

The association between self-control demands and need for recovery:

Which individual and situational factors buffer the relationship?



Introduction

In today's highly dynamic work organizations more flexibility in terms of where ("flexplace") and when ("flexitime") employees work is required (Allen, et al., 2013). Due to these flexible work arrangements (FWA) new demands, such as self-control, occur (Schmidt & Neubach, 2007). Self-control demands (SCDs) in FWA are regarded as job stressors that have previously been found to be positively associated with increased need for recovery (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011). In order to be able to meet these demands and stay healthy,

it is necessary to clarify how individuals and organizations can benefit from FWA (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015). Therefore, the goal of the study was to find individual (psychological detachment, role integration) as well as situational (boundary control, psychological job control) resources. We addressed the question if these resources can buffer the impacts of increased SCDs in the current work context, characterized by enhanced flexible and permeable boundaries between work and personal life.

Hypotheses

- H1:** SCDs are positively associated with need for recovery.
- H2:** Psychological detachment from work partially mediates the effects of SCDs on need for recovery.
- H3:** Role integration moderates the relationship between SCDs and need for recovery.
- H4:** Boundary control moderates the relationship between SCDs and need for recovery.
- H5:** Psychological job control moderates the relationship between SCDs and need for recovery.

Sample & Measures

Selection criteria: Employed at least 30h per week & Availability of FWA
N = 302 (151 *clickworker.de*, 25 cent/person) | ♀ 43.7% | ♂ 56.3%
 Age: 18-64 (31-45: 43.8%) | Leadership position: 31.5% | Academics: 60.3%
 Survey in fall 2017 via online questionnaire in German and English
 Mediation and moderation analyses via PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013)

Dimension	Items	Sample item	α	Source
SCDs				
Impulse control	9	"At work I cannot let myself get carried away by spontaneous reactions under any circumstances." (Impulse control)	.82	Schmidt & Neubach (2010)
Overcoming inner resistance				
Resisting distractions				
Psychological detachment	4	"At the end of a working day I forget the work."	.88	Sonnentag & Fritz (2007)
Need for recovery	5	"By the end of the working day, I feel really worn out."	.81	Van Veldhoven & Broersen's (2003)
Boundary control	3	"I have control over whether I am able to keep my work and personal life separate."	.89	Kossek et al. (2012)
Psychological job control	6	"To what extent does your job permit you to decide about when the work is done?"	.87	Hackman & Oldham (1980) + Kossek et al. (2006)
Role integration	9	"I regularly receive work-related correspondence (e-mail or phone calls) even when I'm not working." (Permeability)	-	Hecht & Allen (2009) + self-developed scales

