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# Day by Day – A Daily Diary Exploration of Microworkers’ Working Conditions and Well-Being

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## Abstract

AI technologies fundamentally rely on human labor for labeling, processing, and validating large volumes of data—a form of digital piecework known as microwork. Despite the significant contributions microwork has made to the development and commercial viability of AI technologies, the working conditions within microwork and the implications of these conditions for workers’ well-being remain underexplored. Most studies on this topic use cross-sectional or qualitative designs, which do not account for the unstable and fluctuating nature of microwork. This study, therefore, applies Self-Determination Theory to examine how daily fluctuations in working conditions in microwork affect workers’ psychological and psychosomatic well-being through the satisfaction of their basic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Additionally, we explore how different degrees of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation between workers moderate this relationship.

A 5-day daily diary study is conducted among 200 microworkers on Clickworker in May 2025, aiming for a minimum of 150 complete responses. Workers answer a baseline survey assessing their well-being, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and additional variables used as covariates. The diary survey comprises measures of the experienced working conditions on microworking platforms, participants’ basic need satisfaction, psychological, and psychosomatic well-being on each day. As participants might not work on microworking platforms daily, the diary surveys are sent to participants for 8 consecutive days, of which each participant can return a maximum of five surveys. Workers receive compensation of €3.5 per survey based on the Dutch minimum wage. Data is analyzed in a two-level model with repeated measures on the day-level (within-person;  $n = 750$ ) and the individual measures at the person-level (between-person;  $n = 150$ ).

On the within-person level, we expect to find direct positive effects of better daily working conditions on daily well-being. Next, we test daily basic need satisfaction as a mediator between working conditions and well-being, expecting the working conditions to be significantly related to workers’ daily basic need satisfaction, which in turn is significantly associated with worker well-being. Between-persons, we test intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as cross-level moderators of the association between the experienced working conditions and workers’ basic need satisfaction. This study may shed light on how daily microworking conditions impact well-being and generate new insight into digital labor’s risks for psychological and psychosomatic well-being. These insights can provide further guidance in improving working conditions for microworkers.

**Keywords:** Microwork, Well Being, Daily Diary, Working Conditions

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