REVIEW ARTICLE

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Good and bad days at work: A descriptive review of day-level and experience-sampling studies

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Summary

Workdays are the main temporal building blocks of people's experiences at work, and many factors potentially contribute to having a good versus a bad day at work. Still, empirical findings on these ingredients are scattered and a bigger picture is missing. This article reviews day-level and experience-sampling studies ($k = 382$ studies) to describe what makes for a good versus bad day at work. We derive outcome criteria for good versus bad days from the circumplex model of effect and identify specific pre-work factors (sleep, pre-work events, and pre-work experiences) and at-work factors (situational conditions, states and experiences, behaviors, results of one's actions, and work breaks) as their core ingredients. We highlight temporal trends in this rapidly growing research area and critically assess the current state of the literature with respect to theoretical and methodological issues. We link empirical findings that have emerged from our literature review to a homeostatic human sustainability perspective, offer directions for future research, and discuss the practical implementation of research findings.

KEYWORDS
affect circumplex, diary studies, experience-sampling studies, systematic literature review, workday, well-being

1 | INTRODUCTION

Days are primary building blocks of humans' experience of time, largely entrained by the earth's rotation and the associated light–dark cycle. In most jobs, work is organized into workdays or shifts as discrete time periods corresponding to the day as a core "temporal schema" that brings structure and order to the "abstract, fluid concept of time" (Shipp & Richardson, 2021, p. 303). Experiences unfolding at the day level predict people's longer-term health and evaluation of their lives (Charles et al., 2013; Möwisch et al., 2019). Therefore, it is essential to understand which factors turn a workday into a happy and satisfying one and which factors leave employees angry or exhausted. Moreover, identifying features of good versus bad days offers important benefits for understanding and designing workdays.

For instance, which situational factors help job holders feel good at work? Which behaviors should they pursue and which experiences should they strive for or try to avoid? How can managers facilitate good days at work, for instance, by showing specific leadership behaviors or by making harmful events less likely? Can individuals do anything before the workday starts to make it a good one? Answers to these questions will help to better understand what keeps people well at work so that they can have an enjoyable and satisfying working life.

During the past decade, our field has witnessed a strong increase in day-level and experience-sampling studies that examine within-person fluctuation in momentary states and processes, along with outcomes relevant to individuals and organizations. These studies have addressed a broad range of research questions in the field of organizational behavior, such as affective experiences at work

(Frank et al., 2021), job stressors (Prem et al., 2017), leadership behavior (Breevaart et al., 2016), and power dynamics (Foulk et al., 2018). Review articles have focused on conceptual and methodological questions (Dalal et al., 2014; McCormick et al., 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2019) as well as summarized practical advice for researchers who want to use this research approach (Fisher & To, 2012; Gabriel et al., 2019). Initial meta-analyses examined specific questions such as within-person stressor-strain relationships (Pindek et al., 2019) and affect differences between work and non-work life (Biskup et al., 2019).

Despite valuable findings and guidance gained from conceptual and method-oriented reviews as well as specific meta-analyses, a structured overview summarizing the manifold factors that potentially contribute to a good versus bad day at work is missing. A review that gathers and organizes empirical findings as well as identifies patterns and trends within the fragmented literature is highly needed. Without an overview of the state of research on the area, our field lacks an important building block for portraying the "lived-through experience of working" (Weiss & Rupp, 2011, p. 87). Accordingly, we might miss the opportunity to develop research-based recommendations about how to have happy, satisfying, and fulfilling workdays and how to minimize the occurrence of workdays that are upsetting and exhausting. Thus, it seems time to take advantage of the enormous potential that the rich body of day-level and experience-sampling studies offer and develop a better understanding of what makes a good versus a bad day at work.

Describing and structuring existing research will contribute to a deep evidence-based conceptualization of what shapes people's days at work. It will offer insights into what makes workdays satisfying and enjoyable – and what might turn days into unpleasant and exhausting experiences without any benefit for individuals or organizations. Our approach will help future research to develop a "theory of the workday" that can focus on the day as a core temporal building block of people's experiences at work. Such a theory could specify which factors contribute to and which endanger well-being as an important aspect of human homeostasis and sustainability at work (Barnes et al., 2023) as well as describe causal mechanisms and interplays connecting these factors.

In the past, researchers have addressed questions of workday design (Elsbach & Hargadon, 2006) and day-by-day management (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). Although these approaches have provided valuable insights and illustrated the benefits of putting the workday into focus, the scope of this earlier research is relatively narrow with an emphasis on specific activities and experiences in specific work environments. Our review extends these earlier approaches and adopts a broader perspective: It builds on research covering diverse jobs and includes a more differentiated set of "ingredients" for good versus bad days at work.

When we use the term "good day at work" in our review, we refer to a day that job holders experience as pleasant, engaging, and satisfying. Such a prototypical good day contrasts with a bad day that job holders experience as being upsetting, exhausting, and generally unfulfilling. Thus, good versus bad days are reflected in job holders' well-being.

We pursue four specific goals in our review:

1. We describe a structural framework for conceptualizing a good versus bad day at work. This framework includes factors contributing to a good versus bad day at work (i.e., "ingredients") as predictors and affective well-being as a core outcome for evaluating a day as good versus bad.
2. We systematically review the literature focusing on day-level and experience-sampling studies in the field of organizational behavior and applied psychology examining predictors of good versus bad workday outcomes at the day level.
3. Based on a critical evaluation of the literature, we discuss essential features of a good versus bad day at work in the context of a homeostatic human sustainability perspective.
4. We develop directions for future research by highlighting new research questions. We offer practical recommendations for how to have a good day at work.

2 | RELEVANCE OF A DAY-LEVEL PERSPECTIVE

Making the workday a focal research issue is important for several reasons. First, the day is a key temporal unit that structures people's understanding of their day-to-day lives (Shipp & Richardson, 2021). Days differ in what happens, how people experience what happens, and how they feel about it (Hicks & Diamond, 2008). This is indicated by the substantial within-person variance of core organizational-behavior concepts such as leadership, experienced stress, and affect (Podsakoff et al., 2019).

Second, fluctuations within employees (i.e., within-person processes) are conceptually different from stable differences between employees (i.e., between-person differences). Research on between-person differences has focused on the question of how between-person differences in, for instance, stable workplace factors (e.g., high chronic workload) are related to persons' general level of well-being. Research on within-person processes has attempted to answer the question of how, for instance, workplace features on a specific day (e.g., more workload than the person usually experiences) are related to well-being on this day. Thus, while between-person differences may reflect results of longer-term adaptation (Matthews et al., 2014) or accumulation (Ganster & Rosen, 2013) processes, within-person fluctuations reflect short-term variations within "life as it is lived" (Bolger et al., 2003).

Third, results found in between-person studies do not fully replicate in within-person studies. For instance, McCormick et al. (2020) showed that in 24% of the studies included in their meta-analysis, the sizes of the correlations at the within- versus between-person level were significantly different and even showed different signs in some of the comparisons. This finding suggests that processes operating at the day level may fundamentally differ from processes that result in between-person differences, emphasizing the importance of focusing on the day as an organizing framework of people's lives.

3 | STRUCTURAL FRAMEWORK

Our framework describes criteria for having a good versus bad day at work and factors that contribute to having a good versus bad day at work. With respect to the outcome criteria, we focus on affective well-being (Warr, 1990) as the hedonic component within broader well-being conceptualizations (Ryan & Deci, 2001). We build on the circumplex model of affect (Russell, 1980) that captures essential dimensions of subjective well-being in organizations (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011) and incorporates both positive and negative affective states of high and low activation. With the inclusion of both positive and negative states, we will be able to examine workday features that are typical for good and bad days.

More specifically, the circumplex model of affect (Russell, 1980) describes affect within a two-dimensional space, with one dimension referring to valence and the other dimension referring to activation (i.e., arousal). States within the positive-activation quadrant refer to experiences of being happy, enthusiastic, and excited. Additionally, the vigor component of work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010) and the vitality component of thriving (Spreitzer et al., 2005) fall into this quadrant. States within the positive-deactivation quadrant refer to experiences of being relaxed, calm, and serene. Satisfaction is also located in this quadrant (Bakker & Oerlemans, 2011). States within the negative-activation quadrant refer to experiences of being angry, anxious, tense, and frustrated. Finally, states within the negative-deactivation quadrant refer to experiences of being sad and depressed. Also, exhaustion as a core component of burnout (Maslach et al., 2001) is a negative-deactivated state.

