Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology (2019), 92, 806–824

The British Psychological Society

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Crafting social resources on days when you are emotionally exhausted: The role of job insecurity

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Workdays are demanding and draw upon one's emotional and physical resource pools. Consequently, employees become exhausted and need to recover by replenishing their resources *during* and/or *after* their workday. Building on conservation of resources theory, we argue that employees, especially those with low job insecurity, cope with exhaustion *at work* by crafting social resources on the days that they are exhausted. Specifically, we expect that employees who are exhausted will use their limited resources to gain social support from their co-workers and supervisor, but only when employees feel they can profit from this newly gained resource in the long run (i.e., when the risk of losing one's job is low). We tested this idea in a sample of 271 elementary school teachers who filled out an online daily diary at the end of each workday for a period of 10 workdays (271 × 7.31 days = 1,539 data points). Results of multilevel modelling analyses showed that there was a significant cross-level interaction effect for perceived risk of losing one's job (i.e., job insecurity). That is, on the days that employees were exhausted, they crafted more social resources, especially when they perceived low (vs. high) job insecurity. Our study shows that exhaustion is not necessarily detrimental to employees and organizations, but may also activate employees to reduce resource loss by proactively searching for support in their work environment.

Practitioner points

- On a daily basis, employees who are exhausted search for social resources such as social support from colleagues.
- Employees especially try to deal with their exhaustion by crafting social resources when they generally feel that their job is not at risk (i.e., low job insecurity).

Burnout is an important indicator of employee ill-being that is characterized by exhaustion (i.e., feeling severely fatigued), cynicism/depersonalization (i.e., distancing oneself from work), and reduced efficacy/accomplishment (i.e., feeling incompetent; Bakker,

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DOI:10.1111/joop.12261

Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2003; Maslach, 1976; Maslach, Schaufeli, & Leiter, 2001). Exhaustion is burnout's core component, and because it is most easily recognized, exhaustion is the most widely reported burnout symptom (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004; Maslach *et al.*, 2001; Moore, 2000). Dealing with demands at work draws upon employees' emotional and physical resources and, as a result, causes exhaustion. In order to function optimally, employees need to recover by replenishing these resources during and/or after work. Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies that examine differences in exhaustion between people show that employees who are *chronically* exhausted cope with exhaustion at work by either withdrawing themselves from the workplace (e.g., increased absenteeism, increased turnover intentions) or by reducing their effort at work (e.g., greater personal conflict, decreased team task performance; for a review see Maslach *et al.*, 2001). That is, they no longer replenish their resources and therefore do not recover from exhaustion.

In line with the idea that psychological processes do not always generalize across between- and within-person levels (Dalal, Bhave, & Fiset, 2014), we argue that employees may be able to proactively cope with their exhaustion on a *day-to-day* basis. That is, it is natural to be fatigued at the end of a workday (e.g., Alarcon, 2011; Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001) and because employees are motivated to maintain and regain valuable resources (Hobfoll, 1988, 2001), we argue that employees will try to replenish their resources on the days that they are exhausted by crafting social resources at work. Recent research supports the notion that *daily* suboptimal situations at work spark proactive behaviour among employees. That is, Fritz and Sonnentag (2009) showed that employees were more likely to take charge on days that they experienced more situational constraints (i.e., working with incomplete or outdated information).

Additionally, according to conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1988, 2001), it is especially important for employees to invest resources to gain further resources in the face of potential, or threat of, resource loss. The experience of daily exhaustion may trigger the risk of chronic exhaustion (i.e., loss-spiral) and as such create a signalling effect for employees to proactively cope with this threat by crafting social resources. Yet, because exhausted employees have limited resources available (Maslach *et al.*, 2001), they are likely to only invest their resources when the return on investment is high (Hobfoll, 2001). Specifically, we argue that exhausted employees are likely to craft social resources when they feel they can benefit from these resources in the future – that is, when their job insecurity is low. Job insecurity reflects a subjective fear of losing one's current employment, and losing one's job implies that employees no longer have access to the work resources that they may have crafted (e.g., social support, social integration, social participation; De Witte, 2005).

To test our ideas, we employ a daily diary study (Gunthert & Wenze, 2012; Ohly, Sonnentag, Niessen, & Zapf, 2010), which allows us to examine our proposed model in its natural context (i.e., at work) and closely after it has happened (i.e., at the end of the workday). This design reduces the impact of recall bias (Schwarz, 2012) and increases the ecological validity of our results (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). By taking a different perspective on exhaustion – namely that employees may proactively cope with exhaustion on a daily basis when they do not fear that they will lose their job in the future – we contribute to the nomological net surrounding exhaustion and stimulate researchers to think about differences in between-person (i.e., chronic) and within-person (i.e., daily) differences in exhaustion. Consequently, our study may provide input for further research on how daily exhaustion develops into the stage where employees are

no longer able to replenish their resources and/or how coping with daily exhaustion may prevent employees from becoming chronically exhausted. Finally, our study has important practical implications for management, because we examine whether perceived job insecurity, which may be reduced by increasing feelings of control and predictability, prevents employees from coping with their daily exhaustion.