Results

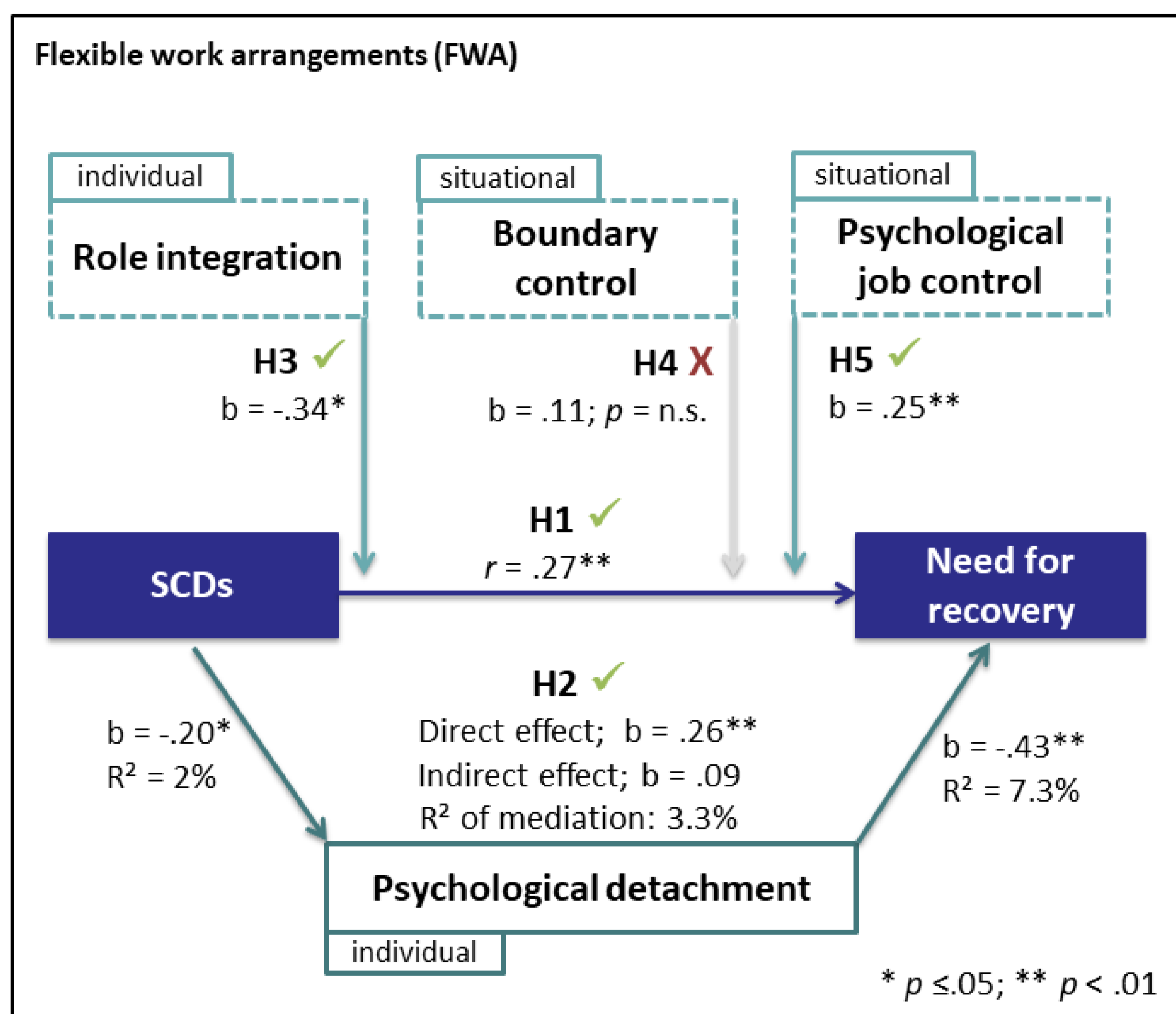


Figure 1. Theoretical model showing the mediating and moderating effects between SCDs and need for recovery under FWA condition.

