Received: 27 September 2023 | Revised: 29 May 2024 | Accepted: 4 June 2024

DOI: 10.1002/job.2819

RESEARCH ARTICLE

WILEY Journal of Organizational Behavior

Reasons for interruptions at work: Illuminating the perspective of the interrupter

Leon Toebben[1] | Anne Casper[2] | Wilken Wehrt[3] | Sabine Sonnentag[1]

[1]Department of Psychology, University of Mannheim, Mannheim, Germany

[2]Department of Education and Psychology, Free University of Berlin, Berlin, Germany

[3]Department of Work and Social Psychology, Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands

Correspondence
Leon Toebben, Department of Psychology, School of Social Sciences, University of Mannheim, A5, 6, D-68159 Mannheim, Germany.
Email: toebben@uni-mannheim.de

Funding information
Part of this research was supported by a grant from the German Research Foundation within the Priority Program "Intentional Forgetting in Organisations" (SPP 1921; SO 295/10-2) to Sabine Sonnentag and by an early career research grant from the University of Mannheim to Anne Casper. These grants are gratefully acknowledged.

Summary

This research sheds light on two crucial yet overlooked aspects of work interruptions: the perspective of employees who initiate interruptions and the reasons behind those interruptions. Building on earlier research on interruptions and theories on employee motivation, we identified six key reasons for interruptions that we integrated into a typology. This typology combined three interruption topics (performance, belongingness, and hedonic well-being) and two interruption foci (benefitting the interrupter and benefitting the interruptee; i.e., self-focused and other-focused). We validated this typology using qualitative reports and a scale-development approach, thereby creating the interruption-for-a-reason scale (IFRS). We found that interruptions were typically initiated for good reasons and positively correlated with social exchange constructs. That is, initiating interruptions was linked to requesting social support and to performing prosocial behaviors to coworkers. Altogether, this research contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of interruptions by offering a new perspective on interruptions that addresses the complexities of this phenomenon. Illuminating the interrupters' perspective and the various reasons for interruptions is key to a more balanced examination of the positive and negative aspects of interruptions.

KEYWORDS
scale development, social exchange, validation, work interruption

1 | INTRODUCTION

Although there are often good reasons for interrupting someone, work interruptions—unexpected suspensions of the interrupted employee's progress on ongoing work tasks (Puranik et al., 2020)—have a bad reputation. Past research concluded that interruptions impair performance and well-being (for reviews, see Leroy et al., 2020; Puranik et al., 2020), and accordingly recommended to reduce interruptions to a minimum (e.g., Baethge & Rigotti, 2013; Pachler et al., 2018). Recently, scholars challenged this negative stance and suggested to also address positive aspects of interruptions (Bush et al., 2021; Puranik et al., 2021). Answering this call, we illuminate two crucial yet neglected aspects of interruptions that are key to a more nuanced understanding of the positive and negative aspects of interruptions: the interrupting employees' perspective and the various reasons for initiating interruptions.

Two limitations in the literature might have led to an overemphasis on interruptions' negative aspects. First, past research has concentrated on employees who are interrupted (i.e., interruptees) while

A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychology Annual Conference 2022 in Seattle.

neglecting employees who interrupt (i.e., interrupters; Puranik et al., 2020). Exceptions include a few studies on how interrupters decide to interrupt others (Rivera, 2014) and on the interrupters' consideration for the interruptees (Dabbish & Kraut, 2004; Romero et al., 2007). Focusing on interruptees might overestimate interruptions' negative aspects because interruptions might be particularly disturbing for persons who are interrupted. That is, interruptions might occur at moments that are inconvenient for interruptees because of interruptees' limited control over the timing and content of interruptions (McFarlane, 2002; Seipp, 2019). As a result, interruptions usually disrupt the interruptees' progress on ongoing tasks (Beck et al., 2017).

Second, most research emphasized disruptive effects of interruptions on interruptees' goal progress, thereby treating interruptions as a unidimensional construct (Puranik et al., 2020). However, besides their disruptive nature, interruptions involve other less aversive facets given that they are initiated for various reasons and tap into several of the goals that employees pursue. Scholars have recently started exploring these other aspects and subsequently reported positive aspects of interruptions (Bush et al., 2021; Puranik et al., 2021; Sonnentag et al., 2018). For instance, interruptions may encompass pleasant social interactions that can foster social acceptance (Puranik et al., 2021) or they may serve to discuss work-related issues which may improve collaboration (Bush et al., 2021).

Given these limitations in the literature, the primary purpose of this research is to illuminate the interrupters' perspective and their multiple reasons for interrupting. Thus, our research extends the literature on interruptions in important ways. First, we introduce the perspective of the interrupters to research on work interruptions, shedding light on why they initiate interruptions and what functions interruptions serve for them. This step is critical for a more complete understanding of interruptions because the interrupters are a central component of interruptions. After all, interruptions typically involve an employee who initiates them (Jett & George, 2003; Puranik et al., 2021; Wajcman & Rose, 2011). Neglecting the interrupters' perspective would be unfortunate because the interrupters' well-being and performance are crucial for organizational functioning. That is, interrupters may initiate interruptions because they are beneficial for them. Without considering the interrupters' perspective, scholars overlook these potentially beneficial aspects of interruptions for interrupters.

Second, we develop and validate a comprehensive typology of the interrupters' reasons for initiating interruptions, thereby uncovering the multidimensionality of interruptions. Analyzing qualitative reports of interruption reasons and using a scale-development approach, we provide evidence for the validity of our typology (for similar approaches, Clark et al., 2020; Colbert et al., 2016). Because our typology captures a broad range of interruption reasons, it extends prior research that did not address the different facets of interruptions.

Third, we illustrate the critical role that interruptions play in workplace social exchanges by examining the unique relationships between different interruption types and constructs related to social exchange. For instance, some interruption types may be positively related to interrupters requesting social support, while others may be positively related to interrupters offering social support. Ultimately, we address that interrupters initiate interruptions for good reasons and move beyond exclusively focusing on the aversive, goal-disrupting aspects interruptions have for interruptees. As a result, our research paves the way for a better understanding of how employees can maximize the benefits of interruptions while reducing negative ramifications.

2 | THE INTERRUPTION-FOR-A-REASON TYPOLOGY

Work interruptions refer to unexpected encounters initiated by coworkers that disrupt the interruptees' progress on ongoing work tasks (Jett & George, 2003; Puranik et al., 2020). This interruption subcategory has also been described as "intrusion" (Jett & George, 2003). In this paper, we focus on interruptions that involve face-to-face communication, such as a spontaneous visit from a coworker in one's office. Face-to-face interruptions are prevalent across occupations (Claessens et al., 2010; Leroy & Glomb, 2018; Wajcman & Rose, 2011). For instance, Leroy and Glomb (2018) found that interruptions occurred most frequently through face-to-face interactions, accounting for 51% of all interruptions. Similarly, Wajcman and Rose (2011) found that employees from a telecommunications company experienced an average of 12 face-to-face interruptions per day. While face-to-face interruptions were limited at work during the coronavirus pandemic, they may be prevalent again given return-to-office policies by organizations like Apple (Gurman, 2022) and Tesla (Wingard, 2022).

The interruption-for-a-reason typology outlines six key reasons for why employees initiate interruptions. In this typology, we combine three interruption topics (performance, belongingness, and hedonic well-being) and two interruption foci (benefitting the interrupter and benefitting the interruptee). We draw from theories regarding employee motives to derive these interruption topics and foci (Bindl et al., 2022; De Dreu & Nauta, 2009).

Specifically, the three interruption topics are rooted in two core classes of human motives: instrumental motives (the desire to attain delayed incentives or long-term goals) and hedonic motives (the desire to experience pleasure and avoid pain; e.g., Ryan & Deci, 2001; Tamir, 2009). Building on these core human motive classes, we propose that interruptions relate to the instrumental motives of improving work performance (*performance interruptions*) and fostering social bonds (*belongingness interruptions*), and the hedonic motive to improve affective states (*hedonic interruptions*). Our distinction between interruptions for performance reasons, belongingness reasons, and hedonic reasons aligns with recent research on employee motives (Bindl et al., 2022).

Organizational scholars have applied this distinction between instrumental and hedonic motives in their research (Bindl et al., 2022; von Gilsa & Zapf, 2013). Concerning instrumental motives,

researchers typically differentiated between task-related outcomes (e.g., job performance) and social outcomes (e.g., fostering good relationships) that employees strive to attain (de Wit et al., 2012; Umphress et al., 2003). Our distinction between interruptions for performance and belongingness reasons aligns with this research. Furthermore, scholars have also frequently emphasized the importance of hedonic motives in driving employee actions (Judge & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2011). These motives are also apparent in workplace interactions where employees often seek to improve affective well-being by providing emotional support to coworkers (Colbert et al., 2016).

Next to distinguishing between the three interruptions topics, we also differentiate between two interruption foci. While prior research on interruptions commonly assumed that interrupters have self-centered motives for interrupting (e.g., Puranik et al., 2020; Romero et al., 2007), theories on work behavior emphasize that employees' behaviors are motivated both by self-interest and a concern for others' welfare (e.g., De Dreu & Nauta, 2009). Accordingly, we distinguish between interruptions that focus on benefiting the interrupters themselves (*self-focused interruptions*) and interruptions that focus on benefiting the interruptees (*other-focused interruptions*). Combining the three motives and two interruption foci results in six distinct interruption types. Below, we explain each of the six interruption types in more detail.

2.1 | Performance interruptions

Employees typically seek to perform well at work (e.g., Deci et al., 2017). Social interactions can facilitate work goal achievement, whether through the exchange of task-relevant information or the provision of instrumental support (e.g., Colbert et al., 2016). Hence, employees may initiate interruptions to improve their own or their coworkers' work performance through the inherent social interactions (*performance interruptions*). In line with this reasoning, prior research described that interruptions can address task-related topics and thereby be conducive to work performance (Bush et al., 2021; Jett & George, 2003).

We distinguish between two types of performance interruptions. First, interrupters initiate *self-focused performance interruptions* to improve their own work performance, for instance, when asking for help on a task. There is indirect support that these interruptions are common in the workplace because employees frequently seek informal social interactions at work to request support on a work task, feedback, or valuable information (for a review, Lim et al., 2020). Second, we propose that employees initiate *other-focused performance interruptions* to improve the interruptees' work performance, such as by offering support on a work task, feedback, or valuable information. Similarly, Jett and George (2003) argued that interruptees can benefit from interruptions by receiving task-related information from interrupters. In addition, research on prosocial behavior shows that employees frequently and proactively support their coworkers with their work tasks (Lee et al., 2019), and initiating interruptions might be a way to proactively provide such help.

2.2 | Belongingness interruptions

Employees have a fundamental need for belongingness, that is, they desire to be in positive social relationships with their coworkers (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Because work interruptions typically involve social interactions between coworkers (Jett & George, 2003), interruptions can be powerful tools for employees to satisfy their own and their coworkers' belongingness needs. We use the term *belongingness interruptions* to refer to such interruptions that serve to improve belongingness, and we differentiate between two types of belongingness interruptions.