Daily exhaustion and crafting social resources

Exhausted employees have little emotional and physical resources (Maslach *et al.*, 2001) and because employees are motivated to replenish their resources (Hobfoll, 1988, 2001), exhausted individuals have to carefully consider how to invest their resources in order to refill their resource pool. Put differently, exhausted employees best invest their resources in such a way that the likelihood of return on investment is highest. One way to accumulate or replenish resources is by seeking social support (Hobfoll, 2001). In general, social support from colleagues and supervisors may create a positive work atmosphere and can help the individual to experience the work situation as less threatening and more manageable (Lim, 1996). Moreover, supportive colleagues may actually provide assistance (Hobfoll, Freedy, Lane, & Geller, 1990). Halbesleben (2006) meta-analytically showed that especially after seeking work-related social support, employees felt less exhausted; suggesting that social support from colleagues is an important way for exhausted employees to replenish their resources and address their exhaustion. This is in line with Hobfoll's (1988, 2001) argument that colleagues could be a valuable source of resources because they can provide immediate support.

In two daily diary studies, Halbesleben and Wheeler (2011) found that employees were more likely to show organizational citizenship behaviours directed at other individuals (OCB-I; e.g., taking time to listen to colleagues' problems) on the days that they were exhausted, especially toward colleagues that had socially supported them in the past. In line with conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1988, 2001), employees showed less OCB directed at the organization (OCB-O; e.g., protecting organizational property) and performed their tasks less well on the days that they were exhausted. That is, exhausted individuals invested in OCB-I, and not in OCB-O or in-role performance, because resources are most likely gained by investing in the relationship with colleagues. The current study relates to these studies by Halbesleben and Wheeler (2011), because contrary to most research on exhaustion, we also examine whether employees' daily exhaustion relates to the *investment* of resources. Contrary to Halbesleben and Wheeler (2011), we examine whether exhausted employees seek support from people in their work environment (i.e., crafting social support) rather than providing help (i.e., OCB-I) to their colleagues. Social job resources can be gained when employees proactively ask for support, feedback, and advice from colleagues and supervisors and when asking for coaching from the supervisor (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2012). By mobilizing these social resources, employees replenish their resources and cope with their exhaustion. In addition, social support also contributes to the maintenance of resources in stressful situations (Pearlin, Menaghan, Leiberman, & Mullan, 1981). Because of the value of social support, employees who feel exhausted would be inclined to restore resources by investing their remaining resources to craft social resources at work. This way, individuals actively invest in behaviours that are most advantageous and make best use of their resources to prevent further resource losses (Hobfoll, 2001). We thus hypothesize the following:

Hypothesis 1: Daily exhaustion positively relates to daily crafting social resources.

Job insecurity and investment of resources

Employees who perceive their job as highly insecure are worried that they may involuntary lose their job in the future. Job insecurity is a subjective feeling, meaning that a colleague in a similar position may perceive his/her job as more or less insecure. Moreover, job insecurity is different from actually losing one's job, because in the latter situation, job loss becomes a certainty. Yet, the consequences of job insecurity and actual job loss seem to be equally detrimental (e.g., Dekker & Schaufeli, 1995; Latack & Dozier, 1986). In their meta-analysis, Sverke, Hellgren, and Naswall (2002) found that job insecurity reduces job satisfaction, job involvement, organizational commitment, mental and physical health, and performance and increases turnover intentions. An important explanation for these harmful outcomes is that insecurity about the future of one's job tends to reduce employees' sense of control over their environment, which may raise negative emotions and attitudes (Ashford, Lee, & Bobko, 1989; Shoss, Jiang, & Probst, 2016).

Based on the above, we consider job insecurity to be an important factor that influences the extent to which exhausted employees will craft social resources. On the days that employees feel exhausted, they have limited resources. Because resources are valuable and people are motivated to acquire and maintain resources (Hobfoll, 2001), it is likely that employees are motivated to replenish their resources on these days by trying to gain social resources. However, the expected return on investment is crucial for individuals with limited resources (Hobfoll, 1988). Job insecurity is a stressor (De Witte, Vander Elst, & De Cuyper, 2015; Mauno, De Cuyper, Tolvanen, Kinnunen, & Mäkikangas, 2014) that poses a threat to employees' resources (De Cuyper, Mäkikangas, Kinnunen, Mauno, & De Witte, 2012; Jahoda, 1981) as it indicates the possibility that employees may no longer be able to access their social resources at work in the future. This anticipation of resource loss makes it less likely that employees invest resources in the job and more likely that they will defend existing resources (De Cuyper *et al.*, 2012). In line with this reasoning, Lebel (2017) argues that insecurity or uncertainty may lead to feelings of fear and threat that can activate protective behaviours, such as withdrawal from work, when people feel they are unlikely to effectively deal with the uncertainty (i.e., are exhausted). Therefore, we expect that exhausted employees will only invest effort in gaining social resources when they feel that they can benefit from these resources (i.e., have low job insecurity). More specifically, employees who feel secure about their employment are likely to perceive low job insecurity as a resource (Mauno *et al.*, 2014) that allows them to use this resource to try to restore or accumulate additional resources in the form of social support, feedback, and coaching when they feel exhausted on a given work day. Accordingly, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 2: Daily exhaustion positively relates to daily crafting social resources, especially when employees' general feeling of job insecurity is low.