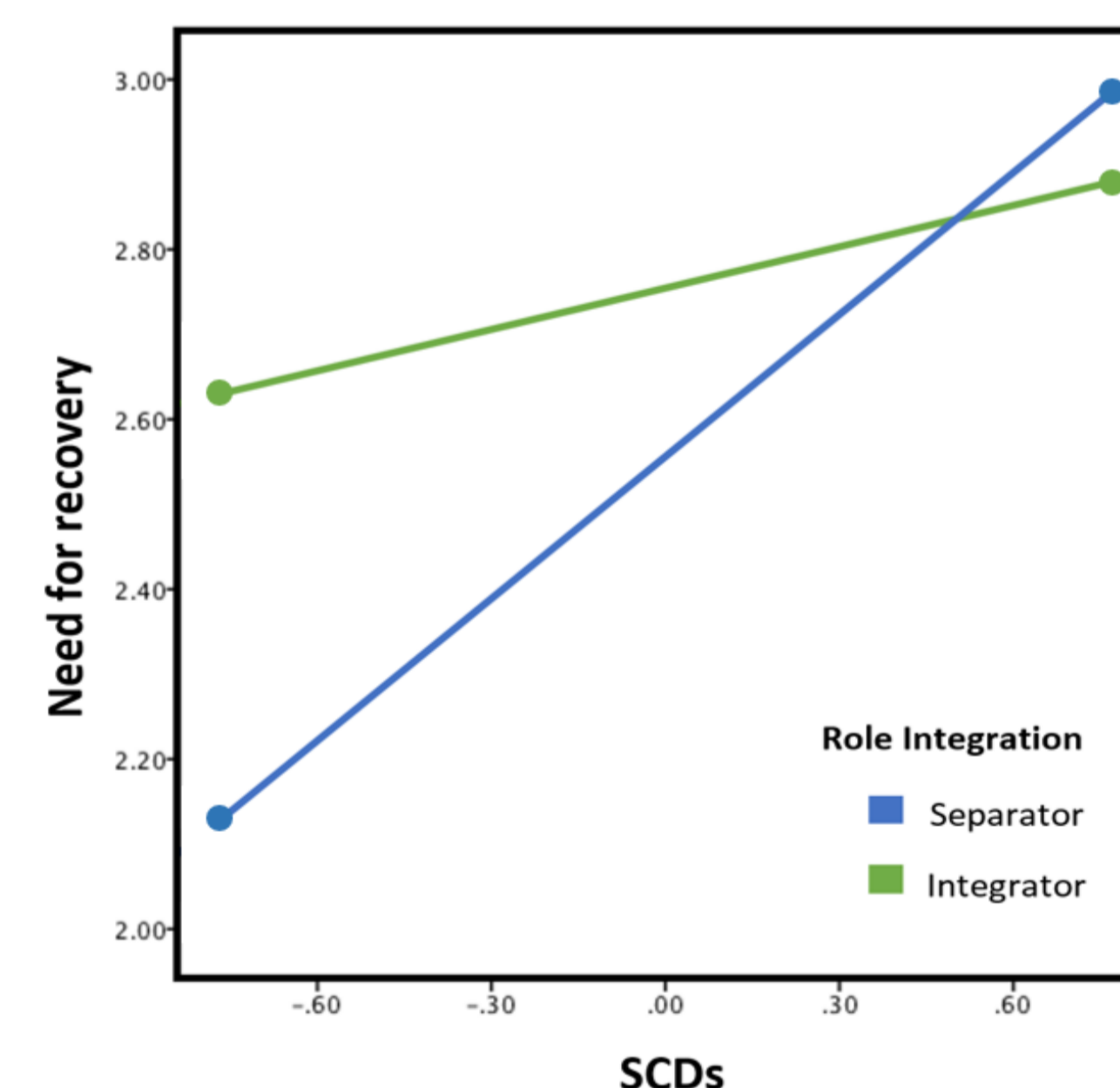


Figure 2. Simple slopes for need for recovery on SCDs at values of role integration (H3).

