation, such that older adults' work motivation is more strongly related to ideal-actual affect discrepancy relative to younger adults. We added to the previous models linear age and the cross-level interaction terms. Quadratic age was removed, as preliminary analysis revealed no quadratic main or interaction effects in any of the three models.

As shown in Table 4 (Model 1), age significantly predicted work engagement, suggesting higher mean levels of work engagement in older compared to younger employees across days. In addition, the interaction between age and ideal-actual LAP discrepancy was marginally significant for work engagement. Visual inspection indicated a slightly stronger negative relationship between daily ideal-actual LAP discrepancy and daily work engagement at younger compared to older age (see Figure 3, panel A). Work centrality was significantly predicted by age such that older age was associated with slightly higher mean levels of work centrality across days (Table 4, Model 2). In addition, the interaction between ideal-actual LAP discrepancy and age was significant. A simple slope test showed that ideal-actual LAP discrepancy was negatively related to work centrality at younger age (1 *SD* below the mean, $\beta = -.147$, $SE = .05$, $p < .01$), while it was unrelated to work centrality at higher age (1 *SD* above the mean, $\beta = 0.081$, $SE = .05$, $p = .11$). For motivation to continue working we failed to find any significant main or

interaction effect of age (see Table 4, Model 3). In Figure 3, the relationships between ideal-actual workplace LAP affect and each type of work motivations are displayed for younger and older adults. Figure 4 shows the relationships between ideal-actual HAP affect and work motivation for younger and older adults. In sum, Hypothesis 5 was not supported. If interaction effects emerged, they were in the opposite direction from what was predicted.

Additional analyses. As described above, results revealed that ideal-actual affect discrepancies for HAP and LAP affect both emerged as significant predictors of work engagement (Table 4, Model 1) and motivation to continue working (Table 4, Model 3), though not for work centrality (Table 4, Model 2). We did not make any predictions about differential effects of either LAP or HAP affect on work motivation beforehand and therefore carried out post-hoc analyses. Results revealed that the negative relationship between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work engagement was significantly stronger for HAP than for LAP affect (χ^2 (1) = 4.19, $p < 0.05$). However, there were no significant differences between the HAP and LAP ideal-actual discrepancy coefficients with regard to motivation to continue working (χ^2 (1) = 0.10, $p = .75$).

Discussion

The degree to which work affords the affective experiences that employees strive to experience might be crucially important for their work motivation. However, individual differences in ideal positive affect and how its correspondence to actual affect is related to work outcomes have been neglected so far. The present study addressed this gap by investigating the relationship between ideal and actual positive workplace affect and work motivation, with a special focus on age differences in these variables. While findings indicated no age-related differences in ideal workplace affect, older employees did report higher levels of daily actual LAP affect (e.g., feeling relaxed) than younger employees but comparable levels of daily actual HAP affect (e.g., feeling elated). In addition, older age was associated with smaller daily ideal-actual LAP discrepancies, but similar daily HAP discrepancies relative to younger age. Findings

further provided initial evidence that daily ideal-actual affect discrepancy is associated with decreased levels of work motivation. On days with high discrepancies between ideal and actual affect, employees reported lower levels of motivation to work (i.e., work centrality), at work (i.e., work engagement) and to continue working. A moderating effect of age on this relationship was only found for work centrality, but not for work engagement and motivation to continue working.

Age Differences in Ideal, Actual Workplace Affect and the Discrepancy Between Both

Inconsistent with predictions and prior research (e.g., Scheibe et al., 2013) we did not find age differences in ideal workplace affect. Older and younger employees both valued LAP affect at work more strongly relative to HAP affect, and the relative preference of LAP over HAP was comparable across age groups. One potential reason for this finding is that in contrast to the study by Scheibe and colleagues (2013), the present study measured ideal workplace affect in particular and not affect preferences in general, which might be differently related to age. This hints to the possibility that different life domains could be associated with different ideal affect, such that younger adults might prefer LAP affect in the work domain but not in other domains of life. So far, research on ideal affect has assumed that ideal affect is stable within individuals (Scheve, 2012). However, the present findings might encourage future research to investigate whether ideal affect can differ across domains. Furthermore, the inconsistency of the present results with prior research might reflect differences in sample characteristics. While the study by Scheibe et al. (2013) consisted of Americans aged 18 to 93 years, participants of the present study were German healthcare workers between 20 and 65 years. The differences in age range in particular could explain the inconsistent findings with the study conducted by Scheibe et al. (2013). These authors found the largest age-differences in preference of LAP over HAP in adults older than 80 years. Relatedly, findings of the present study are in line with an earlier study that found no age differences in ideal affect in a younger and healthier sample of European Americans (Tsai et al., 2011), which more closely resembles the present sample. Thus, we may

have been unable to replicate findings from this prior study because of the smaller age range of the present sample.

