



“Hey Are You Busy Right Now?” Stressor Appraisals of Interruptions to Workflow

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INTRODUCTION

- ▶ Any activity that impedes a state of productivity and disrupts the continuity of a work activity can be defined as an interruption (Brixley et al., 2007; Jett & George, 2003).
- ▶ Work Interruptions are generally studied as having negative effects
- ▶ Interruptions are related to irritation, forgetting of intentions, decreases in satisfaction with one’s own performance on their initial task, and decreased well-being (Baethge & Rigotti, 2013; Pachler et al., 2018, Keller et al. 2019).
- ▶ COR theory states that people are inclined to utilize, work to retain, and value the resources they accrue (Hobfoll, 1989)
- ▶ Interruptions may induce a stress response if the employee perceives the interruption event as a “threat” to their resources if they are not able to meet both the demands of the interruption and their primary work demands (Hobfoll, 1989).
- ▶ Some interruptions (e.g., positive social interactions) could replenish resources and leave an employee feeling rejuvenated, with increased energy.

PURPOSE

Where are the Gaps in Current Research?

- ▶ Current research primarily focuses on the negative effects of being interrupted at work (productivity loss, increased stress) and has yet to explore the possibility of resource replenishing interruptions.
- ▶ Little research has explored situational characteristics surrounding interruption events and their effects on employee reactions. We will use vignettes to explore the following hypotheses:

HYPOTHESES

- H1. Resource threat appraisal (a) and perceived energy (b) will vary by interruption duration (short vs long).*
- H2. Resource threat appraisals (a) and perceived energy (b) will vary by interruption domain (work vs social).*
- H3. Resource threat appraisals (a) and perceived energy (b) will vary by interruption urgency (high vs low).*
- H4. Resource threat appraisal (A) and perceived energy (b) will vary due to an interaction between the domain, duration, and urgency of an interruption.*

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

- ▶ Participants will be recruited via Amazon’s Mechanical Turk
- ▶ Workers (N=300) who are over the age of 18 and indicate that they work in a typical office environment where interruptions are realistic will be invited to participate in the study.
- ▶ Participants will be compensated \$1.00 for their time.

VIGNETTES

- ▶ Designed to reflect eight unique combinations of the IVs (duration, domain, urgency).
- ▶ Reviewed by graduate students (N = 16) and faculty (N = 3) to identify the best and most realistic interruptions.
- ▶ Participants will read each interruption vignette, appraise it as a threat to resources, and report their perceived changes in energy.

MEASURES

- ▶ Stressor Appraisal Scale (Schneider, 2008)
- ▶ Perceived Energy (Britt et al., 2013)
- ▶ Interruption Normality (Semmer et al., 1999, adapted by Ma et al., 2019).
- ▶ BFI-10 Rammstedt & John, 2007).
- ▶ PANAS-X Watson & Clark 1999).
- ▶ Time-Management Behavior Scale (Peeters & Rutte, 2005).
- ▶ Competitive Climate (Brown et al., 1998)
- ▶ Cooperative Team Norms (Chatman & Flynn, 2001)

CONCLUSIONS

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

- ▶ Tap into an unexplored dimension in the relationship between workflow interruptions and employee stress and well-being.
- ▶ Contribute to the theoretical basis for how people respond to various types of workflow interruptions and provide insight on what drives those different reactions.
- ▶ Identifying training gaps for improving communication, performance and effectiveness in employees, in addition to better understanding how different types of interruptions can affect employee well-being.
- ▶ Applying these findings could help organizations build a culture that facilitates “good” interruptions that replenish resources, while creating norms that limit stressful interruptions or provide resources that make interruptions less stressful.

LIMITATIONS

- ▶ Not exploring how productivity may be impacted
- ▶ Only exploring in-office, face-to-face interruption events
- ▶ Self-report methodology

KEY REFERENCES

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Interruption Vignettes

“Imagine you are very focused while completing an important task for your job. You have been working on this for a few hours and find yourself absorbed in what you are doing. Unexpectedly, one of your co-workers enters your office or workspace and asks you to do a favor for them. They need to address a pressing issue with a client but are supposed to be in a meeting that's just about to start. They ask if you can sit in on the meeting for them and let them know what they missed. You agree and attend the meeting, which lasts one hour before you are able to return to your original task.”

PROPOSED MODEL

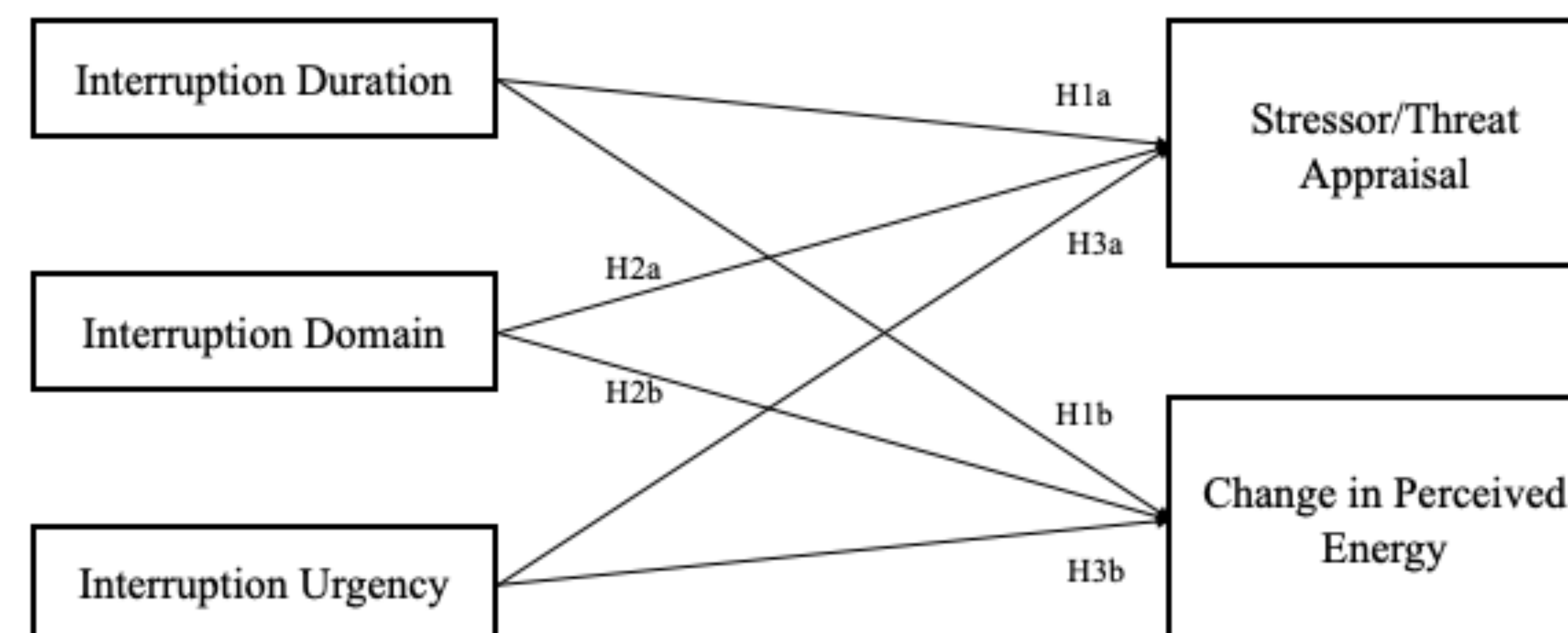


Figure 1. Proposed relationship between workflow interruptions and stressor appraisal and perceived energy after the event, as a result of a main effect by one of the situational characteristics of interruptions.