Method

Participants and procedure

Our participants were 271 Dutch elementary school teachers. The schools were part of a large school community and the researchers closely collaborated with the HR department to set up the study. The teachers were informed about the study through their HR

department and through meetings with people from the HR department and the first author of this manuscript. We asked participants to participate in a 10-day daily diary study. In the first week, participants received an email including the link to the first questionnaire. They accessed the questionnaire with their unique login names and passwords, which were included in the email. In this way, we were able to guarantee anonymity and at the same time identify the same person who filled out our questionnaire on different days. In the first survey, we also asked them to fill out several demographic questions such as age and gender. After that, participants received an email every workday for 2 weeks including the link to the same, short questionnaire. All participants received a report about the results of the study through their HR department after the study was completed.

All 1,109 teachers within the community were invited to participate in our study, and around half of them actually participated in at least one daily survey (i.e., 585). For comparability with daily diary studies, we communicated to the teachers that we would only use the data of employees who participated at least five times, and hence removed those participants (i.e., 314) who filled out less than five questionnaires, resulting in a final sample of 271 teachers (24% of our original sample). We have a considerable number of data points with 271 teachers filling out the questionnaire 7.31 days on average: 271 × 7.31 days = 1,981 data points. Our final sample consists of 219 women (80.8%) and 52 men (19.2%). On average, they were 46.25 years old (*SD* = 11.25; range 24–63). Most of our participants were highly educated (i.e., 79.7% finished higher vocational training) and were either married or cohabiting (80.8%). Participants had 22.33 years of work experience (*SD* = 11.07) and an organizational tenure of 17.34 years (*SD* = 10.78). All of our participants had a permanent contract, yet this does not mean that participants are confident they will not lose their job. That is, De Cuyper and De Witte (2005) found that temporary workers were as insecure as permanents. Job insecurity even affects permanents more severely compared to temporaries in terms of engagement, trust, and organizational commitment.

Measures

Day-level exhaustion

We used five items from the Dutch version of the Utrecht Burnout Scale (UBOS; Schaufeli & Van Dierendonck, 2000) to measure employees' daily exhaustion. We adjusted the time frame so that the items refer specifically to the day. An example item is: 'Today, I was mentally exhausted by my work'. The items could be answered on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). The alpha reliability ranged from .89 to .93 across days.

Day-level crafting social resources

The crafting social resource dimension from the job crafting scale (Tims *et al.*, 2012) was used to measure daily crafting of social resources. The five items were adapted such that they referred to the day level. Participants rated the items such as 'Today, I asked my colleagues for advice' on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). The reliability of the scale ranged from .64 to .82.

Job insecurity

To measure the risk of losing one's job, we used four items developed by Goudswaard, Dhondt, and Kraan (1998). An example item is 'I am at risk of losing my job'. All items could be rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 5 (*totally agree*). The scale showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$).

Control variable

We controlled for daily job autonomy, one of the most important antecedents of daily job crafting (Rudolph, Katz, Lavigne, & Zacher, 2017). Daily job autonomy was measured with three items from Bakker, Demerouti, and Verbeke (2004). An example item is 'Today, I could decide myself how to perform my work', which could be answered on a 7-point scale (ranging from totally disagree to totally agree). The internal consistency ranged from $\alpha = .62$ to $\alpha = .74$.

Strategy of analysis

We tested our hypotheses in Mplus (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2014). Because we have a two-level structure whereby days ($N = 1{,}539$) are nested within persons ($N = 271$), we used multilevel analyses to test our hypothesis. We estimated four different models: (1) the null model, (2) the random intercepts and fixed slopes model, (3) the random intercepts and random slopes model, and (4) the cross-level interaction model (i.e., random intercepts and random slopes model; Aguinis, Gottfredson, & Culpepper, 2013). We used the −2log-likelihood difference test as a measure of differences in fit between the models. For the formulas to compute a chi-square difference test based on the log-likelihood values and scaling correction factors provided by Mplus, we refer the reader to the paper by Satorra and Bentler (2001).

We used Preacher, Curran, and Bauer's (2006) online tool for plotting 2-way interaction effects in hierarchical linear modelling. This tool generates an R-code which provides the lower and upper values of each simple slope, which can then be used to graph the interaction effect in standard programs like Excel. To plot our interaction in Excel, we used software developed by Dawson and Richter (2006).

Results

Descriptive statistics

Table 1 provides an overview of the means, standard deviations, alphas, and inter-correlations between our study variables. Table 1 shows a positive correlation between daily exhaustion and daily crafting social resources ($r = .11$, $p < .05$).