As expected, we found that older adults reported higher levels of actual LAP workplace affect relative to younger employees and equal levels of HAP affect. Thus, older healthcare employees tended to feel more serene and relaxed but equally elated and delighted at work compared to their younger co-workers. This finding is in line with increasing evidence that older adults report higher levels of actual LAP than younger adults but comparable levels of HAP affect (Kessler & Staudinger, 2009; Scheibe et al., 2013; English & Carstensen, 2014). In addition, we found that older adults had a lower daily discrepancy between ideal and actual LAP workplace affect, but no considerable age-differences in ideal-actual HAP affect discrepancy. As we did not find age differences in ideal affect, decreased ideal-actual LAP affect discrepancy with increasing age is likely to be rooted in differences in actual affect. More specifically, higher levels of actual LAP affect in older relative to younger employees appear to be the reason for age-related reductions in ideal-actual affect discrepancy.

Together, the findings can be explained by an age-related increase in motivation to regulate emotions predicted by SST and increased emotion regulation competencies (Scheibe & Carstensen, 2010). The goal framework of emotion regulation proposed by Mauss and Tamir (2012) postulates that the perceived discrepancy between ideal and actual affect triggers emotion regulation processes. Considering that older adults are more motivated to engage in emotion regulation (Carstensen, 2006) and also more competent and efficient during the regulation process (e.g., Dahling & Perez, 2010), they might be more successful in reaching their levels of ideal affect. A study by Kessler and Staudinger (2009) has provided indirect evidence for this, demonstrating that self-reported affect regulation mediated the relationship between age and LAP affect. It is important to note that HAP discrepancy remained relatively stable across age. Although inconsistent with prior research (Scheibe et al., 2013), this finding is in line with predictions made by SAVI (Charles, 2010) and accordingly, might be attributed to older adults'

difficulty to deal with high-arousal states, possibly attenuating their advantage in emotion regulation efficiency. Although we cannot draw any conclusions about the underlying mechanisms of the present findings, the present study does extend prior findings of age-differences in ideal-actual discrepancy (Scheibe et al., 2013) to the workplace and hence increases convergent evidence.

Ideal-Actual Affect Discrepancy and its Relation to Work Motivation

Another key finding of the current study was that work motivation was reduced on days with higher ideal-actual affect discrepancy, as indicated by decreased work engagement, work centrality, and motivation to continue working. This provides additional evidence for the importance of positive affect for work motivation, adding to earlier studies (e.g., Seo et al., 2010). While most of the existing research to date has studied affect primarily in terms of valence (i.e., positive versus negative affect) and has endorsed measures that only capture HAP affect (e.g., Foo, Uy, & Baron, 2009), the present study took into account differences in levels of arousal. Thus, the present findings provide a more fine-grained picture regarding the association between positive affect on work outcomes. More specifically, we found that ideal-actual HAP and LAP affect discrepancy were both negatively related to work motivation.

Previous theoretical explanations for the link between positive affect and motivation have mainly relied on the notion of positive affect as an influence factor for expectancy judgments (i.e., effort leads to the desired outcomes) and utility judgments (i.e., the attractiveness of an outcome; Erez & Izen, 2002), as well as progress judgments in goal pursuit (Carver & Scheier, 1998; Seo et al, 2004). This notion implicitly assumes that positive affect is universally perceived as rewarding, thereby influencing the aforementioned judgments. However, it might be that if experienced positive affect falls short of ideal levels, the effect of positive affect on judgment processes is reduced, with potentially negative consequences for levels of work motivation. Based on the present study, however, we cannot provide support for these propositions, as we cannot disentangle whether discrepancy between ideal and actual affect

predicts work motivation beyond actual affect. Furthermore, we did not test the underlying mechanisms (i.e., judgment processes) of the ideal-actual discrepancy-motivation link.