First, interrupters initiate *self-focused belongingness interruptions* to satisfy their own belongingness need. Because social interactions with coworkers are the key to foster positive bonds at work (Bhave & Lefter, 2018), interrupters can use interruptions to socialize with their coworkers and, thereby, satisfy their own belongingness needs. Second, interrupters might interrupt their coworkers to help them feel accepted and included through social interactions (*other-focused belongingness interruptions*). Research from the interruptees' perspective supports the idea that interrupting others can be an effective way to improve interruptees' belongingness. That is, Puranik et al. (2021) found that getting interrupted can indeed contribute to satisfying interruptees' belongingness need. In addition, employees commonly reported that they felt more connected with their work group when coworkers involved them in positive social interactions, such as by offering social support (Van den Broeck et al., 2016).

2.3 | Hedonic interruptions

Employees want to feel good at work, so that they seek to reduce negative affect and increase positive affect (von Gilsa & Zapf, 2013). Given that social interactions can lead to strong and instant changes in employees' affective states (Kitayama et al., 2000; Quinn & Dutton, 2005), employees might use the social component of interruptions to improve their own or their coworkers' affective states (*hedonic interruptions*). For instance, after having been criticized by a supervisor, employees might immediately seek emotional support from coworkers to vent negative emotions. As another example for a hedonic interruption, interrupters may turn to their coworkers and make a joke that lightens their mood.

We propose two types of hedonic interruptions. First, *self-focused hedonic interruptions* serve to directly improve the interrupters' own affective well-being. After all, employees seek social interactions to make them feel better (Owens et al., 2016) and recover from stress while being at work (Zacher et al., 2014). Second, *other-focused hedonic interruptions* are initiated to improve the

interruptees' affective well-being. For example, interrupters may offer emotional support to interruptees who have undergone stressful events by displaying compassion towards them (Colbert et al., 2016).

3 | THE PRESENT RESEARCH

In this research, we introduce the interrupters' perspective to the literature by examining their reasons for interruptions and the role interruptions play in social exchanges. In Study 1, we analyzed employees' qualitative reports of why they interrupt others at work. This way, we examined whether our interruption-for-a-reason typology covers the variety of interruption reasons occurring in everyday work life. In Study 2, we developed the interruption-for-a-reason scale (IFRS) to measure the six interruption reasons outlined in the typology and subsequently validated its factor structure. In Study 3, we analyzed the unique relationships between each of the six reasons for interruptions with constructs related to social exchange.

4 | STUDY 1: EXAMINING INTERRUPTION REASONS IN EVERYDAY WORK LIFE

We examined if the interruption-for-a-reason typology captures the entire spectrum of interruption reasons by collecting and categorizing qualitative reports of why employees initiate interruptions (for a related approach, Colbert et al., 2016). Specifically, we systematically collected the lived experiences of employees and, in doing so, examined if our theoretically derived typology of interruption reasons can live up to employees' actual experiences at work (Wilhelmy & Köhler, 2022).[1]

4.1 | Method

We recruited employees in German-speaking countries for participation in an online survey via social media pages, such as www.facebook.com and www.xing.de. Persons who worked exclusively remotely were not eligible for study participation because they might not have been able to initiate face-to-face interruptions. As an incentive, participants could take part in a lottery to win one of four vouchers worth 20 Euros. This way, we collected qualitative reports from 60 employees (47 female) from various occupations. Seven participants (11.7%) were aged between 18 and 25, 17 participants (28.3%) were aged between 26 and 35, 14 participants (23.3%) were aged between 36 and 45, and 21 participants (35.0%) were 46 years old or older. Thirty-four participants (56.7%) held a university degree. Data collection took place from November 2022 to January 2023. During this time, contact restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic at German workplaces were removed.

To assess the reasons for interruptions, we asked the participants to write down the last three situations in which they interrupted a coworker. Then, we instructed participants to list the reasons for why they interrupted their coworkers in each situation. The participants could list up to 25 reasons per situation. As a result, the participants provided a total of 391 descriptions of reasons for interruptions. Two independent raters (one of them being the first author of this article) coded these descriptions by using the categories of our interruption-for-a-reason typology, combinations of the various categories in our typology, and a category of reasons not covered in our typology.

4.2 | Results and brief discussion

The interrater agreement was 83.6% (Cohen's $\kappa = .76$). Table 1 summarizes the categorizations and provides examples of each category based on the participants' descriptions. Most descriptions (85.9%) were categorized as one of the interruption types in our typology or a combination of them. Specifically, most descriptions (47.1%) involved self-focused performance interruptions, while other interruption types were mentioned less frequently. Of note, several interruption types often occurred in combination (22.5%). Typical combinations of interruption types were self-focused performance interruptions and other-focused performance interruptions (56.6% of all combined interruption types) and self-focused belongingness interruptions and other-focused belongingness interruptions (13.3% of all combined interruption types). Furthermore, the raters categorized 6.9% of all reasons as reasons not covered in the typology. These other reasons related to discussing work-unrelated tasks and duties (e.g., sharing a car to commute to work), solving interpersonal conflicts with coworkers, and exchanging pleasantries with coworkers (e.g., wishing them a nice weekend). However, because the reasons not covered in the typology were very diverse, no clear and theoretically compelling category emerged that would warrant expanding the typology. Finally, the raters could not categorize 7.2% of the descriptions into any category because the participants did not provide sufficient information. Overall, because most reasons could be sorted into the interruption-for-a-reason typology, we conclude that the typology covers the entire spectrum of interruption reasons sufficiently well.

5 | STUDY 2: MEASURING INTERRUPTION REASONS

In Study 2, we developed the IFRS, following best practices for scale development (Hinkin, 1998). In three phases, we generated and reviewed items to assess the six interruption types, shortened the scale using exploratory factor analysis (EFA), and applied a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to validate the factor structure of the six-factor typology.

[1]Study 1 was conducted more recently than Study 2 but is presented first in the manuscript to better communicate the conceptualization of our scale.

TABLE 1 Categories of interruption reasons (Study 1).

Category	Percentage of reasons	Examples
Self-focused performance interruptions	47.1	Asking for advice on a work task
Self-focused belongingness interruptions	3.3	Socializing with coworkers; building a bond
Self-focused hedonic interruptions	7.4	Seeking encouragement; seeking distraction from work
Other-focused performance interruptions	3.8	Offering help on a work task
Other-focused belongingness interruptions	0.3	Showing appreciation to a coworker
Other-focused hedonic interruptions	1.5	Showing compassion to a coworker; Listening to a coworker's private problems
Combinations of interruption types	22.5	Discussing a task one is cooperating on (self-focused performance interruptions and other-focused performance interruption); small talk with a befriended coworker (interrupter-focused belongingness interruptions and other-focused belongingness interruption)
Other reasons	6.9	Discussing work-unrelated tasks and duties, such as sharing a car to commute to work; solving conflicts with coworkers; exchange of pleasantries, such as wishing a coworker a nice weekend
Not possible to code	7.2	Not having any particular reason in mind; describing a situation in which one gets interrupted rather than initiates the interruption

Note: $N = 60$ participants; $n = 391$ descriptions of interruption reasons. Participants were asked to list the reasons for the last three situations in which they interrupted a coworker. Two independent raters categorized these reasons into one of the nine categories reported in the table.

5.1 | Phase 1: item generation and item review

5.1.1 | Method

Using our descriptions of the interruption types, we generated six items in German for each interruption type, resulting in a total of 36 items. We made sure that the items of the self-focused interruption subscales and the other-focused interruption subscales mainly differed in their focus on the interrupter versus the interruptee but otherwise covered a similar content. During item generation, we consulted prior unidimensional interruption measures that focus on the interruptee (e.g., Fletcher et al., 2018; Parke et al., 2018). However, these measures might oversample negative aspects of interruptions because they emphasize goal-disrupting aspects (e.g., "other people prevented me from making progress on a task I was working on"; Fletcher et al., 2018) and use negatively connotated words, such as "interruption," "disruption," and "disturbance" (e.g., Keller et al., 2020; Parke et al., 2018). The IFRS avoids these problems by not emphasizing goal-disrupting aspects and refraining from using negatively connotated words.

Each item was preceded by the item stem: "I turn to others while they are occupied with their work without them expecting me." In a separate text box, we explained that we mean their colleagues, subordinates, and superiors when referring to "others." By specifying that interruptees are occupied with their work, the item stem implies that interruptees need to suspend their ongoing work to attend to the interruption without overemphasizing these goal-disrupting aspects. Hence, this item stem includes the two core features of an interruption as defined by Puranik et al. (2020), namely that the interruptees suspend their ongoing work task and do not expect these suspensions to occur.

After generating the items, we examined whether they sufficiently reflected the underlying constructs (i.e., substantive validity; Anderson & Gerbing, 1991), using expert ratings. We recruited 12 subject matter experts (11 women, aged 21 to 35) who specialized in work and organizational psychology. Eight experts were working in research, three experts were graduate students, and one expert was working in the industrial sector. We first provided definitions of the six interruption types and then administered the items in a random order. The experts' task was to classify each item into one of the six interruption-type categories and to rate how certain they were that they correctly classified each item (1 = *fully uncertain*; 5 = *fully certain*). The experts could also indicate that they were not able to classify an item and could leave comments after each item.

5.1.2 | Results

Overall, 29 out of the 36 items were correctly classified by all experts and seven items were correctly classified by 91.7% of the experts (i.e., one incorrect classification each). All items met the "very strong" benchmarks for substantive validity statistics proposed by Colquitt et al. (2019). The experts' mean certainty of their classification for each item ranged between 4.25 ($SD = 0.87$) and 4.92 ($SD = 0.29$). Following the rule to retain items correctly classified by at least 75% of the experts (Hinkin, 1998), we kept all items. Moreover, based on one expert's comment, we added one item to the other-focused hedonic interruption subscale that covered negative affective states to balance the number of items that relate to positive and negative affect in this subscale.

5.2 | Phase 2: shortening the scale

In Phase 2, we administered our scale to a sample of employees to examine the scale's factor structure and to shorten the scale, using EFA. We applied frequency response options to capture the frequency of concrete behaviors (Spector et al., 2010).

5.2.1 | Method

Participants and procedure

We recruited the participants by posting a web link to the online surveys on social media sites, particularly on www.facebook.com and www.xing.de. All data were collected between August 2020 and June 2021, a time during which contact restrictions were in place due to the coronavirus pandemic. A participation requirement was that participants regularly worked on-site at their workplaces unless remote work was temporally necessary due to the coronavirus pandemic. We integrated data from two independent samples to conduct the analyses. For brevity, we describe the combined sample here and provide further information on the separate samples in the supporting information.

