

The role of detachment in the relationship between time pressure and need for recovery in flexible work arrangements

Introduction

Flexible work arrangements are increasing and due to this development it is important to examine its effects on employees. Perceived flexibility provides resources to deal with job demands (Van Yperen et al., 2016). If there is a discrepancy between job demands and available resources, strain occurs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). **Time pressure** leads to increases in **need for recovery** (Sonnentag et al., 2010). Based on the stressor-detachment model (Sonntag & Fritz, 2015), **psychological detachment** is assumed to play a mediating role in this relationship. In previous research, antecedents and negative effects have not yet been the focus of research as much as positive effects (e.g. temporary break from job demands) (Sonntag et al., 2010).

Hence, this study aims to enrich the empirical evidence. The **buffer hypothesis** (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) suggests that certain interactions between demands and resources may mitigate the outcome strain. Since the previous findings are ambiguous, the effects of the potential buffers **psychological job control** and **social support** in the job are examined. The **availability of flexible work arrangements** (FWA) in schedule and spatial aspects of work might influence these buffers but have not been investigated extensively so far. Therefore the aim of this study is to examine the relationship between FWA and the above mentioned factors that might buffer the effect of time pressure on need for recovery.

Instruments

Dimension	Scale	Reliability	M	SD	Items	Sample item	Source
Time pressure	ISTA	.87	2.85	.88	5	How often are you under time pressure?	Semmer et al. (1999)
Need for recovery	Need for recovery scale	.81	2.67	.86	5	I find it difficult to relax at the end of a working day.	van Veldhoven & Broersen (2003)
Psychological detachment	Recovery experiences scale	.89	3.14	.94	4	At the end of a working day I forget about the work.	Sonnentag & Fritz (2007)
Psychological job control	JDS	.87	3.22	.90	6	How much autonomy do you have in your job?	Hackman & Oldham (1980), Kossek et al. (2006)
Social support	HSE MS Indicator Tool	.84	3.35	.84	5	I am given supportive feedback on the work I do.	Health and Safety Executive (2004)

Hypotheses

- ✓ H1: Time pressure is positively related to need for recovery.
- ✓ H2: Psychological detachment partially mediates the relationship between time pressure and need for recovery.
- ✓ H3: The availability of FWA is related to psychological job control.
- ✓ H4: The availability of FWA is related to job social support.
- ✗ H5: Psychological job control moderates the relationship between time pressure and need for recovery.
- ✗ H6: Job social support moderates the relationship between time pressure and need for recovery.

Sample, Methods, & Analysis

Sample:

- N = 328 (171 clickworkers; clickworker.de; 25 cent/person)
- ♂ 54.6%
 - 42.7% 31-45 years old (range: 18-64 years)
 - employed, at least 30 hrs. per week

Method:

Survey in fall 2017 per online questionnaire in English and German

Analysis:

Correlation analysis; Mediation analysis and moderation analysis with SPSS PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013)

Research Model & Results

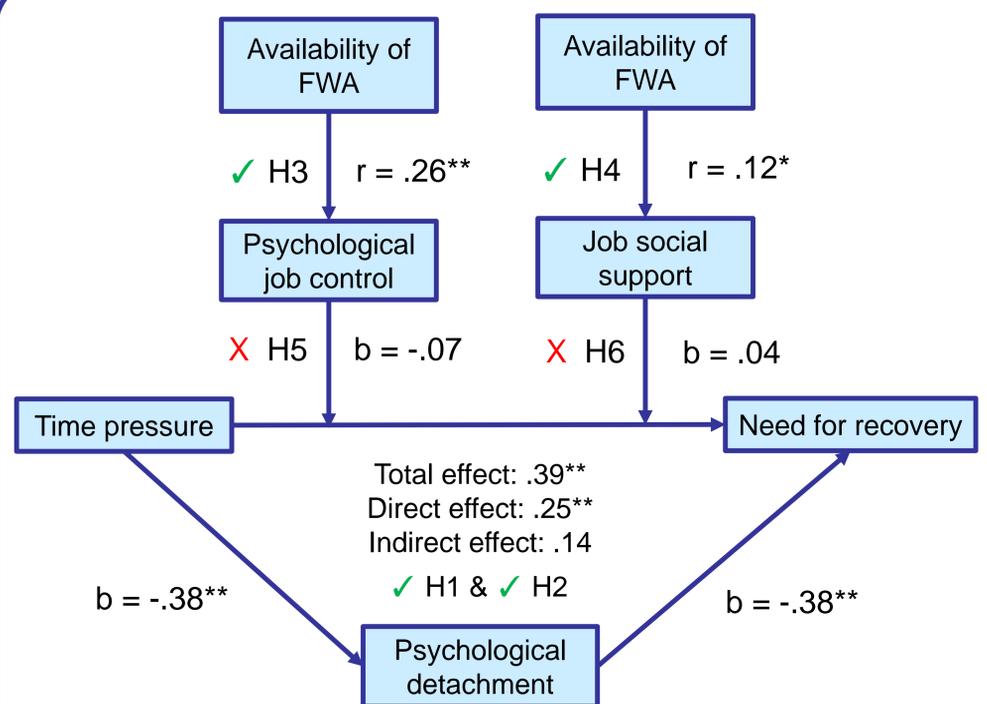


Fig. 1: Research model and results

*p≤.05 **p≤.01

Discussion & Implications

When **psychological detachment** is needed most it is more difficult to experience it. **Psychological job control** was not shown to be a buffer, which indicates that the exhaustion due to time pressure is independent from having (perceived) control. A buffering effect of **job social support** was neither found. This may be due to the different aspects of social support (e.g. feedback, listening) used in the questionnaire, of which some may be more effective than others. Future research should focus on the specific sources and types of social support that are effective buffers.

The **availability of FWA** was positively related to both psychological job control and job social support. Although they could not be shown to mitigate the demand-strain relationship, they are very likely to mitigate other combinations of demands and strains.

Practical implications:

- Optimizing workload to decrease time pressure
- Offering workshops to enhance the ability to detach from demanding work
- Implementing FWA increases job control and social support

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