

Forget about work and relax your mind during the weekend!

Unfinished tasks before the weekend and recovery



Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie

Introduction

In the last decades the number of dual-earner couples has risen dramatically (OECD, 2011) as well as possibilities to use family-friendly accommodations such as flexible work arrangements (Costa et al., 2004). Due to blurred boundaries between work and private life, employees may experience difficulties to successfully unwind from work during non-work time and therefore lack recovery (Major & Germano, 2006). Recovery from work fails when affective rumination - repetitive thoughts with negative feelings related to work issues - is taking place. This kind of rumination was found to be linked to unfinished work tasks before the weekend (Sonnentag & Krueger, 2006). It has been shown that a person's preference for separating work and family domains facilitates switching-off from work during non-work time (Park, Fritz, & Jex, 2011). Research also indicated pleasurable leisure experiences to play a crucial role in improving recovery experiences during non-work time (Sonnentag et al., 2014). Additionally, to one's own ability to recover from work, spousal recovery support, receiving from the partner, has been identified as an interpersonal resource related to an increase in recovery experiences (Park & Fritz, 2015). The aim of this diary study is to get deeper insights into the influence of cross-over effects between dual-earner couples on recovery during the weekend to shed light on complex dyadic processes, also with regards to potential gender differences.

Sample

Convenience Sample of **N** = 57 couples (original sample)
N = 36 couples (this study)
Age: 22 - 60 years (♀ : *M* = 36, *SD* = 11.36 | ♂ : *M* = 39, *SD* = 12.8)
Inclusion criteria: Work > 20h/week | Min. one partner has a flexible work arrangement | > 50% shared time
Data collection: 20.08.18 - 26.11.18

Instruments

Dimension	Items	α	Sample Item	Source
Unfinished Tasks	6	.92	I have not finished important tasks that I had planned to do this week.	Syrek et al. (2016)
Recovery	4	.93	After this Weekend I feel wellrested	Sonnentag & Fritz (2007)
Rumination	5	.88	This weekend I became fatigued by thinking about work-related issues	Cropley et al. (2012)
Recovery Support	4	.78	This weekend I provide support or assistance for my spouse to relax or do relaxing things	Sonnentag & Fritz (2007)
Integrator/Segmentator	4	.87	I don't like work issues creeping into my home life	Kreiner (2006)
Pleasurable Leisure Experience	3	.93	During the weekend, I did things that cheer me up	Sonnentag et al. (2013)