Well-being states can manifest at several points in time: As process indicators that emerge during the workday, as proximal indicators that become evident around the end of the workday, and as more distal indicators that emerge at later time points, such as during the evening or the next day.[1] Various well-being states need not be aligned across the different time points. For instance, a feeling of excitement during the workday may develop into satisfaction during after-work hours. Feelings of anger during the day may dissipate during the evening and may result in elevated levels of exhaustion after the end of the workday.

With respect to ingredients that contribute to a good versus bad day, we cover both those that emerge before the start of the workday and those that emerge during the workday. Factors emerging before work put people into states that are conducive to having a good versus bad day at work (Rothbard & Wilk, 2011). Such pre-work factors include experiences and events during the previous evening, sleep, environmental conditions and events as well as cognitions, motivation, and behaviors before work. Factors emerging during the workday may have a more direct influence on well-being. They include events and ongoing conditions at work (e.g., receiving social support), states

and experiences at work (e.g., being mindful), behaviors (e.g., helping), results of one's actions (e.g., prosocial impact), and work breaks.

4 | SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

4.1 | Literature search

Our literature review builds on primary day-level and experience-sampling studies with job-holder samples. Thereby, we included studies referring to the entire day (e.g., experiences during the whole workday) as well as studies referring to specific aspects within a day (e.g., specific tasks, episodes, and events) because we believe that both summary assessments of the overall day, as well as fluctuations during a day, can inform what determines a good versus a bad day at work. We identified relevant publications through an electronic search of the psychological and organizational literature up to May 2022. We first selected journals that publish organizational and applied-psychology research based on the Scimago journal database (www.scimagojr.com). Specifically, we used (1) the subject categories of "Applied Psychology", "Social Psychology", and "Psychology (miscellaneous)" within the subject area "Psychology" and (2) "Organizational Behavior and Human Resource Management" and "Business, Management and Accounting (miscellaneous)" within the subject area "Business, Management, and Accounting". In each of the five subject categories, we selected the 50 journals with the highest SJR scores, resulting in 216 journals (34 journals were listed in two or more subject categories). We deemed 50 journals in each category sufficient because this number largely encompasses all journals commonly considered high-quality and impactful. The full list of journals is given in Table S1 in the Online Supporting Information.

For 207 of these 216 journals, we conducted a search in one of the following databases (in descending order of frequency): PsycInfo, Business Source Premier, Academic Search Premier, PubMed, EconLit, and MLA International Bibliography. For the remaining nine journals that were not listed in any of these six databases, we looked for suitable articles on the respective journal websites. In both approaches, we identified relevant articles by searching for day-level and experience-sampling studies examining well-being in a work context (for the exact search terms, see the Online Supporting Information).

This initial search resulted in 18,100 published articles. The first author of this article screened the abstracts of all articles to examine their relevance to our research question. In this step, non-empirical articles, articles using a qualitative approach only, articles based on non-working student or elderly samples, articles not including any relevant predictor or well-being measure, articles not reporting a day-level within-person analysis (e.g., studies using a week-level approach), as well as any duplicates were excluded from further consideration, resulting in a total number of 421 articles to be reviewed. During the review process performed by all three authors, we identified 65 of the 421 articles that did not provide suitable or sufficient information for the review (e.g., studies that assessed data at the day level but performed analyses at the person level only or studies that used well-

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[1]These temporal aspects of well-being outcomes refer to the time when well-being outcomes are experienced, not when they are measured. For example, positive affect experienced during the workday (even when assessed after work) is a process outcome while current positive affect assessed after work is a proximal outcome.

being measures as predictors, but not as outcomes). After excluding these articles, we retained 356 articles reporting a total of 382 studies on which we built our review. Table S2 in the Online Supporting Information provides an overview of the 356 articles. Table 1 summarizes the key features of the 382 studies. As Figure 1 (Panel A) shows, the number of studies increased substantially in the past decade. When describing the study findings, we put particular weight on studies of high methodological quality (e.g., studies that temporally separated the measurements of ingredients and well-being outcomes and/or studies that controlled baseline levels of well-being) and tried to make inconsistent findings explicit. However, regarding specific ingredients, only a few studies were available, so we had to rely on these studies.

4.2 | Outcome variables studied

Of all the reviewed studies, 63.9% included outcomes with positive valence and 64.9% included outcomes with negative valence. With respect to the positive outcomes, a clear majority of studies examined positive-activated outcomes (e.g., happiness, vigor; 51.0% of all studies) and only 13.6% of all studies examined positive-deactivated outcomes (e.g., satisfaction, serenity). With respect to negative outcomes, activated (e.g., anger, nervousness; 28.3% of all studies) and deactivated (fatigue, sadness; 36.6% of all studies) outcomes were more balanced. Thus, although the literature covers all four quadrants of the affect circumplex, positive-activated states were studied most often.

4.3 | Ingredients for good versus bad days

4.3.1 | Pre-work ingredients

A minority of studies (16.5%) focused on the role of pre-work ingredients for well-being during or after work. These studies suggest that what happens before the start of the workday matters for well-being later in the day. For example, sleep quantity and particularly sleep quality turned out to be powerful predictors of high levels of positive-activated states (e.g., vitality; Diestel et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2021) and low levels of negative-deactivated states (e.g., depletion; Barnes et al., 2011; Johnson et al., 2014). Additionally, positively connotated experiences and behaviors in the morning such as mindfulness (Sawyer et al., 2022) and self-reflection (Lanaj et al., 2019) contributed to high levels of positive-activated and low levels of negative-deactivated states. Contrarily, adverse events encountered before work (e.g., bad news, commuting problems) were related to negative-activated (Fu et al., 2021) and negative-deactivated states (Gerpott et al., 2022), with negative downstream consequences for positive-activated states later during the day (Gerpott et al., 2022; Hu et al., 2020).

Experiences from the previous evening, however, showed inconsistent findings. Some studies reported that positive-activated states during the workday benefitted from thinking positively about one's work or mentally detaching from it (Liu et al., 2021; Sonnentag et al., 2021), while other studies did not find evidence that evening cognitions or experiences matter for the next workday (Flaxman et al., 2018; Sonnentag & Niessen, 2008). Possibly, experiences from the previous evening are overshadowed by sleep and morning events and experiences such that the impact of the previous evening might last only until the next morning. However, due to the limited number of studies, results remain inconclusive, leaving room for future research to more closely investigate the role of evening experiences for the next day at work.

4.3.2 | At-work ingredients

The vast majority of reviewed studies focused on at-work ingredients (92.4%). Studies on work events and ongoing resourceful versus stressful conditions dominate the research on at-work ingredients. There is clear evidence that positive events and resourceful ongoing conditions are related to positive-activated and positive-deactivated states. Negative events and ongoing stressful conditions have been shown to be related to negative-activated and negative-deactivated states. This pattern of findings demonstrates a valence symmetry between ingredients and outcomes. For instance, a study by Xanthopoulou et al. (2009) showed that on days with higher-than-usual job resources (i.e., autonomy, coaching, team climate), employees experienced more vigor during the day, along with other signs of work engagement. Dimotakis et al. (2011) reported that on workdays with more pleasant interpersonal interactions, employees reported higher job satisfaction at the end of the workday. Eatough et al. (2016, Study 2) found that on days when employees had to work on more illegitimate tasks (i.e., unnecessary or unreasonable tasks), they experienced higher levels of anger and depressive mood at the end of their workday, even when controlling for morning anger and morning depressive mood, respectively.

