

# The use of flexible work arrangements: effects on partner's work detachment and affect



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## Introduction

In dual-earner relationships, both partners have to combine work and family. Flexible work arrangements (FWAs, e.g. flextime and flexlocation) (Butler et al., 2009) may help to balance work and non-work time. However, there is a difference between the availability and the actual use of flexible work arrangements. Many studies have not distinguished between these two types of FWA. But not everyone who has the ability to work flexibly makes use of it (Allen et al., 2013).

Previous studies (e.g. Kratzer & Sauer, 2000) found a significant negative relationship between flextime use and psychological detachment. However, other studies (e.g. Spieler et al., 2016) found that the use of flextime leads to greater boundary strength which is correlated with higher levels of psychological detachment. To our knowledge this study is the first to analyze this relationship on a daily basis.

Previous findings concerning the relationship between flexible work arrangements and well-being (Spieler et al., 2016) have been inconsistent. The following study aims to show how the use of FWAs has an effect on positive and negative affect through psychological detachment from work on a daily basis. We also assessed how these main mechanisms concern the employees' partner (crossover effect).

## Sample

Convenience Sample of N = 57 couples (original sample)

N= 72, 36 couples (this study)

Age: 22 - 60 years (♀: M=36, SD=11.36; ♂: M=39, SD=12.8)

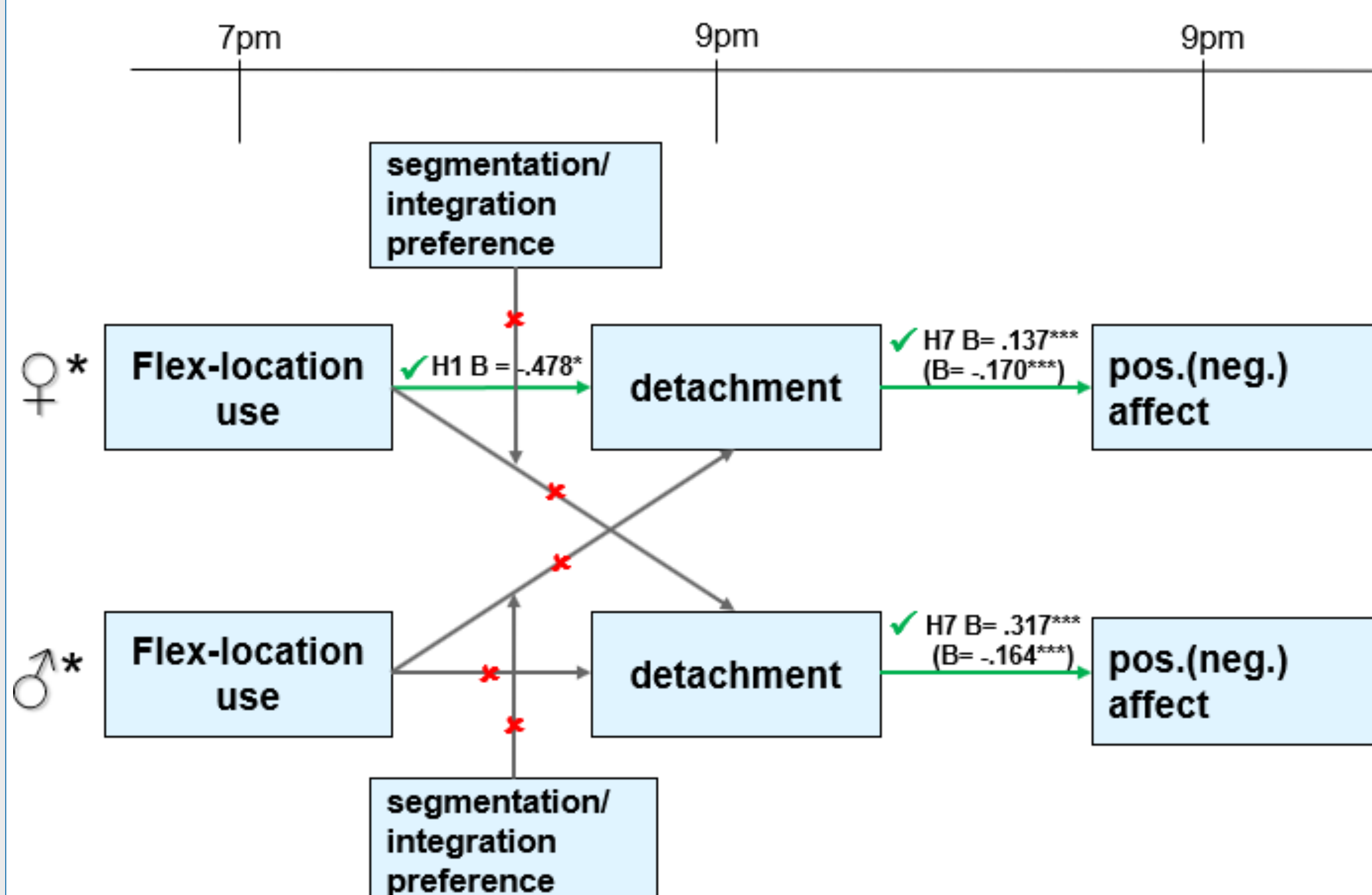
**Inclusion criteria:** Work > 20 hours/week | Min. one partner has a flexible work arrangement | Partners spent >50% of their time together