Null model

Table 2 shows the results for the multilevel modelling analyses. The null model (Model 1) in Table 2 includes the intraclass correlation coefficient (ICC), which is calculated by dividing the between-person variance (τ_{00}) by the sum of τ_{00} and the within-person variance (σ^2). The ICC shows that 45.7% of the variance in crafting social resources resides at the between-person level and 54.3% of the variance can be explained at the within-person (i.e., day) level. Additionally, the ICC for exhaustion showed that 66.1% of the

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, inter-correlations, and internal consistencies (Cronbach's alphas on the diagonal) between the study variables, $N = 271$ persons, $N = 1{,}539$ data points)

Level	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.	3.
Within-person					
1. Daily exhaustion	3.01	1.55	(.89 to .93)		
2. Daily crafting social resources	2.70	1.13	.11*	(.64 to .82)	
Between-person					
3. Job insecurity	2.02	.81	.12	.01	(.71)

Note. *$p < .05$.

variance in exhaustion is explained at the between-person level and 33.9% of the variance is explained at the within-person level. These results provide support for a nested data structure that requires multilevel modelling.

Hypothesis testing

First, we examined whether daily exhaustion was positively related to daily crafting social job resources (i.e., Hypothesis 1) while controlling for daily job autonomy. Second, we tested our cross-level moderation hypothesis that stated that the perceived risk of losing one's job moderates the relation between daily exhaustion and daily crafting social job resources (see Table 2). In Model 2, we tested a random intercept, fixed slope model. That is, the intercepts of crafting social resources were allowed to vary between persons, whereas the slopes (i.e., relation between daily exhaustion and daily crafting social resources) were not allowed to vary between persons. This model tests the presence of a Level 1 direct effect (γ_{10}) of daily exhaustion on daily crafting social resources, as well as a cross-level direct effect (γ_{01}) of perceived risk of losing one's job on daily crafting social job resources while controlling for within-person (i.e., daily) differences in exhaustion. In support of our first hypothesis, daily exhaustion was positively related to daily crafting social resources ($\gamma_{10} = .084, p < .001$; see Table 2). That is, on days that employees were more exhausted, they crafted more social resources. There was no significant cross-level direct effect of perceived risk of losing one's job on daily crafting social resources ($\gamma_{01} = .019, p = .778$).

Model 3 tested a random intercept (i.e., similar to Model 2) and a random slope model. Different from Model 2, this model allowed the relation between daily exhaustion and daily crafting social resources to vary between persons and tests whether there is sufficient slope variance (τ_{11}) to examine cross-level variables to explain this variance. This model showed a significant increase in model fit compared to model 2 (see Table 2), which shows that there is sufficient slope variance to test a cross-level interaction effect (see Aguinis *et al.*, 2013). Model 4 involved testing our cross-level interaction effect (γ_{11}). That is, following our second hypothesis, we examined whether perceived risk of losing one's job moderates the relation between daily exhaustion and daily crafting social resources. The results support our cross-level interaction model. Table 2 shows that the slope of daily exhaustion on daily crafting social resources is equal to $\gamma_{10} = .210$ ($p < .001$) for employees with average job insecurity. However, this relation becomes weaker by $\gamma_{11} = -.064$ ($p < .05$) units as an employee's job insecurity increases by one unit, meaning that employees with higher job insecurity are less likely to craft their social

Table 2. Results of multilevel modelling analysis for the cross-level moderation

Level and variable	Dependent variable: Crafting social job resources			
	Null (Model 1)	Random intercept and fixed slope (Model 2)	Random intercept and random slope (Model 3)	Cross-level interaction (Model 4)
Level 1				
Intercept (γ_{00})	2.702 (0.052)***	2.301 (0.203)***	2.285 (0.205)***	2.301 (0.201)***
Exhaustion (γ_{10})		0.084 (0.025)***	0.084 (0.024)***	0.210 (0.065)***
Autonomy (γ_{20}; control variable)		0.075 (0.025)**	0.078 (0.025)**	0.078 (0.025)**
Level 2				
Job insecurity (γ_{01})		0.019 (0.069)	0.023 (0.069)	0.017 (0.068)
Cross-level interaction				
Exhaustion × job insecurity (γ_{11})				−0.064 (0.030)*
Variance components				
Within-person (L1) variance (σ^2)	0.690	0.686	0.676	0.674
Intercept (L2) variance (τ_{00})	0.580	0.558	0.516	0.527
Slope (L2) variance (τ_{11})			0.015	0.012
Intercept-slope (L2) covariance (τ_{01})			0.006	0.006
Additional information				
ICC	0.457			
−2log-likelihood	1,948	1,934***	1,932*	1,930*
Scaling correction factor for MLR	1.376	1.292	1.121	1.122
Number of estimated parameters	3	6	8	9

Note. ***$p < .001$; **$p < .01$; *$p = .05$.

resources on the days that they experience more exhaustion. Figure 1 graphically represents the cross-level interaction effect. The slope for employees who experience higher levels of job insecurity (+1 *SD*) is non-significant ($z = .80$, $p = .424$), while the slope for employees who score lower on job insecurity (−1 *SD*) is significant ($z = 3.88$, $p < .001$).[1]