The combined sample consisted of 389 German-speaking employees (74.8% female) from various occupations. Fifty-five of the participants (14.1%) were aged between 18 and 25, 160 participants (41.1%) were aged between 26 and 35, 98 participants (25.2%) were aged between 36 and 45, and 76 participants (19.5%) were 46 years old or older. One-hundred-fifteen participants (29.6%) were in a leadership position, and 237 (60.9%) held a university degree. Most participants worked in health-care and social services (24.4%), manufacturing (11.8%), and science and education (9.5%). Moreover, 165 participants (42.4%) worked one or less days per week remotely, 92 participants (23.7%) worked 2 or 3 days per week remotely, and 132 (33.9%) worked four or more days per week remotely. In addition, a subsample of 152 participants (39.1%) also reported how many days per week they worked on site. Specifically, 46 participants (30.3%) in this subsample worked one or less days per week on site, 47 (30.9%) worked 2 or 3 days per week on site, and 59 (38.8%) worked four or more days per week on site.

Measures

We used the 37-item IFRS developed in Phase 1. The participants were asked to answer the questions using a typical workweek as a referent. Response options were 1 = *never*; 2 = *less than once per week*; 3 = *one to three times*; 4 = *four to six times*; 5 = *seven to nine times*; 6 = *10 times or more* (adapted from Wilkes et al., 2018). The scale was preceded by an instruction paragraph to exclusively focus on interactions in which other people were physically present (i.e., face-to-face interactions).

Analytic strategy

Main analyses in this phase and in Phase 3 were done in R, Version 4.0.4 (R Code Team, 2022), using the psych package (v2.0.12; Revelle, 2020) and the lavaan package (v0.6.8; Rosseel, 2012). We conducted an EFA with principal axis factoring and oblimin rotation. In line with the underlying six-factor typology, we requested a six-factor solution. To arrive at short scales, we reduced the scales to four items per factor. For the four factors covering performance and belongingness motives, we retained all items that loaded with at least 0.40 on the respective factor and below 0.30 on any other factor. When more than four items were retained per factor, we kept the items with the highest factor loadings.

For the two hedonic interruption factors, we retained the two best-fitting positive affect items and the two best-fitting negative affect items for each of the two factors (i.e., four items per factor). Here, "best-fitting" referred to the items with the highest loading on the relevant factor and the lowest cross-loading on other factors. We chose this procedure because we conceptualized hedonic interruptions as relating both to positive affective states and negative affective states and subsequently included items covering both affective states in the hedonic interruption subscales.

5.2.2 | Results

The eigenvalues from a principal component analysis, a scree test, and parallel analysis supported the decision to retain six factors in the EFA (Hinkin, 1998; Watkins, 2018). The EFA indicated that the six factors accounted for 62% of the variance. Applying the above specified exclusion criteria, we removed 13 items, resulting in a shortened scale that included a total of 24 items. We present descriptive statistics, correlations, and Cronbach's alphas (ranging from .83 to .88) of the shortened subscales in Table 2. The complete factor-loading matrix of the EFA can be found in Table S2.

5.3 | Phase 3: confirming the factor structure

In Phase 3, we validated the factor structure of the shortened 24-item scale with additional samples, using CFA. Due to the low means of the scale items analyzed in Phase 2, we extended the response format of the scale so that it covered 1 month.

5.3.1 | Method

Participants and procedure

To recruit participants, we posted web links to the online surveys on social media sites, especially on www.facebook.com and www.xing.de. Data collection took place from January 2021 to June 2021, during the coronavirus pandemic. A participation requirement was to regularly work on-site at one's workplace. We combined data from three independent samples for the analyses and provide detail on the individual samples in the supporting information.

The combined sample included 436 German-speaking employees (68.1% female) from different occupations. Forty-two participants

TABLE 2 Means, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach's alphas of the shortened subscales – Phase 2 and Phase 3 (Study 2).

Variable	M_{P2}	SD_{P2}	M_{P3}	SD_{P3}	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Self-focused performance interruptions	2.75	0.97	4.56	1.66	**.86** **.88**	.38	.42	.47	.34	.34
2. Self-focused belongingness interruptions	2.22	0.98	3.16	1.86	.42	**.85** **.86**	.71	.26	.55	.43
3. Self-focused hedonic interruption	2.23	0.91	3.45	1.74	.47	.73	**.82** **.83**	.34	.54	.59
4. Other-focused performance interruptions	2.96	1.00	4.97	1.74	.61	.38	.45	**.88** **.88**	.55	.64
5. Other-focused belongingness interruptions	2.38	0.99	3.74	1.97	.38	.64	.60	.57	**.89** **.87**	.73
6. Other-focused hedonic interruptions	2.54	0.90	4.23	1.79	.41	.55	.65	.60	.76	**.86** **.84**

Note: $N_{\text{Phase 2}} = 389$. $N_{\text{Phase 3}} = 436$. $Range_{\text{Phase 2}}$: 1 to 6. $Range_{\text{Phase 3}}$: 1 to 9. Correlations below the diagonal refer to Phase 2. Correlations above the diagonal refer to Phase 3. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal in bold. Lower rows give Cronbach's alphas for Phase 2. Upper rows give Cronbach's alphas for Phase 3. All correlations are significant at $p < .001$.

(9.6%) were aged between 18 and 25, 147 participants (33.7%) were aged between 26 and 35, 117 participants (26.8%) were aged between 36 and 45, and 130 participants (29.8%) were 46 years old or older. One hundred sixty participants (36.7%) held leadership positions, and 291 (66.7%) possessed a university degree. The primary industries represented by participants were health-care and social services (31,9%), followed by manufacturing (11.7%), and science and education (11.2%). Furthermore, 238 participants (54.8%) worked one or less days per week remotely, 83 participants (19.0%) worked 2 or 3 days per week remotely, and 114 participants (26.1%) worked four or more days per week remotely. A subsample of 336 participants (77.1%) reported how many days per week they worked on site. That is, 96 participants (28.6%) in this subsample worked one or less days per week on site, Seventy-three participants (21.7%) worked 2 or 3 days per week on site, and 167 participants (49.7%) worked four or more days per week on site.

Measures

We used the 24 IFRS items that resulted from Phase 2. We asked the participants to answer the questions using a typical workweek or a typical work month as a referent. The response options were 1 = *never*; 2 = *less than once per month*; 3 = *once a month*; 4 = *two to four times a month*; 5 = *once per week*, 6 = *two to three times per week*; 7 = *four to six times per week (that is, about once per day)*; 8 = *seven to nine times per week (that is, about once to twice per day)*; 9 = *ten times per week or more (that is, about twice per day or more)*. Prior to responding to the IFRS, we instructed the participants to only focus on interactions in which the other people were physically present.

Analytic strategy

We performed CFAs with maximum likelihood estimation on the covariance matrix based on the 24 items. We compared the fit indices of the hypothesized six-factor model to the fit indices of alternative models using χ^2-difference tests. Alternative models were a three-factor model, in which all items representing the same interruption topic (performance, belongingness, and hedonic well-being) loaded on a separate factor, a two-factor model, in which all items representing the same interruption focus (self-focused and other-focused) loaded on a separate factor, and a one-factor model in which all items loaded on one common factor.

5.3.2 | Results

The hypothesized six-factor model had a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999), $\chi^2 = 552.93$, $p < .001$, $df = 237$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.95, Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 0.94, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.06, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.04, and showed a significant better fit than a three-factor model with all items representing the same interruption topic loading on one factor, $\chi^2 = 1{,}886.95$, $p < .001$, $df = 249$, CFI = 0.74, TLI = 0.72, RMSEA = 0.12, SRMR = 0.10, $\Delta\chi^2 = 1{,}334.02$, $\Delta df = 12$, $p < .001$; a two-factor model with all items representing the same interruption focus loading on one factor, $\chi^2 = 1{,}876.46$, $p < .001$, $df = 251$, CFI = 0.75, TLI = 0.72, RMSEA = 0.12, SRMR = 0.10, $\Delta\chi^2 = 1{,}323.53$, $\Delta df = 14$, $p < .001$; and a one-factor model, $\chi^2 = 2{,}634.38$, $p < .001$, $df = 252$, CFI = 0.63, TLI = 0.59, RMSEA = 0.15, SRMR = 0.12, $\Delta\chi^2 = 2{,}081.45$, $\Delta df = 15$, $p < .001$. Table 3 displays the final scale and factor loadings. Descriptive statistics, correlations, and Cronbach's alphas (ranging from .82 to .89) of the subscales are shown in Table 2.[2]

[2]We re-ran the CFA with the data from Study 3 ($n = 200$) that we conducted when no contact restrictions were in place. Again, the six-factor model showed a good fit, $\chi^2 = 473.088$, $p < .001$, $df = 237$, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.07, SRMR = 0.04, suggesting that the contact restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic might have not severely affected the factor structure underlying the data collected in Phases 2 and 3 of Study 2.

TABLE 3 Final interruption-for-a-reason scale items, factor loadings, and standard errors from confirmatory factor analysis in Phase 3 (Study 2).

Factor and items	Loadings (*SE*)
Self-focused performance interruptions	
...to ask for support on my work tasks.	0.78 (0.08)
...so that they can help me out with my work tasks.	0.81 (0.08)
...so that they can help me do my job.	0.78 (0.08)
...to help me solve problems related to my work task.	0.76 (0.08)
Self-focused belongingness interruptions	
...to feel like part of the group.	0.81 (0.09)
...to feel accepted.	0.81 (0.09)
...so that I do not feel like an outsider.	0.75 (0.09)
...so that I am not alone.	0.70 (0.10)
Self-focused hedonic interruptions	
...to make me feel less bad.	0.69 (0.09)
...to improve my mood.	0.76 (0.10)
...to lift my spirits.	0.82 (0.09)
...to deal with my negative feelings.	0.68 (0.09)
Other-focused performance interruptions	
...to help them make progress on their work tasks.	0.84 (0.08)
...to explain something to them about their work tasks.	0.71 (0.09)
...to help them get their work tasks done.	0.84 (0.08)
...to help them solve problems related to their work tasks.	0.83 (0.08)
Other-focused belongingness interruptions	
...to make them feel like part of the group.	0.86 (0.09)
...so that they feel accepted.	0.85 (0.09)
...so that they do not feel left out.	0.79 (0.09)
...so that they do not feel like outsiders.	0.76 (0.09)
Other-focused hedonic interruptions	
...to make them feel less bad.	0.76 (0.09)
...to make them happy.	0.76 (0.08)
...to cheer them up.	0.82 (0.09)
...to help them cope with negative feelings.	0.80 (0.09)

Note: $N = 436$. Range: 1 to 9. Factor loadings are standardized. Item stem: "I turn to others while they are occupied with their work without them expecting me."

5.4 | Brief discussion

In Study 2, we followed best practices (Hinkin, 1998) to develop the IFRS and validate its factor structure in three phases. The IFRS measures the six interruption reasons with four items each. Altogether, Phases 1, 2 and 3 result in a parsimonious scale that demonstrates substantive validity, reliability, and expected dimensionality.