With respect to asymmetric valence between ingredients and outcomes, positive work events and ongoing resourceful conditions were found to be associated with lower levels of negative-activated and negative-deactivated states in some studies (Koopmann et al., 2016; Shockley et al., 2021), but not all (Reindl et al., 2021). Similarly, negative events and stressful conditions were related to positive-activated and positive-deactivated states in some studies, but not in others. This inconsistent pattern emerged for both task-related (Rodell & Judge, 2009; Tadić et al., 2015) and interpersonal factors (Beattie & Griffin, 2014; Scharp et al., 2021).

Overall, positive events such as receiving positive feedback and encountering resourceful conditions (e.g., being granted autonomy) are core ingredients for a good day at work, whereas negative events such as arguments with co-workers and other stressful conditions (e.g., unpredictable tasks) increase the likelihood of having a bad day. Ongoing conditions that are usually categorized as challenge stressors (e.g., high workload or time pressure) are ambivalent in their impact. In addition to the well-documented association between these challenge stressors with negative-activated states (Ilies et al., 2010; Pindek et al., 2022), they are associated with both positive-activated

**TABLE 1**   Key features of studies included in systematic literature review.

Feature	Percentage of studies/descriptive statistics
Major publication outlets	Journal of Applied Psychology: 19.9% Journal of Occupational Health Psychology: 12.6% Journal of Organizational Behavior: 8.4% Journal of Organizational and Occupational Psychology: 6.5% Journal of Vocational Behavior: 6.5% Work & Stress: 6.5% Personnel Psychology: 6.0% European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology: 6.0% Academy of Management Journal: 4.5% Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes: 4.2% Applied Psychology: An International Review: 3.4% International Journal of Stress Management: 2.4%
Frequently used theories	Conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1998): 17.8% Affective events theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996): 12.3% Ego depletion theory (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000): 12.3% Job demands-resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001): 10.2% Transactional model of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984): 10.0% Self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000): 10.0% Effort-recovery model (Meijman & Mulder, 1998): 5.5% Challenge-hindrance framework (Cavanaugh et al., 2000): 3.7% Broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2001): 3.7% Work-home resources model (ten Brummelhuis & Bakker, 2012): 2.9% Job demands-control model (Karasek, 1979): 2.9% Boundary transition theory (Ashforth et al., 2000): 2.9%
Temporal focus of predictor[a]	Predictor before work: 16.5% Predictor during work: 92.4%
Temporal focus of outcome[a]	Process outcome (during work): 66.8% Proximal outcome (right after work): 28.5% Distal outcome (during evening): 17.5% Distal outcome (next day): 8.4%
Well-being aspect covered in outcome[a]	Positive and activated: 51.0% Positive and deactivated: 13.6% Positive and mixed activation: 5.2% Negative and activated: 28.3% Negative and deactivated: 36.6% Negative and mixed activation: 8.9% Mixed valence, mixed activation: 4.2%
Sample size	Person level: $M = 110.3$, $SD = 69.3$ persons Day level (excluding event level): $M = 768.9$ ($SD = 688.8$) days
Length of diary study	$M = 8.9$ ($SD = 5.6$) days
Temporal separation of constructs[a]	Concurrent assessment: 67.5% Lagged assessment: 49.0%
Data-collection protocol[a]	Interval-based assessment: 89.8% Signal-based assessment: 9.4% Event-based assessment: 2.6% Day-reconstruction method: 0.5%
Controlled for previous well-being	Yes: 33.0% No: 67.0%
Study type	Correlational: 96.6% Experimental: 3.4%
Mediator or moderator tested (for relevant relationships)	Day-level mediator: 38.0% Day-level moderator: 22.3% Person-level moderator: 37.4%
Measurement source	Only self-report: 95.8% Other-report: 4.2%
Data-analytic procedure	Multilevel structure not modeled (e.g., ANOVA): 2.9% Multilevel regression framework: 43.8%

(Continues)

TABLE 1 (Continued)

Feature	Percentage of studies/descriptive statistics
	Multilevel SEM/path analysis framework: 51.7%
	Other (e.g., multilevel latent profile analysis): 1.6%

[a]Percentages do not add up to 100% because more than one feature could apply to each study. For example, one study might include both a predictor before work and during work.
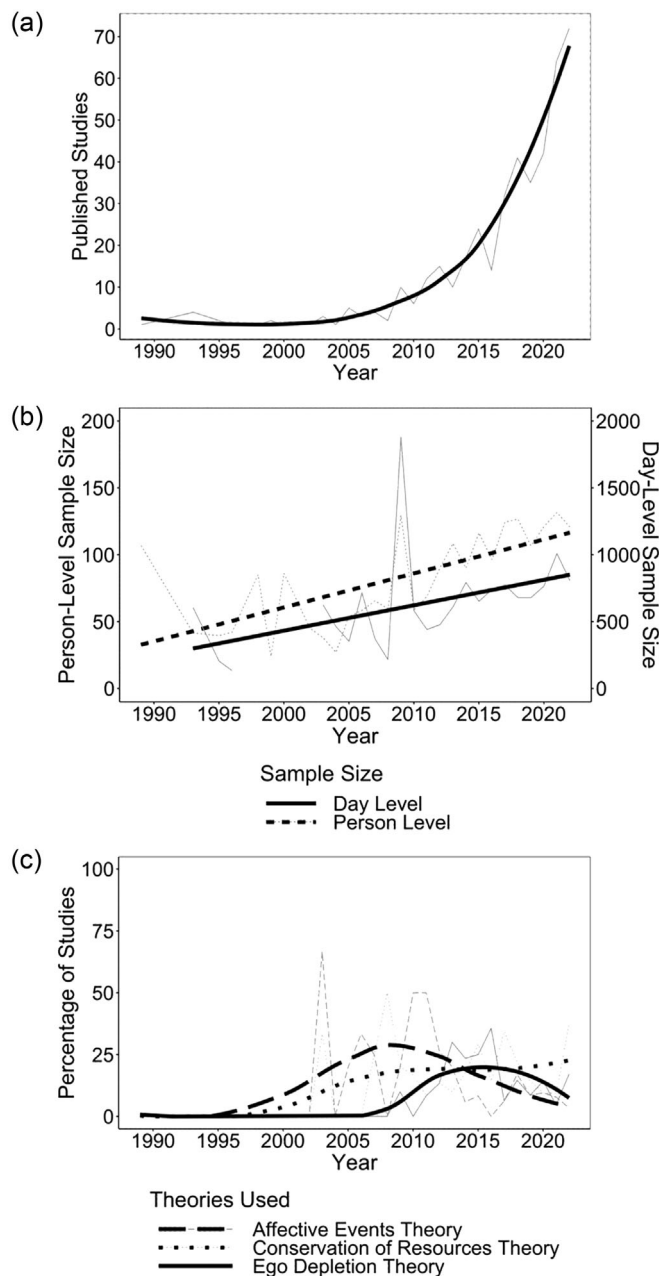
FIGURE 1 *Published studies (panel a), sample size (panel B), and theory-use (panel C) over time. Note.* Panel a: gray = mean number of studies per year. Black = trend line. We estimated the number of studies in 2022 because we conducted our literature search in spring 2022. Panel B: gray = mean sample size per year. Black = trend line. With respect to day-level sample size, event-level studies were excluded because the larger event-level sample sizes would have skewed the results (resulting in $n = 335$ studies). Panel C: gray = percentage of studies using each theory. Black = trend line.

(Demerouti et al., 2015; Rodell & Judge, 2009) and negative-deactivated states (Ilies et al., 2010; Tomprou et al., 2020). These findings suggest that challenge stressors can be both energizing and exhausting. Possibly, positive-activated states (e.g., vigor) benefit from challenge stressors up to a certain point, and then show a decline (Reis et al., 2017; Vujčić et al., 2017).

Moreover, it is not only external events and conditions but also experiences and states that strongly contribute to a good versus bad day at work. Feeling challenged by one's work (Tuckey et al., 2015), focusing on gains (Koopmann et al., 2016), being mindful (Jamieson et al., 2022), and experiencing flow (Demerouti et al., 2012) are rather consistently associated with positive-activated states. Associations with positive-deactivated states have been observed as well (Huang et al., 2015), but the research emphasis has been more on positive-activated states. A similar picture emerged for motivational experiences. Being autonomously motivated (Beal & Ghandour, 2011) and experiencing the satisfaction of competence, autonomy, and relatedness needs (Ilies et al., 2017; van Hooff & De Pater, 2019) were mainly related to positive-activated states. Unfavorable experiences such as threat appraisals were related to negative-activated states (Jamieson et al., 2022; Tuckey et al., 2015).