**Data collection:** 08/20/2018 – 11/26/2018

## Instruments

Dimension	Source	Items	$\alpha$	Example
Segmentation preference	Kreiner, G. E. (2006)	4	.86	"I prefer to keep work life at work."
Detachment	Sonnentag, S. & Fritz, C. (2007)	4	.95	"I don't think about work at all."
Positive Affect	Watson & Tellegen (1988)	6	.76	"Please indicate how you feel right now?" Examples: active, proud, relaxed
Negative Affect	Watson & Tellegen (1988)	6	.83	"Please indicate how you feel right now?" Examples: in a bad mood, nervous, angry

## Model



## Hypotheses & Results

- ✓ H1: Daily use of FWA leads to less psychological detachment.
- ✗ H2: Daily use of FWA leads to more psychological detachment.
- ✗ H3: The individual's segmentation preference moderates the effect of the daily use of FWAs on daily psychological detachment.
- ✗ H4: The partner's daily use of FWAs has a positive effect on the other partner's daily psychological detachment from work.
- ✗ H5: The partner's daily use of FWAs has a negative effect on the other partner's daily psychological detachment from work.
- ✗ H6: Segmentation Preference moderates the negative and positive effect of one partner's daily use of FWAs on the other partner's daily psychological detachment.
- ✓ H7: Day-specific psychological detachment from work is positively related to positive affect and negatively related to negative affect.

## Discussion & Limitations

We found that the use of flexible work arrangements, particularly the use of different work locations, leads to less psychological detachment from work but only for women. As shown in previous studies (Feuerhahn, 2014, Sonnentag & Binnewies, 2013) we also found that day specific psychological detachment from work is positively related to positive affect and negatively related to negative affect. Contrary to our expectations, there were no significant effects between the other variables. Women's detachment from work may be more influenced by flexible work arrangements than detachment from work of men, which should be further investigated. A limitation of this study is that the number of couples was smaller than originally planned, which might have led to fewer significant results.

## Implications

- Especially female employees should be aware of the fact that the use of flexible work locations can have a negative impact on their own detachment from work. When using flex-location, it should be well planned in which way it is used.
- It is important to know for all employees that detachment from work has a strong positive connection with positive affect. This should be taken into consideration and they should find ways to actively detach when their not at work.
- Employers should notice how workers respond to work outside the office to find out which workers benefit from flexible work and which do not.

## References

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