6 | STUDY 3: THE ROLE OF INTERRUPTIONS IN SOCIAL EXCHANGES

In Study 3, we examined how initiating interruptions relates to the exchange of social resources with interruptees, linking the interruption types to other constructs in their nomological network. According to social exchange theory (SET; Blau, 1964), workplace social interactions involve exchanges of social resources, such as task-relevant information that facilitate achieving work goals (Bakker, 2011) or care and attention that improve employees' well-being (Wang et al., 2023). Reciprocity tends to guide resource exchanges in the sense that one party usually responds to the behaviors of another party with similar behaviors (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Interruptions may involve such social exchanges. Specifically, during an interruption, the interrupter either requests resources from the interruptee (i.e., self-focused interruptions) or offers resources to the interruptee (i.e., other-focused interruptions). In response, the interruptee can provide resources to the interrupter or receive resources from the interrupter. Social resources exchanged via interruptions refer to the performance, belongingness needs, and hedonic well-being of the interaction partners.

To uncover the associations between interruptions and interrupters' social exchanges, we linked the interruption types to other constructs relevant to social exchanges. Thereby, we also established the nomological network of the IFRS (Hinkin, 1998). Specifically, we examined two categories of social exchange constructs: interpersonal relationship characteristics and social exchange behaviors. In addition, we focused on the unique relations between each interruption type and the social exchange constructs. Because the various interruption types serve distinct purposes, they should also be differentially related to social exchange constructs. By investigating these unique relationships, we gain a nuanced understanding of the role that interruptions play in interrupters' social exchanges.

SET is a particularly suitable framework for studying how interruptions play out at work because it frames interruptions as interdependent exchanges between interrupters and interruptees (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). While prior research mostly focused on the interruptees' perspective and neglected the interpersonal component of interruptions (for an exception, Puranik et al., 2021), SET accounts for the give-and-take between the interrupter and the interruptee during interruptions. As a result, by focusing on the social exchanges during interruptions, SET acknowledges the interpersonal aspects of interruptions, providing a more comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon.

6.1 | Interpersonal relationship characteristics

Work interruptions are inherently interpersonal (Jett & George, 2003; Puranik et al., 2021). Therefore, characteristics of the interpersonal relationships between interrupters and their coworkers should be related to the interrupters' tendency to initiate interruptions.

6.1.1 | Social exchange relationship quality

Social exchange relationship quality describes the degree to which a relationship is based on mutual trust and obligation to return favors (Bernerth et al., 2007). Employees in high-quality exchange relationships will be likely to request social resources from their coworkers, such as by initiating self-focused interruptions, because they can trust that their requests will be acceded to (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Lim et al., 2020). Moreover, employees in high-quality exchange relationships experience a sense of obligation to provide social resources to their coworkers (Aryee et al., 2002), such as by initiating other-focused interruptions. Among others, this obligation stems from employees' desire to reciprocate prior favors received from their coworkers (e.g., Kamdar & Van Dyne, 2007). Together, employees in high-quality exchange relationships will be likely to both request and offer social resources to their coworkers. Given that interruptions can serve to request and offer social resources, we expect employees in high-quality exchange relationships to frequently interrupt their coworkers, irrespective of the specific interruption type.

> **Hypothesis 1.** Social exchange relationship quality with coworkers will be positively correlated with the six interruption types.

6.1.2 | Status

Status describes employees' relative social standing in their workplace reflected in their respect, prominence, and prestige (Djurdjevic et al., 2017). Employees in high-status positions tend to possess many task-relevant resources that they can share with their coworkers, such as knowledge and competences (Rhee & Choi, 2017). In addition, given that coworkers typically perceive the resources provided by high-status employees as valuable (Groysberg et al., 2011), coworkers are motivated to reciprocate favors of high-status employees by providing resources in return (Ball & Eckel, 1996). Therefore, high-status employees may be especially willing to provide task-relevant resources to their coworkers to receive these social exchange benefits from their coworkers (Rhee & Choi, 2017). Employees may provide task-relevant resources to their coworkers, in turn, by initiating other-focused performance interruptions that serve to improve the interruptees' performance. However, the other interruption types do not involve the interrupters offering task-relevant resources to interruptees. Hence, the greater access to task-relevant resources by higher-status interrupters should particularly influence their likelihood to initiate other-focused performance interruptions as compared to the other interruption types. Further, because coworkers judge harmful actions by high-status employees less harshly (Bowles & Gelfand, 2010), high-status employees might feel less restrained to interrupt their coworkers despite the negative effects interruptions can have for coworkers. Overall, we expect high-status employees to be especially likely to engage in other-focused performance interruptions.

> **Hypothesis 2.** Status will be positively correlated with other-focused performance interruptions.

6.1.3 | Popularity

Popularity can be defined as the degree to which one is generally accepted by one's coworkers (Scott & Judge, 2009). Popular employees may be in especially good positions to make their coworkers feel like they belong in their workgroup. After all, coworkers can "bask in reflected glory" of popular employees (Cialdini et al., 1976), so that they feel more accepted in their work group. Feeling accepted, in turn, is a critical aspect of belongingness (Leary et al., 2013). Popular employees may be motivated to make use of this capability to make coworkers feel like they belong given their prospects of receiving social exchange benefits in return, such as social support (Scott & Judge, 2009). One way to make their coworkers feel like they belong may be for employees to initiate other-focused belongingness interruptions that serve to improve interrruptees' belongingness. Compared to the other interruption types, initiating other-focused belongingness interruptions may be a particularly good opportunity for popular employees to make use of their high social standing. Hence, we hypothesize the following:

> **Hypothesis 3.** Popularity will be positively correlated with other-focused belongingness interruptions.

6.2 | Social exchange behaviors

Because the interruption types serve to request or offer social resources, they should be related to other interpersonal work behaviors that aim at exchanging similar resources. Hence, we examined the relationships between the interruption types and similar social exchange behaviors.

6.2.1 | Instrumental and emotional social support seeking

Social support seeking involves asking coworkers for assistance in response to work stressors (Carver et al., 1989). Social support seeking and self-focused interruptions are similar behaviors because they include requesting social resources from coworkers and involve informally initiated social interactions (Lim et al., 2020). Research distinguishes between two forms of social support seeking. First, instrumental support seeking describes seeking assistance on work-relevant issues, such as problems with the tasks at hand (Carver et al., 1989; Colbert et al., 2016). Employees might seek instrumental support by initiating self-focused performance interruptions. After all, these interruptions serve to enhance one's own work performance,

which can be accomplished by seeking work-relevant assistance (Lim et al., 2020). Compared to the other interruption types, self-focused performance interruptions and instrumental support seeking might share a particular similarity because both behaviors are initiated to receive benefits on task-related matters. Hence, we expect the following:

> **Hypothesis 4.** Instrumental support seeking will be positively correlated with self-focused performance interruptions.

Second, emotional support seeking can be described as seeking assistance for emotionally coping with work stress, such as requesting sympathy or understanding from coworkers (Carver et al., 1989; Colbert et al., 2016). Similarly, initiating self-focused hedonic interruptions might be a way to cope with emotional challenges given that these interruptions serve to reduce interrupters' negative affective states. In addition, emotional support seeking and self-focused hedonic interruptions both focus on addressing help recipients' emotions. That is, emotional support seeking allows employees to vent negative emotions and experience improved affect (e.g., Van de Ven et al., 2013). Hence, in comparison to the other interruption types, self-focused hedonic interruptions and emotional support seeking might be particularly similar because employees initiate both behaviors to improve their own affective well-being. As such, we expect the following:

> **Hypothesis 5.** Emotional support seeking will be positively correlated with self-focused hedonic interruptions.

6.2.2 | Task-focused and person-focused interpersonal citizenship behaviors

Interpersonal citizenship behavior (ICB) describes discretionary acts of helping directed at other coworkers (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002). ICB and other-focused interruptions are similar behaviors because they aim at offering social resources to coworkers. Moreover, because ICBs are not part of the job's role requirements (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002), they might typically be performed without a formal schedule, such as by interrupting the help recipients. There are two forms of ICB. First, task-focused ICB involves offering work-relevant resources to employees, such as advice on a work task (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002). In initiating other-focused performance interruptions, employees also offer work-relevant resources to employees, so that they may simultaneously engage in task-focused ICB. Supporting this argumentation, Jett and George (2003) argued that interruptions can be a source of task-relevant information for interruptees. Compared to the other interruption types, other-focused performance interruptions and task-focused ICB might be especially similar given that employees initiate both behaviors to improve others' work performance. Therefore, we hypothesize:

> **Hypothesis 6.** Task-focused ICB will be positively correlated with other-focused performance interruptions.

Second, person-focused ICB refers to helping coworkers in more personal ways, such as by listening and showing concern (Settoon & Mossholder, 2002). When employees initiate other-focused hedonic interruptions, they intend to improve the interruptees' affect. Doing so can involve person-focused ICB, for instance, when interrupters invite the interruptees to talk about stress at work in an effort to make the interruptees feel better. Person-focused ICB may be more similar to other-focused hedonic interruptions than to other interruption types because both person-focused ICB and other-focused hedonic interruptions aim to improve the affect of other coworkers. Hence, we expect the following:

> **Hypothesis 7.** Person-focused ICB will be positively correlated with other-focused hedonic interruptions.

6.3 | Method

6.3.1 | Participants and procedure

We collected all data from December 2022 to January 2023 via the online platform Prolific. The time of data collection did not involve any contact restrictions due to coronavirus pandemic at German workplaces. To reduce concerns regarding common-method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2012), we temporally separated the measurement of the IFRS from the measurement of other constructs in the nomological network.

Participation requirements included working more than 20 h per week and working regularly on site at one's workplace. A total of 233 participants responded to the first survey, of which 220 also responded to the second survey that was sent to them 1 week later. Each survey included two attention-check items instructing the participants to respond with a particular response option (Huang et al., 2012). Of the 220 participants who answered both surveys, we removed 12 participants who responded incorrectly to at least one of these attention-check items. In addition, we removed another eight participants because of exceptionally fast response times, using Leiner's (2019) relative speed index. Each survey took about 15 min and the participants received at least 5.50£ for participating in both surveys.

The final independent sample consisted of 200 German-speaking participants (34.5% female) from various occupations. Thirty-seven participants (18.5%) were aged between 18 and 25, 97 participants (48.5%) were aged between 26 and 35, 37 participants (18.5%) were aged between 36 and 45, and 29 participants (14.5%) were older than 45. Seventy-six participants (38.0%) were in leadership positions, and

123 (61.5%) had obtained a university degree. The participants worked in various industries, such as health-care and social services (11.0%), manufacturing (13.5%), and science and education (37.0%). In addition, 114 (57.0%) participants worked one or less days per week remotely, 64 (32.0%) worked 2 or 3 days per week remotely, and 22 (11.0%) worked four or more days per week remotely. Furthermore, 27 (13.5%) participants worked one or less days per week on site, 64 (32.0%) worked 2 or 3 days per week on site, and 109 (54.5%) worked 4 or 5 days per week on site.

6.3.2 | Measures

If not stated otherwise, items were answered on 5-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*). In addition, we adapted items so that they asked about "people at work" and explained to the participants that we thereby refer to their colleagues, subordinates, and superiors. Because all items were responded to in German, we used translation–backtranslation procedure on some scales if necessary (Brislin, 1970). All items can be found at https://osf.io/d2pbc/?view_only=9d1973fb45704175986fdbab8b72019d.