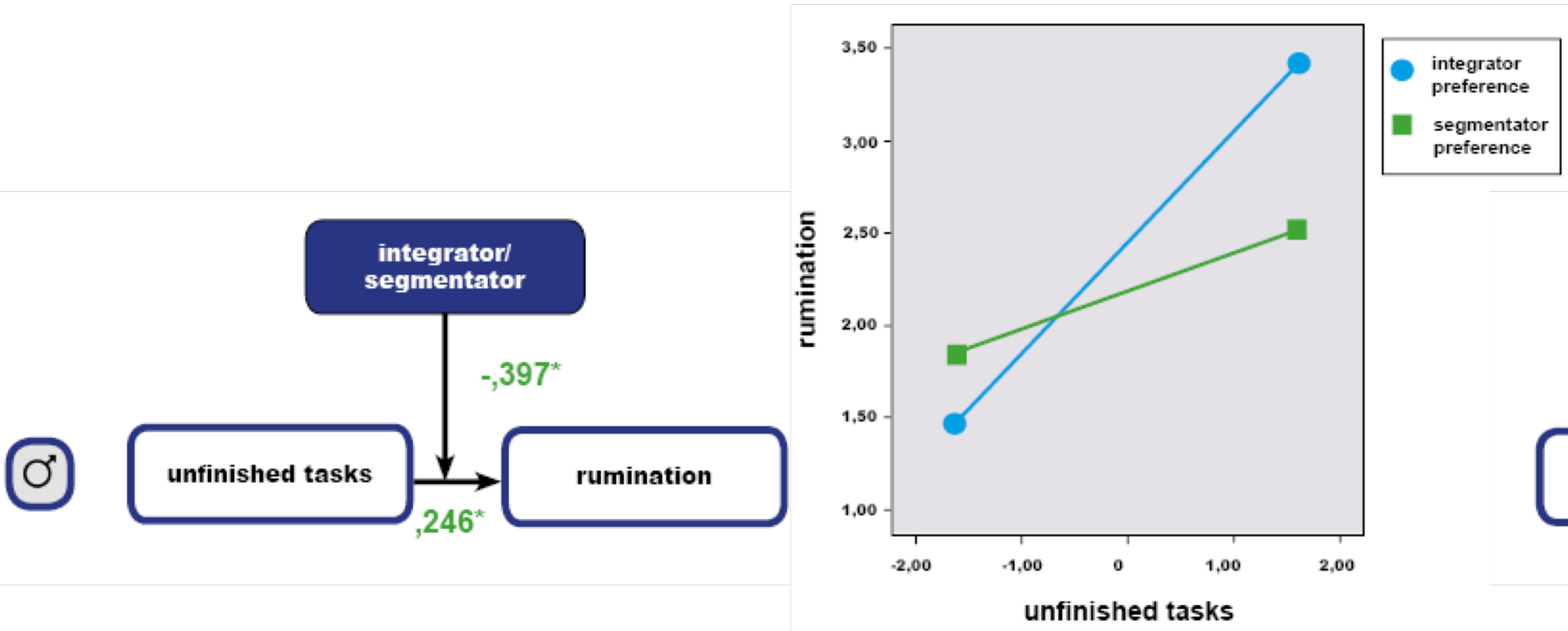
Hypotheses and Main Results

- ✓ **H1a** Unfinished tasks lead to more rumination during the weekend which is moderated by segmentator/integrator preference^{*1}
- ✗ **H1b** Unfinished tasks lead to more rumination during the weekend which is moderated by the extent of work centrality such that high work centrality increases this effect.
- ✗ **H2** Rumination of P1 leads to less recovery support of P1 and vice versa
- ✓ **H3** Rumination leads to less recovery, which is moderated by pleasurable leisure experiences during the weekend.^{*2}

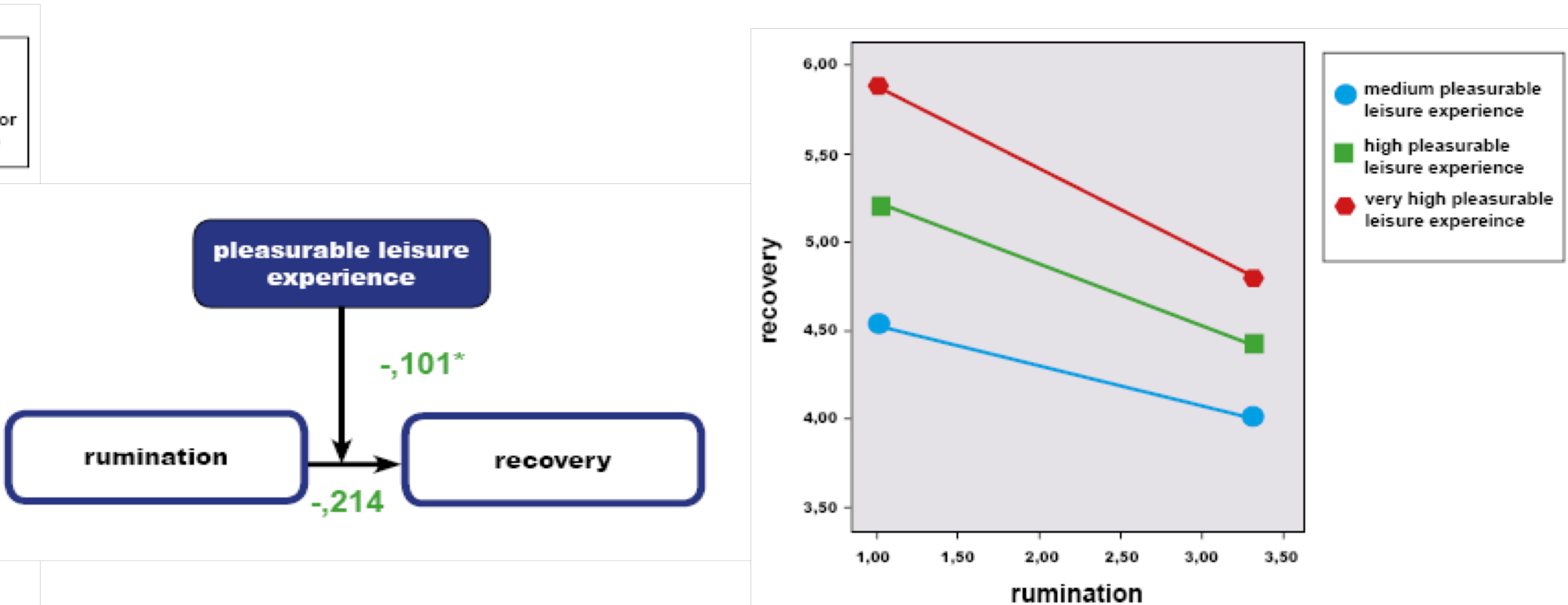
^{*1} only significant for P2
^{*2} only significant for moderation in individual sample