[1] *Additionally, we followed the reviewer's suggestion to randomly split the sample to replicate our results and although this significantly reduced the statistical power of our analyses (Bolger, Stadler, & Laurenceau, 2012), the results were in the expected direction. In Sample 1, we found no relationship between daily emotional exhaustion and crafting social resources,* $\gamma_{10} = .002$ *(.036),* $p = .958$*. However, the result for the cross-level interaction was in the expected direction, although it was not significant,* $\gamma_{11} = -.058$ *(.046),* $p = .209$*. In Sample 2, we found a positive and significant main effect of daily exhaustion on daily crafting social resources,* $\gamma_{10} = .137$ *(.032),* $p = .044$*, and a negative and significant cross-level interaction effect,* $\gamma_{11} = -.069$ *(.034),* $p = < .001$.

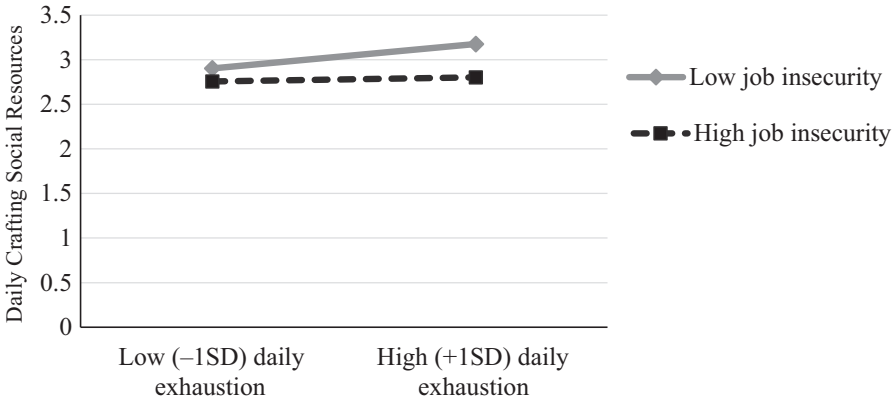

Figure 1. General job insecurity moderates the relationship between daily exhaustion and daily crafting social resources.

Supplementary analyses

One of the reviewers asked us to report the results based on all available data (i.e., including those participants who filled out the daily diary two, three, or four times as well) and encouraged us to do so for the sake of data transparency. There were several reasons why we conducted our analyses based on the data of those participants who filled out at least five daily questionnaires. First, we set our inclusion criteria, which we also communicated to our participants, at five daily diaries (in 2 weeks) or more and adhered to this inclusion criterion for the sake of scientific integrity. To encourage participants to provide as much data as possible, they received a small health-related gift from their organization when they filled out at least five daily diaries. By giving the participants 2 weeks to fill in the daily surveys, we wanted to give participants sufficient opportunities to join the study, which allowed us to capture our variables at different moments in time. The minimum of five days equals a general working week and allows sufficient variability to test our hypothesized model.

Second, from a methodological point of view, we did not include those who participated two times or more, because for these participants, their exhaustion and crafting do not fluctuate. That is, in our analyses we focus on participant's fluctuations from their average (person-mean). When participants fill out two days (e.g., exhaustion scores 2 and 3, M = 2.5 and crafting scores 3 and 4, M = 3.5), their fluctuations from their baseline is similar across days (e.g., $\pm$0.5). Additionally, one of the reasons we set our inclusion criterion at 5 days or more is because increased missingness results in a loss of power (Bolger *et al.*, 2012; Mehl & Conner, 2012), while we need the power to test our hypotheses, especially the cross-level interaction. The missingness will increase substantially if we include those teachers that have missing data on six and seven out of ten days. Consequently, our approach is a variation of casewise deletion, which involves removing cases with considerable missing data, while keeping those with no and lower missing data (Johnson *et al.*, 2009; Mehl & Conner, 2012).

Yet, because we are proponents of data transparency, we do want to report the results using the larger sample (i.e., those who participated at least three rather than five times, N = 322 $\times$ 6.73 days = 2,167 data points), which indeed suggest that this sample is underpowered. Specifically, in this sample, we found a positive relationship between daily emotional exhaustion and crafting social resources, γ_{10} = .124 (.042), p < .01. We

also found the expected cross-level interaction effect, although it failed to reach significance, $\gamma_{11} = -.049$ (.028), $p = .081$.[2]

Discussion

A number of studies demonstrated that employees who are *generally* exhausted tend to withdraw themselves from work to prevent further resource loss (e.g., Deery, Iverson, & Walsh, 2002; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). We argued that *daily* exhaustion starts a different coping process, namely that employees proactively cope with exhaustion at work by asking for social resources from colleagues and supervisors (i.e., craft more social resources; Tims *et al.*, 2012). That is, crafting social job resources is a way to replenish resources, because it provides access to support, advice, and feedback (Halbesleben, 2006; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and reduces burnout (Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2013). Halbesleben (2006) suggests that employees may be selective in their attempts to gather social support resources, depending upon the symptoms of burnout (i.e., exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced personal accomplishment). He argues that exhausted employees may be most likely to gather work-related social support because colleagues and supervisors may help to see the demand differently or provide instrumental help that allows one to mitigate the high job demands. The present study indeed demonstrated that exhausted employees actively search for support, feedback, and advice (i.e., craft social resources) and may as such try to alleviate perceived demands and gain resources to protect themselves from further resources loss (cf. Edwards, 1992).