In addition, according to self-regulation theory, affect acts as a feedback cue for goal progress (Carver & Scheier, 1998). There has been some disagreement, however, with regard to the role of positive and negative affect in this feedback loop. On the one hand, some researchers have argued that positive affect decreases motivation, signalizing that no more effort is needed, while negative affect fosters motivation, signalizing that more effort is needed (Carver & Scheier, 2000). On the other hand, scholars have suggested that positive affect increases expectations of eventual goal attainment, which in turn increases motivation, while negative affect reduces expectations of goal attainment, lowering motivation (Seo et al., 2004). Even though the present study did not assess the underlying processes of the positive affect-motivation link, our results might be more in line with the latter position. This is because we found positive correlations between daily positive affect and motivation. Moreover, although we did not examine negative affect in the present study directly, experiencing a large discrepancy between ideal and actual affect has been assumed to trigger negative emotions such as discomfort (Mauss & Tamir, 2013). We found that ideal-actual affect discrepancy is negatively associated with work motivation, which is also more compatible with the second line of reasoning. Nevertheless, the underlying mechanisms of the relation between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work motivation remain to be tested by future research.

One unexpected finding of the present research was that ideal-actual HAP was more strongly linked to work engagement and work centrality than ideal-actual LAP. Hence, HAP appears to be particularly important for work engagement and work centrality. A potential explanation with regard to work engagement stems from a recent affective conceptualization of the construct, according to which high levels of pleasure and activation characterize work engagement (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). In other words, work engagement is inherently associated with HAP rather than LAP affect. Consequently, large discrepancies between ideal

and actual HAP affect might be more detrimental to work engagement than higher levels of LAP affect discrepancy.

In contrast to expectations, we found no age moderation effect for the relationship between ideal-actual HAP discrepancy and work motivation. In other words, older and younger employees had similar reductions in levels of motivation in response to ideal-actual HAP affect discrepancy. While we failed to find support for the moderating role of age on the relationship between LAP affect discrepancy and work engagement as well as motivation to work, age did moderate the relationship between ideal-actual LAP affect discrepancy and work centrality. However, contrary to expectations, high ideal-actual LAP affect discrepancy was associated with a sharper decrease in work centrality in younger compared to older employees. Since we only found a moderation effect of age in one out of six cases and this effect was in the opposite direction than expected, our results suggest that overall, ideal-actual affect discrepancy is equally detrimental for older and younger employees' work motivation. However, future research is needed to shed light into these findings.

Strengths and Limitations

The current study is the first taking into account individual differences in preferred types of positive workplace affect, thereby helping to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between positive affect and work motivation. Furthermore, the daily diary design employed by the present study enabled us to capture day-to-day variations in affect and motivation within individuals across ten working days. Finally, the sample of this study might be a good representation of healthcare employees, as participants were recruited from four hospitals located in different parts of Germany (North and West Germany) and worked in a variety of occupations.

Despite these strengths, the present research has some limitations that are important to acknowledge. First of all, due to the design of the study we were unable to directly test how much variance ideal affect can explain beyond actual affect with regard to work motivation. This

is because we assessed actual affect at the day level but not ideal affect, as ideal affect was assumed to be stable across days. Therefore, the variance in daily ideal-actual affect discrepancy is driven by variations in daily positive affect. In order to determine the amount of variance ideal affect can explain beyond actual affect in the positive affect-motivation link, future research should include daily measures of ideal affect.

Second, the study used a cross-sectional design and therefore does not allow making inferences about causal relationships. For example, it is possible that instead of larger ideal-actual affect discrepancies leading to decreased levels of work motivation, higher work motivation resulted in increased levels of positive affect, which in turn reduced the discrepancy between ideal and actual workplace affect. However, given prior experimental studies showing that positive affect increases behavioral indicators of work motivation this is unlikely (Seo et al., 2010).

Third, all measurements were based on employees' self-reports, potentially raising risks of common method bias and thereby inflating correlation estimates (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). With respect to affect, future research might use other means than self-report, as for instance physiological measures or behavioral observations. Moreover, future studies might want to include more objective measures of employees' work motivation such as ratings by supervisors and co-workers or behavioral measurements of, for instance, effort.

