

# Off time during family time

## How being available for work during leisure time affects daily work home conflict and detachment:

### A diary study among dual-earner couples.



Arbeits- und Organisationspsychologie

#### Introduction

Recently representatives of the SPD party in Germany presented a program where the usage of home office is enshrined in the act, which is already reality for Belgium and the Netherlands (FAZ, 04. 01. 2019). Work life initiatives as Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) have become a broader organizational issue to help dual earner couples to manage work and home demands, avoid work family conflict, turnover intentions and to enhance productivity and employee’s wellbeing (Kossek et al., 2010; Schooreel & Verbruggen, 2016). FWAs are often accompanied with work related ICT use to help employees work outside the office and differ from their usual schedule. Boundaries become more permeable and the tendency of being constantly available increases. This availability enhances more work–life integration (versus segmentation), that can become exhausting and depleting. Consequently, depletion caused by work related Interruptions (Smit et al., 2016) during leisure time leads to a lack of psychological detachment from work which by implication has an impact on a person’s leisure experience. Further detachment influences affective states and recovery (Sonnetag & Bayer, 2005; Sonnetag, Binnewies & Mojza, 2008). Furthermore besides this intrapersonal spillover process, employees living in relationships were found to be influencing each other, producing an interpersonal dimension, the so called crossover effect. As partners interact with each other, crossover effects were found to be significant for an employees work behaviour in general (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012). In the long run, as boundaryless working conditions are expected to grow, it is important to know about the consequences, benefits but also burden, that are initiated by these complexity.

#### Hypotheses

- ✓ H1: **Interruptions** from work during non-work time will lead to a **higher work-family conflict**.
- ✗ H2: The positive relationship between **WFC** and **Interruptions** will be moderated by **segmentation preference**.
- ✗ H3: The presence of **segmentation supplies** predicts lower **WFC** (regardless of preference).
- ✗ H4: **Boundary control** moderates the relationship between **interruptions** and **WFC**.
- ✓ H5: **Interruptions** during non-work time will lead to a **lower detachment** from work.
- ✗ H6: **Detachment** from work leads to more **positive affect**.
- ✓ H7: Under the precondition of actively shared time, **high detachment** from work of one individual will **cross over** to their partner by increasing their **positive affect**.

#### Sample & Measures

Convenience Sample of N = 57 dual-earner couples (original sample)  
N = 45 dual-earner couples (this study) | Age: 22 - 60 years  
( ♀ : M=36, SD=11.36; ♂ : M=39, SD=12.8)

##### Participation Criteria

- 1) Flextime/Flexplace Arrangement
- 2) Min. 30h/Week
- 3) No Shiftwork
- 4) No Self-employment

##### Multiple Regression & Moderation

Online questionnaire three times a day (5 p.m. 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.)

Dimension	Items	Sample Item	$\alpha$	Source
Interruption	4	How often were you called about work matters today?	.80	Schieman & Young (2013)
Work-Family Conflict	3	Today work kept me from private activities more than I liked.	.81	Carlson et al. (2000), Ezzedeen & Swiercz (2007)
Detachment	4	During non-work time, I forget about work.	.95	Sonnetag & Fritz (2007)
Positive Affect	6	How do you feel right now? "active"	.86	The PANAS Watson et al. (1988)
Segmentation Preference	4	I don't like to have to think about work while I'm at home.	.92	Kreiner (2006)
Segmentation Supplies	4	Where I work, people can keep work matters at work.	.82	Kreiner (2006)
Boundary Control	3	I control whether I am able to keep my work and personal life separate.	.91	Kossek et al. (2012)

