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Abstract

Background

For employed mothers, the move from weekend care load to Monday work entry may represent a psychosocial threshold rather than a neutral beginning to the week. Under unequal care arrangements and persistent mental load, this transition may shape women's day-level mental and emotional well-being in different ways. This study examined how employed mothers moved from weekend care into Monday work entry and how this transition was patterned across occupational contexts.

Methods

This qualitative study drew on semi-structured interviews with 30 employed mothers from three occupational groups: academics (n = 9), nurses (n = 12), and bankers (n = 9). Interviews focused on

weekend care load, trigger timing, Monday morning logistics, and work-entry appraisal. The analysis used the Gendered Cognitive Monday Transition Model (GCMTM) to trace the transition across six moments, from weekend care load to consequences. Cross-case comparison focused on how demand, control, and psychological disconnect combined to shape outcomes.

Results

Monday transition did not follow a single pattern. Three main patterns emerged: Monday as reset or breathing space, Monday as continuation of burden, and Monday as partial relief or ambivalent transition. Outcomes were not distinguished by demand alone. The more meaningful variation emerged in how demand combined with control and psychological disconnect at work entry. For some mothers, work entry opened a relative space of focus, relief, or self-return, including what some described as a "Happy Monday." For others, Monday marked the continuation of weekend burden in transformed form, while a third group experienced partial relief alongside residual fatigue, guilt, or pressure. Positive outcomes clustered more strongly among academics, whereas negative and ambivalent outcomes were more prominent among nurses and bankers, although no occupational group was internally uniform. The findings also showed that Monday transition did not always begin on Sunday evening or map neatly onto calendar Monday.

Conclusions

Monday work entry among employed mothers should not be treated as a neutral weekly routine. Rather, it is a differentiated psychosocial transition with relevance to women's mental and emotional well-being. Unequal care burden and work-entry conditions shape whether Monday is lived as relief, strain, or ambivalence. The findings support more mother-sensitive and context-sensitive workplace practices at the start of the week.

Keywords: employed mothers; women's mental health; psychosocial well-being; Monday transition; mental load; unpaid care; maternal well-being; work-family interface; qualitative research

1 Background

For employed mothers, the shift from weekend care load to Monday work entry is not simply a routine return to work. It can function as a recurring psychosocial threshold through which unpaid care, household coordination, anticipatory strain, and re-entry into paid work are reorganized at the start of the week. This matters for women's psychosocial well-being because everyday life is not organized through separate "home" and "work" spheres in any clean sense; rather, women's routines are often structured through gendered expectations and unequal responsibility patterns that move across domains (West & Zimmerman, 1987; Finch, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 1989).

This issue becomes sharper when the cognitive and invisible dimensions of care are considered. Research on mental load has shown that mothers often carry not only physical care tasks but also the remembering, monitoring, anticipating, and planning work that sustains family life (Walzer, 1996; Offer, 2014; Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019; Daminger, 2019). More recent work has emphasized that this cognitive and emotional overload is consequential for women's stress, family–work strain, and well-being rather than a minor supplement to domestic labor (Dean et al., 2022; Haupt & Gelbgiser, 2024). From this perspective, Monday work entry should not be understood as a simple return after rest, but as movement out of care-intensive time that is often mentally saturated and unequally carried by mothers.

This is also relevant to women's mental and emotional health. Work–family research has long shown that strain at the work–family interface is consequential for psychological well-being, while more recent studies suggest that transitions and timing matter, not only total burden (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Rantanen et al., 2008; Cooklin et al., 2016; Allen et al., 2019; French et al., 2022). Research on mothers' return-to-work experiences and perinatal work–family strain likewise suggests that work re-entry can carry emotional negotiation, guilt, relief, and overload at the same time (Costantini et al., 2022; McCardel et al., 2024). Yet the specific move from weekend care load to Monday work entry among employed mothers remains under-conceptualized. Accordingly, the present study examines this threshold through the Gendered Cognitive Monday Transition Model (GCMTM), asking how demand, control, and

psychological disconnect shape whether Monday is experienced as reset, burden continuation, or ambivalent transition.