Another limitation concerns the small number of items used in order to assess daily affect and work motivation. However, shortened scales might be preferred for daily diary studies in order to reduce participants' burden (Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010). In addition, with respect to daily affect we found that the 4-item version correlated highly with the 8-item version used in the baseline session. A further limitation, which is also related to measurement issues, pertains to the fact that some of the scales we used were not validated for the day-level. In particular, the present study was among the first examining work centrality and motivation to continue working at day level. Results showed that there are considerable variations in both

variables across days and this might encourage future research to further investigate the validity of the daily measures we used. Furthermore, since participants had a 24-hour time window to complete the questionnaire each day, we cannot rule out that some retrospective bias is still present in the data, albeit reduced compared to traditional onetime measurements.

Finally, due to the selectivity of our sample, generalizability of the results is limited. More specifically, as the present study involved a sample of healthcare workers, results may not apply outside the healthcare sector. Results should therefore be replicated in other occupational groups.

Implications for Future Research and Practice

Research Implications. The present study has several implications for future research. First of all, the present study emphasizes the importance to not only examine valence of affect but also arousal. While most studies on positive affect at work have assessed affect with the PANAS (e.g., Foo, Uy, & Baron, 2009), a measure that only captures HAP affect, our results indicate that LAP affect might also represent a strong predictor of work motivation. Moreover, studies that included arousal have found that level of arousal is positively related to work motivation (Seo et al., 2010). However, with regard to ideal-actual affect discrepancy as a driver of work motivation, HAP only appears to be a stronger predictor for some indicators of work motivation (e.g., work engagement) but not for others (e.g., motivation to continue working). Future research should further disentangle effects of LAP and HAP for various indicators of work motivation.

Second, the present study contributes to research on positive affect as a daily driver of work motivation. Specifically, our results indicate that the daily discrepancy between ideal and actual LAP and HAP workplace affect might be an important predictor of work motivation. Future research is needed to test whether ideal-actual discrepancy predicts work motivation beyond actual affect. This could have implications for theories on the affect-motivation relationship, as it would challenge the assumption that positive affect uniformly exerts positive

influence on expectancy, utility, and progress judgments of outcomes (e.g., Seo et al., 2004). Future research should also investigate how ideal-actual affect discrepancy and the underlying cognitive mechanisms of the affect-motivation link interact.

Third, the present research highlights the importance of examining daily fluctuations in work motivation. While previous research has already demonstrated daily variations in work engagement (see Bakker, 2014, for a review), work centrality and motivation to continue working have so far been considered as relatively stable. However, in the present study more than 40 percent of the variance in work centrality and motivation to continue working was within-individuals, suggesting considerable day-to-day variations in both variables.

Finally, a further avenue for future research might be to investigate curvilinear relationships between ideal-actual affect discrepancy and work motivation. Recently, research has found an inverted U-shape relationship between positive affect and proactive behavior (Lam, 2013). Thus, it might be that up to a certain point a small ideal-actual affect discrepancy is beneficial for motivation but when actual affect exceeds ideal affect too much, this could be even detrimental for work motivation. It might be then signalized that no more effort is required to obtain a certain affective goal (Carver, 2003). Stated differently, the rewarding effect of experiencing ones preferred affective state would diminish.

Practical implications. The present findings have some noteworthy implications for organizational practices. Practitioners should recognize that falling below ones' levels of desired positive affect at work is associated with significant reductions in work motivation. An important task for organizations would therefore be to ensure that employees come close to their ideal affect. This might be particularly true for younger employees, as the present study suggests that they experience larger discrepancies between levels of ideal and actual affect than older employees. Since emotion regulation might be the underlying mechanism through which people try to align ideal and actual affect (Tamir & Mauss, 2013), organizations could offer emotion regulation trainings aiming at improving emotion regulation competencies. There is initial

evidence that practicing emotion regulation strategies improves the effectiveness of emotion regulation as indicated by reduced levels of negative affect (Denny & Ochsner, 2014). The present study has further indicated that older adults are generally more successful in attaining their affective goals. This is might be due to an age-related increase in motivation and competence to regulate emotions (Scheibe et al., 2013). Organizations could utilize these competencies by assigning mentoring roles to older adults so that they can help their younger co-workers to deal effectively with emotions and come closer to their ideal affect. Another potentially fruitful approach for organizations could be to create an emotional climate that matches employees` ideal affect. One advantage of this approach would be that it no longer requires employees to regulate their emotions, which is cognitively effortful and may take away resources from task performance (e.g., Beal, Weiss, Eduardo, MacDermid, 2005).