Moderation Results

Moderation effect of unfinished tasks on rumination by integrator/segmentator preference



Moderation effect of rumination on recovery by pleasurable leisure experience



Discussion

Unfinished tasks at the end of the week lead to more rumination during the weekend. As expected, more rumination during the weekend leads to less recovery on Monday. Contrary to our expectations, the more rumination occurs, the higher the recovery support for the partner seems to be. This may be explained by the fact that we only focused on affective rumination and how this elicits negative feelings, instead of problem-solving rumination, where rumination could enhance recovery states after finding a solution (Cropley & Zijlstra, 2001). Therefore the nature of the unfinished tasks could play an important role. If the unfinished tasks are associated with success at the workplace, positive feelings could arise that in turn lead to more recovery support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012). Gender differences can be observed with regards to integrator/segmentator preferences and the cross-over effect from recovery support for one partner to actual recovery of that partner. A possible explanation is, women benefit more from receiving spousal support thus it has stronger influence on their well-being (Donato, Leon-Perez, Wallston & Kripalani, 2018). Furthermore, regarding the reduction of depressive symptoms, low perceived spousal support from men to women was associated with higher scores in depression scale among women only (Namkee & Jung-Hwa, 2011).

Implications

- Research:
- Impact of children (living at home) on rumination and recovery
 - Other personal characteristics
 - Nature of unfinished tasks (resources or demands)
 - Adaptive strategies of dual-earner couples
- Organisations:
- Employers: try not to assign new tasks on Friday afternoon (if compatible with the deadline)
 - Employees: try to complete a task before starting a new one, in order to avoid a large number of pending assignments
- Partnership:
- Keep in mind the importance of social support

References
Cropley, M., Michalianou, G., Pravettoni, G., & Millward, L. J. (2012). The relation of post-work ruminative thinking with eating behaviour. *Stress and Health*, 28(1), 23-30. doi: 10.1002/smi.1397; Cropley, M., & Millward, L. J. (2009). How do individuals 'switch-off' from work during leisure? A qualitative description of the unwinding process in high and low ruminators. *Leisure Studies*, 28(3), 333-347. doi: 10.1080/02614360902951682; Fritz, C., Sonnentag, S., Spector, P. E., & McInroe, J. A. (2010). The weekend matters: Relationships between stress recovery and affective experiences. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 31(8), 1137-1162. doi: 10.1002/job.672; Geurts, S.A.E., & Sonnentag, S. (2006). Recovery as an explanatory mechanism in the relation between acute stress reactions and chronic health impairment. *Scandinavian Journal of Work, Environment & Health*, 32(6), 482-492. doi: 10.5271/sjweh.1053