Studies further suggest that a person's own behavior has the potential to turn the workday into a good versus bad one. With respect to positive-activated states, helping others (Lin et al., 2017), being proactive (Cangiano et al., 2019; Daniels et al., 2009), and engaging in approach-oriented job crafting and similar behaviors (Demerouti et al., 2015; Scharp et al., 2021) are important. Instigating harmful behaviors (e.g., engaging in abusive supervision) has rarely been studied, and when it has, it has produced inconsistent results. More specifically, behaving abusively related to positive-deactivated states in one study (Qin et al., 2018) and negative-deactivated states in another (Shen et al., 2021). Moreover, research clearly shows that surface acting (i.e., modifying the display of one's emotions, usually by covering up genuinely felt emotions) in interactions with customers can ruin the day. Surface acting is related to low levels of positive-activated (Schreurs et al., 2014) and positive-deactivated states (Scott et al., 2012) as well as high levels of negative-activated (Wagner et al., 2014) and negative-deactivated states (Xanthopoulou et al., 2018), often prolonged until bedtime (Huppertz et al., 2020; Wagner et al., 2014).

Perceiving positive results from one's actions is also important for a good versus a bad day at work. For instance, goal progress (Alliger & Williams, 1993), perceived prosocial impact (Sonnentag & Starzyk, 2015), and perceived gratitude from service beneficiaries (Tang et al., 2022) are mainly associated with positive-activated states. In addition, positive results seem to counteract depletion as has been

shown in negative associations with negative-deactivated states (Koopman et al., 2016; Lanaj et al., 2016). Interestingly, negative results and explicit failures were largely neglected in the reviewed literature.

Finally, breaks during the day are an important element of a good versus bad workday as taking breaks is associated with high levels of positive-activated states (Chong et al., 2020; Kühnel et al., 2017) as well as low levels of negative-activated (Zhu et al., 2019) and negative-deactivated states (Zacher et al., 2014). When it comes to specific break activities and experiences, relaxation and having control over break time are most important (Bosch et al., 2018; Trougakos et al., 2014), with engagement in social relations (Bosch et al., 2018) and psychological detachment from work (Chong et al., 2020) being associated with favorable outcomes in some studies, but not others (Trougakos et al., 2014).

4.4 | Boundary conditions

Many studies (56.0%) included moderator variables, providing additional insights into the dynamic interplay of factors that turn a workday into a good versus bad one. Table S3 in the Online Supporting Information gives an overview of the person-level and day-level moderators. Most of the moderators were only assessed in one or two studies so conclusions remain preliminary.

Overall, there is evidence that person-level and day-level factors can influence how strongly workday ingredients actually impact the day. At the person level, extraversion and positive affectivity help to take advantage of favorable workday factors (Glomb et al., 2011; Oerlemans & Bakker, 2018). Neuroticism exacerbates the impact of unfavorable factors (Johnson et al., 2014; Rodell & Judge, 2009). The
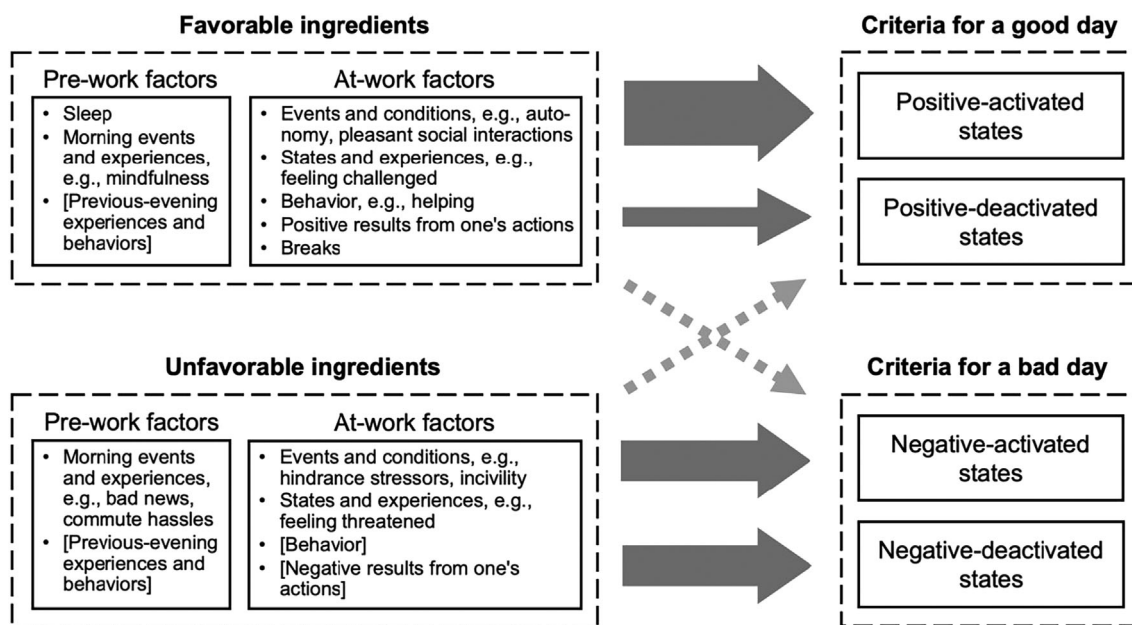
effects of both favorable and unfavorable workday factors are more pronounced at workplaces with poor chronic job conditions, such as high chronic stressors (Gross et al., 2011; Lin et al., 2019), low resources (Ilies et al., 2010; Park & Kim, 2019), and poor leadership (Bono et al., 2007; Cangiano et al., 2019). Similarly, at the day level, day-specific negative events and conditions tend to aggravate the impact of other unfavorable workday factors (Liu et al., 2015; Zhou et al., 2019), whereas behaviors aiming at problem-solving and strategic use of one's resources tend to offset the negative effects of detrimental events (Schmitt et al., 2012; Tremmel & Sonnentag, 2018). Day-specific positive events and conditions tend to buffer negative workday factors on negative states (Pluut et al., 2018; Prem et al., 2016) and lead to a positive association between high demands and positive-activated states (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Kooij et al., 2020).

5 | ASSESSMENT OF THE LITERATURE

Our literature review provided detailed insights into the characteristics of good and bad days at work. In this section, we discuss the overall picture emerging from the review and high-level features of the reviewed studies, including underlying temporal aspects, theoretical frameworks as well as methodological aspects and developments over the years.

5.1 | Overall picture of the empirical literature

Our review showed that a broad set of pre-work and at-work ingredients matter for having a good versus bad day at work (summarized in Figure 2). Most obviously, positive events, resourceful conditions, and

Favorable ingredients

Pre-work factors
- Sleep
- Morning events and experiences, e.g., mindfulness
- [Previous-evening experiences and behaviors]

At-work factors
- Events and conditions, e.g., autonomy, pleasant social interactions
- States and experiences, e.g., feeling challenged
- Behavior, e.g., helping
- Positive results from one's actions
- Breaks

Criteria for a good day
- Positive-activated states
- Positive-deactivated states

Unfavorable ingredients

Pre-work factors
- Morning events and experiences, e.g., bad news, commute hassles
- [Previous-evening experiences and behaviors]

At-work factors
- Events and conditions, e.g., hindrance stressors, incivility
- States and experiences, e.g., feeling threatened
- [Behavior]
- [Negative results from one's actions]

Criteria for a bad day
- Negative-activated states
- Negative-deactivated states

FIGURE 2 *Overview on empirical results obtained from literature review. Note*: Ingredients in brackets are theoretically plausible but relatively under-researched. The width of the solid arrows represents the frequency of the outcome criteria studied. Dashed arrows refer to inconclusive relationships when studying valence asymmetry.

positive experiences mainly predict positive states while negative events, stressful conditions, and negative experiences mainly predict negative states. Relationships between potentially favorable ingredients and negative states as well as between potentially unfavorable ingredients and positive states (i.e., asymmetric valence between ingredients and outcomes) have been studied less often. Findings from studies on these asymmetric relationships are mixed, with some studies reporting significant relationships between favorable (unfavorable) ingredients and low levels of negative (positive) states and other studies reporting non-significant relationships. In terms of outcomes, favorable ingredients were more consistently related to positive-activated than to positive-deactivated states. This finding could be partially attributed to the majority of studies assessing states experienced during the workday – as opposed to later in the day. Benefits for positive-deactivated states might become evident only later after the workday has ended. With respect to negative states, findings referring to activated versus deactivated states are more balanced. Possibly, facing unfavorable ingredients at work immediately increases negative-activated states, and the effort mobilized to cope with these negative ingredients results in negative-deactivated states (e.g., fatigue) after a while.

