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Feeling Confident after all? Examining the Relationship between Daily  
Negative Work Events and Employees' Self-Esteem in a Diary Study

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### **Abstract**

The literature on the relationship between negative work events and self-esteem is inconsistent, although emerging diary studies suggest a negative association between the two variables. This diary study aimed to clarify the impact of negative work events on state self-esteem within the framework of sociometer theory. Both, general and social negative work events were examined, along with the moderating roles of sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) and competitive climate (CC). Participants ( $N = 183$ ) self-reported negative work events and state self-esteem once a day for 10 working days. Additionally, a baseline assessment of SPS and CC was administered. Multiple regression with moderation analysis was performed. The results did not support the hypotheses, indicating that negative work events, regardless of category, do not predict state self-esteem. Additionally, interaction terms of SPS and CC showed no significant effects. However, further analyses revealed a moderate, positive effect of negative work events on negative affect. While the findings did not show a negative impact on self-esteem, they suggest the need to support employees in dealing with negative events. Recommendations include hosting group meetings and employing supportive leadership styles. Future research could explore the influence of highly impactful work events, as these might affect employee well-being differently than daily hassles.

## **Feeling Confident after all? Examining the Relationship between Daily Negative Work Events and Employees' Self-Esteem in a Diary Study**

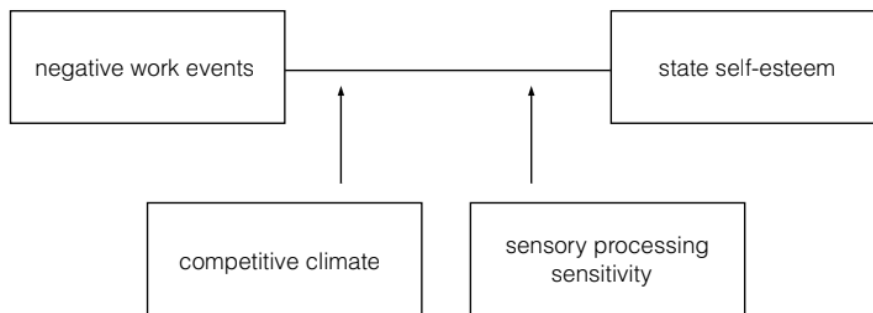
When being in a productive workflow, encountering technical difficulties or receiving negative feedback from a supervisor can be discouraging. Such situations are termed work events, defined as “changes in circumstances” (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996, p. 31) which interrupt the regular work routine (Morgeson et al., 2015). Work events can cause emotional reactions (Kuba & Scheibe, 2017), with negative work events referring to events that are appraised as negative to well-being (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Moreover, such events can decrease individuals' goal attainment (Schmitt & Weigelt, 2023) and can cause negative affect or fatigue, expressing a potential threat to employee well-being when accumulated (Kuba & Scheibe, 2017). Examples of negative work events include work overload (Schmitt & Weigelt, 2023), conflicts with colleagues, or receiving negative, personal news while at work (Ohly & Schmitt, 2015). Since employees spend a considerable amount of time and effort at work, such experiences are closely connected to the self-concept (Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2018) and could as such provide individuals with information that is integrated into it.

One aspect of the self, namely self-esteem, has repeatedly been studied in the organizational context due to its positive effects on work outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance (Bowling et al., 2010) and adjustment (Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2008). Defined as “an individual's subjective evaluation of her or his worth as a person” (Donnellan et al., 2011, p. 738), self-esteem is often referred to and measured as a stable trait, yet can fluctuate around the trait level, which is referred to as state self-esteem (Geukes et al., 2017). Existing research on the link between negative work events and self-esteem offers mixed findings. While Song and Guo's (2022) correlational study shows a negative association between negative work events and self-esteem, longitudinal studies present a more nuanced picture. For instance, Kuster et al. (2013) found no significant effect of work experiences on

self-esteem, while Krauss and Orth (2021) identified reciprocal effects, indicating that self-esteem showed a stronger influence on later work experiences than vice versa. This disparity might stem from neglecting the temporal aspect of self-esteem. As self-esteem was measured as a stable trait (Kuster et al., 2013), no insights were offered into how negative work events might influence individuals' self-esteem at the moment.

Furthermore, individual and contextual factors should be considered when assessing how negative work events affect self-esteem. According to Sociometer Theory (Leary, 2005), individuals monitor their level of social acceptance, and when obtained, attain an enhanced sense of self-worth. As such, individuals who have a heightened sensitivity regarding the perception and processing of external stimuli, referred to as *sensory processing sensitivity* (SPS; Aron & Aron, 1997) might identify cues of acceptance or rejection faster and could therefore experience changes in self-esteem more intensely. Moreover, contextual factors such as the organizational climate should be considered in the aforementioned relationship. For instance, in competitive climates, which are characterized by frequent comparisons with others (Gilabert, 2023), negative work events could potentially trigger negative self-evaluations more readily than other organizational climates (Murtza & Rasheed, 2023).

The current diary study explored the impact of negative work events on state self-esteem, motivated by previous inconclusive findings. It also examined boundary conditions affecting this relationship. Specifically, it assessed a positive moderation effect for individuals high in SPS, who process external stimuli more deeply (Acevedo et al., 2014). Contextual factors such as working in a competitive climate were also included, as they may worsen self-evaluations during such events (Murtza & Rasheed, 2023). This study contributes to the limited organizational literature on SPS and focuses on the antecedents of self-esteem rather than its consequences, which represents a previously neglected perspective (Perinelli et al., 2022).

**Figure 1***Theoretical model***Sociometer Theory of Self-Esteem**

Self-esteem is not only a relevant aspect of private life, impacting social relationships (Harris & Orth, 2020; Mund et al., 2015) and individuals' mental health (Sowislo & Orth, 2013), but it has also been linked to vital work outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction (Bowling et al., 2010). However, little is known about factors that influence self-esteem specifically within the work domain (Krauss & Orth, 2021; Perinelli et al., 2022) which is essential to understand to support employee's occupational functioning. One theoretical perspective, which has been validated and termed suitable for research questions concerning the organizational context (Perinelli et al., 2022) is the sociometer theory of self-esteem by Leary (2005). The theory suggests that social interactions are a key determinant in shaping an individual's sense of self-worth. More specifically, the theory posits that individuals monitor their social environment for cues of social acceptance and when these cues are detected, self-esteem increases (Krauss & Orth, 2021). Self-esteem should therefore decline when individuals' relational evaluation is low such as when the other person shows a lack of interest or disapproval (Leary, 2005; Leary, 2012). Contrary to other theories of self-esteem which assume that people are intrinsically motivated to enhance or maintain their self-esteem (Hogg & Abrams, 1990; Islam, 2014), sociometer theory proposes

that people are primarily seeking avenues to enhance their social acceptance, viewing self-esteem as a measure of successfully attaining this objective (Leary, 2012).