Interruption-for-a-reason scale

We used the 24-item IFRS as described in Phase 3 of Study 2 (α of the subscales ranging from .92 to .95). Response options were: *1 = never*; *9 = ten times per week or more (that is, about twice per day or more)*.

Social exchange relationship quality

We used an eight-item scale by Bernerth et al. (2007) to assess social exchange relationship quality ($\alpha = .92$). An example item is "Other people at work and I have a two-way exchange relationship."

Status

We assessed status ($\alpha = .95$) using Djurdjevic et al.'s (2017) five-item scale. A sample item is "I possess high status in my workgroup."

Popularity

To assess popularity ($\alpha = .77$), we used an eight-item scale developed by Scott and Judge (2009) and revised to the self-report format by Bartels et al. (2019). A sample item is "I am popular in my workgroup."

Instrumental and emotional social support seeking

We used the items from Carver et al. (1989) to assess both instrumental support seeking and emotional support seeking. The items were framed in terms of how the participant typically responds when under stress. We used all four available items to assess instrumental support seeking (e.g., "I ask other people at work who have had similar experiences what they did"; $\alpha = .87$) and three of four available items to assess emotional support seeking (e.g., "I discuss my feelings with other people at work"; $\alpha = .90$). We omitted the original item "I get sympathy and understanding from someone" because it did not assess help-seeking behavior but rather help availability.

Task-focused and person-focused ICB

We administered the scale from Settoon and Mossholder (2002) to assess both task-focused citizenship behavior and person-focused citizenship behavior. Items were adapted to the self-report format. The scale assessed task-focused citizenship behavior with six items (e.g., "I go out of my way to help other people at work with work-related problems"; $\alpha = .88$) and person-focused citizenship behavior with eight items (e.g., "I listen to other people at work when they have to get something off their chest"; $\alpha = .89$).

6.4 | Results

Table 4 displays descriptive statistics and correlations of the scales.[3] Hypothesis 1 was mostly supported with social exchange relationship quality being positively related to four out of the six interruption types, correlations ranging between $r = .14$, $p = .046$, and $r = .19$, $p = .006$. Social exchange relationship quality was unrelated to self-focused belongingness interruptions, $r = .06$, $p = .391$, and self-focused hedonic interruptions, $r = .08$, $p = .272$. In line with Hypothesis 2, status was positively related to other-focused performance interruptions, $r = .27$, $p < .001$. Supporting Hypothesis 3, popularity was positively related to other-focused belongingness interruptions, $r = .23$, $p = .001$. Furthermore, we found support for Hypothesis 4 because self-focused performance interruptions were positively related to instrumental support seeking, $r = .27$, $p < .001$. Supporting Hypothesis 5, self-focused hedonic interruptions were positively related to emotional support seeking, $r = .31$, $p < .001$. Similarly, we found support for Hypothesis 6 because other-focused performance interruptions were positively related to task-focused citizenship behavior, $r = .32$, $p < .001$. Lastly, in line with Hypothesis 7, other-focused hedonic interruptions were positively related to person-focused citizenship behavior, $r = .22$, $p = .002$.

6.4.1 | Additional analyses

Because we were especially interested in the unique relations of each interruption type with other constructs, we also conducted relative weights analyses (RWAs; LeBreton et al., 2007). RWAs allow us to determine the relative importance of an interruption type over and above other interruption types, that is, how much an interruption type uniquely contributes to the overall variance explained by a model (R^2). RWAs are especially suitable for the present purposes because some of the interruption types were highly correlated (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2015). We conducted separate RWAs with each social exchange construct as criterion variable. In Table 5, we report the relative weights of the interruption types. In addition to the raw relative weights, we provide rescaled relative weights that indicate the percentage of R^2 explained. In Table S4, we also report the hierarchical

[3]We report multiple regression analyses of the three interpersonal relationship characteristics together predicting each interruption type in Table S3.

TABLE 4 Means, standard deviations, correlations, and Cronbach's alphas of variables (Study 3).

Variable	*M*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Self-focused performance interruptions	4.13	1.70	**.92**												
2. Self-focused belongingness interruptions	3.13	1.97	.50*	**.94**											
3. Self-focused hedonic interruptions	3.29	1.91	.55*	.73*	**.92**										
4. Other-focused performance interruptions	4.58	1.86	.58*	.46*	.56*	**.93**									
5. Other-focused belongingness interruptions	3.86	1.93	.40*	.63*	.56*	.49*	**.95**								
6. Other-focused hedonic interruptions	3.82	1.84	.42*	.63*	.68*	.56*	.73*	**.93**							
7. Social exchange relationship quality	3.67	0.71	.19*	.06	.08	.17*	.17*	.14*	**.92**						
8. Status	3.44	0.95	.19*	.08	.14	.27*	.21*	.20*	.39*	**.95**					
9. Popularity	3.71	0.51	.12	.03	.06	.21*	.23*	.21*	.57*	.40*	**.77**				
10. Instrumental support seeking	3.54	0.82	.27*	.13	.22*	.24*	.13	.15*	.38*	.11	.32*	**.87**			
11. Emotional support seeking	2.74	1.02	.14*	.22*	.31*	.10	.17*	.25*	.32*	.19*	.24*	.49*	**.90**		
12. Task-focused citizenship behavior	3.61	0.75	.20*	.12	.13	.32*	.17*	.18*	.48*	.34*	.53*	.37*	.33*	**.88**	
13. Person-focused citizenship behavior	3.77	0.68	.12	.07	.10	.19*	.14*	.22*	.51*	.29*	.71*	.41*	.38*	.64*	**.89**

Note: $N = 200$. Cronbach's alphas are on the diagonal in bold. Range interruption types: 1 to 9. Range other variables: 1 to 5.
*$p < .050$.

multiple regression analyses that precede the RWAs. We executed the RWAs using the RWA Web tool (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2015), applying bias-corrected and accelerated 95% confidence intervals and 10 000 replications.

The pattern of the relative weights fully aligned with our hypotheses. None of the interruption types were uniquely related to social exchange relationship quality given that none of the relative weights were significant. Other-focused performance interruptions were uniquely related to status because their relative weight was the largest and the only significant. In addition, other-focused belongingness interruptions were uniquely related to popularity. With respect to social exchange behaviors, self-focused performance interruptions were uniquely related to instrumental support seeking, self-focused hedonic interruptions were uniquely related to emotional support seeking, other-focused performance interruptions were uniquely related to task-focused citizenship behavior, and other-focused hedonic interruptions were uniquely related to person-focused citizenship behavior.

6.5 | Brief discussion

Our analyses showed that the interruption types mostly demonstrated expected relationships with other constructs related to social exchange. In addition, the various interruption types were uniquely related to these constructs, highlighting the value of differentiating between interruption types. These findings suggest that the interruption types play different roles in interrupters' social exchanges at work.

7 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this research, we examined how interrupters experience interruptions by shedding light on their reasons for interrupting and the role interruptions serve in social exchanges with coworkers. In doing so, we integrated the key reasons for initiating interruptions into a typology of six interruption types. We then validated this typology using qualitative data and scale development, thereby creating the 24-item interruption-for-a-reason scale. Furthermore, we found that the six interruption types were uniquely related to constructs involving social exchanges.

7.1 | Theoretical implications

Our research advances theory on interruptions in important ways. First, we introduced the interrupters' perspective to research on

TABLE 5 Relative weights analyses (Study 3).

	Social exchange relationship quality	Status	Popularity	Instrumental support seeking	Emotional support seeking	Task-focused citizenship behavior	Person-focused citizenship behavior
Self-focused performance interruptions	0.02 (35.97)	0.01 (15.07)	0.00 (6.73)	0.04* (43.51)	0.01 (5.55)	0.02 (13.72)	0.01 (8.03)
Self-focused belongingness interruptions	0.00 (6.21)	0.01 (6.61)	0.01 (9.98)	0.00 (4.78)	0.02 (13.75)	0.00 (2.86)	0.00 (5.33)
Self-focused hedonic interruptions	0.00 (5.15)	0.01 (5.55)	0.01 (7.45)	0.02 (18.32)	0.05* (46.47)	0.01 (0.67)	0.00 (6.62)
Other-focused performance interruptions	0.01 (17.83)	0.04* (38.20)	0.02 (21.86)	0.02 (23.95)	0.01 (5.11)	0.07* (60.53)	0.02 (24.60)
Other-focused belongingness interruptions	0.02 (23.63)	0.02 (20.88)	0.03* (30.47)	0.00 (4.11)	0.01 (7.04)	0.01 (8.57)	0.01 (11.66)
Other-focused hedonic interruptions	0.01 (11.21)	0.01 (13.68)	0.02 (23.52)	0.00 (5.34)	0.03 (22.09)	0.01 (9.65)	0.03* (43.75)

Note: $N = 200$. Values are raw relative weights. In parentheses are rescaled relative weights. Statistical significance for the relative weights is tested using 95% confidence intervals, corresponding to a significance level of .050 (Tonidandel & LeBreton, 2015).
*$p < .050$.

interruptions. Our findings demonstrate that interruptions are important work events for interrupters that serve several purposes and show associations with important organizational constructs. Clearly, the influence of interruptions extends beyond impact on interruptees, so that studying the interrupters' perspective is critical to a more complete understanding of how interruptions play out at work. An understanding of interruptions that primarily focuses on the viewpoint of interruptees, as done in previous interruption research (e.g., Leroy et al., 2020), is incomplete.

Second, we uncovered six novel interruption types, derived from the key reasons for interruptions, and described them in a typology. This typology combined three interruption topics (performance, belongingness, and hedonic well-being) and two interruption foci (self-focused and other-focused). Analyses of qualitative descriptions of employees' interruption reasons revealed that the interruption reasons outlined in our typology corresponded to employees' actual experiences at work. Using scale development, we found further evidence for the validity of the typology. Recently, scholars have started questioning prevailing unidimensional conceptualizations of interruptions (Bush et al., 2021; Puranik et al., 2021). Subsequently, Bush et al. (2021) distinguished between interruptions that deal with work and interruptions that deal with non-work issues. Consistent with theory (Bindl et al., 2022; De Dreu & Nauta, 2009), we expanded this research by adding further detail to the differentiation between various interruption types. As a result, our approach paves the way for future research to examine fine-grained effects of different interruption types.

Third, with the interruption-for-a-reason typology as foundation, we examined the relationships between the six interruption types and organizationally relevant constructs. We found that the various interruption types had unique relationships with other constructs in their nomological network. Hence, differentiating between the six reasons for interruptions matters for understanding how interrupters experience interruptions at work. For instance, we found that initiating interruptions that serve to improve one's own work performance was positively related to seeking instrumental support. However, interrupters did not only initiate interruptions with their own benefit in mind but also to benefit the interruptees. For example, initiating interruptions that serve to improve the interruptees' performance was positively associated with task-focused citizenship behaviors. These findings challenge assumptions of past research suggesting that employees interrupt others for their own advantage (Puranik et al., 2020) but at the expense of the interruptees (Käser et al., 2013; Romero et al., 2007). Furthermore, we expand recent research that found that interruptions can satisfy belongingness needs (Puranik et al., 2021) by revealing additional interpersonal aspects of interruptions. Specifically, our findings demonstrated that initiating hedonic interruptions was positively associated with the exchange of emotional support.