Conclusion

Prior research has indicated that employees' positive affect is positively related to work motivation and therefore valuable for organizations. However, findings from the present study suggest that it is important that employees` positive affective experience matches their desired levels of positive affect. If actual affect deviates from ideal affect to a larger extent, this might even diminish work motivation. With regard to ideal workplace affect, the present study found that LAP affect might be preferred at work regardless of age, but older employees are more successful than younger employees in attaining their ideal affect. Taken together, these findings suggest that future research on positive affect and work outcomes should further examine the concept of ideal workplace affect and explicitly test its predictive power beyond actual affect. For organizations, it could be important to support their employees to reach their ideal affect by for instance adjusting the work climate or offering emotion regulation training.

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Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations and Intercorrelations.

	M	*SD*	ICC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Person-level														
1 Age	46.54	10.01	-	-										
2 Work ability	39.07	5.84	-	- .11	-									
3 Ideal HAP	4.04	0.54	-	- .14	-.05	-								
4 Ideal LAP	4.32	0.53	-	- .11	-.10	.34**	-							
Day-level														
5 HAP	2.83	0.68	.53	- .12	.15	.38**	.05	-	.36**	-.83**	-.35**	.58**	.25**	.40**
6 LAP	3.35	0.63	.45	.04	.03	.11	.29**	.33**	-	-.31**	-.83**	.42**	.11**	.27**
7 HAP discrepancy	0.96	0.66	.52	.00	-.20*	.31**	.20*	-.70**	-.22*	-	.43**	-.52**	-.23**	-.37**
8 LAP discrepancy	0.93	0.70	.51	- .08	.02	.20*	.45**	-.27	-.68**	.39**	-	-.34**	-.13**	-.26**
9 Motivation at work	4.69	0.96	.50	.10	.24**	.20*	.18*	.66**	.40**	-.54**	-.25**	-	.41**	.47**
10 Motivation to work	2.75	0.79	.55	.33**	.02	.06	.01	.31**	.08	-.28**	-.11	.49**	-	.25**
11 Motivation to continue working	2.83	1.06	.55	- .03	.24**	.08	-.06	.39**	.17	-.35**	-.21*	.39**	.25**	-

Note. Interperson means and standard deviations are presented in the first two columns respectively. Below the diagonal the between-person correlations are displayed (N = 127). Day variables were aggregated across diary days. Raw day-level correlations are displayed above the diagonal (N = 1138).
*p < .05. **p < .01.

Table 2

Summary of General Linear Model Results Predicting Differences in Ideal Affect

	$F(1,124)$	p	η^2
Affect type[a]	88.475**	< .001	.416
Age	2.047	.155	.016
Affect type x Age	0.792	.375	.006

[a] Low arousal positive affect (LAP) served as a reference category, coded zero.
**$p < .01$.

Table 3

Summary of Multilevel Model Results Predicting Actual Affect and Ideal-Actual Affect Discrepancy

	Model 1: Actual Affect			Model 2: Ideal-actual Affect		
	Estimate	*SE*	*t*	Estimate	*SE*	*t*
Intercept	3.3424	.0690	48.416**	0.9844	.0731	13.467**
Time	-0.011	.0054	-2.039*	0.0107	.0054	1.980*
Affect type[a]	-0.4964	.0381	-13.035**	-0.0147	.0371	-0.396
Age	0.0075	.0055	1.345	-0.0124	.0059	-2.093*
Age^2	0.0007	.0005	1.710	-0.0011	.0005	-2.288*
Age*Affect type	-0.0140	.0033	-4.306**	0.0101	.0032	3.174**
Age^2*Affect type	-0.0006	.0003	-2.428*	0.0006	.0002	2.179*

[a] LAP served as a reference category, coded zero.

*p < .5. **p < .01.