Cross-sectional and longitudinal research gives preliminary support for this perspective (Song & Guo, 2022). For example, Song and Guo (2022) studied the association between workplace gossip and organizational self-esteem in the context of Chinese organizations. Results showed that workplace gossip was negatively associated with employees' organizational self-esteem which was mediated by workplace exclusion. Furthermore, during their systematic review, Perinelli et al. (2022) identified that a significant number of articles in leading organizational psychology journals ( $N = 8$ ) suggest a detrimental effect of what they term *perceived negative interpersonal contingencies at work* (i.e. ostracism, workplace gossip, surface acting, among other variables) on *individual differences*, such as self-esteem and organizational based self-esteem. Additionally, the results of their longitudinal study lend further support to sociometer theory, as global self-esteem was shown to be indirectly predicted by the quality of relationships with colleagues via the mediation effect of organizational socialization.

In contrast to these findings, Kuster and colleagues (2013) conducted a longitudinal study using two independent datasets and found that most work experiences (e.g., job success, support at work, work stressors) had no significant effect on self-esteem in either dataset. The only exceptions to this overall finding were that job satisfaction and job rewards appeared to have a marginal impact on self-esteem. On the other hand, they found significant effects of self-esteem on prospective work experiences, such as ostracism, interruptions at work and interpersonal conflict among other events, expressing that self-esteem is shown to be a determining factor in how people experience and construe their work (Orth et al., 2012). Motivated by the ongoing debate regarding in which direction self-esteem influences work outcomes or vice versa (Baumeister et al., 2003; Krueger et al., 2008; Orth et al., 2012),

Krauss and Orth (2021) conducted a meta-analysis of longitudinal studies focusing on the directionality of effects between the constructs. The results revealed reciprocal effects, where self-esteem exerted a greater effect on later work experiences than the other way around. While this meta-analysis is valuable for understanding how work experiences affect global self-esteem, it is insufficient to understand the effect that work events can have on momentary, or state self-esteem.

To my knowledge, the study by Peng and Zen (2016) is the only study conducted in an organizational context that assesses the effects of a negative work event, namely workplace ostracism, on state self-esteem. Their results are in line with sociometer theory and support the notion that negative work events hold the potential to negatively affect one's sense of self-worth in the moment. Taking the theoretical premises of sociometer theory into account and incorporating the primary indices of the detrimental effects of negative work events on state self-esteem, the current study aims to explore the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1a:* Daily negative work events are negatively associated with employees' state self-esteem.

Moreover, it is worthwhile to investigate whether different types of negative work events have varying effects on state self-esteem. As sociometer theory describes self-esteem as a result of social interactions, it is plausible that negative work events of social nature, for instance, being ignored or humiliated at work, in contrast to task-related negative work events, such as technical problems, affect state self-esteem more strongly. This difference in effect is expected because non-social events, such as a technical difficulty with the PC, do not involve aspects of negative relational evaluation (Leary, 2012).

*Hypothesis 1b:* Negative work events of the category social-self are associated with stronger declines in state self-esteem in employees than all other negative work events.



The effects of negative work events on state self-esteem are worthwhile to examine for several reasons. Over the past decade, research on event-oriented organizational behaviour has significantly increased due to the potential of events to “substantially impact employees’ psychological states, attitudes and behaviour” (Liu et al., 2023, p. 2). For instance, Liu and colleagues (2023) clarified that even positive work events like promotions can lead to negative consequences such as reduced organizational citizenship behaviour, or that one initial event can trigger new events with further consequences. This expresses the complexity of events concerning behavioural outcomes and emphasizes the necessity of understanding how events impact employee functioning. Regarding self-esteem, research has thus far focused on its consequences while research into antecedents is largely missing (Perinelli et al., 2022). Yet, knowing how negative work events affect employees' self-esteem is valuable for organizations to implement effective prevention and intervention measures to support employees' performance. Lastly, boundary conditions in this field are weakly explored (Song & Guo, 2022) which gives reason to further identify under which conditions declines in self-esteem are particularly pronounced.

### **Sensory Processing Sensitivity as a Moderator**

When examining negative work events, it is crucial to consider that the psychological consequences of these events may vary based on individual differences. Specifically, SPS could give insight into such differences, as this trait encompasses a stronger awareness and processing of internal and external stimuli, emotional reactivity, empathy and the ability to sense subtle cues in the social environment (Aron & Aron, 1997; Bröhl et al., 2022; Schmitt, 2022). One theory that describes individual differences in susceptibility to environmental influences is the *differential susceptibility theory* (Belsky & Pluess, 2009; Pluess, 2015; Lionetti, 2020; Vander Elst et al., 2019). This theory assumes that some individuals react to and process environmental stimuli more intensely than others, regardless of the valence of the

stimulus. This view has so far repeatedly received empirical support (Acevedo et al., 2014; Lionetti et al., 2019; Slagt et al., 2018) and has been linked to SPS (Vander Elst et al., 2019). As such, sensitive individuals have the advantage of reaping the benefits of positive environments (Pluess & Belsky, 2013) as well as the disadvantage of experiencing negative consequences in adverse environments more intensely, affecting their health and well-being (Vander Elst et al., 2019). Applied to sociometer theory, sensitive individuals are theorized to more easily identify cues of social acceptance or rejection than their less sensitive counterparts. Moreover, the deeper processing style enables sensitive individuals to make connections between social cues or events (Acevedo, 2020) which could lead to not only a heightened awareness of negative work events but a stronger impact due to this deeper processing style. Taken together, the heightened awareness and processing of the social environment should lead to stronger declines in self-esteem when encountering negative work events.

The diary study by Van Reyn and colleagues (2023) showed preliminary support for this notion in the non-work domain. They investigated the association between negative events in daily life and life satisfaction, affective experiences and self-esteem for people of varying SPS levels. Results expressed stronger declines in self-esteem following perceived negative daily events for people higher in SPS compared to individuals scoring lower on SPS. Even though they did not find support for differential susceptibility theory, as sensitive individuals did not react more strongly to positive events, they found support for the *diathesis-stress model* (Pluess, 2015), which posits that individuals are only impacted more strongly when it comes to negative events.

However, sensory processing sensitivity is a vastly under-researched topic in the organizational context (Schmitt, 2022) and it is so far unknown if these effects translate to the work environment as well. Still, there is reason to assume that individuals high in SPS will

experience similar declines in state self-esteem when experiencing negative events in organizational settings. First, SPS is described as a stable trait and as such it can be assumed that this processing style of the environment should be similar across environments (Lionetti et al., 2019). Additionally, studies have suggested moderate heritability of SPS (Assary et al., 2020), further supporting the notion that this heightened sensitivity could persist across environments (Greven et al, 2019).

*Hypothesis 2:* The negative relationship between negative work events and state self-esteem is stronger for employees higher in SPS compared to employees lower in SPS.