Next to the direct association between exhaustion and crafting social job resources, we sought to gain a better understanding of the influence of feeling insecure about one's job on this relation to answer the question when exhausted employees decide to invest in gaining social resources. A growing number of employees seem to be worried about involuntary job loss (De Witte, 2005; Smithson & Lewis, 2000), and this perception influences employees' behaviours at work. That is, research has shown that job insecurity leads to reduced well-being (e.g., Barling & Kelloway, 1996) and lessened job satisfaction and organizational commitment (see De Witte, 2005; Mauno *et al.*, 2014; Sverke *et al.*, 2002). We showed that job insecurity is an important factor that affects employees' daily behaviour at work. Specifically, when perceived job insecurity was low, the relation between daily exhaustion and daily crafting social job resources became stronger. This finding indicates that when perceived job insecurity was low, exhausted employees were more likely to actively search for resources from their colleagues and supervisors, suggesting that they see value in investing in resource gains.

Theoretical implications

Our study contributes to our knowledge in several important ways. First, exhaustion indicates that job stressors are high and when not accounted for, may lead to more cynicism and withdrawal from the workplace (Maslach *et al.*, 2001). Our findings show that people can feel more or less exhausted on a given workday (see also Derks, Van Mierlo, & Schmitz, 2014;

[2] *Additionally, as also requested by the reviewer, we split the larger sample in two and in Sample 1, we found no relationship between daily emotional exhaustion and crafting social resources,* $\gamma_{10} = .032$ *(.060),* $p = .598$*, but we did find a cross-level interaction effect in the proposed direction,* $\gamma_{11} = -.530$ *(.378),* $p < .001$*. In Sample 2, we found a positive and significant main effect of daily exhaustion on daily crafting social resources,* $\gamma_{10} = .196$ *(.055),* $p < .001$*, but an insignificant interaction effect, although it was in the expected direction,* $\gamma_{11} = -.047$ *(.036),* $p = .198$*.*

Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2011) and deal with their daily exhaustion at work by crafting social job resources. This finding indicates that employees may search for help and advice when faced with high stressors that wear them out. We are among the first (see also Fritz & Sonnentag, 2009) to show that negative experiences such as fatigue on a specific workday, may actually associate with positive proactive behaviours. Our findings do contradict findings from cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on between-person differences, which show that exhaustion is resource depleting to the point that employees cope by withdrawing themselves from the workplace or reducing their effort expenditure at work (for a meta-analysis see Swider & Zimmerman, 2010). Our study and those of Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) and Halbesleben and Wheeler (2011) show that the effects of exhaustion are clearly different for enduring versus more temporal exhaustion, thereby supporting the claim by Dalal *et al.* (2014) that psychological processes do not always generalize across between- and within-person levels. Our study hereby contributes to the nomological network surrounding exhaustion and offers important insights into the ways in which employees may cope with emotional exhaustion.

Second, COR theory (Halbesleben, 2006; Hobfoll, 1988) suggests that people faced or threatened with resource loss, as in the case of exhaustion, may benefit from acquiring new and/or additional resources (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2009), but will not invest in just any type of resources (Halbesleben, Neveu, Paustian-Underdahl, & Westman, 2014). In line with COR theory, the present study shows that employees not only invest in helping co-workers as was found in Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) and Halbesleben and Wheeler (2011), but also invest in proactively crafting supportive resources from co-workers and supervisors that may directly help them to deal with their exhaustion.

The present study also contributes to a better understanding of how job insecurity shapes employees' responses to exhaustion. Because exhausted employees should be protective of their resources (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2011), it can be argued that they will only invest their resources when the work environment does not pose an additional threat to valued resources, that is, when job insecurity is low. We indeed showed that when job insecurity was low, exhaustion associated more strongly with crafting social job resources. In contrast, when job insecurity was high, the relation between exhaustion and crafting social job resources was not significant. Employees thus tend to invest in social resources when they feel secure that they will not lose their job. This secure feeling may act as a resource that can be used to restore or accumulate additional resources (Mauno *et al.*, 2014).

Finally, this study also contributes to a better understanding of how job crafting may be used by employees on the day level. Previous studies mainly focused on individual (e.g., proactive personality; Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; self-efficacy; Tims, Bakker, & Derks, 2014) or work-related predictors (e.g., autonomy; Leana, Appelbaum, & Shevchuk, 2009; Petrou, Demerouti, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Hetland, 2012) of job crafting to show which individual and work characteristics may spur job crafting. However, job crafting may also be used more strategically in response to employees' feelings at work. Focusing on the job crafting dimension increasing social job resources, this study showed that employees may use this type of job crafting as a coping strategy for daily exhaustion. We do have to acknowledge that our findings were not fully replicated in the supplementary analyses, and therefore, future replication studies are needed.