Taken together, our review clearly demonstrates that to have a good day at work, explicit favorable ingredients are needed, and the absence of unfavorable ingredients alone does not result in a good day. Similarly, having a bad day at work can be mainly attributed to unfavorable ingredients, and the absence of favorable ingredients alone does not turn a workday into a bad one. However, there is some – albeit weak – evidence on asymmetric relationships suggesting that unfavorable ingredients may dampen the experience of a good day at work and favorable ingredients may uplift an otherwise bad day.

With these findings, our review delves deeper than prior discussions on workday design. Going beyond a traditional work-design approach, Elsbach and Hargadon (2006) suggested considering the design of workdays and emphasized the importance of adding "mindless work" to professional workdays. Our literature review offers a different approach to workday design by addressing a much broader set of ingredients. It highlights the importance of positive events, resourceful conditions, and favorable appraisals, among others. It suggests that instead of "mindless work," positive social interactions and work breaks, for example, should be incorporated into one's day as essential aspects of workday design.

Despite important insights that emerged from our review, we also observed significant omissions in the literature. As mentioned, negative states were not systematically included as outcome measures when examining favorable ingredients as predictors and positive states were not systematically included when examining unfavorable ingredients as predictors. This omission is understandable as research tends to build on the principle of affect symmetry (Sonnentag, 2015). But as our review shows, asymmetric relationships do occur and therefore it is important to learn more about them. Moreover, our review showed that the broad category of potentially favorable ingredients included a much richer set of ingredients than the broad category of potentially unfavorable ingredients. Studies focusing on potentially favorable ingredients examined a diverse set of behaviors and results of one's actions (in addition to events and conditions, as well as states and experiences). Studies focusing on potentially unfavorable ingredients mainly addressed negative events and stressful conditions, supplemented by a few studies on states and experiences. Harmful behaviors (e.g., instigated incivility) and unfavorable results of one's actions (e.g., failures) received relatively little research attention. Thus, it seems that researchers look for possible causes for positive states in both external and internal factors but mainly turn to external factors when searching for causes of negative states. By focusing on how people themselves can turn their day into a good one, researchers tend to neglect how people may contribute to creating bad days themselves. For instance, procrastination and other self-undermining behaviors (Bakker & Wang, 2020) as well as behaviors driven by perfectionistic concerns (Mohr et al., 2023) are potential behavioral ingredients for having a bad day at work.

In addition to these omissions, we identified other gaps in the literature. For instance, the period before work (i.e., the previous evening or morning) appeared to be largely overlooked, with the available studies covering diverse constructs that cannot be easily integrated into a cohesive bigger picture. Similarly, with respect to at-work factors, energy management and self-regulation strategies outside of breaks (e.g., daily planning) were addressed in just a few studies. The literature reviewed paid also surprisingly little attention to specific work tasks and how they are sequenced over the course of the day. For instance, meetings that play an important role in everyday work (Rogelberg, 2018) were rarely covered (but see Starzyk et al., 2018). Additionally, the sequencing of tasks over the workday – a topic that has been heavily discussed in the popular literature (Covey et al., 1995) – was largely neglected. Moreover, it was not always clear why specific resources and specific stressors – and not others – were selected as study variables. With some studies focusing on very specific ingredients, their selection seemed to be mainly driven by face validity instead of theory, and, in some cases, theoretical reasoning seemed to be added post hoc.

5.2 | Temporal aspects

To better understand the underlying temporal processes of what makes for a good versus a bad day at work, it is essential to consider when ingredients and outcomes are measured and to which time point the measures refer. For example, measuring positive and negative affect after work with reference to the whole workday can yield different results than measuring positive and negative affect after work with reference to the momentary state (Ganzach & Yaor, 2019). Accordingly, in our review, we distinguished between process (66.8% of studies), proximal (28.5%), and distal (during the evening: 17.5%; next day: 8.4%) well-being outcomes. However, within these categories, studies differed in how they incorporated time. For example, regarding process outcomes, some studies measured momentary well-being states at work (i.e., How do you feel right

now?; French & Allen, 2020) while others measured well-being states retrospectively referring to (parts of) the workday (i.e., How did you feel since starting work?; Gabriel et al., 2020). Furthermore, some studies did not provide sufficient information about the timing of their measurements, thereby making it hard to understand the processes resulting in the measured well-being outcomes. While we did not observe qualitative differences in result patterns depending on the time referent of the outcome, we cannot ultimately draw conclusions about underlying temporal processes in general and how long the effect of an ingredient endures, in particular. However, current research suggests that the benefits of some ingredients might fade out over the course of the day (Wiegelmann et al., 2023). To better address these temporal processes, specifically designed studies are needed that explicitly address time within the day. In addition, meta-analytic approaches focusing on the role of temporal aspects can be helpful to further quantify the role of the timing of processes.

5.3 | Theoretical frameworks

To analyze the theoretical basis of the studies included in this review, we coded the theories that authors cited as their theoretical foundation.[2] In the 382 empirical studies, researchers relied on more than 100 different theories. While for 18 studies (4.7%), no explicit theoretical foundation was reported, the other 364 studies were based on $M = 1.9$ ($SD = 1.03$, ranging from 1 to 8) theories on average. The large number of different theories researchers drew on initially seems to suggest a lack of shared theoretical understanding of what explains how employees can have good versus bad days at work. When zooming in on the 12 most often used single theories, however, a common theme emerges.

As a whole, the majority of the 12 most often used theories (Table 1) focus on the tension between demanding environmental factors and costly psychological processes on the one side and benign environmental factors and favorable psychological processes on the other side. Some of the theories mainly focus on either demanding factors and processes (ego depletion model, transactional model of stress, challenge-hindrance framework) or on resourceful factors and processes (broaden and build theory). Most approaches address both demanding and resourceful factors as well as processes and describe them as conflicting forces (conservation of resources theory, job demands-resources model, effort-recovery model, work-home resources model, job demands-control model). In contrast to these theoretical approaches that specify the content of demanding versus resourceful factors and processes, the other frequently used theoretical approaches (affective events theory, self-determination theory, boundary transition theory) focus on more specific factors relevant to well-being. Overall, the most widely used theories share the core idea that well-being can be explained by a duality of demanding versus resourceful factors. Although the job demands-resources model (Bakker et al., 2023) already captures this duality with

respect to negative-deactivated states (i.e., exhaustion) and positive-activated states (i.e., work engagement), a future unifying theoretical framework needs to also incorporate negative-activated and positive-deactivated states. Moreover, this framework should be more specific in describing which factors result in activated versus deactivated states.

With respect to the three most often used theories, we observed interesting trends over time (see Figure 1, Panel C). Specifically, while studies increasingly used conservation of resources theory, the use of ego-depletion theory decreased after 2015. We speculate that upcoming criticism of ego-depletion theory along with failed replications (e.g., Hagger et al., 2016; Vohs et al., 2021) might have contributed to this development. To avoid using ego-depletion theory, researchers might have turned to the conservation of resources theory because of its similarity as a resource framework. However, the conservation of resources theory also has its shortcomings such as its vague conceptualization of resources (Halbesleben et al., 2014) and the paucity of empirical research on some key assumptions (for an exception, cf. Meier et al., 2023). Lastly, while studies increasingly used affective events theory until the 2010s, use since then continuously decreased, maybe because other theories increased in relative importance.