### **Competitive Organizational Climate as a Moderator**

Apart from individual differences, organizational climates also affect essential work outcomes, such as performance (Raza, 2010) or organizational citizen behaviour (Randhawa & Kaur, 2015), among others. Especially competitive organizational climates have been described as having incentivising effects on employees' motivation to develop, perform, and excel (Gilabert, 2023). Competitive climate is defined as “[...] a specific type of motivational climate, [where] only the best and most successful individuals are rewarded (in terms of money, promotion, recognition, and enhanced status)” (Wisse et al., 2019, p. 744). Consequently, competitive climates have been described as potentially harmful to employees, as the nature of competition suggests that goals are not jointly attainable, thereby fostering a narrative of winners and losers (Gilabert, 2023).

Social comparison theory by Festinger (1954) for instance postulates that humans constantly engage in comparisons with others in order to obtain evaluations of the self (Crusius et al., 2022). Next to the fact that this process of self-evaluation is mostly biased when there is no objective information to base a comparison upon, there can be different motives for self-comparison, for instance comparing oneself to others in order to improve on skills and abilities or to protect or enhance one's self-esteem (Dijkstra et al., 2010). In the

organizational context, self-esteem has been shown to be determined by social comparisons in the form of relative performance comparisons (Kuhnen & Tymula, 2012). Additionally, research suggests that when outperforming other employees, the brain's reward centres get activated, therefore resulting in pleasurable feelings (Dohmen et al., 2011). This finding underscores the profound impact of competitive environments on neural processes and highlights the depth of their incentivizing effects. The enhanced comparison with others as well as the notion of striving for status, recognition (Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2010) or financial rewards and promotion (Wisse et al., 2019) might activate employees' negative self-evaluations more promptly in case of not attaining these objectives. Possibly, through the enhanced social comparison that is engaged in competitive environments (Murtza & Rasheed, 2023), employees experience negative work events through the lens of "winners and losers", hence impacting their sense of self-worth.

Moreover, when evaluating this climate from the perspective of the sociometer theory, it could be argued that through the overt ambition to excel in such environments, cues of social acceptance (e.g., monetary boni, pay raise, enhanced status) are more clearly displayed than in other environments. Likewise, encountering a negative work event might result in a more pronounced decrease in self-worth compared to other professional settings due to signalling a greater distance from desired goals and thus being associated with more social rejection. It is therefore assumed that individuals working in a competitive climate are more visibly confronted with social cues of acceptance or rejection and that negative events activate the perception of social rejection more promptly than when there is less competition. I therefore argue for a positive moderation effect of competitive climate on state self-esteem.

*Hypothesis 3:* The negative relationship between negative work events and state self-esteem is stronger in competitive organizational climates.

## Method

### Design and Procedure

Participants were recruited with convenience sampling, using the personal and professional networks of the researchers, namely Bachelor and Master students at the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen writing their dissertations. Employing a diary study design, the research consists of an initial baseline assessment of trait variables and 10 subsequent daily surveys to measure state variables. Since diary studies require more effort from participants in comparison to traditional surveys (Hektner et al., 2006) and are often accompanied by high dropout rates (Ohly et al., 2010), using convenience sampling can aid in capitalizing on motivated participants. To further incentivize participation, subjects could sign up for a raffle by providing their email addresses at the end of the baseline survey. After completing the baseline survey and answering at least five diary surveys, participants were eligible to win a prize of 50,- Euros. The data was utilized in multiple research projects, prompting a three-cycle data collection process that started in 2022 and finished in 2024. Eligibility criteria to participate consisted of a good understanding of the English language and working at least 20 hours a week which was screened for in the baseline survey.

After approval of the study by the Ethics Committee of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, a pilot test was conducted on the online platform Qualtrics (<https://qualtrics.com/>). The pilot study lasted two days and was conducted to assess if all surveys ran timely. At the start of the study, participants were informed about the purpose of the research and could decide whether to participate or withdraw (see Appendix 1). After obtaining consent, the baseline survey was administered. Upon completion, the researchers distributed the diary surveys, which were sent to the participants' email addresses. Diary surveys followed a fixed sampling scheme (Myin-Germeys & Kuppens, 2021), where

daily surveys were distributed every day at a set time of 3 pm and remained accessible until 10 pm. Data was captured and stored in the data collection tool Qualtrics.

## **Participants**

After clearing the sample of ineligible subjects, the final count comprised 183 participants, representing an adequate sample size when considering that diary studies in high-ranking journals previously sampled a minimum of 100 participants (Ohly et al., 2010). Ages ranged from 20 to 64 ( $M = 38$ ,  $SD = 13.69$ ) with the majority of participants being female (54.6%). Participants reported being from the Netherlands (32.8%), Germany (21.3%) and India (9.3%), with a significant proportion reporting other nationalities (36.6%). On average, employees reported to work between 35-40 hours per week and most of them worked for one employer (85.8%). Sample jobs are teacher, nurse, consultant, engineer, waitress, graphic designer and police officer, among others. The majority of the sample obtained at least a university degree or higher (69.9%). More details regarding relevant characteristics of the sample can be found in Table 1.

## **Measures**

### ***Baseline survey***

First, participants were screened with the item “How many hours do you work per week (on average)?” to assess if they fulfilled the inclusion criterion of working at least 20 hours per week. Answering options represented five different working hour spans, for instance, the minimum span ranging from “0-19 hours a week” up to a maximum of “40 or more hours”. Furthermore, demographic data such as age, gender, educational level, and country of origin, among other variables, were collected. Additionally, participants were asked about work-related information such as the sector they work in, their function, occupation, working days and times as well as their total employment years and the employment years in the current organization (for the full survey, see Appendix 2).

**Sensory Processing Sensitivity** was measured with the 12-item Highly Sensitive Person Scale (HSP-12; Pluess et al., 2023). Originally, the HSP scale consisted of 27 items, with the short version (HSP-12) showing similar total mean scores and distribution as the original one (Pluess et al., 2023). One exemplary item of the scale is “Do you find it unpleasant to have a lot going on at once?”. Answering options range from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely) on a Likert scale. Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.82.

**Competitive climate** was measured with the performance climate subscale in the Motivational Climate at Work Questionnaire (Nerstad et al., 2013). The 8 items of the subscale are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). One item reads “In my department/work group, there exists a competitive rivalry among the employees”. The scale expressed acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Control variables** encompassed gender and weekly work hours. Several studies have found gender differences in self-esteem, with males showing higher global self-esteem than females (Bleidorn et al., 2016; Kling et al., 1999). Gender was assessed with the question “Please indicate your gender”, with answering options being (1) male, (2) female or (3) otherwise defined or undefined, or prefer not to say. Furthermore, high working hours have shown the potential to negatively impact self-esteem in employees, especially in the context of workaholism (Aziz et al., 2018), which is why weekly work hours are controlled for in the current study (for the measurement of the variable, consult the section above termed “Baseline survey”).