Table 4

Results of a Multilevel Analysis Predicting Daily Work Motivation

	Model 1: Motivation at work (work engagement)				Model 2: Motivation to work (work centrality)				Model 3: Motivation to continue working			
	Estimate	*SE*	*t*	*p*	Estimate	*SE*	*t*	*p*	Estimate	*SE*	*t*	*p*
Intercept	4.757	.087	54.432**	<.001	2.817	.073	38.839**	<.001	3.525	.113	31.062**	<.001
Time	-0.015	.008	-1.928	.055	-0.020	.007	-2.892**	.004	0.001	.009	0.005	.996
WAI	0.044	.014	3.125**	.002	0.011	.011	0.985	.327	0.037	.015	2.520*	.013
Ideal LAP	0.184	.164	1.124	.263	0.015	.133	0.109	.913	0.174	.173	1.007	.316
Ideal HAP	0.337	.160	2.100*	.038	0.114	.130	0.881	.380	0.431	.166	2.60*	.011
Ideal-actual LAP	-0.411	.053	-7.813**	<.001	-0.033	.037	-0.887	.375	-0.350	.057	-6.204**	<.001
Ideal-actual HAP	-0.549	.059	-9.412**	<.001	-0.206	.039	-5.305**	<.001	-0.367	.057	-6.471**	<.001
Age	0.017	.008	2.087*	.039	0.029	.007	4.204**	<.001	0.010	.011	0.912	.364
Ideal-actual LAP x age	0.011	.006	1.892	.061	0.013	.004	3.050**	.002	-0.001	.006	-0.166	.868
Ideal-actual HAP x age	0.002	.006	0.279	.780	-0.004	.004	-0.920	.358	-0.008	.006	-1.362	.176

Note. Fixed effects are displayed. WAI= Work ability index. WAI, Ideal affect, age and age^2 are grand-mean centered level 2 predictors. Ideal-actual affect scores are person-mean centered level 1 predictors.

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

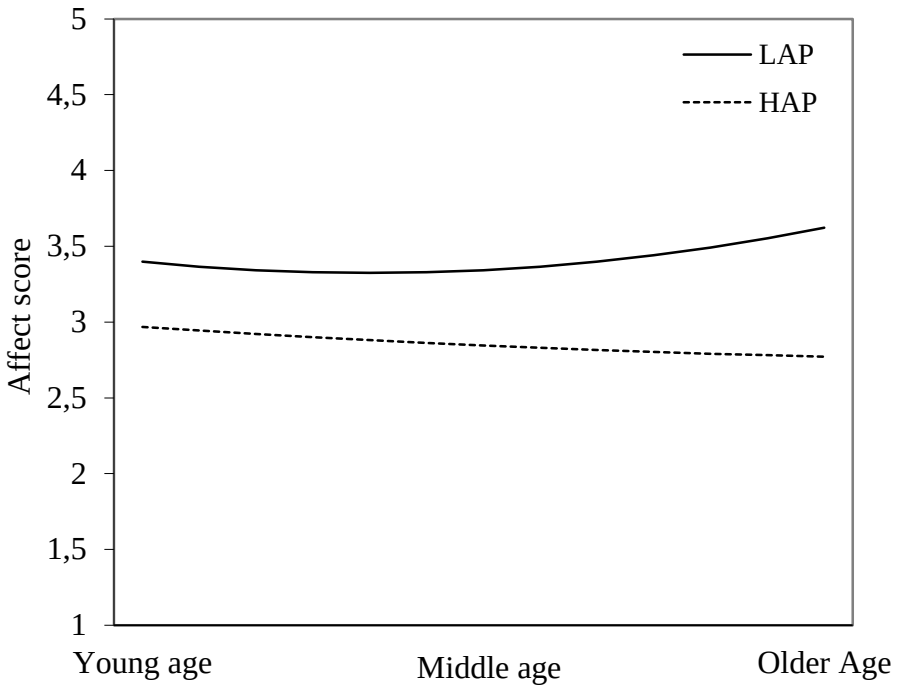

Figure 1. Scores of high-arousal positive (HAP) and low-arousal positive (LAP) affect as a function of age.