5.4 | Methodological aspects and development over the years

Across the studies included in our review, some prevailing methodological limitations emerged. Many studies might be subject to common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Most studies assessed predictor and outcome variables at the same point in time (67.5% of all studies). Moreover, nearly all studies used self-report measures to assess both ingredients and well-being outcomes (95.8% of all studies). The simultaneous assessment of predictors and outcomes using self-report measures is a key issue because, for example, mood states while answering the surveys could lead to inflation of the observed relationships between predictors and outcomes (Gabriel et al., 2019; Podsakoff et al., 2023).

In terms of data-collection protocol (Reis & Gable, 2000), most studies (89.9%) used interval-contingent assessment (i.e., participants provided their responses at specific time points; for instance, at the end of their workday). A small subset of studies used signal-based assessment (i.e., participants responded to electronic prompts sent at [semi-]random time points; 9.4%), event-based assessment (i.e., participants provided their responses after a specific event happened; 2.6%), and day-reconstruction approaches (i.e., participants provided their responses after deliberately recalling specific daily episodes; 0.5%). Although interval-contingent assessment is a comparably economic data-collection approach, it heavily relies on retrospective reports and might miss specific incidents that could be better captured with signal-based or event-based approaches. These approaches, however, are more disruptive for study participants.

It is important to note that most studies pursued a non-experimental approach (96.6% of all studies), with only a few

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[2]In this analysis, we use the terms "theory" and "theoretical foundation" interchangeably.

exceptions (e.g., Song et al., 2018). Thus, we cannot draw causal inferences from most of the studies, leaving room for discussions about reverse causation. For example, well-being might also influence how people report work events (Casper et al., 2019).

Moreover, some of the reviewed studies might be subject to jingle-jangle fallacies. While jingle fallacies refer to the assumption that two constructs are the same because they share the same name, jangle fallacies refer to the assumption that two constructs differ because they have different names (Kelley, 1927). We observed jingle fallacies, for example, in studies examining the broader concept of "job demands" while measuring only quantitative demands (e.g., Du et al., 2018) or a combination of physical, cognitive, and emotional demands (e.g., Garrick et al., 2014). We observed jangle fallacies, for example, in studies examining deactivated-negative states: Studies used different construct names such as (low) self-regulatory capacity (e.g., Abdel Hadi et al., 2022), ego or resource depletion (e.g., Diestel et al., 2015) or (mental) fatigue (e.g., Alabak et al., 2020), while all used the exact same measure.

When looking at methodological developments over the years, we observed some encouraging trends. Most obviously, both person-level and day-level sample sizes strongly increased over the years (see Figure 1, Panel B). With a mean sample size of $M = 110.3$ ($SD = 69.2$) persons and $M = 768.9$ ($SD = 688.8$) days, we also observed higher mean sample sizes in our review than in a previous article summarizing experience-sampling studies (Gabriel et al., 2019) – probably because both sample sizes (Figure 1, Panel B) and the number of published studies (Figure 1, Panel A) increased rapidly from year to year. This development is fortunate because large sample sizes at both within-person and between-person levels are needed for sufficient power (Arend & Schäfer, 2019). Additionally, other methodological aspects improved over the years. For example, more and more studies temporally separated assessment of constructs (i.e., measuring predictor and outcome in different surveys, see Figure S1 in the Online Supporting Information) and studies increasingly controlled for previous well-being to increase the robustness of results (see Figure S2 in the Online Supporting Information). Lastly, data-analytic procedures also improved over time. Since Preacher et al.'s (2010) publication on structural equation modeling (SEM) approaches to multilevel analysis, multilevel SEM and path models have mostly replaced multilevel regression frameworks (see Figure S3 in the Online Supporting Information). These trends indicate that methodological study quality has increased over the years. Although this positive trend needs to be appreciated, it should be noted that most of the reviewed studies are correlational self-report studies with usually not more than two to three measurement points per day.

6 | GOOD AND BAD WORKDAYS FROM A HOMEOSTATIC HUMAN SUSTAINABILITY PERSPECTIVE

Our literature review identified a multitude of factors that can make a good versus bad day at work. Overall, the picture appears scattered, and the examined ingredients may be considered somewhat arbitrary – in part because they originated from very different theories. Similarly, theoretical frameworks in themselves are varied and numerous. Our differentiation of various ingredients before and at work helps to structure the findings. Nevertheless, the overall picture still seems somewhat fragmented.

As a potential avenue for overcoming such fragmentation, we suggest a homeostatic human sustainability perspective (Barnes et al., 2023). According to this perspective which is grounded in dynamic energy budget theory (Jager et al., 2013), humans need to balance the three main functions of maintenance (i.e., ensuring the health and individual survival), growth (i.e., promoting one's own development and growth), and generativity (i.e., promoting development and growth of others). Additionally, humans need to protect these functions against entropic forces (i.e., factors that threaten well-being, health, and survival). Applying this perspective, we suggest that good versus bad days can be characterized by the three functions of maintenance, growth, and generativity as well as protection against or minimization of entropic forces.

First, with respect to the maintenance function, good days are characterized by sustained homeostasis. Specifically, good days are days that realize a balance between effort expenditure on the one hand and sufficient cognitive, affective, and energetic resources along with the restoration of these resources on the other hand. Many of the findings identified in our literature review can be interpreted as serving the maintenance function. Pre-work ingredients of a good day such as good sleep (Liu et al., 2021) as well as compassionate and mindful cognitive-affective states in the morning (Jennings et al., 2023; Sawyer et al., 2022) are typical examples of the maintenance function as they put the organism into a resourceful state that helps to uphold smooth functioning at work. Processes happening during the previous evening can contribute to the maintenance function (Liu et al., 2021), but overall seem to be less effective than processes happening immediately before the start of the workday (Sonnentag et al., 2020).

At work, factors such as positive work events (Ellis et al., 2019) and particularly job resources (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009) fulfill a core maintenance function as they keep the person engaged, provide discretion, and help to meet day-specific job requirements. Similarly, short-term planning (Parke et al., 2018), other self-management behaviors (Breevaart et al., 2014), and work breaks (Chong et al., 2020) obviously have an important maintenance function. Perceived goal progress (Koopman et al., 2016) as a result of one's actions can be subsumed under the maintenance function because task performance helps to keep one's job and secure one's income in order to sustain one's life.

Second, with respect to the growth function, good days are days on which "the self [expands] beyond its current state" (Barnes et al., 2023, p. 8). This could be, for instance, days that provide skill variety and learning experiences, days on which one receives mentoring or coaching, and days that increase positive self-evaluations (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy) in other ways. In our literature review, we came across some features of a good workday that serve this

growth function. For instance, a high promotion focus (Koopmann et al., 2016) is a typical example of a state that supports the growth function. Also, most proactive behaviors that aim to improve one's work situation and/or oneself (Parker et al., 2010) contribute to the growth function. Proactive behaviors in general (Cangiano et al., 2019) and various forms of job crafting in particular (Demerouti et al., 2015; Scharp et al., 2021) create the prerequisites so that one can develop and grow at work. Job resources that help explore new possibilities and expand beyond the status quo serve the growth function. In particular, stimulating job features such as skill variety (Breevaart et al., 2014) can be subsumed under the growth function.

Third, with respect to the generativity function, good days are those on which one contributes to others in one's work environment, for instance, days on which one provides social support, coaching, and mentoring to others. For a leader, encouraging and supportive leadership behaviors are also examples of the generativity function. Our literature review identified some daily on-the-job behaviors that address the generativity function, such as performing organizational citizenship behaviors (Koopman et al., 2016), helping others (Lin et al., 2017), and experiencing prosocial impact (Sonnentag & Starzyk, 2015).