### ***Diary surveys***

**Negative work events** were measured using 19 items of the subscale in the Taxonomy of Work Events by Schmitt and Scheibe (2022). The scale entails four underlying categories, namely *task*, *social-self*, *social-others* and *personal* negative work events. In the *task-related* domain, one example is “you were unsuccessful with accomplishing or

progressing with a work goal, project, or task”. In contrast, within the *social-self* domain, an item is “you were humiliated, treated disrespectfully or rudely by the supervisor”. For the *social-others* category, an example would be “you have witnessed counterproductive behaviour or a social conflict between others at work”. Lastly, the *personal event* dimension was captured with one item, namely “you suffered acute physical or mental health symptoms”. The scale has two advantages, namely identifying if negative work events occurred and additionally, assessing the impact of the respective negative work event. Thus, subjects could indicate the absence of negative work events or the absence of its impact with the response option (1) “Did not experience this situation; no impact” up to experiencing negative work events with varying impacts, such as (3) “situation experienced; moderate impact” or (5) “situation experienced, significant impact” (see Appendix 3). There were five answering options. The scale exhibited excellent reliability ( $\alpha = .97$ ).

**State self-esteem** was measured using three modified items originally from the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Eatough et al., 2015; Rosenberg, 1989). For instance, one item read “Today, I took a positive attitude toward myself”. Answering options ranged on a five-point scale from (1) “not at all” to (5) “extremely”. The scale demonstrated a Cronbach’s alpha score of 0.91, indicating excellent reliability.

### **Data analytic strategy**

To analyze the data, surveys were downloaded from Qualtrics and imported into IBM SPSS Statistics 29. Initially, data was collected from 314 employees. In the baseline dataset, participants were excluded for reasons such as failing the attention check, reporting zero employment years, or submitting duplicate baseline surveys, resulting in the removal of one baseline survey. Regarding the diary surveys, all individual responses were combined into a single dataset which revealed that some participants completed at least one diary survey but



not the baseline survey or indicated non-working status which resulted in removal. The final count was 183 participants and the datasets were merged for subsequent analyses.

To assess if the obtained sample size is sufficient to detect significant effects among the variables in case present, the programme G\*Power version 3.1 was used (Faul et al., 2009). Here, the post hoc analysis was performed. With an effect size of .058, an alpha error probability of .05 and five predictors, the sample of 183 participants showed a power value of 0.69 (see Appendix 4), which is deemed insufficient when comparing the current value with the recommended power of at least 0.8 (Newsom, 2024). Furthermore, for competitive climate, state self-esteem, and SPS scale means were computed by creating a separate variable for each scale using the compute variable function. In preparation for the multiple regression analysis, assumptions needed to be tested to warrant reliable estimates. Therefore, the assumptions of normality, linearity, homoscedasticity and independence of observations were examined. To define the strength of the relationships, the classification system by Cohen (1988) was applied, which categorizes relationships as weak:  $\beta < 0.3$ ; moderate:  $\beta = 0.3 - 0.5$  or strong:  $\beta > 0.5$ , respectively.

### ***Assumption testing***

To test the hypotheses, aggregating the data was necessary. Therefore, daily observations from the diary surveys were averaged out to a mean score per person to assess relevant between-person differences (Ohly et al., 2010). Next, all predictors were standardized with the compute variable function to account for differing answering formats across measures. Afterwards, the assumptions of linearity and normality were assessed by plotting residuals in scatterplots, QQ-Plots and histograms. To ensure that the data is normally distributed, the Shapiro-Wilk value was consulted, which indicates the normality of data when the p-value is above 0.05 (Yap & Sim, 2011). Furthermore, multicollinearity was assessed by using

pairwise correlations, with correlations above 0.8 indicating multicollinearity (Shrestha, 2020).

### ***Multiple regression and moderation analysis***

Multiple regression was run with standardized scores of negative event impact as the independent variable and state self-esteem as the dependent variable, next to controlling for gender and weekly work hours. Analyses were run with and without control variables, which is recommended by Becker and colleagues (2015) to understand the varying impacts of the predictors without inflating findings. The same analysis was run for the independent variable of impact of negative events of the social-self category. To assess the moderation effects of SPS and CC, interaction terms were formed. The state self-esteem scale was inserted into the dependent variable box while the predictors, namely impact of negative events, interaction terms, moderating variables and control variables were all standardized and inserted into the independent variable box. To assess if moderation effects were significant, the p-value of each interaction term was consulted.

## **Results**

### **Correlations**

Correlation analyses revealed that gender is moderately and positively associated with Sensory Processing Sensitivity ( $r = .366, p < .001$ ) indicating that females show higher average scores of SPS than males. Moreover, a positive albeit weak association was found between average weekly work hours and competitive climate, ( $r = .243, p < .001$ ), suggesting that employees in competitive climates work more hours per week than in other climates. Additionally, average weekly work hours were negatively associated with SPS, ( $r = .26, p < .001$ ), showing a weak correlation. Finally, competitive climate and state self-esteem showed a negative correlation, ( $r = -.149, p = .044$ ) albeit of weak strength (see Table 2).

### **Assumption testing**

The linearity, as well as homoscedasticity assumptions, were visually analyzed with a scatterplot by plotting negative work events against self-esteem, which were both deemed met. Inspection of histograms as well as the Shapiro-Wilk value indicated the violation of the assumption of normality since the value showed to be statistically significant. Furthermore, the competitive climate scale and state self-esteem scale showed a significant, negative correlation. Since the correlation is of weak strength ( $r = .149$ ,  $p = .044$ ), multicollinearity could be excluded. Overall, subsequent estimates should be interpreted with caution due to the violation of normality.

## **Test of Hypotheses**

### ***Multiple Regression Analyses***

Hypothesis 1a assumed a negative effect of daily negative work events on employees' self-esteem. Results revealed that there is no statistically significant effect of negative events on state self-esteem ( $\beta = .038$ ,  $p = .610$ ), therefore expressing that negative work events do not predict decreases in state self-esteem. To address Hypothesis 1b, negative work events of the category social-self and state self-esteem were analyzed. Regression coefficients were not significant,  $\beta = .031$ ,  $p = .768$ . Overall these findings express that negative work events do not predict decreases in momentary self-esteem in employees, regardless of which category these events stem from (i.e. general negative work events or only social negative work events). Lastly, the explained variance value expresses that negative work events are not suitable to account for substantial changes in state self-esteem,  $R^2 = .014$ ,  $F(177) = 0.86$ ,  $p = .46$ .

### ***Moderation Analysis***

Competitive climate and sensory processing sensitivity were included as moderators in the relationship between negative work events and state self-esteem (see Table 3). Regarding sensory processing sensitivity, results show no significant interaction term,  $\beta = -.034$ ,  $p =$

.656. This means that individuals high in sensory processing sensitivity do not experience stronger declines in state self-esteem when encountering a negative work event than their less sensitive peers. Thus, Hypothesis 2 could not be supported.