Dynamic and time-sensitive work–family scholarship further suggests that the timing of strain matters, not only its presence. Rather than unfolding in a flat and undifferentiated way, work–family processes cluster within particular temporal windows and are shaped by when demands emerge, accumulate, and carry over (Allen et al., 2019; French et al., 2022). Time is also socially organized within family life itself. Family schedules are negotiated through gendered expectations and routines (Daly, 2002), and women's experience of being rushed is closely tied to the unequal distribution of unpaid work, responsibility, and time pressure (Mattingly & Sayer, 2006). These insights suggest that the start of the workweek may be more than a routine marker. For employed mothers, it may operate as a socially organized transition point through which weekend care intensity becomes reconfigured rather than simply left behind.

Boundary and transition research reinforces that interpretation. Micro role transitions are not merely shifts in location or activity, but changes in role enactment, attention, and self-organization (Ashforth et al., 2000). Similarly, work–home boundaries are not simply crossed; they are actively negotiated, maintained, and blurred through everyday practices and organizational conditions (Kreiner et al., 2009). Control is especially important in this regard. Research on telecommuting and related flexibility arrangements has shown that work arrangements matter not only because they alter where work is done, but because they reshape job control, policy use, and work–family effectiveness (Kossek et al., 2006). In the present study, this broader line of thinking matters because Monday work entry is treated as a boundary event in which women move from one demanding domain into another without necessarily experiencing a clean psychological separation between them.

A smaller but highly relevant line of recent research has moved even closer to the present question. Völker et al. (2024) show that Monday reattachment plays a meaningful role in how weekend conditions carry into the workweek, while Darouei et al. (2024) demonstrate that home-to-work transitions are not

uniformly harmful and that appraisal processes are central to how such daily transitions are experienced. These studies are important because they shift attention away from static workload explanations toward transition, timing, and appraisal. Even so, they do not directly theorize the move from weekend care load to Monday work entry among employed mothers, nor do they place the gendered cognitive organization of domestic life at the center of that transition.

This absence remains important not only for women-centered understandings of how everyday strain is patterned at the intersection of care, work, and organizational conditions, but also for broader psychosocial understandings of how care burden is carried into the start of the workweek. Research in and adjacent to this literature has shown that motherhood remains differentially penalized, monitored, negotiated, and structured within labor-market settings (Baker, 2010; Crowley, 2013; Costantini et al., 2022; Mendonca et al., 2023; Guyotte et al., 2023). Yet the specific threshold between weekend care time and Monday work entry has remained under-described, even though feminist care-labor research strongly suggests that it is likely to matter for employed mothers' psychosocial well-being.

To analyze this threshold, the present study uses the Gendered Cognitive Monday Transition Model (GCMTM), a process-oriented analytic framework that traces movement from weekend care load (T0) to trigger (T1), Monday morning logistics (T2), work-entry appraisal (T3), outcome (T4), and consequences (T5). GCMTM does not treat demand, control, and disconnect as stand-alone themes. Rather, these dimensions function as the core appraisal mechanism through which similar starting conditions may yield different Monday transition outcomes. In this sense, the analytic framework draws on appraisal thinking in stress research (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and remains broadly compatible with the view that stress processes are shaped by access to, or loss of, meaningful resources and control (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001, 2011). The study's argument is not that Monday is inherently positive or inherently negative for employed mothers. Instead, it shows that Monday transition is differentiated: for some women it opened a relative breathing space or even, in their own words, a "Happy Monday"; for others it marked the continuation of burden; and for others it took an ambivalent form in which relief and residual strain

coexisted. The contribution of the study, therefore, is to conceptualize Monday work entry among employed mothers as a psychosocial and contextually patterned transition rather than a neutral start to the workweek.

2 Methods

2.1 Study design and analytic orientation

This study used a qualitative, women-centered design to examine how employed mothers moved from weekend care load into Monday work entry. The analytic aim was not to produce a generic typology detached from lived experience, but to identify how different transition logics became visible across cases as mothers moved from care-intensive weekend time into the first work threshold of the week. The women-centered framing in this article refers to the gendered social organization of care, responsibility, and work entry among mothers. The analysis was therefore concerned with unequal care relations and responsibility patterns rather than with a biological account of sex.

The study was also process-oriented. Rather than treating Monday as a static feeling or a general attitude toward the start of the week, the analysis approached it as an unfolding transition shaped by timing, sequence, and appraisal. This orientation was consistent with temporal and transition-based work-family scholarship, which suggests that everyday crossings between home and work are shaped not by burden alone, but by when demands emerge and how they are appraised (Ashforth et al., 2000; Allen et al., 2019; French et al., 2022; Darouei et al., 2024). The interview stance was also informed by women-centered qualitative traditions that treat women's accounts as analytically important rather than as secondary illustrations of pre-existing models (Oakley, 1981).

