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 (Sonntag 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.

Methods

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)

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, leadership) 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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