Similarly for competitive climate, the interaction term showed no statistically significant result,  $\beta = -.065$ ,  $p = .394$ . Thus, in competitive climates the effects of negative work events on state self-esteem are not more pronounced than in less competitive environments, lending no further support to Hypothesis 3. The explained variance of all predictors including control variables equals  $R^2 = .055$ ,  $F(177) = 1.443$ ,  $p = .191$ , thus predictors fail to explain substantial differences in the outcome.

### **Additional Analyses**

Results suggest that there is no impact of negative work events on state self-esteem, regardless of whether such events are of social nature or not. Therefore, it could be fruitful to investigate how such events impact employees' well-being indicators. Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996) suggests that events evoke emotions in individuals and that these emotions affect work attitudes and behaviours. As such, this perspective highlights a view where events are not necessarily affecting one's sense of self-worth but rather one's affective state.

To explore this alternative view, the same analytic strategy was applied, this time using negative affect instead of self-esteem as the dependent variable. Negative affect was measured with four items, asking employees how they felt at the end of the workday (Reindl et al., 2021). For instance, one item read "I felt sad", and could be answered from (0) "very little or not at all" to (4) "extremely". Results were significant ( $\beta = .362$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicating that negative work events predict increases in negative affect. This finding underscores the negative impact that such events can have on employees' well-being. Furthermore, a direct, positive effect of SPS on negative affect was found ( $\beta = .304$ ,  $p < .001$ ) indicating that

individuals who have higher trait levels of SPS experience higher levels of negative affect than their less sensitive counterparts, regardless of events.

## **Discussion**

### **General Findings**

The current study aimed to examine if negative work events in general but also more specifically negative work events of the category social-self impact employees' state self-esteem. Additionally, the moderating effects of individual differences in sensory processing sensitivity and employees' organisational climates, specifically competitive climates, were examined. Based on the sociometer theory (Leary, 2005), research was led by the Hypothesis that negative work events negatively impact state self-esteem. The theory suggests that individuals monitor their relational evaluation and that self-esteem decreases if declines in relational evaluation (e.g. disapproval, rejection) are detected, which negative work events were hypothesised to provoke.

Contrasting the expectation of finding a negative effect, no statistically significant result was found for Hypothesis 1a, therefore expressing no negative impact of negative work events on state self-esteem in the current study. Furthermore, Hypothesis 1b focused on the impact of negative work events of the category social-self, as such events are characterised by carrying an interpersonal component and could more directly signal social acceptance or rejection than other events. Again, no support has been found for this notion as the results were not significant. Overall, negative work events do not impact self-esteem negatively in the current study, regardless of which events were examined.

These findings align with results by Kuster and colleagues (2013) who found no negative effect of work experiences on self-esteem, yet contradict meta-analytic findings by Krauss & Orth (2021) which identified reciprocal effects between work experiences and self-esteem. However, two key differences need to be noted. First, previous studies used

global self-esteem as an overall measure of one's sense of self-worth and secondly, they examined various work experiences, including, but not limited to work events. Thus, a tentative explanation could be that work events are one but not the only component that influences self-esteem. For instance, Krauss and Orth (2021) examined job stressors (e.g. ostracism, illegitimate tasks, etc.) which resemble some of the negative events used in the current study, but also incorporated income, job resources or job success as work experiences. Income however is positively related to self-esteem (Krauss & Orth, 2021), potentially expressing a buffering effect against the impact of negative work events. Since the majority of the current sample obtained at least a university degree (69.9%), and therefore likely has higher income (Stryzhak, 2020), this could be an explanatory mechanism of why negative events did not impact employees' self-esteem.

Another relevant observation in the current study was that the distribution of less and more impactful events was substantially skewed to the right, making less impactful events the norm and more impactful events rare. The diary study by Van Reyn and colleagues (2023) reported that higher subjectively experienced event intensity predicted various outcomes including lower self-esteem, emphasizing that not only event valence but its impact intensity matters across well-being indicators.

Lastly, despite sociometer theory being a validated theoretical framework for organizational settings (Perinelli et al., 2022) this theoretical perspective might be too specific to apply to events. For instance, some events could directly inform individuals of their social acceptance, such as when being ostracized or ignored by colleagues. On the other hand, not all events can be assumed to signal cues of social acceptance or rejection to individuals, such as when technical difficulties occur. Such events are usually not directly connected to the ability of the employee nor do they involve aspects of relational evaluation. Therefore, the last perspective on why negative work events did not explain changes in state

self-esteem is simply that events incorporate varying amounts of cues of social acceptance or rejection, therefore not necessarily impacting self-esteem.

### ***Findings on Sensory Processing Sensitivity***

Regarding individual differences, sensory processing sensitivity was theorized to moderate the relationship between negative work events and state self-esteem with the expectation of a positive moderation effect. As individuals high in SPS are more able to sense environmental subtleties and process them more profoundly (Acevedo, 2020; Lionetti et al., 2019) it was expected that cues of social acceptance or rejection would be picked up more easily and processed more strongly than less sensitive employees would. It was expected that sensitive individuals would therefore be impacted more strongly by negative work events, a perspective that did not hold, as SPS did not show to moderate the relationship between negative work events and state self-esteem.

This finding differs from the diary study by Van Reyn and colleagues (2023) where daily negative events impacted the self-esteem of highly sensitive individuals significantly more than their less sensitive counterparts. While Van Reyn and colleagues (2023) investigated the impact of daily negative events on state self-esteem, the current study employed negative work events, potentially suggesting a difference in effect based on the context in which the negative event occurs. Perhaps individuals are more able to detach from work-related events in comparison to daily hassles, with the latter potentially carrying a stronger meaning for individuals as it concerns their private lives.

Moreover, SPS correlated with gender and weekly work hours, indicating that females have higher trait levels of SPS than males and that sensitive employees work on average less than their less sensitive peers. Despite the weak correlation, this finding indicates that there might be reasons why sensitive employees decide to work less. Since female gender and SPS are correlated, one tentative explanation could be that the reduced work hours are due to more

caretaking activities, a task that often is managed by women (Okubo, 2023). Another explanation could be tied to the diathesis-stress model, which suggests that individuals high in SPS experience stronger negative effects in adverse environments (Pluess et al., 2015). As such, sensitive individuals could be more prone to suffering in less supportive work environments, possibly increasing their negative experiences in comparison with their less sensitive counterparts, therefore leading to fewer work hours.

Lastly, the current study found support for the notion that employees experience more negative affect after experiencing negative work events. This finding highlights that negative work events can impair employee well-being, despite causing no changes in employees' sense of self-worth. Regarding SPS, a positive, direct effect on negative affect was found, showing that sensitive individuals tend to experience more negative affect, regardless of events. This finding aligns with the results of Van Reyn and colleagues (2013), where individuals higher in SPS showed to experience more intense emotional reactivity after negative events than their less sensitive counterparts. Since around 30% of the general population is estimated to score high in SPS (Lionetti et al., 2018), these findings are relevant for various work fields and suggest supporting this vulnerable group.