Finally, entropic forces that threaten homeostatic functioning undermine good days and result in bad days. These entropic forces should be avoided. In our review, we identified a broad range of pre-work and at-work factors that can be subsumed as entropic forces, such as aversive commutes (Gerpott et al., 2022), daily-routine disruption (McClean et al., 2021), and stressful work events (Ilies et al., 2010; Zohar et al., 2003). These factors put the person into a suboptimal state, making it difficult to uphold the basic functions of maintenance, growth, and generativity. Moreover, they overtax the person, derail them from functioning well, and threaten their well-being. Regarding on-the-job behaviors, surface acting (Wagner et al., 2014) is a strong entropic force as it clearly contributes to negative-activated and negative-deactivated states. At the same time, one could also see the surface acting as an indicator of an overtaxed system where the employee is no longer able to regulate interpersonal interactions within a homeostatic maintenance process. Instead, the employee needs to shift to a seemingly less effortful but also less effective way of emotion regulation.

Overall, discussing the findings of our literature review within the homeostatic human sustainability perspective (Barnes et al., 2023) is useful for arriving at a better understanding of good and bad days at work. Ultimately it can help to develop a more specific theory of the workday. It is obvious that most primary studies covered the maintenance function and examined entropic forces, while the growth and generativity function received relatively little attention. We believe that job resources could be multi-purpose ingredients for a good workday. Autonomy experienced during the workday is probably the most obvious factor that can serve the maintenance, growth, and generativity function as autonomy allows any needed action to be taken on a particular day, be it maintenance (e.g., adjusting one's work behavior to prevent exhaustion), growth (e.g., volunteering for a new task that provides learning opportunities) or generativity

(e.g., prioritizing social support). Moreover, autonomy may also be helpful in counteracting entropic forces, for instance, by using high-energy periods to work on the most demanding tasks. Additionally, social support is relevant to both the maintenance (e.g., getting help to accomplish current tasks) and the growth function (e.g., getting encouragement and inspiration to tackle a new project). The multi-purpose nature of job resources makes them a particularly important factor contributing to a good day at work.

The homeostatic human sustainability perspective (Barnes et al., 2023) provides a framework for deriving assumptions about the relative importance of the various ingredients for a good day at work. Because entropic forces threaten the essential maintenance function, they are probably the most harmful to experiencing a good workday. Factors that serve a maintenance function keep the person as a homeostatic system going and should therefore be important for a good day at work. However, because the maintenance function is fundamental and needs to be regulated on a regular basis, factors serving this function most probably do not lead to extreme boosts of well-being. We speculate that particular factors serving the growth and generativity function – i.e., functions that go beyond homeostatic maintenance – will contribute to high levels of well-being. The relative importance of growth versus generativity might depend on personal values and priorities.

7 | IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite fruitful insights from our literature review, it is evident that many questions need additional research attention. In this section, we discuss avenues for future research.

7.1 | Ingredients

With respect to ingredients for a good versus a bad day at work, workdays are often more complex than described in the literature we reviewed. For instance, the relative importance of the various single ingredients needs more research efforts. More important workday features might overshadow the impact of less important ones. In this context, it would also be interesting to test if factors that serve the growth and generativity function are particularly important for high levels of well-being – as we suggested above. Additionally, inconsistencies between previous-day and present-day experiences may shape the evaluation of a workday as good versus bad (Yoon et al., 2023).

Moreover, because existing research on day-specific well-being is dominated by a variable-centered approach (Wang et al., 2013), little is known about configurations of ingredients that are particularly important. Thus, research might turn to within-person latent profile analysis to identify patterns of ingredients that are most promising for having a good day. For instance, when studying configurations of pre-work and at-work ingredients in such latent profile analyses, it would

be interesting to see if profiles that add morning self-reflection to favorable at-work ingredients are associated with better well-being than profiles without morning self-reflection.

Another direction for researchers is to spell out how the diverse ingredients of good workdays may create chains that relate to each other. It may be, for example, worthwhile to implement measurement points every one to two hours and assess specific states (e.g., positive activation) as responses to events (e.g., receiving emotional support), which then further facilitate behaviors (e.g., helping) that, in turn, increase positive activation even further. Assumptions about which chains may be at play may come from theoretical approaches to the role of affect in goal pursuit such as the multiple goal pursuit model (Louro et al., 2007) or traditional control theory perspectives (Carver & Scheier, 1990).

Finally, we deem it important to better understand potential tools that individuals themselves can use to create or protect a good day at work. We encourage research to focus on the role of specific self-regulation strategies for good days at work, such as self-reward (Wehrt et al., 2022). Also here, chains of affective and behavioral factors that result in effective self-regulation as well as day-level profiles of external factors combined with self-regulation strategies could be analyzed. Moreover, as most studies focused on at-work ingredients, addressing pre-work and after-work factors in a systematic way is needed.

7.2 | Outcomes

The studies included in our review covered the full affect circumplex, but often it appeared that the investigated outcomes were chosen in a rather atheoretical way, based on pragmatic considerations (e.g., face-validity, frequent use in other studies). We encourage researchers to develop a better understanding of which ingredients relate to which positive versus negative and activated versus deactivated states. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that well-being states may change throughout the day. For instance, a negative social interaction with a co-worker may elicit a negative-activated state (e.g., anger), which in turn might be offset by an encouraging interaction with one's supervisor. Theoretical models describing affective shift (Bledow et al., 2011) and emotional journeys (Scott et al., 2020) could be good starting points for capturing change in well-being throughout the day.

In our review, we drew on the circumplex model of affect that focuses on hedonic well-being (Russell, 1980). This perspective neglects that several conceptualizations of a good life explicitly encompass eudaimonic well-being as an essential well-being facet (King & Napa, 1998; Oishi & Westgate, 2022; Ryan & Deci, 2001). Eudaimonic well-being captures experiences that result from purpose and virtue in life. Further, the eudaimonia concept establishes a difference between just feeling good and the purposefulness or significance of work (Keyes & Annas, 2009). Whereas for ascribing hedonic well-being it is irrelevant which factors caused it (i.e., it does not matter what makes one feel good), eudaimonic well-being can only be ascribed when specific conditions (e.g., virtues, inner moral standards) are met. Consequently, incorporating eudaimonia allows humans to be considered moral and meaning-seeking beings at work.

To overcome the limitations of our focus on hedonic well-being and explore research attention given to eudaimonic well-being in daily work life, we performed an additional analysis. Specifically, we looked at studies considering meaning as an exemplary eudaimonic outcome (Oishi & Westgate, 2022). Seven studies already incorporated in our review reported results on meaning as an eudaimonic well-being indicator. For instance, Zhang et al. (2019) found that moral and authentic behavior predicted daily meaning at work, reinforcing that eudaimonia requires behavior that is in line with virtues beyond just feeling good. Adding meaning-related search terms ("meaning*" OR "purpose" OR "eudaimon*" OR "sense") to our original search criteria resulted in one additional study that only considered meaning and no hedonic well-being indicators as outcomes (Fay et al., 2023; see Table S4 in the Online Supporting Information).

These low numbers of studies addressing meaning indicate that more research on eudaimonia is needed. Thus, we encourage future research to study eudaimonic well-being as an additional outcome criterion for good days at work. These future studies may want to go beyond meaning as an indicator of eudaimonic well-being. For instance, studies could include other potential aspects of eudaimonia such as self-actualization, authenticity, personal expressiveness, and virtue (Huta & Waterman, 2014). Therefore bringing more attention to eudaimonic well-being can point to misalignments between hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. For instance, work behaviors such as unethical pro-organizational behavior (Tang et al., 2020) or inauthentic impression management (Chawla et al., 2021) may promote hedonic but simultaneously endanger eudaimonic well-being. Conversely, hedonic well-being may be impaired when work is effortful but achieves meaningful outcomes.

7.3 | Boundary conditions

Our review identified a broad range of moderators of the relationship between workday features and well-being. Although inspecting the most frequently used moderator variables resulted in valuable insights, it is imperative that future studies incorporate moderator variables in a more systematic and theory-driven way. Researchers should refer to explicit theoretical frameworks that provide a rationale for why specific moderators are included while others are not. For instance, adaptations of the conservation of resources theory (Halbesleben et al., 2014) and theoretical developments based on the homeostatic human sustainability perspective (Barnes et al., 2023) could be good starting points for informed decisions about moderators to be included.