Practical implications

The present study has practical implications that highlight the role of (1) organizations in reducing feelings of job insecurity and (2) employees in replenishing their resources. First, the results of the present study showed that employees are more likely to try to proactively

cope with their exhaustion in a secure context (i.e., low job insecurity). That is, when employees felt confident about keeping their job in the future, they were more prone to ask for help and advice (i.e., invest in social job resources). Accordingly, organizations should reduce feelings of unpredictability and uncontrollability (i.e., job insecurity) among employees whenever possible. Although job insecurity is also a result of larger economical forces that do not easily change, organizations can be open and explicit in their communication regarding organizational changes and involve employees in the decision-making process (De Witte, 2005). These measures increase feelings of control and the predictability of future events and increase the feeling that employees are treated fairly by their employer. Consequently, exhausted employees will be more likely to invest their limited resources in their job, which benefits them as well as the organization.

At the individual level, employees may be more resilient when they experience more 'ownership' at work and can thus craft their job in a way that allows them to protect and gain valued resources and as a consequence, maintain their own well-being at work. Training employees how to craft their job on a day-to-day basis may allow them to feel that they can control their work environment and thus avert negative feelings such as exhaustion. There is indeed evidence from job crafting interventions showing that employees who were instructed to engage in crafting job resources reported to have found more job resources (Van Wingerden, Bakker, & Derks, 2017) and experienced more positive affect (Van den Heuvel, Demerouti, & Peeters, 2015).

Strengths, limitations, and implications for future research

Our daily diary design allowed us to examine intrapersonal fluctuations in exhaustion and crafting social resources. Tapping into the major advantages of diary studies, this design enabled us to measure these experiences in their natural context (i.e., work) and closely after they had happened (i.e., at the end of the workday), which reduces retrospective bias (Ohly *et al.*, 2010) and increases the ecological validity of our findings (Bolger *et al.*, 2003). Our study provides a valuable insight into how employees cope with daily exhaustion. That is, when comparing our daily diary study to cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on exhaustion, it seems that, on a daily basis, employees may be able to proactively ask for help when they feel exhausted, while in the long run, employees cope with their exhaustion by withdrawing themselves from the workplace. Interestingly, we also examined the relationship between day 1 exhaustion and day 10 crafting social resources and found that this relationship was not significant ($r = .09$, $p = .167$). Together, these findings suggest that the nomological net of exhaustion does not necessarily generalize across between- and within-person levels and more research is needed to shed light on these differences. Research on chronic exhaustion suggests that when employees are exhausted, they no longer have resources available to deal with their situation, which results in additional demands, which further reduces employees' resources and increases their exhaustion (so called 'loss spirals' of resources, Hobfoll, 2001; see, e.g., Ten Brummelhuis, ter Hoeven, Bakker, & Peper, 2011). We showed that on a daily basis, employees still invest resources into crafting social job resources such as asking for advice from colleagues. Answering questions such as 'Is there a tipping point at which employees have too little resources left to craft their resources?', 'Does crafting resources on a daily basis protect employees from becoming chronically exhausted?', and 'How does daily exhaustion result in chronic exhaustion?' would be extremely helpful to advance our understanding of and theories on exhaustion/burnout.

Another interesting avenue for future research, as suggested by one of our reviewers, is to examine both quantitative job insecurity and qualitative job insecurity (Hellgren, Sverke, & Isaksson, 1999). Whereas quantitative job insecurity refers to the fear of losing one's job (which was the focus of our study), qualitative job insecurity refers to the fear that the quality of the employment relationship will deteriorate. Theoretically, we would expect a different effect for quantitative versus qualitative job insecurity. That is, we found that the relationship between emotional exhaustion and crafting social resources was not affected when people experience high quantitative job insecurity, which we argue is due to the fact that people who are exhausted but feel secure of work in the future will be able to benefit from the social job resources they craft. In contrast, exhausted employees who fear that they may lose their job (i.e., high quantitative job insecurity) may not be likely to craft social resources *at work*, because they fear that they may not benefit from these resources in the future, but they may be likely to craft social resources *outside of work*, such as advice or feedback from family and/or friends. Yet, when people fear that the quality of the employment relationship will deteriorate (i.e., high qualitative job insecurity), they may be especially likely to craft social resources at work on the days that they are exhausted, in the hopes of improving the quality of the employment relationship. In line with this idea, some studies indeed show that crafting social resources is positively related to employability perceptions (Brenninkmeijer & Hekkert-Koning, 2015; Tims *et al.*, 2012), which may be helpful when one faces job insecurity (Silla, De Cuyper, Gracia, Peiró, & de Witte, 2009).