Finally, we showed that studying interrupters' reasons for interruptions allows for a more balanced view on interruptions that also considers their positive aspects. Past research focused on how interruptions disrupt the interruptees' progress on ongoing work tasks (Puranik et al., 2020). While we do not deny this aversive aspect, our

findings revealed that interruptions entail several other more beneficial aspects. Instead of conceptualizing interruptions as job stressors that drain interruptees' resources (Keller et al., 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2023), we conceptualized interruptions as social exchange behaviors. As a result, we uncovered that interrupters initiate interruptions for good reasons and that interruptions play important roles in interrupters' social exchanges with their coworkers.

7.2 | Limitations and directions for future research

Despite its merits, our research has some limitations. First, this research focuses on the interrupters' perspective but does not examine the interruptees' perspective. Hence, future research could adapt the IFRS to assess the interruptees' perspective and examine the psychometric properties of such a scale. Although one might argue that interrupters' reasons for interruptions are not always transparent to interruptees, according to attribution theory (Heider, 1958), interruptees might infer reasons from the interrupters' behaviors during interruptions. The reasons that interruptees attribute to the interrupters' behaviors might align with the reasons proposed in our typology. Applying the IFRS to the interruptees' perspective could help research on interruptees to account for the multidimensionality of interruptions. In addition, focusing on the reasons for interruptions may bring to light positive aspects of interruptions for interruptees. For instance, interruptions can be a source of social support for interruptees given that other-focused interruptions serve to benefit them.

Second, although we found evidence that the six interruption types are distinct and differentially relate to other constructs, everyday work interruptions might often entail combinations of the interruption types. For instance, a coworker might interrupt both to help with a work task (i.e., other-focused performance interruption) and to satisfy their belongingness need (i.e., self-focused belongingness interruption). In line with this reasoning, the participants typically ascribed multiple and intertwined reasons for interruptions to individual interruption episodes in Study 1. In addition, we found moderate to high correlations between the interruption types in our studies (for instance, ranging between $r = .26$ and $r = .73$ in Phase 3 of Study 2). Hence, it remains open how various reasons for interruptions are typically combined in a single interruption episode and how these combinations affect interrupters and interruptees. To address this gap, future research could deploy an episodic approach to study individual interruption episodes in detail or use a person-centered approach to identify latent profiles of combinations of interruption types (Lubke & Muthén, 2005).

Third, although we implemented a temporal separation between the measures in Study 3 and strengthened our analyses by reporting relative weights of interruption types, our research design is still limited. Hence, future research should next apply the IFRS using other research designs. An event-sampling approach (Reis & Gable, 2000) might be particularly promising given that the reasons for interruptions are mentally easily accessible for respondents shortly after they initiated the interruptions.

Fourth, being a self-report measure, the IFRS is inherently limited to assessing reasons for interruptions that employees have conscious access to. However, the IFRS also aims at measuring reasons rooted in emotional states and psychological needs, such as belongingness, of which employees may not always be fully aware (McClelland, 1985). The IFRS might not entirely capture these more abstract reasons, potentially introducing biases. For instance, when high-status employees initiate interruptions to alleviate a negative affective state, they might suppress acknowledging this reason because admitting to being in a negative affective state would be incongruent with their high status (McGrath, 2017; Tiedens, 2001). Nevertheless, supporting the IFRS's ability to effectively capture all interruption reasons, we found that the self-reported interruption reasons were meaningfully related to other constructs in their nomological net measured a week later. Yet, future research should strive to deepen the understanding of the extent to which the reasons for interruptions are consciously accessible to employees. An important next step could be comparing our self-reported IFRS with implicit measures of interruption reasons (Uhlmann et al., 2012).

As a suggestion for future research, it would be interesting to examine if the IFRS cannot only be used to study interruptions that occur face-to-face but also via other communication channels. A next step would be to study the IFRS in the context of other synchronous communication channels, such as phone calls or online voice calls. Applying the IFRS to interruptions via other synchronous channels might be particularly suitable because these channels can convey many information, such as tone of voice, and involve direct reactions from interaction partners (Ishii et al., 2019). As a result, interruptions via synchronous channels enable employees to not only exchange task-relevant information but also to communicate on a more personal level (Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, interruptions via synchronous channels may occur for the broad variety of reasons covered in the interruption-for-a-reason typology. Furthermore, when studying interruptions via asynchronous channels from the interrupters' perspective, such as interruptions via e-mails, it can be challenging to only sample those interactions that classify as interruptions. For instance, contacted employees might open their e-mail program only at certain times to prevent e-mails from becoming interruptions. In such cases, e-mails cannot classify as interruptions because they did not suspend the contacted employees' ongoing work tasks (Puranik et al., 2020). To overcome this challenge, future research might require methodological approaches that enable insight into the contacted employee's behavior at the start of the interaction, as could be implemented in dyadic studies among coworkers.

Similarly, it would be valuable to link our research on face-to-face interruptions to interruptions in other contexts, such as interruptions in conversations (Briggs et al., 2023). Research on conversational interruptions might benefit from a systematic typology of interruption reasons, which could be consistent with our typology. Like our research on work interruptions, focusing on reasons for conversational interruptions can uncover previously overlooked positive aspects. For instance, conversational interruptions can serve to

validate the interruptees' viewpoint (James & Clarke, 1993), which might align with our other-focused belongingness interruption category. Nevertheless, despite conceptual overlap, the reasons for work interruptions might not fully apply to conversational interruptions due to differing social dynamics. For instance, conversational interruptions can serve to signal dominance to interruptees (Farley, 2008), which is not covered in our typology.

Moreover, future research should unpack how contemporary workplace trends, such as flexible work arrangements (Shifrin & Michel, 2022) and the use of communication technology (Leroy et al., 2021), impact the initiation of interruptions. For instance, given that social relationships at work are an important reason for coming to the office (Mergener & Trübner, 2022), employees who work predominantly remotely might intend to spend their on-site time strengthening bonds with their coworkers. To do so, these employees might frequently interrupt for belongingness reasons on on-site days. Furthermore, communication technology, such as instant messaging applications, has lowered the barrier for interrupting one's coworkers (Leroy et al., 2021). Employees use this technology to interact with their coworkers even on site (Finn, 2006). Future research could explore how employees use different communication channels to interrupt their coworkers. For instance, interrupters might rely on e-mail communication to address simple work tasks but use face-to-face interruptions to coordinate more complex tasks that require in-depth discussions. In addition, while relying on communication technology as interruption channel might facilitate quick and easy exchanges of information, it might pressure employees to be constantly connected to communication technology, harming their well-being (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015).

As another future research direction, scholars should study the reasons for interruptions across various cultures. Our study was conducted among German employees whose cultural communication style may affect the reasons for why they initiate interruptions. Specifically, Germans are recognized for their formality and directness in communication, prioritizing the conveyance of information while downplaying social functions (House, 2006; Schmidt, 2001). As a result, German employees might be hesitant to initiate belongingness and hedonic interruptions that involve informal, personal interactions with interruptees. Belongingness and hedonic interruptions might be more frequent in other cultures than in our German samples. Future research should consider these cultural differences when studying interruptions across cultures.

Furthermore, although we identified several positive aspects of interruptions for interrupters, future research should explore under which conditions interruptions might have negative implications for interrupters. For instance, in workplaces that discourage interruptions, coworkers might punish interruptions because they violate organizational norms (Feldman, 1984). In such workplaces, employees who frequently initiate interruptions might risk damaging their reputations and relationships with their coworkers. As another example, while our research focused on interruptions that either benefitted the interrupters or interruptees, interrupters might also initiate interruptions to harm interruptees, such as to bully them (Mackey et al., 2021). When initiating interruptions for such reasons, interrupters might get distrusted by their colleagues or excluded from workgroups (Schilpzand et al., 2014).

7.3 | Practical implications

Prior research has encouraged organizations to eliminate interruptions from workplaces (e.g., Baethge & Rigotti, 2013). Accordingly, some organizations implemented policies limiting interruptions, such as quiet hours during which interruptions are prohibited (Perlow, 1999) or work areas designated to be free of interruptions (Haapakangas et al., 2018). Our research shows that these recommendations and policies can be costly because they may deprive employees of interruptions' benefits. Instead, we recommend organizations to adopt a more differentiated view on interruptions. In managing interruptions, organizations should not only consider the interruptees' perspective but also the interrupters' perspective. Our research highlights that interrupters initiate interruptions for good reasons. In addition, interruptions play important roles in interrupters' exchanges of social resources with their coworkers, being positively associated with requesting and offering social support. Minimizing interruptions at work may limit opportunities for these social exchanges that are pivotal to organizational functioning (e.g., Cropanzano et al., 2017). Organizations should design workplaces that maximize the benefits of interruptions for interrupters found in this research while mitigating the negative effects of interruptions for interruptees found in past research. For example, desks in open-plan offices can be separated by division barriers (i.e., physical partitions, such as movable walls), which ensure that employees not involved in interruptions among other coworkers are not disturbed, while still allowing for spontaneous social interactions (Sykes, 2011).

Further, organizations could implement distinct approaches for the various interruption types. For instance, organizations might facilitate performance interruptions as they involve employees seeking instrumental support and engaging in task-focused citizenship behaviors. The other interruption types can involve fostering social connections and exchanging emotional support, which are also critical to employees' well-being (Colbert et al., 2016). However, given that these interruption types do not deal with work tasks, they may less directly impact organizational performance. Hence, organizations could implement rules that limit such task-unrelated interruptions to times when interruptees signal that they are available to get interrupted, such as when their office door is open (Keller et al., 2020).

Finally, interrupters should consider the benefits and drawbacks of different interruption channels. Face-to-face interruptions are more immediate and allow for more informal, personal interactions than interruptions via virtual channels, such as e-mails (Wang et al., 2020). However, virtual interruptions may be less disruptive for interruptees than face-to-face interruptions because interruptees can postpone responding to virtual interruptions, such as by opening their e-mail program only at times that are convenient for them (Nees & Fortna, 2015). Hence, interrupters should contemplate resorting to

virtual channels when the interruptions are not urgent and are not supposed to involve more personal interactions.

Altogether, with this research, we hope to stimulate an office culture that is open to interruptions and at the same time considerate about making them.[4] In doing so, organizations might be able to capitalize on the positive aspects of interruptions while mitigating potential downsides.