### ***Findings on Competitive Climate***

For competitive climate, a positive moderation effect was expected. The Hypothesis was based on the assumption that employees in competitive climates engage in more comparisons with each other which leads to more negative self-evaluations (Murtza & Rasheed, 2023), next to possibly being more overtly confronted with cues of social acceptance represented in terms of materialistic rewards in these climates (Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2010; Wisse et al., 2019). However, findings do not support the notion that competitive climates exacerbate the effect of negative work events on state self-esteem.



In the current study, individual trait competitiveness was not measured. However, Janssen and Askari (2019) found a significant positive association between global self-esteem and trait competitiveness in athletes, suggesting that competitive individuals perceive themselves as worthy. This research is interesting in direct contrast with the weak, negative correlation between competitive climate and state self-esteem that has been found in the current study. This correlation indicates that employees working in competitive organizational climates experience less state self-esteem than employees in other climates, regardless of events. Since competitive climates are characterized by the notion that goals are not co-achievable, and employees are driven to excel, not achieving one's performance expectations might lead to a lower sense of self-worth in the moment (Gilabert, 2023). Lastly, competitive climate positively and weakly correlates with average weekly work hours, which can be for several reasons. For instance, employees in competitive environments are often motivated to excel and outperform their peers (Dohmen et al., 2011) which could consume more time. Additionally, the strong incentive structures in these environments (Fletcher & Nusbaum, 2010; Wisse et al., 2019) may be linked to increased work hours as individuals possibly get more rewarded for their work in these environments than in other climates.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

An advancement of the current study was its ecologically valid design. The majority of research on events and self-esteem has so far relied on cross-sectional and longitudinal research (for exceptions see DeHart & Pelham, 2007 and Van Reyn et al., 2013), limiting our understanding of how these variables interact in natural environments. The key advantage of diary studies over other designs is the potential to reduce recall bias (Scollon et al., 2009) which is relevant for the accuracy of the given data. Another strength of the study is the diverse sample composition. Although convenience sampling was employed, the sample included individuals from varied cultural and professional backgrounds. However, a notable

limitation is the high percentage of highly educated individuals which may not be representative of the general population (Barro & Lee, 2013).

Despite the aforementioned advancements, there are also shortcomings in the current research. First, using multiple regression analysis instead of multilevel modeling suffices to answer the research questions, yet sacrifices valuable observations in the data by condensing the multiple observations per individual to a mean score (Palmier-Claus et al., 2019). Thus, it is relevant to mention that results can differ, based on which analytic approach is used, due to differing specificity of the data.

Second, the daily surveys were on average nine minutes long. Considering that participants are asked to answer the same questions on a daily basis, longer daily surveys can exhaust the ambition and willingness of participants to accurately answer each question. Ohly and colleagues (2010) recommended to not exceed 5-7 minutes for daily surveys to ensure data accuracy. Since the attention check item was included in the baseline survey, but not in the daily surveys, assessing how accurately individuals responded remains unattainable.

Third, the assumption of normality has been violated. Employing the log transformation for the variable *negative work events* was excluded due to the possibility of causing difficulties in interpretation later on. Therefore, this limitation remains unresolved and can impact results.

Lastly, findings are based on associations and no causal conclusions can be drawn. Temporal precedence was not investigated and therefore it can not be stated if decreases in self-esteem, if found, would happen after a negative event or before. Applied to the additional findings, it cannot be stated that work events caused increases in negative affective states, but rather that they seem to co-occur.

### **Practical Implications and Future Directions**

The findings of the present study offer a positive outlook, namely that employees in the current sample do not experience decreases in self-esteem when experiencing negative work events. However, additional findings suggest that employees tend to experience heightened negative affect in the presence of negative work events, indicating a negative impact on employee well-being. Especially for individuals high in SPS, several observations give reason to assume that these employees represent a vulnerable group in the workplace. To support all employees, particularly those who are sensitive, organizations could implement group meetings to discuss what is working well and what is not. For example, routine negative work events, such as unresolved technical issues with printers or PCs, can be addressed and improved after these meetings. By tackling unfavourable situations, employees can reduce certain types of negative events and, more importantly, feel supported by the organization, fostering a positive work environment.

This approach is also essential for competitive climates, as employees in such climates in the current sample show to have less state self-esteem. Competitive climates have previously been described as a “double-edged sword” (Bani-Melhem et al., 2023), due to promoting excellence yet possibly at the expense of employee well-being. One recommendation here could be to make use of supportive leadership practices, to encourage excellence without compromising personal resources.

Recommendations for research entail investigating the causes of why sensitive employees work less, which could be indicative of barriers that these individuals face in their work lives. Moreover, it could be fruitful to investigate the effect of impactful work events. Since these kinds of events seem to happen rarely, participants could be asked to report impactful events only on days where they happen, while extending the study period to increase the probability of capturing such events. Lastly, sociometer theory is applicable in work contexts (Perinelli et al., 2022) yet received no further support in the current study.

Therefore, it could be beneficial to investigate which situations exactly entail cues of relational evaluation and thus might impact self-esteem. As such, negative work events might be too broad to capture the exact situations that make us feel good about ourselves- or less so.

### **Conclusion**

The current study paints an optimistic outlook, as negative work events, regardless of their nature, do not seem to impact employee self-esteem. Additional analyses revealed that such events are associated with heightened negative affect which is why employees should be supported by their organizations in terms of group meetings or supportive leadership styles. Future research could benefit from identifying possible barriers for sensitive employees to work more, or extend diary studies by exploring more impactful events and their influence on work outcomes and employee well-being.

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## Tables

**Table 1***Sample characteristics (N=183)*

		<i>n</i>	%
Gender	Female	99	54.6%
	Male	83	45.4%
Nationality	Dutch	60	32.8%
	German	39	21.3%
	Indian	17	9.3%
	Other	67	36.6%
Highest level education	Secondary School	19	10.4%
	Technical Secondary School Diploma	21	11.5%
	University Degree	115	62.8%
	Doctorate Degree	13	7.1%
	Other	15	8.2%
Employment	One employer	156	85.7%
	Several employers	17	9.3%
	Self-employed	9	4.9%
Sector <sup>a</sup>	Health and social welfare	29	15.9%
	Industry, production	22	12.1%
	ICT, consultancy, legal consulting	21	11.5%
	Education and instruction	21	11.5%
	Communication and marketing	12	6.6%
	Financial industry	10	5.5%
	Other	35	19.2%

*Note.* <sup>a</sup>Sectors with percentages below 5% were excluded from the table for reasons of readability. Such sectors included administration (4.4%); public administration (3.8%); trade (2.2%); transport, storage and communication (3.3%); hospitality sector, tourism, culture (2.2%) and the construction industry (1.6%).