#### Overview

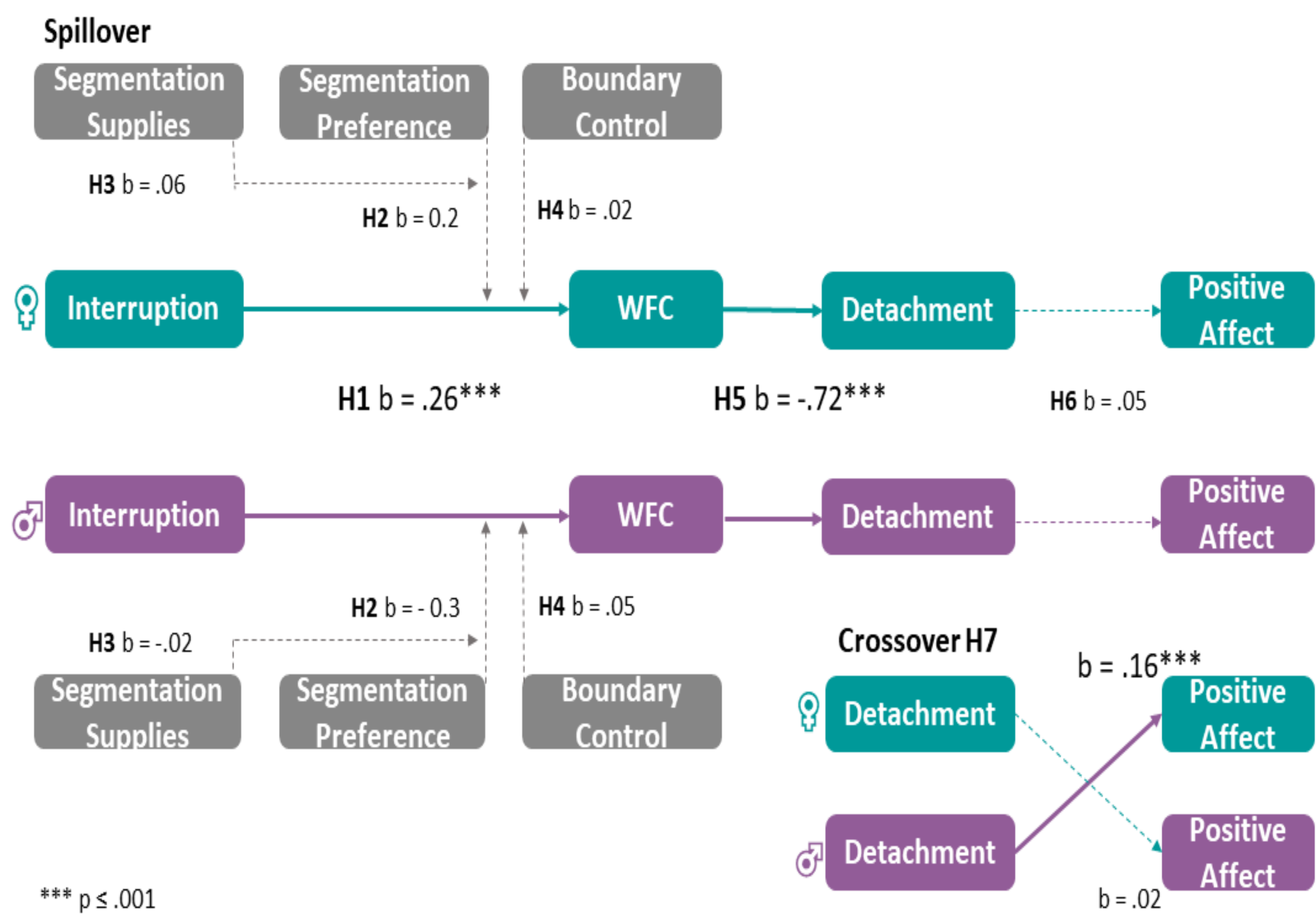


Figure 1. Theoretical model showing the spillover incl. moderating effects of segm. supplies/preference and boundary control between Interruptions and WFC as well as the crossover from detachment to positive affect.