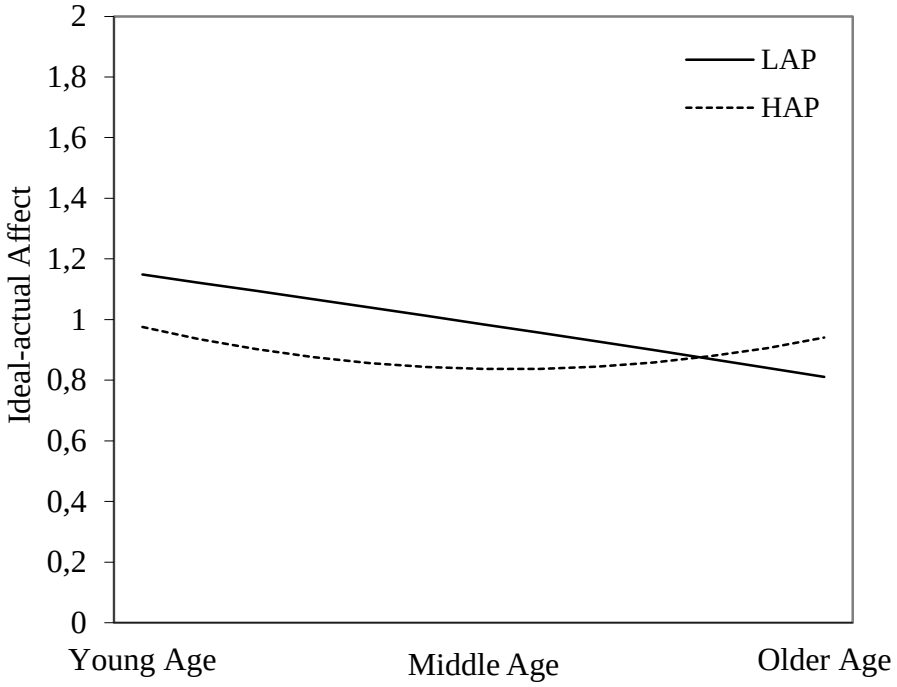

Figure 2. Ideal-actual LAP and HAP discrepancy scores as a function of age. Higher scores indicate a larger discrepancy between ideal and actual affect.

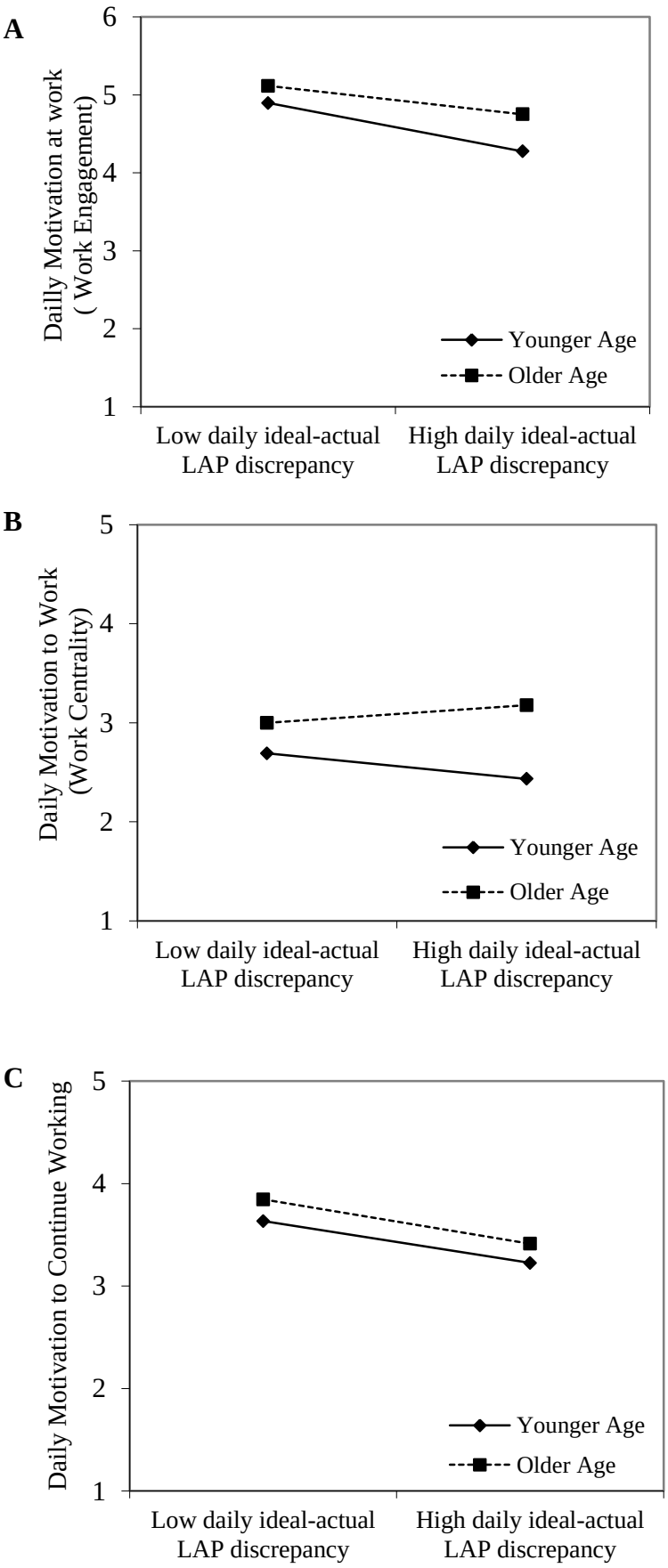

Figure 3. The relationship between daily ideal-actual LAP discrepancy and daily motivation (A) at work, (B) to work, (C) to continue working for young and older employees. The interaction was only significant for work centrality.