**Table 2***Means, standard deviations, and inter-correlations among trait and state measures*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
1 Negative work event	1.7	0.52	-	-	-	-
2 Sensory processing sensitivity	4.16	0.93	.072	-	-	-
3 Competitive climate	2.39	0.77	.015	.035	-	-
4 State Self-Esteem	3.27	0.57	.032	-.124	-.149*	-
5 Gender <sup>a</sup>	.55	.49	.099	.356**	-.140	-.075
6 Weekly work hours <sup>b</sup>	3.96	.99	-.089	-.259**	.243**	-.078

*Note.*  $N = 183$ .

<sup>a</sup>Gender was coded as (0) male, (1) female or (2) otherwise defined or undefined or prefer not to say. <sup>b</sup>Weekly work hours were divided into five categories, namely working (1) 0-19 hours, (2) 20-28 hours, (3) 28-34 hours, (4) 35-40 hours and (5) 40 or more hours. The mean score represents the mean in categories, not in work hours.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 3**

*Moderator Analysis including standardized Negative Work Events, Control Variables, Moderators and Interaction Terms on unstandardized State Self-Esteem*

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Negative Work Events	.022	.042	.038	.511	.610
Sensory Processing Sensitivity	-.078	.047	-.134	-1.655	.100
Competitive Climate	-.068	.045	-.117	-1.502	.135
SPS*NWE <sup>a</sup>	-.017	.038	-.034	-.446	.656
CC*NWE <sup>b</sup>	-.035	.041	-.065	-.855	.394
Gender	-.037	.046	-.064	-.796	.427
Work hours	-.045	.046	-.078	-.977	.330

*Note.* *N* = 183.

<sup>a</sup>Interaction term includes sensory processing sensitivity (SPS) and negative work events (NWE). <sup>b</sup> Interaction term includes Competitive climate (CC) and negative work events (NWE).

## **Appendix 1**

### **Consent form**

Welcome to our study on the roles of personal characteristics and daily work events for employees' occupational well-being. We invite you to participate in our study if you meet the following criteria: you work at least 20 hours a week and you have sufficient English skills to answer the survey questions. Our research team includes Antje Schmitt, PhD, Associate Professor and Jenny Schwabe, Melina Malea, Henriette T. Siemens, Awika Brough, and Nils Westerhuis (Master's students) from the University of Groningen, Department of Psychology.

#### **Description of the study**

In this project, we investigate the effects of daily work events on employees' work behaviours and well-being. Employees experience various events in their daily work that elicit emotional reactions. We want to know more about the specific events that occur in employees' daily work and how employees with various personality characteristics react to daily work events.

#### **Do I have to participate in this research?**

Participation in the research is voluntary. However, your consent is needed. Therefore, please read this information carefully. Ask all the questions you might have, for example, because you do not understand something. Only afterwards, you decide if you want to participate. If you decide not to participate, you do not need to explain why, and there will be no negative consequences for you. You have this right at all times, including after you have consented to participate in the research.

#### **What do we ask of you during the research?**

Below, we will first ask you for your consent to participate in this study. The study consists of two parts: A one-time baseline questionnaire and a series of short daily

questionnaires. The baseline questionnaire takes about 10 - 12 minutes to complete and contains questions about your personal background, personal characteristics, work conditions, and well-being. The daily part requires your participation for 10 work days over 2 weeks starting on February 19th 2024. During two weeks, from Monday to Friday, we invite you by email to complete one online survey per day (about 9 minutes each). You will receive this link each afternoon and you are asked to complete it at the end of your workday. In those surveys, we will ask you about the work events that you experienced and your behaviour and well-being at work.

### **What are the consequences of participation?**

Your participation helps us to better understand how people deal with daily work requirements. We do not anticipate any risk to you participating in this study.

### **Incentive**

In appreciation of your time, we will provide you with a feedback report if you complete the baseline survey and at least five daily surveys. The feedback report includes an overview of the most interesting study findings. Moreover, if you complete the baseline survey and at least five daily surveys, you are eligible to enter into the prize draw. We will raffle 3 X €50.

### **How will we treat your data?**

Your responses will be treated strictly confidential. After completion of the study, data files will be matched together using your email address. We will then prepare feedback reports on the most relevant study findings and organize a raffle (3 x €50 will be raffled). Afterwards, your email will be removed from the data. Your data will only be processed using a code number. This code number is not linked to personal information that might be used to directly identify you, such as your email address. Your research data will be analyzed by the researchers. All researchers as stated above have access to the raw data and the

anonymized data (excluding the emails).

To award the prizes to the three winners, the PI (Antje Schmitt) will contact them by email and ask for their bank details. It is up to the winners whether they want to provide this information and receive the prize. The bank details will not be saved in any of the data files and the emails from the winners including the bank details will be deleted once the payment is completed. No other personal data that may identify participants (e.g., location data) will be collected.

The students will use the anonymized data as a basis for their final theses. It is also planned to use the data for publications, which will be published in scientific journals. Research data that are published, for example in theses or scientific journals, cannot identify you. Fully anonymized research data may be shared with other researchers for scientific purposes. Your personal information will remain confidential and will not be shared with third parties without your explicit consent. Research data will only be shared if they cannot be used to identify you. Therefore, your privacy is guaranteed.

You can also ask for your data to be removed from the research database, ask for a copy of your personal data, or have erroneous personal data corrected until the matching of the surveys based on your email is completed. This is possible until March 15th 2024. In these cases, please email Antje Schmitt ([a.schmitt@rug.nl](mailto:a.schmitt@rug.nl)).

### **What else do you need to know?**

You may always ask questions about the research: now, during the research, and after the end of the research. You can do so by emailing the principal investigator, Antje Schmitt at [a.schmitt@rug.nl](mailto:a.schmitt@rug.nl).

Do you have questions/concerns about your rights as a research participant or about the conduct of the research? You may also contact the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences of the University of Groningen: [ec-bss@rug.nl](mailto:ec-bss@rug.nl).

Do you have questions or concerns regarding the handling of your personal data? You may also contact the University of Groningen Data Protection Officer: [privacy@rug.nl](mailto:privacy@rug.nl).

Please take a screenshot if you want to have a copy of this information sheet.