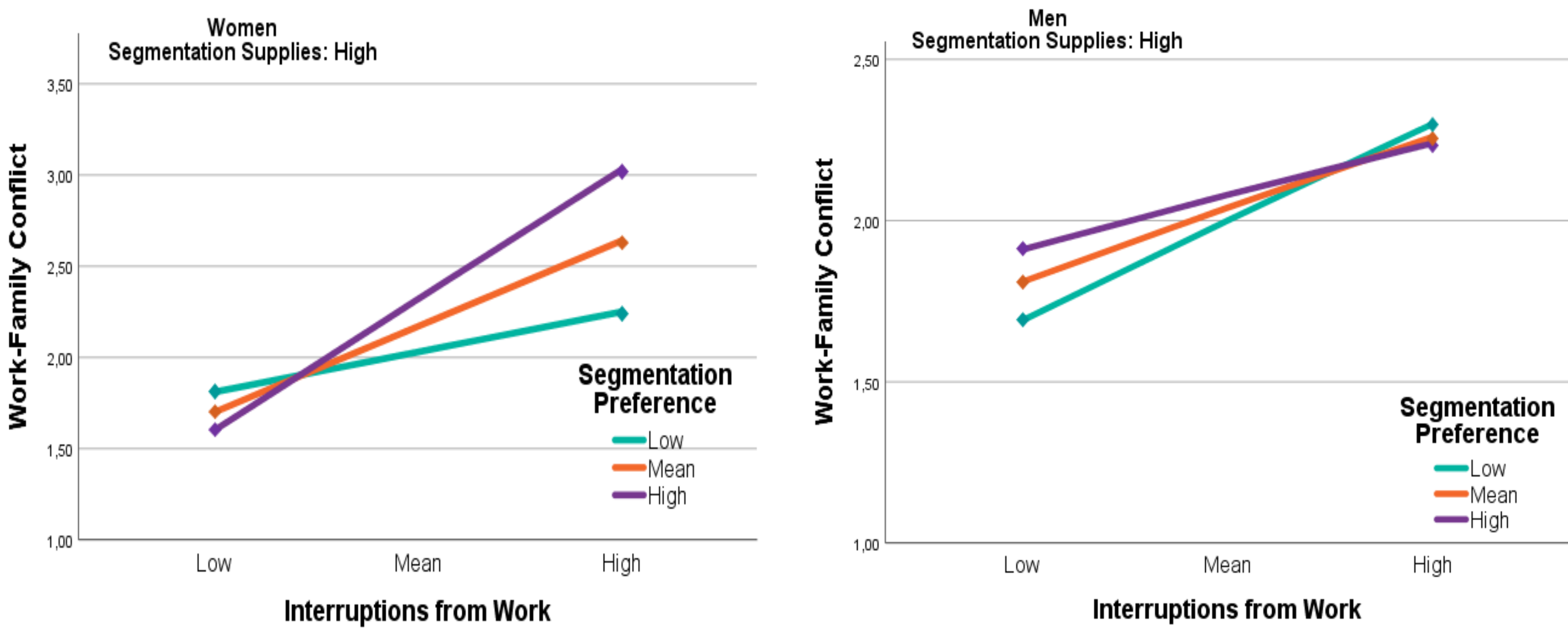


Figure 2. Simple Slopes for work-family conflict on interruptions from work during leisure time, at low, medium, and high values of segmentation preference when segmentation supplies are high.

#### Discussion

First of all the study confirmed the spillover effect of interruptions/work related ICT use to be triggering work family conflict and a lack of detachment. For all strains of the spillover process no hypothesized moderators were found to be significant. Therefore it was of no meaning to have either a integration nor segmentation preference, contrary to our literature findings (Smit et al., 2016). For the cross over part, which constitutes the center of our analysis, an interesting gender effect was found. Women happen to be more dependent of their partners level of detachment, meaning the higher a man is detached from work the more positive their female partners affective state. Otherwise, no significant effect could be found: a woman’s level of detachment was of no influence for a mans positive affect. Empathy can function as a possible moderator, as women are often discussed to be more empathic (Toussaint & Webb, 2005).

#### Implications

- ❖ Employees as well as employers need to keep in mind, that frequent work related ICT use at home may be toxic for a positive work – family – balance. This in turn can lead to numerous problems, like less work engagement and overall depletion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2012; Schooreel & Verbruggen, 2016).
- ❖ Women tended to be more receptive to their partners state of detachment as did men
- ❖ FWAs can not be seen as a simple solution when employees come up with family needs.

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