In terms of type, most moderator variables included in previous studies referred to person-level and day-level variables, largely neglecting team-level and organization-level variables. Future studies need to overcome this strong focus on individual-level processes by including team-level and organization-level moderators. Research has

shown that teamwork factors (Nielsen et al., 2017) and organizational policies (Kossek et al., 2023) are highly important for well-being. Thus, teamwork and organizational variables may also play a role as moderators between ingredients for a good workday and associated outcomes.

In our review, we rarely encountered studies that took the temporal context into account (e.g., Beal & Ghandour, 2011, for an exception). However, processes unfolding during the workday do not occur in a temporal vacuum but are embedded in a temporal context. First, the time of the day can impact a person's reaction to events and ongoing conditions. For instance, it might be more difficult to cope with unfavorable events and ongoing conditions later during the workday when fatigue is high (Bennett et al., 2021). Second, the day of the week can influence affective and energetic processes (Dust et al., 2022). Third, the time of the year with associated busy versus more relaxed periods may influence the impact of specific workday factors (Teuchmann et al., 1999). Fourth, specific temporal contexts within an organization, such as the time when a new product is launched, could influence the processes happening at the day level. Finally, times of societal and health crises could have an impact on how workday features impact well-being (Fleuren et al., 2023).

7.4 | Addressing causality and improving methodological quality

As nearly all the reviewed studies used correlational designs, questions about causality remain unanswered. To allow conclusions about causality, experimental approaches implemented in daily-survey studies are needed. In within-person experiments, study participants receive an experimental treatment (e.g., encouragement to appraise upcoming events as a challenge) on randomly chosen days and no or a control treatment on the other days (see Lanaj et al., 2019, for example). Researchers, of course, should take care to prevent any carryover effects from one day to the next.

It goes without saying that future day-level studies should strive to avoid having just one daily measurement occasion and should control for baseline levels of the outcome variable (e.g., morning states). Future studies should reduce retrospective reports by integrating signal-based or event-based assessments into interval-oriented data-collection protocols. Finally, researchers should aim to go beyond using purely self-report measures.

7.5 | New research questions

Drawing on the findings of our review, we suggest several new research questions that would be worth exploring in future research. First, studies could more closely investigate how to actively create and take advantage of good days, and how to avoid bad days. For example, how can individuals and supervisors create good days at work under adverse circumstances (e.g., after poor sleep during the previous night, when facing disruptive events at work)? How can people detect early

that the odds are high for having a good day at work – and accordingly plan important tasks for this day? And how can they diagnose "high-risk days" early and engage in counteracting measures? To answer these questions, researchers need to pay more attention to individuals' self-awareness at work, deepen research on self-leadership, and study how large-scale organizational practices can inform day-to-day work. From a methodological perspective, addressing these questions will require data collection in multiple organizations, many more measurement points per day, and the inclusion of multi-source data (e.g., supervisors and subordinates). While these suggestions are not necessarily new, they have been rarely implemented in empirical research (but see Trougakos et al., 2015, for the inclusion of co-worker ratings).

Second, researchers could focus on factors that are important upon completion of the workday. For example, they could examine specific activities and experiences enacted at the end of the workday that can help to finish the day well (e.g., planning the next workday, Smit, 2016). The period right after work can be crucial to successfully transition from work to a private role and thus either prolong (disrupt) the effects of having a good (bad) day at work. Moreover, researchers may build on earlier research on capitalization (Ilies et al., 2011) and now examine under which circumstances ingredients for a good workday are most suitable for capitalization and under which circumstances and for whom capitalization is most needed and most helpful.

Third, existing day-level studies on well-being focused on relatively frequent, low-intensity events and tended to neglect the effects of shocks (e.g., traumatic stressors). This is understandable because shocks are rare events and, therefore, they are not easily covered in typical daily diary designs. To capture shocks, event-based study designs will be more useful. Qualitative approaches might be an important first step to learning more about how shocks turn workdays into good ones versus bad ones.

Fourth, researchers could use the homeostatic human sustainability perspective (Barnes et al., 2023) to examine how people experience the fulfillment of the maintenance, growth, and generativity functions as well as draining entropic forces during their workdays. In this context, it would be interesting to know if and how they prioritize the various functions during the workday and how specific ingredients for a good workday contribute to the various functions. Above we have argued that resources, for instance, might serve both a maintenance and growth function. This approach would require that the specific functions that are potentially served by workday features (e.g., availability of job resources) are assessed explicitly. New measures of, for instance, autonomy and social support would be needed that differentiate between the various ways people use job resources (i.e., for maintenance versus growth).

Finally, future research could examine the development of good-day routines or the chronification of entropic forces. For example, how do experiences of having single good days translate into good-day routines? What are the risks of routinely experiencing bad days? Are there adaptation or accumulation processes so that features of good days lose their positive impact or do features of bad days become more harmful when experienced over a longer period? How can people leverage the benefits of good days? And how can they

"undo" the effects of bad days? To answer such questions, researchers may combine diary assessments with follow-up measurements to see if desirable daily behaviors become habitualized (Sonnentag et al., 2022). They may use measurement burst designs (Sliwinski et al., 2009) to understand how daily entropic forces may develop into the destabilization of a person's homeostatic system. Moreover, when studying the implications of good days beyond the limits of single days, researchers may want to focus on transitions between days using a Markov-chain approach (Crayen et al., 2017).

8 | PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Although more research is needed to better understand days at work, our review offers recommendations about how to design a good day for oneself and to support others in this endeavor. In this section, we summarize the core practical implications for job holders.

Concerning pre-work factors, ensuring one has slept well and long enough (Barnes et al., 2011; Liu et al., 2021) can set a positive tone for the day (Rothbard & Wilk, 2011) and may even offset the detrimental impact of negative events (Liu et al., 2017). If possible, walking or cycling to work is recommended (Calderwood & Mitropoulos, 2021), as commuting hassles (which may be more likely in cars and trains) endanger a good start to the day (Gerpott et al., 2022). Creating mental boundaries between pre-work and work, for instance via transition rituals (Ashforth et al., 2000) or explicit reattachment practices (Vogel et al., 2021), may be important to prevent morning hassles translating into a bad work day.

Concerning interpersonal behaviors at work, being helpful and considerate towards others is particularly powerful (Koopman et al., 2016; Lam et al., 2016), in part because others tend to reciprocate (Lee et al., 2019) and pleasant social interactions may emerge (Puranik et al., 2021; Spence et al., 2014). However, being attentive to one's limits concerning energy and time is important when helping others or being otherwise proactive (Cangiano et al., 2019; Lanaj et al., 2016). Approaching people at work mindfully (Hülsheger et al., 2013), with appreciation and trust (Lanaj et al., 2018), and without surface acting (Nesher Shoshan & Venz, 2022) is important.

Concerning task-related and other processes, demands should be approached as challenges (Tuckey et al., 2015) and some degree of task completion is important (Gross et al., 2011; Koopman et al., 2016). A simple trick for job holders may be to define small (sub-)tasks to experience goal progress. In addition, resources are crucial (Kühnel et al., 2017; Xanthopoulou et al., 2009). Managers should prioritize the allocation of resources and make sure that everyone has enough autonomy and support. Finally, taking breaks helps to sustain positive-activated states throughout the day (Zacher et al., 2014).

9 | CONCLUSION

Overall, our review identified a broad range of different ingredients that contribute to a good day at work as well as ingredients that can result in a bad day at work. Although research on day-level well-being at work still lacks a unifying theoretical framework, several theoretical approaches converge in that they focus on an overall duality of demanding versus resourceful factors, corresponding to entropic forces versus factors that support maintenance, growth, and generativity functions. In terms of studied ingredients and outcomes, pre-work predictors and positive-deactivated outcomes remain largely unexplored. Despite methodological improvements in recent years, empirical research is still largely non-experimental and relies on self-report data assessed on very few occasions per day. Temporal processes unfolding during the day at work still await a systematic investigation. We hope that our review inspires future research to continue this interesting research stream to ultimately help organizations and employees create many more good days at work.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT
The authors have no conflict of interest to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
No primary data were collected. The primary studies on which this article is based are listed in the Supporting Information.

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SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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