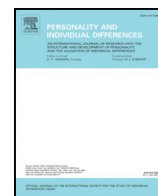




Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

Relating emotional arousal to work vigour: A dynamic systems perspective

Joanna Sosnowska^{a,*}, Joeri Hofmans^a, Filip De Fruyt^b^a Department of Work and Organizational Psychology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussel, Belgium^b Department of Personality Psychology, Ghent University, Ghent, Belgium

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 25 January 2017

Received in revised form 20 June 2017

Accepted 26 June 2017

Available online xxxx

Keywords:

Temporal dynamics

Core affect

Arousal

Vigour

Work engagement

ABSTRACT

We examined the emotional basis of work engagement by focusing on the relationship between arousal and work vigour. Drawing on the DynAff model of Kuppens, Oravecz, and Tuerlinckx (2010), we looked at three elements underlying the temporal dynamics of arousal: (1) the level of baseline arousal (i.e., the attractor state around which arousal fluctuates), (2) the amount of variability in arousal around this baseline, and (3) the swiftness with which people return to their arousal baseline once they deviated from it. We conducted a five-day experience sampling study, in which 88 employees reported on their momentary core affect (i.e., their momentary level of valence and arousal), while vigour was measured at the end of the study. Results showed that higher levels of baseline arousal were related to increased levels of vigour. Furthermore, we found that baseline arousal interacted with arousal variability in the sense that only people with low levels of baseline arousal and low levels of arousal variability experienced lower levels of vigour. Together, our findings suggest that, if we want to advance our understanding of the emotional basis of work engagement, we need to look into the temporal dynamics underlying it.

© 2017 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Work vigour is defined as the level of energy and mental resilience when at work and the overall subjective experience of aliveness related to work (Bakker & Bal, 2010). Based on this definition, it is clear that high levels of work vigour are generally adaptive and desirable, both for the organisation and the employee. Regarding the organisation, previous research has, for example, shown that vigorous employees are more likely to display extra-role behaviour (Fisher, 2002; Ilies, Scott, & Judge, 2006), tend to show more personal initiative and that they approach tasks with more enthusiasm (Frese & Doris, 2001). With regards to the employee-related side, several studies have shown that higher levels of work vigour are linked to positive affective experiences (Van Wijhe, Peeters, Schaufeli, & Van Den Hout, 2011).

Although studies on the correlates of work vigour have convincingly shown that work vigour has a strong affective basis, virtually all studies on the relationship between work vigour and affect have focused on affect valence (i.e., the positivity or negativity of one's affective experiences) (e.g. Ouwenel, Le Blanc, & Schaufeli, 2012; Salanova, Llorens, & Schaufeli, 2011; Van Wijhe et al., 2011). This is remarkable as work vigour—referring to the level of energy, mental resilience, and aliveness at work (Bakker & Bal, 2010)—is conceptually more arousal—than valence-related. In response to this gap in the literature, a first

contribution of this paper is to expand our knowledge on the affective basis of work vigour by focussing on the relationship between work vigour and emotional arousal.

As a second contribution, and drawing on the DynAffect model of Kuppens, Oravecz, and Tuerlinckx (2010), we explicitly acknowledge that people not only differ in their average level of arousal (i.e., baseline arousal), but also in the extent to which their arousal states vary across time and situations (i.e., arousal variability) and in the extent to which people regulate their arousal levels (i.e., arousal attractor strength). By linking individual differences in work vigour to individual differences in baseline arousal, arousal variability and arousal attractor strength, we aim to arrive at a better understanding of how emotional arousal relates to work vigour.

In what follows, we will first provide a short overview of the DynAffect model, after which we explain how each of the DynAffect parameters (i.e., baseline, variability, and attractor strength) is expected to relate to work vigour.

2. The DynAffect model

Whereas affective states are believed to be functional in the sense that they serve in establishing, maintaining, or altering the connection between individuals and their environment (Witherington & Crichton, 2007), researchers acknowledge that affective experiences do not always arise from the function they serve, but more generally from specific interactions of internal and external factors. Thus, despite the fact that people on a daily basis tend to experience a wide range of affective

* Corresponding author at: Department of Work and Organizational Psychology, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinaan 2, 1050 Brussel, Belgium.

E-mail address: Joanna.sosnowska@vub.ac.be (J. Sosnowska).

states—because they are confronted with a wide range of external factors—, there are also important regularities in the states they experience—because of factors internal to the individual (Kuppens et al., 2010; Oravecz, Tuerlinckx, & Vandekerckhove, 2011).

Recently, Kuppens et al. (2010) introduced the DynAffect model with the explicit goal of capturing such affect regularities. In line with Russell and Barrett (1999) and Russell (2003), the DynAffect model describes one's affective experiences as an integral blend of two dimensions: arousal—ranging from feeling passive to feeling active—and valence—ranging from feeling pleasant to feeling unpleasant. Using the valence-arousal framework, momentary affective states can be conceived of as a single point in the two-dimensional, valence-arousal plane, while one's affect trajectory can be seen as a series of valence-arousal combinations across time (Kuppens, Van Mechelen, Smits, De Boeck, & Ceulemans, 2007; Kuppens et al., 2010).