8 | CONCLUSION

Work interruptions are a complex phenomenon and serve various purposes. Past research's focus on how interruptions disrupt the interruptees' goal progress did not adequately address these complexities of interruptions. Hence, we offer a new perspective on interruptions by illuminating the interrupters' perspective and the multiple reasons for interruptions. In doing so, we contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of interruptions. Furthermore, focusing on the interrupters' reasons for interruptions allowed us to uncover several positive aspects of interruptions neglected in prior research. Consequently, our research paves the way for moving beyond a narrow focus on the negative aspects of interruptions. This way, our research can help designing workplaces that facilitate beneficial interruptions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Kevin Englowski for his support in collecting and coding the data; Daniel Arh, Tara Duus, Kevin Englowski, Johanna Goedde, Anja Morstatt, Fabienne Partsch, Nina Schilling, and Marie Stengert for their support in data collection; and Anita Keller for comments on the earlier version of this paper. Open Access funding enabled and organized by Projekt DEAL.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflict of interest to declare.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ORCID

Leon Toebben https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1314-7680
Anne Casper https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1163-4426
Wilken Wehrt https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5564-1249
Sabine Sonnentag https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9464-4653

REFERENCES

Anderson, J. C., & Gerbing, D. W. (1991). Predicting the performance of measures in a confirmatory factor analysis with a pretest assessment of their substantive validities. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *76*(5), 732–740. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.76.5.732

Aryee, S., Budhwar, P. S., & Chen, Z. X. (2002). Trust as a mediator of the relationship between organizational justice and work outcomes: Test of a social exchange model. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *23*(3), 267–285. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.138

Baethge, A., & Rigotti, T. (2013). Interruptions to workflow: Their relationship with irritation and satisfaction with performance, and the mediating roles of time pressure and mental demands. *Work and Stress*, *27*(1), 43–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2013.761783

Bakker, A. B. (2011). An evidence-based model of work engagement. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *20*(4), 265–269. https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411414534

Ball, S. B., & Eckel, C. C. (1996). Buying status: Experimental evidence on status in negotiation. *Psychology & Marketing*, *13*(4), 381–405. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1520-6793(199607)13:4

Barber, L. K., & Santuzzi, A. M. (2015). Please respond ASAP: Workplace telepressure and employee recovery. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *20*(2), 172–189. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0038278

Bartels, A. L., Peterson, S. J., & Reina, C. S. (2019). Understanding well-being at work: Development and validation of the eudaimonic workplace well-being scale. *PLoS ONE*, *14*(4), e0215957. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0215957

Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*(3), 497–529. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.117.3.497

Beck, J. W., Scholer, A. A., & Hughes, J. (2017). Divergent effects of distance versus velocity disturbances on emotional experiences during goal pursuit. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *102*(7), 1109–1123. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000210

Bernerth, J. B., Armenakis, A. A., Feild, H. S., Giles, W. F., & Walker, H. J. (2007). Leader–member social exchange (LMSX): Development and validation of a scale. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *28*(8), 979–1003. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.443

Bhave, D. P., & Lefter, A. M. (2018). The other side: Occupational interactional requirements and work–home enrichment. *Academy of Management Journal*, *61*(1), 139–164. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2016.0369

Bindl, U. K., Parker, S. K., Sonnentag, S., & Stride, C. B. (2022). Managing your feelings at work, for a reason: The role of individual motives in affect regulation for performance-related outcomes at work. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *43*(7), 1251–1270. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2628

Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. Wiley.

Bowles, H. R., & Gelfand, M. (2010). Status and the evaluation of workplace deviance. *Psychological Science*, *21*(1), 49–54. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797609356509

Briggs, C. Q., Gardner, D. M., & Ryan, A. M. (2023). Competence-questioning communication and gender: Exploring mansplaining, ignoring, and interruption behaviors. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *38*(6), 1325–1353. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-022-09871-7

Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, *1*(3), 185–216. https://doi.org/10.1177/135910457000100301

Bush, J. T., Baer, M. D., Welsh, D. T., Outlaw, R., Garud, N., & Sessions, H. (2021). To what do I owe this visit? The drawbacks and benefits of in-role and non-role intrusions. *Journal of Management*, *48*(7), 1888–1917. https://doi.org/10.1177/01492063211015288

Carver, C. S., Scheier, M. F., & Weintraub, J. K. (1989). Assessing coping strategies: A theoretically based approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *56*(2), 267–283. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.56.2.267

Cialdini, R. B., Borden, R. J., Thorne, A., Walker, M. R., Freeman, S., & Sloan, L. R. (1976). Basking in reflected glory: Three (football) field studies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *34*(3), 366–375. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.34.3.366

Claessens, B. J. C., Van Eerde, W., Rutte, C. G., & Roe, R. A. (2010). Things to do today…: A daily diary study on task completion at work. *Applied*

[4]We thank an anonymous reviewer for suggesting that we add a similar sentence as a conclusion to the practical implications section.

Psychology, *59*(2), 273–295. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2009.00390.x

Clark, M. A., Smith, R. W., & Haynes, N. J. (2020). The multidimensional workaholism scale: Linking the conceptualization and measurement of workaholism. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *105*(11), 1281–1307. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000484

Colbert, A. E., Bono, J. E., & Purvanova, R. K. (2016). Flourishing via workplace relationships: Moving beyond instrumental support. *Academy of Management Journal*, *59*(4), 1199–1223. https://doi.org/10.5465/amj.2014.0506

Colquitt, J. A., Sabey, T. B., Rodell, J. B., & Hill, E. T. (2019). Content validation guidelines: Evaluation criteria for definitional correspondence and definitional distinctiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *104*(10), 1243–1265. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000406

Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E. L., Daniels, S. R., & Hall, A. V. (2017). Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies. *Academy of Management Annals*, *11*(1), 479–516. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2015.0099

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of Management*, *31*(6), 874–900. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206305279602

Dabbish, L., & Kraut, R. E. (2004). Controlling interruptions: Awareness displays and social motivation for coordination. *Proceedings of the 2004 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work*, 182-191.

De Dreu, C., & Nauta, A. (2009). Self-interest and other-orientation in organizational behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(4), 913–926. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014494

de Wit, F. R. C., Greer, L. L., & Jehn, K. A. (2012). The paradox of intragroup conflict: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *97*(2), 360–390. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024844

Deci, E. L., Olafsen, A. H., & Ryan, R. M. (2017). Self-determination theory in work organizations: The state of a science. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *4*(1), 19–43. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-032516-113108

Djurdjevic, E., Stoverink, A. C., Klotz, A. C., Koopman, J., da Motta Veiga, S. P., Yam, K. C., & Chiang, J. T. (2017). Workplace status: The development and validation of a scale. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *102*(7), 1124–1147. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000202

Farley, S. D. (2008). Attaining status at the expense of likeability: Pilfering power through conversational interruption. *Journal of Nonverbal Behavior*, *32*(4), 241–260. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10919-008-0054-x

Feldman, D. C. (1984). The development and enforcement of group norms. *Academy of Management Review*, *9*(1), 47–53. https://doi.org/10.2307/258231

Finn, J. (2006). An exploratory study of email use by direct service social workers. *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, *24*(4), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1300/J017v24n04_01

Fletcher, K. A., Potter, S. M., & Telford, B. N. (2018). Stress outcomes of four types of perceived interruptions. *Human Factors*, *60*(2), 222–235. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018720817738845

Groysberg, B., Polzer, J. T., & Elfenbein, H. A. (2011). Too many cooks spoil the broth: How high-status individuals decrease group effectiveness. *Organization Science*, *22*(3), 722–737. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.1100.0547

Gurman. (2022). *Apple sets return-to-office deadline of sept. 5 after covid delays*. Bloomberg, Retrieved August 2023 from https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-08-15/apple-sets-return-to-office-deadline-of-sept-5-after-delays#xj4y7vzkg

Haapakangas, A., Hongisto, V., Varjo, J., & Lahtinen, M. (2018). Benefits of quiet workspaces in open-plan offices—Evidence from two office relocations. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *56*(1), 63–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2018.03.003

Heider, F. (1958). The naive analysis of action. In F. Heider (Ed.), *The psychology of interpersonal relations* (pp. 79–124). John Wiley & Sons Inc. https://doi.org/10.1037/10628-004

Hinkin, T. R. (1998). A brief tutorial on the development of measures for use in survey questionnaires. *Organizational Research Methods*, *1*(1), 104–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/109442819800100106

House, J. (2006). Communicative styles in English and German. *European Journal of English Studies*, *10*(3), 249–267. https://doi.org/10.1080/13825570600967721

Hu, L., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *6*(1), 1–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10705519909540118

Huang, J. L., Curran, P. G., Keeney, J., Poposki, E. M., & DeShon, R. P. (2012). Detecting and deterring insufficient effort responding to surveys. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *27*(1), 99–114. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-011-9231-8

Ishii, K., Lyons, M. M., & Carr, S. A. (2019). Revisiting media richness theory for today and future. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*, *1*(2), 124–131. https://doi.org/10.1002/hbe2.138

James, D., & Clarke, S. (1993). Women, men, and interruptions: A critical review. In D. Tannen (Ed.), *Gender and conversational interaction* (pp. 281–312). Oxford University Press.

Jett, Q. R., & George, J. M. (2003). Work interrupted: A closer look at the role of interruptions in organizational life. *Academy of Management Review*, *28*(3), 494–507. https://doi.org/10.2307/30040736

Judge, T. A., & Kammeyer-Mueller, J. (2011). Happiness as a societal value. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, *25*(1), 30–41. https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.25.1.30

Kamdar, D., & Van Dyne, L. (2007). The joint effects of personality and workplace social exchange relationships in predicting task performance and citizenship performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *92*(5), 1286–1298. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.92.5.1286

Käser, P. A. W., Fischbacher, U., & König, C. J. (2013). Helping and quiet hours: Interruption-free time spans can harm performance. *Applied Psychology: an International Review*, *62*(2), 286–307. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.2012.00517.x

Keller, A. C., Meier, L. L., Elfering, A., & Semmer, N. K. (2020). Please wait until I am done! Longitudinal effects of work interruptions on employee well-being. *Work & Stress*, *34*(2), 148–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2019.1579266

Kitayama, S., Markus, H. R., & Kurokawa, M. (2000). Culture, emotion, and well-being: Good feelings in Japan and the United States. *Cognition and Emotion*, *14*(1), 93–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/026999300379003

Leary, M. R., Kelly, K. M., Cottrell, C. A., & Schreindorfer, L. S. (2013). Construct validity of the need to belong scale: Mapping the nomological network. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, *95*(6), 610–624. https://doi.org/10.1080/00223891.2013.819511

LeBreton, J. M., Hargis, M. B., Griepentrog, B., Oswald, F. L., & Ployhart, R. E. (2007). A multidimensional approach for evaluating variables in organizational research and practice. *Personnel Psychology*, *60*(2), 475–498. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2007.00080.x

Lee, H. W., Bradburn, J., Johnson, R. E., Lin, S., & Chang, C. (2019). The benefits of receiving gratitude for helpers: A daily investigation of proactive and reactive helping at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *104*(2), 197–213. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000346

Leiner, D. (2019). Too fast, too straight, too weird: Non-reactive indicators for meaningless data in internet surveys. *Survey Research Methods*, *13*(3), 229–248. https://doi.org/10.1037/10.18148/srm/2019.v13i3.7403

Leroy, S., & Glomb, T. M. (2018). Tasks interrupted: How anticipating time pressure on resumption of an interrupted task causes attention

residue and low performance on interrupting tasks and how a 'ready-to-resume' plan mitigates the effects. *Organization Science*, *29*(3), 380–397. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.2017.1184

Leroy, S., Schmidt, A. M., & Madjar, N. (2020). Interruptions and task transitions: Understanding their characteristics, processes, and consequences. *Academy of Management Annals*, *14*(2), 661–694. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2017.0146

Leroy, S., Schmidt, A. M., & Madjar, N. (2021). Working from home during COVID-19: A study of the interruption landscape. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *106*(10), 1448–1465. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000972

Lim, J. H., Tai, K., Bamberger, P. A., & Morrison, E. W. (2020). Soliciting resources from others: An integrative review. *Academy of Management Annals*, *14*(1), 122–159. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0034

Lubke, G. H., & Muthén, B. (2005). Investigating population heterogeneity with factor mixture models. *Psychological Methods*, *10*(1), 21–39. https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.10.1.21

Mackey, J. D., McAllister, C. P., Ellen, B. P., & Carson, J. E. (2021). A meta-analysis of interpersonal and organizational workplace deviance research. *Journal of Management*, *47*(3), 597–622. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206319862612

McClelland, D. C. (1985). *Human motivation*. Cambridge University Press.