Our study is based on previous studies that suggest that job crafting is associated with positive outcomes. For example, Tims *et al.* (2013) found that employees who increased their job resources reported higher levels of these job characteristics over time, which resulted in work engagement and fewer burnout complaints. At the day level, crafting of job resources was associated with work enjoyment (Tims *et al.*, 2014). In addition, Demerouti, Bakker, and Halbesleben (2015) also reported positive outcomes following activities to increase social job resources. Together, these studies suggest that crafting may allow employees to recover at work and to feel less exhausted over time. It would be interesting to see future studies examining the effectiveness of job crafting for workers. Additionally, it could be interesting to examine crafting social support along with different forms of social interaction that are unrelated to getting the work done, such as talking to colleagues to avoid work or to complain about work. Another interesting avenue for future research is to study both recovery at work and after work. It is possible, for example, that employees recover from exhaustion *at work*, but do not recover properly from exhaustion *at home* (e.g., when taking care of small children and/or having impaired sleep quality). When this happens, employees may still become chronically exhausted, because they are already exhausted at the start of a new workday.

While Halbesleben and Bowler (2007) and Halbesleben and Wheeler (2011) showed that employees invest in helping co-workers (i.e., OCB-I) on the days that they are exhausted, we showed that employees also craft social support from their colleagues and/or supervisors on the days that they are exhausted. Halbesleben and colleagues also showed that employees who are exhausted show less OCB directed toward the organization (i.e., OCB-O) and less in-role performance and argued that employees may do this because they do not directly get something in return. Yet, we would like to argue that there may be an indirect positive effect on OCB-O and in-role performance, via crafting social resources. That is, social support is a well-known predictor of employee performance (for a meta-analysis, see Crawford, LePine, & Rich, 2010), and therefore, when exhausted employees craft social resources, they may improve their daily

performance in general (i.e., extra-role and in-role performance). It would be interesting to see research testing this idea.

The conclusions of our study are solely based on employees' self-reports. While it is known that self-reports may be biased (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003), we consciously chose to use self-reports, because we were interested in the private experiences of exhaustion, crafting social resources, and feelings of job insecurity. Exhaustion and the experience of job insecurity may be difficult to report by other sources such as colleagues or supervisors; however, future research may use colleague reports of crafting social resources and/or more objective measure of daily exhaustion (e.g., biomarkers; Marchand, Juster, Durand, & Lupien, 2014). Yet, one would need to be fully informed on the relationship with different colleagues, as employees may be unlikely to craft support from every colleague. Furthermore, the cross-level interaction effect suggests that common method bias is not a big problem in this study as common method bias cannot create an artificial interaction effect, but only deflates existing interactions (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010).

Despite strong theoretical arguments supporting our hypotheses, we were unable to establish causality in the current study. The positive main effect supports our theoretical model. That is, we argue and find that on days when people are exhausted, they craft more social resources. Reversely, this positive main effect would mean that people who craft social resources, become more exhausted. Yet, theoretically this relationship cannot be supported, as increasing resources are shown to have motivating potential and can protect against burnout (Demerouti *et al.*, 2001; Halbesleben, 2006). Especially when employees proactively craft their job resources, they should feel better (Tims *et al.*, 2012; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Indeed, Tims *et al.* (2013) showed that those employees who increased their social job resources reported an increase in these job characteristics over time and a decrease in burnout (and therefore, the relationship between crafting social resources and exhaustion should be negative rather than positive). In addition, we expect that crafting leads to decreased exhaustion, independent of the level of job insecurity. Future research on the causal order of the relation between exhaustion and crafting social resources could employ a daily diary study which includes two measurements per day (e.g., after lunch and at the end of the workday). Another option would be to look at lagged effects of exhaustion on crafting social resources the next day. However, studies like these should also measure factors that may affect employees' exhaustion the next morning, such as recovery in the evening/night.

Additionally, in line with many other studies on job insecurity, the participants in our study scored below the mid-point of our scale ($M = 2.01$ on a 5-point scale, $SD = .81$), suggesting that job insecurity is a low base-rate phenomenon. Studies on the prevalence of job insecurity indeed show that job insecurity concerns a small part of the working population (for a review, see De Witte, 2005). The absolute numbers and the negative effects on employee health and well-being also show that this is an important minority. When studying job insecurity, we should consider its low base rate, because selection effects may drop the means of job insecurity even further. That is, it may be that especially those participants high on job insecurity do not participate in the survey. A way forward may be to sample from example countries who have high unemployment rates, companies who are going through a reorganization, or individuals with certain background characteristics such as low skilled blue-collar workers working in the industrial sector (for an overview of antecedents of job insecurity, see De Witte, 2005).

Conclusion

The present study examined the relation between daily exhaustion and crafting social job resources from a multilevel perspective with job insecurity as an individual-level moderator. The study highlights how exhaustion may go hand in hand with proactive job crafting behaviours particularly when job insecurity is low. Colleagues and supervisors may be a rich source of instrumental help, support, and advice that is worthy to invest in under conditions of low job insecurity.

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Received 14 December 2017; revised version received 24 December 2018