The goal of the DynAff model is then to capture regularities in people's affect trajectories by making use of three elements: The first element, baseline, represents the affective set point, which is the person's affective comfort zone and therefore the reference point to which changes are compared. The second element, variability, represents how much people vary around their affective baseline. The last element, attractor strength, captures coherence in one's core affect trajectory because it pertains to the swiftness with which the individual returns to his/her affective homebase once he/she has deviated from it. A strong attractor regulates deviations from the baseline swiftly, pulling the core affect immediately back to the baseline; with a weak attractor, there is little motivation to return to one's baseline. Fig. 1 shows how these three elements jointly give rise to one's core affect trajectory (for two hypothetical individuals).

As a set, the three elements of the DynAffect model allow for the integration of change and stability in the affective system in the sense that they represent stable, between-person differences in three major processes that drive the temporal dynamics of our affective experiences. While individual differences in these processes are not independent from each other, research on the DynAffect model has shown that baseline, variability, and attractor strength differentially relate to a wide range of affective and personality dispositions (Beal & Ghandour, 2011; Beal, Trougakos, Weiss, & Dalal, 2013; Eaton & Funder, 2001; Eid & Diener, 1999; Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002; Kuppens et al., 2010; Oravecz et al., 2011). In this study, we draw on the DynAffect model to examine individual differences in the dynamics of arousal, which we subsequently link to individual differences in work vigour.

3. Linking stability and change of arousal to work vigour

Vigour is often conceptualized as a positive energizing experience at work (e.g. Shirom, 2011). It is distinct from low-intensity positive states such as pleasantness and contentment since it is associated with high levels of both pleasure and arousal (Russel & Steiger, 1982), which is why it is sometimes referred to as “positive energy” (Shirom, 2011). Moreover, several of the facets of vigour, namely physical strength, emotional energy and cognitive liveliness, require energy resources (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). Yet, it is still unknown how energy levels and more specifically emotional arousal relate to vigour. In what follows, we aim to close this gap, looking at how individual differences in stability and change of arousal—as captured by baseline arousal, arousal variability and arousal attractor strength—relate to individual differences in work vigour.

3.1. Baseline arousal and work vigour

Individual differences in baseline arousal are expected to relate to individual differences in work vigour for several reasons. First, both baseline arousal and work vigour pertain to one's average level of energy, and logically speaking stable, between-person differences in the level of energy one experiences in general (arousal) should relate to stable, between-person differences in the level of energy experienced at work (work vigour). Second, emotional arousal relates to fulfilment of the need for stimulation (Steenkamp, Baumgartner, & Van der Wulp, 1996), which in turn links to work vigour because engaged employees thrive in stimulating and challenging environments (Langelaan, Bakker, van Doornen, & Schaufeli, 2006). Finally, research has shown that, although employees might experience high momentary levels of work vigour independent of their momentary affect, at the between-day and between-person level work vigour shows substantial correlations with energetic arousal (Reis, Arndt, Lischetzke, & Hoppe, 2016). Therefore, we expect between-person differences in baseline arousal to positively relate to between-person differences in work vigour (Hypothesis 1).

3.2. Arousal variability and work vigour

The extent to which one fluctuates in his/her affective states—referred to as affect variability—, has in previous research been considered to represent the reactivity to affective events (Beal & Ghandour, 2011; Eid & Diener, 1999). Whereas high variability on the

Core affect trajectories for two hypothetical individuals.

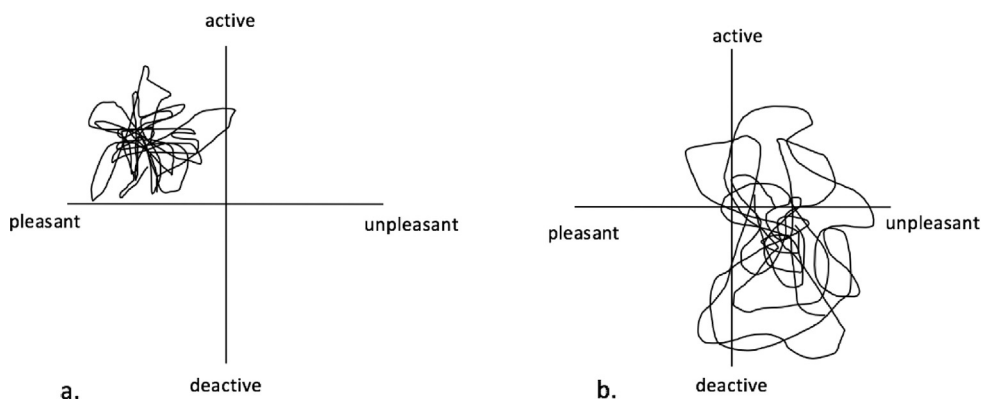


Fig. 1. Core affect trajectories for two hypothetical individuals. a shows a core affect trajectory that is characterised by a moderately active homebase (the centre of gravity of the trajectory is moderately active), low arousal variability (the trajectory does not vary a lot along the arousal axis) and high arousal attractor strength (the trajectory is swiftly pulled back towards the arousal baseline following every deviation). b. instead, shows a core affect trajectory that is characterised by a moderately inactive homebase (the centre of gravity of the trajectory is moderately inactive), high arousal variability (the trajectory varies a lot along the arousal axis) and low arousal attractor strength (the trajectory is not pulled back swiftly towards the baseline after deviating from it).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/11016197>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/11016197>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)