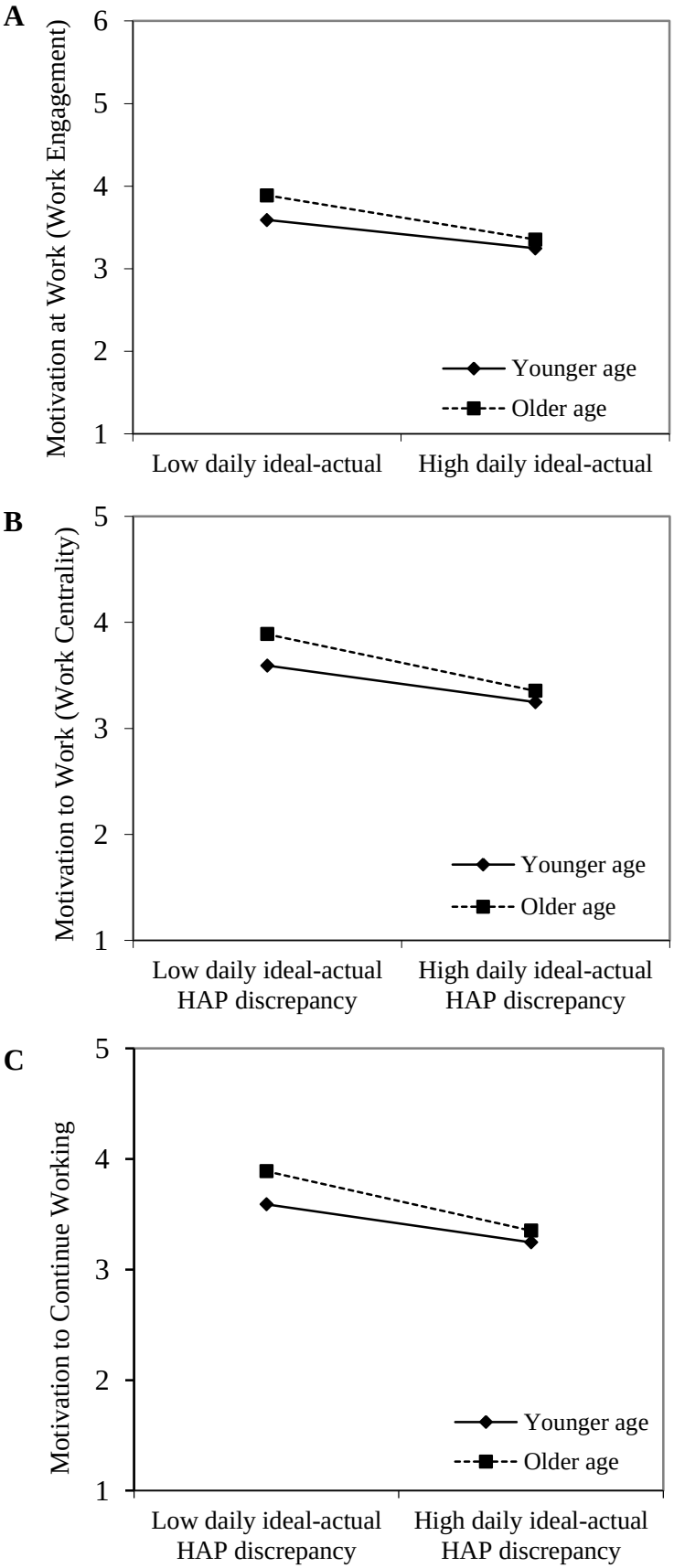

Figure 4. The relationship between daily ideal-actual HAP discrepancy and daily motivation (A) at work (B) to work (C) to continue working for young and older employees. The effect of age was nonsignificant in all three models.