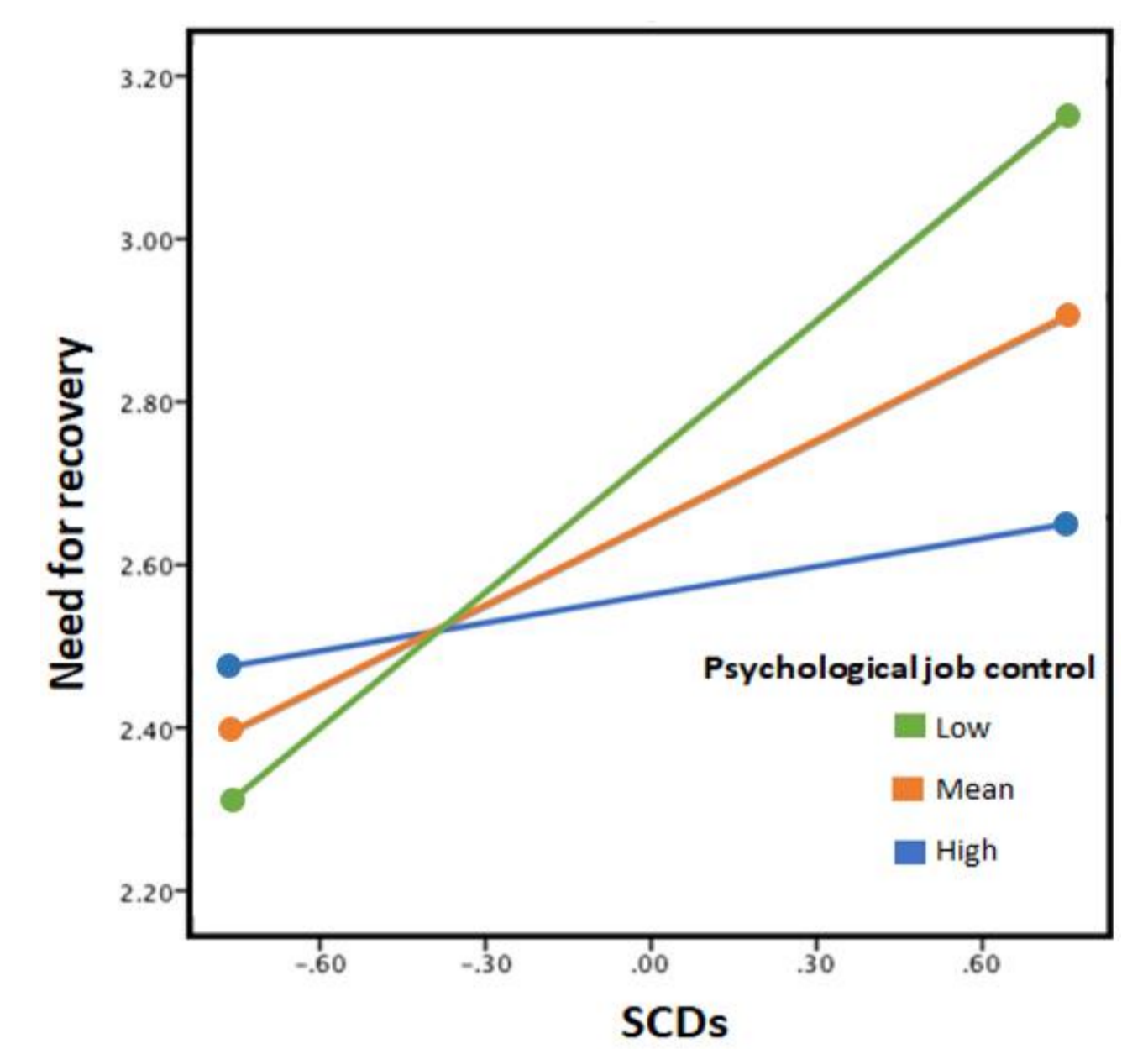


Figure 3. Simple slopes for need for recovery on SCDs at low, medium and high values of psychological job control (H5).

Discussion & Practical Implications

Higher SCDs at work result in a feeling of wanting to recover in order to refill the depleted resources (Diestel & Schmidt, 2011) as explained in the Model of Self-Control Strength (Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Furthermore, as SCDs increase and a person is not able to psychologically detach during leisure time, our results indicate that they will deplete more of their limited regulatory resources, even though they are not in fact at work. In a work environment with high SCDs, as predicted to be the case in today's work context of FWA (Schmidt & Neubach, 2007), role integration has been found to be the better boundary management strategy as it appears to be associated with lower need for recovery. Further results assume that employees will benefit from high psychological job control in line with the Self-Determination-Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Several **practical implications** can be drawn from the present findings:

- We suggest that employees should learn to better detach from work, e.g. by developing rituals that help to "switch off" (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).
- Integrators seem to be better in buffering dynamic demands from work than separators. Hence, it may be better to be flexible, e.g. by taking occasional phone calls from home, rather than draw strict and not permeable boundaries (Smit et al., 2016).
- Managers should keep psychological job control as an important situational factor in mind. They can do so by creating a work environment that allows employees to decide for themselves how, where and when they work.

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