**Consent to participate in the research:**

1. Yes, I consent to participate; this consent is valid until March 15th 2024
2. I do not consent to participate

## Appendix 2

### Baseline survey

#### Weekly work hours

*How many hours do you work per week (on average)?*

1. 0-19 hours
2. 20-28 hours
3. 28-34 hours
4. 35-40 hours
5. 40 or more hours

#### Employer

*Do you spend these hours at one employer?*

1. Yes, I have one employer
2. No, I am self-employed
3. No, I have multiple employers (specify below)
  - a) Answering option: Text box

#### Age

*How old are you? Indicate below in yours*

Answering option: text box

#### Gender

*Please indicate your gender.*

1. Male
2. Female
3. Otherwise defined or undefined, or prefer not to say

#### Nationality

*What is your country of birth?*

1. The Netherlands
2. Other, namely
- a) Answering option: Text box

**Language**

*What is your native language?*

1. Dutch
2. English
3. Other, namely: Text box

**Education**

*What's your highest achieved level of education?*

1. Primary school
2. Secondary school
3. (Technical) Secondary School Diploma
4. University Degree
5. Doctorate Degree
6. Other, namely: Text box

**Sector**

*In which business sector are you employed?*

1. Administration
2. Agrarian sector
3. Construction industry
4. Financial industry
5. Trade
6. Hospitality sector, tourism, culture
7. Industry, production



8. ICT, consultancy, legal consulting
9. Communication and marketing
10. Public and administration
11. Health and social welfare
12. Transport, storage and communication
13. Education and Instruction
14. Other, namely: Text box

**Function**

*Which of the following categories best describes your function?*

1. CEO, board of directors
2. Senior of middle Management
3. Project manager (group leader, supervisor)
4. Clerical worker (non-management)
5. Master craftsman
6. Foreman
7. Manual worker

**Occupation**

*What is your occupation?*

Answering option: Text box

**Years employed**

*For how many years have you been employed?*

Answering option: Text box

**Years employed by current organisation**

*For how many years have you been working at your current company or organization?*

Answering option: Text box

**Supervisor**

*Do you have a supervisor?*

1. Yes
2. No

**Supervisory role**

*Do you currently supervise any other employees as part of your job?*

1. Yes
2. No

**Years supervision**

*How many employees do you supervise directly/indirectly?*

Answering option: Text box

**Workdays**

*Which days of the week do you usually work?*

1. Monday
2. Tuesday
3. Wednesday
4. Thursday
5. Friday
6. Saturday
7. Sunday

**Start workday**

*When does your workday usually start (e.g. 9:00 am)?*

Answering option: Text box

**End workday**

*When does your workday usually end (e.g. 17:00 pm)?*

Answering option: Text box

### **Competitive climate**

*Next, we are interested in how you experience your job. Please indicate your agreement with the following statements (answering options range from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with 5 answering options)*

1. In my department/work group, there exists a competitive rivalry among the employees.
2. In my department/work group, work accomplishments are measured based on comparison with the accomplishments of coworkers.
3. In my department/work group, rivalry between employees is encouraged.
4. In my department/work group, internal competition is encouraged to attain the best results.
5. In my department/work group, only those employees who achieve the best results/accomplishments are set up as examples
6. In my department/work group, one is encouraged to perform optimally to achieve monetary rewards
7. In my department/work group, an individual's accomplishments are compared with those of other colleagues
8. In my department/work group, it is important to achieve better than others.

### **Sensory Processing Sensitivity and attention check (item 10)**

*Please answer each question according to how you personally feel, using the scale from 1= Not at all to 7= Extremely. Tick the box that describes you best.*

1. Do you seem to be aware of subtleties in your environment?
2. Are you easily overwhelmed by things like bright lights, strong smells, coarse fabrics or sirens close by?

3. Do you have a rich, complex inner life?
4. Do you get rattled when you have a lot to do in a short amount of time?
5. Are you deeply moved by the arts or music?
6. Are you annoyed when people try to get you to do too many things at once?
7. Do you make a point to avoid violent movies and TV shows?
8. Do you find it unpleasant to have a lot going on at once?
9. Do changes in your life shake you up?
10. Please select “moderately” here
11. Do you notice and enjoy delicate or fine scents, tastes, sounds, works of art?
12. Are you bothered by intense stimuli, like loud noises or chaotic scenes?
13. When you must compete or be observed while performing a task, do you become so nervous or shaky that you do much worse than you would otherwise?

**You have reached the end of the baseline questionnaire.**

Thank you very much for your participation!

In order to invite you to the daily questionnaires, we need your email address. Starting on Monday, February 19th 2024, you will receive emails in the afternoon of each working day for 10 days. The emails contain a link to the daily surveys. Please complete as many daily surveys as possible. Please enter your e-mail address below. Your email will not be passed on to third parties and will be deleted as soon as the study has been finished.

**Raffle participation**

*Please indicate whether we can use this e-mail address, to send you the feedback report and participate in the raffle*

1. Yes, you can use my email address for the feedback report and raffle
2. No, you can't use my email address for the feedback report and raffle

**Comments**

*Again, we would like to thank you for your participation! If you have any comments, please enter them below.*

Answering option: Text box

### **Appendix 3**

#### **Diary survey**

Hello and welcome back to our study! This is your diary entry for day x/10. Please fill out this survey directly after work. The survey is open from 3 p.m. to 10 p.m. In this survey, we would like to ask you some questions about your job demands, affect, vitality, goal progress, work engagement, daily work events and their impact. Please try to answer all questions as honestly as possible. It is important that you answer all questions only for today and not retrospectively for previous days. If you have missed one or more entries in the previous days, simply skip those entries and answer the questions for today. The survey will take ca. 9 minutes.

#### **Self-esteem**

*Please indicate your agreement with the statements below.*

1. Today, I took a positive attitude toward myself.
2. Today, I felt that I have a number of good qualities.
3. Today, on the whole, I was satisfied with myself.

The five answering options range from (1) not at all to (5) extremely.

#### **Negative Affect**

*Please indicate how you felt at the end of the workday today. I felt...*

1. Sad
2. Blue
3. Nervous
4. Anxious

The five answering options ranged from (0) very little or not at all up to (4) extremely.

## Negative Events

*Below, you find descriptions of situations that may have occurred at work today. We are interested in whether you experienced these situations at work today and how much impact they had on you, that is, if they had important consequences for you.*

1. You were unsuccessful with accomplishing or progressing with a work goal, project or task.
2. You have made a mistake in a work task.
3. You received negative feedback about your own or your team's or organization's work.
4. You have faced a conflict or an ambiguity about a work task or process at work.
5. You were hindered to work on important tasks because of technical problems or a lack of equipment.
6. You were interrupted at work by private issues.
7. You were assigned unreasonable or unnecessary tasks, or received unreasonable requests.
8. You were assigned additional tasks or short deadlines that lead to an overload.
9. You were humiliated, treated disrespectfully or rudely by the supervisor.
10. You were humiliated, treated disrespectfully or rudely by coworkers.
11. You were humiliated, treated disrespectfully or rudely by customers, clients or patients.
12. You were physically threatened, harmed or injured at work.
13. You were socially excluded or ignored at work.
14. You have experienced sexual harassment or sexism at work.
15. You have faced a social conflict at work.

16. You have witnessed unfair, unpleasant, or disrespectful behavior or a social conflict between others at work.
17. You have witnessed counterproductive behavior or a social conflict between others at work.
18. You have witnessed counterproductive behavior of coworkers or poor teamwork.
19. You suffered acute physical or mental health symptoms.

The five answering options ranged from (1) “Did not experience this situation; no impact” to (5) “situation experienced; very significant impact”.

### **Goodbye**

You have reached the end of today’s daily survey. Thank you for your participation! If you have any comments for the research team, please enter them below.

Answering option: Text box



## Appendix 4

### Screenshot of Power analysis