McFarlane, D. C. (2002). Comparison of four primary methods for coordinating the interruption of people in human-computer interaction. *Human-Computer Interaction*, *17*(1), 63–139. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327051HCI1701_2

McGrath, A. (2017). Dealing with dissonance: A review of cognitive dissonance reduction. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, *11*(12), e12362. https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12362

Mergener, A., & Trübner, M. (2022). Social relations and employees' rejection of working from home: A social exchange perspective. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, *37*(3), 469–487. https://doi.org/10.1111/ntwe.12247

Nees, M. A., & Fortna, A. (2015). A comparison of human versus virtual interruptions. *Ergonomics*, *58*(5), 852–856. https://doi.org/10.1080/00140139.2014.990934

Owens, B. P., Baker, W. E., Sumpter, D. M., & Cameron, K. S. (2016). Relational energy at work: Implications for job engagement and job performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *101*(1), 35–49. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000032

Pachler, D., Kuonath, A., Specht, J., Kennecke, S., Agthe, M., & Frey, D. (2018). Workflow interruptions and employee work outcomes: The moderating role of polychronicity. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *23*(3), 417–427. https://doi.org/10.1037/ocp0000094

Parke, M. R., Weinhardt, J. M., Brodsky, A., Tangirala, S., & DeVoe, S. E. (2018). When daily planning improves employee performance: The importance of planning type, engagement, and interruptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *103*(3), 300–312. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000278

Perlow, L. A. (1999). The time famine: Toward a sociology of work time. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *44*(1), 57–81. https://doi.org/10.2307/2667031

Podsakoff, N. P., Freiburger, K. J., Podsakoff, P. M., & Rosen, C. C. (2023). Laying the foundation for the challenge–hindrance stressor framework 2.0. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *10*(1), 165–199. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-080422-052147

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2012). Sources of method bias in social science research and recommendations on how to control it. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *63*(1), 539–569. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100452

Puranik, H., Koopman, J., & Vough, H. C. (2020). Pardon the interruption: An integrative review and future research agenda for research on work interruptions. *Journal of Management*, *46*(6), 806–842. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206319887428

Puranik, H., Koopman, J., & Vough, H. C. (2021). Excuse me, do you have a minute? An exploration of the dark- and bright-side effects of daily work interruptions for employee well-being. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *106*(12), 1867–1884. https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000875

Quinn, R. W., & Dutton, J. E. (2005). Coordination as energy-in-conversation. *Academy of Management Review*, *30*(1), 36–57. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2005.15281422

R Code Team. (2022). R: A language and environment for statistical computing. Vienna, Austria. http://www.R-project.org/

Reis, H. T., & Gable, S. L. (2000). Event-sampling and other methods for studying everyday experience. In H. T. Reis & C. M. Judd (Eds.), *Handbook of research methods in social and personality psychology* (pp. 190–222). Cambridge University Press.

Revelle, W. (2020). *Psych: Procedures for psychological, psychometric, and personality research*. Northwestern University.

Rhee, Y. W., & Choi, J. N. (2017). Knowledge management behavior and individual creativity: Goal orientations as antecedents and in-group social status as moderating contingency. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *38*(6), 813–832. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2168

Rivera, A. J. (2014). A socio-technical systems approach to studying interruptions: Understanding the interrupter's perspective. *Applied Ergonomics*, *45*(3), 747–756. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apergo.2013.08.009

Romero, N., Szóstek, A. M., Kaptein, M., & Markopoulos, P. (2007). Behaviours and preferences when coordinating mediated interruptions: Social and system influence. In L. J. Bannon, I. Wagner, C. Gutwin, R. H. R. Harper, & K. Schmidt (Eds.), *ECSCW 2007* (pp. 351–370). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-84800-031-5_19

Rosseel, Y. (2012). Lavaan: An R package for structural equation modeling and more. Version 0.5–12 (BETA). *Journal of Statistical Software*, *48*(2), 1–36.

Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2001). On happiness and human potentials: A review of research on hedonic and eudaimonic well-being. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *52*(1), 141–166. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.141

Schilpzand, P., De Pater, I. E., & Erez, A. (2014). Workplace incivility: A review of the literature and agenda for future research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *37*(1), 57–88. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1976

Schmidt, P. L. (2001). *Understanding American and German business cultures*. Meridian World Press.

Scott, B. A., & Judge, T. A. (2009). The popularity contest at work: Who wins, why, and what do they receive? *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *94*(1), 20–33. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0012951

Seipp, A. (2019). Why do we keep interrupting ourselves? Exploring the reasons for internal interruptions at work. *Performance Enhancement & Health*, *7*(1), 100148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.peh.2019.100148

Settoon, R. P., & Mossholder, K. W. (2002). Relationship quality and relationship context as antecedents of person- and task-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(2), 255–267. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.2.255

Shifrin, N. V., & Michel, J. S. (2022). Flexible work arrangements and employee health: A meta-analytic review. *Work & Stress*, *36*(1), 60–85. https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2021.1936287

Sonnentag, S., Reinecke, L., Mata, J., & Vorderer, P. (2018). Feeling interrupted—Being responsive: How online messages relate to affect at work. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *39*(3), 369–383. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2239

Spector, P. E., Bauer, J. A., & Fox, S. (2010). Measurement artifacts in the assessment of counterproductive work behavior and organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *95*(4), 781–790. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0019477

Sykes, E. R. (2011). Interruptions in the workplace: A case study to reduce their effects. *International Journal of Information Management*, *31*(4), 385–394. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2010.10.010

Tamir, M. (2009). What do people want to feel and why?: Pleasure and utility in emotion regulation. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, *18*(2), 101–105. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01617.x

Tiedens, L. Z. (2001). Anger and advancement versus sadness and subjugation: The effect of negative emotion expressions on social status conferral. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *80*(1), 86–94. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.80.1.86

Tonidandel, S., & LeBreton, J. M. (2015). RWA web: A free, comprehensive, web-based, and user-friendly tool for relative weight analyses. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *30*(2), 207–216. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-014-9351-z

Uhlmann, E. L., Leavitt, K., Menges, J. I., Koopman, J., Howe, M., & Johnson, R. E. (2012). Getting explicit about the implicit: A taxonomy of implicit measures and guide for their use in organizational research. *Organizational Research Methods*, *15*(4), 553–601. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428112442750

Umphress, E. E., Labianca, G., Brass, D. J., Kass, E., & Scholten, L. (2003). The role of instrumental and expressive social ties in employees' perceptions of organizational justice. *Organization Science*, *14*(6), 738–753. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.14.6.738.24865

Van de Ven, B., van den Tooren, M., & Vlerick, P. (2013). Emotional job resources and emotional support seeking as moderators of the relation between emotional job demands and emotional exhaustion: A two-wave panel study. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, *18*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030656

Van den Broeck, A., Ferris, D. L., Chang, C.-H., & Rosen, C. C. (2016). A review of self-determination theory's basic psychological needs at work. *Journal of Management*, *42*(5), 1195–1229. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316632058

von Gilsa, L., & Zapf, D. (2013). Motives for emotion regulation in service work. In P. L. Perrewé, C. C. Rosen, & J. R. B. Halbesleben (Eds.), *The role of emotion and emotion regulation in job stress and well being* (Vol. 11, pp. 133–161). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/s1479-3555(2013)0000011009

Wajcman, J., & Rose, E. (2011). Constant connectivity: Rethinking interruptions at work. *Organization Studies*, *32*(7), 941–961. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840611410829

Wang, B., Liu, Y., & Parker, S. K. (2020). How does the use of information communication technology affect individuals? A work design perspective. *Academy of Management Annals*, *14*(2), 695–725. https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0127

Wang, B., Liu, Y., Qian, J., & Parker, S. K. (2023). Help anyone, if helped by some: Understanding generalized reciprocity through the lens of interaction ritual chain theory. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *96*(1), 970–992. https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12442

Watkins, M. W. (2018). Exploratory factor analysis: A guide to best practice. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *44*(3), 219–246. https://doi.org/10.1177/0095798418771807

Wilhelmy, A., & Köhler, T. (2022). Qualitative research in work and organizational psychology journals: Practices and future opportunities. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *31*(2), 161–185. https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2021.2009457

Wilkes, S. M., Barber, L. K., & Rogers, A. P. (2018). Development and validation of the workplace interruptions measure. *Stress and Health*, *34*(1), 102–114. https://doi.org/10.1002/smi.2765

Wingard, J. (2022). *Elon Musk's big bet against remote work: Will Tesla win?* Forbes, Retrieved August 2023 from https://www.forbes.com/sites/jasonwingard/2022/06/04/elon-musks-big-bet-against-remote-work–will-tesla-win/

Zacher, H., Brailsford, H. A., & Parker, S. L. (2014). Micro-breaks matter: A diary study on the effects of energy management strategies on occupational well-being. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *85*(3), 287–297. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2014.08.005

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Leon Toebben is a PhD candidate of work and organizational psychology at the University of Mannheim (Germany). His research focuses on organizational behavior, specifically work interruptions and workplace habits.

Anne Casper is an Assistant Professor of work and organizational psychology at the Free University of Berlin (Germany). She is interested in how cognitive processes shape employee's well-being. She approaches her research questions with ecological momentary assessment, longitudinal survey studies, and experimental designs.

Wilken Wehrt is an Assistant Professor of work and organizational psychology at Maastricht University (The Netherlands). His research interests include habits, motivation, work-home conflict, and self-regulation.

Sabine Sonnentag is a Full Professor of work and organizational psychology at the University of Mannheim (Germany). She is interested in how individuals can stay well, healthy, and engaged at work, even under adverse circumstances. She studies job stress and job-stress recovery, health behavior (eating, physical exercise), and various aspects of self-regulation, including habit change.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

How to cite this article: Toebben, L., Casper, A., Wehrt, W., & Sonnentag, S. (2024). Reasons for interruptions at work: Illuminating the perspective of the interrupter. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2819