As a single author, I approached the analysis reflexively, with particular attention to preserving participant language, avoiding the flattening of mothers' accounts into pre-set categories, and treating women's descriptions of care, relief, guilt, and work entry as analytically primary. The women-centered orientation of the study therefore shaped not only the framing of the research question, but also the interpretation of transition patterns across cases.

2.2 Participants and occupational contexts

The analytic corpus consisted of 30 employed mothers from three occupational groups: academics (n = 9), nurses (n = 12), and bankers (n = 9). Participants ranged in age from 28 to 45 years (M = 36.47); 28 were married and 2 were single mothers. Sixteen participants had one child, 12 had two children, and 2 had three children; one nurse participant was also pregnant at the time of interview. Participants were eligible if they had at least one child aged 0–12. In the final sample, all mothers met this criterion, although some also had older children.

Participants worked across university, hospital, and banking settings, including public universities, public hospital environments, shift-based and ward-based nursing schedules, and bank settings marked by target pressure, customer intensity, and varying degrees of schedule control. Because the purpose of the study was cross-case pattern analysis rather than statistical generalization, the sample was used to illuminate differentiated transition logics rather than to estimate prevalence. Occupation was therefore treated as analytically important, but not as fate. The design allowed the study to examine whether some work arrangements more readily supported control, disconnect, and breathing space at work entry, without treating occupational group as a deterministic explanation.

2.3 Data collection and interview focus

The material consisted of qualitative interviews focused on weekend care load, the timing and form of Monday trigger experiences, Monday morning logistics, work-entry feelings and thoughts, and the broader tone of the transition into the workweek. Interviews were conducted in Turkish using individual semi-structured interviews, primarily face-to-face, with some interviews conducted online or by phone. Interview length ranged from approximately 9 to 17 minutes. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Interview prompts addressed, among other issues, the atmosphere of Monday morning preparation and commuting, the first emotion felt upon starting work, whether time at work could sometimes feel lighter or more one's own than time at home, whether Monday resembled a conventional "Monday syndrome" or a different post-weekend experience, and

whether relief at work entry was accompanied by guilt or social pressure. Although the interviews were relatively brief, they were tightly focused on a clearly bounded experiential window and used a common semi-structured prompt set designed to elicit concrete accounts of Monday transition across cases. Interviews were treated as experience-near accounts rather than as prompts for extracting only abstract themes. This was important because participant language was retained where analytically consequential, including literal expressions such as “Happy Monday” when those phrases were directly present in the interviews. Interview attention centered not only on overtly evaluative language, such as whether Monday felt difficult or relieving, but also on the metaphors, bodily descriptions, and short expressions through which transition tone became visible in the data—for example, “reset,” “new page,” “kaos” (“chaos”), “karın ağrısı” (“stomach ache”), or “işe gelince rahatlama” (“relief upon arriving at work”).

2.4 Analytic framework and cross-case procedure

The analysis was guided by the Gendered Cognitive Monday Transition Model (GCMTM) (see Figure 1). The model organizes Monday transition across six moments: weekend care load (T0), trigger (T1), Monday morning logistics (T2), work-entry appraisal (T3), outcome (T4), and consequences (T5). Within T3, demand, control, and disconnect were treated as the core appraisal dimensions. These were not written up as stand-alone themes; rather, they functioned as the analytic mechanism through which transition outcomes were interpreted.

Analytically, the study proceeded through a directed, process-oriented cross-case reading of a master matrix and standardized case summaries. The point of the matrix was not mechanical coding for its own sake, but disciplined comparison across cases. Cases were compared in terms of the relation between weekend burden, trigger timing, Monday morning logistics, work-entry appraisal, and overall outcome. Across repeated cross-case reading, demand alone did not explain variation in outcomes. The sharper distinction appeared in how demand combined with control and psychological disconnect at work entry. This procedure yielded three main transition patterns: Monday as reset or breathing space, Monday as continuation of burden, and Monday as partial relief or ambivalent transition. Boundary conditions and

exception cases were retained analytically rather than treated as noise, because several cases with heavy T0 or T2 conditions still moved toward positive outcomes, while some cases with apparently protective elements remained ambivalent or negative. The analysis was therefore pattern-oriented without being reductionist.

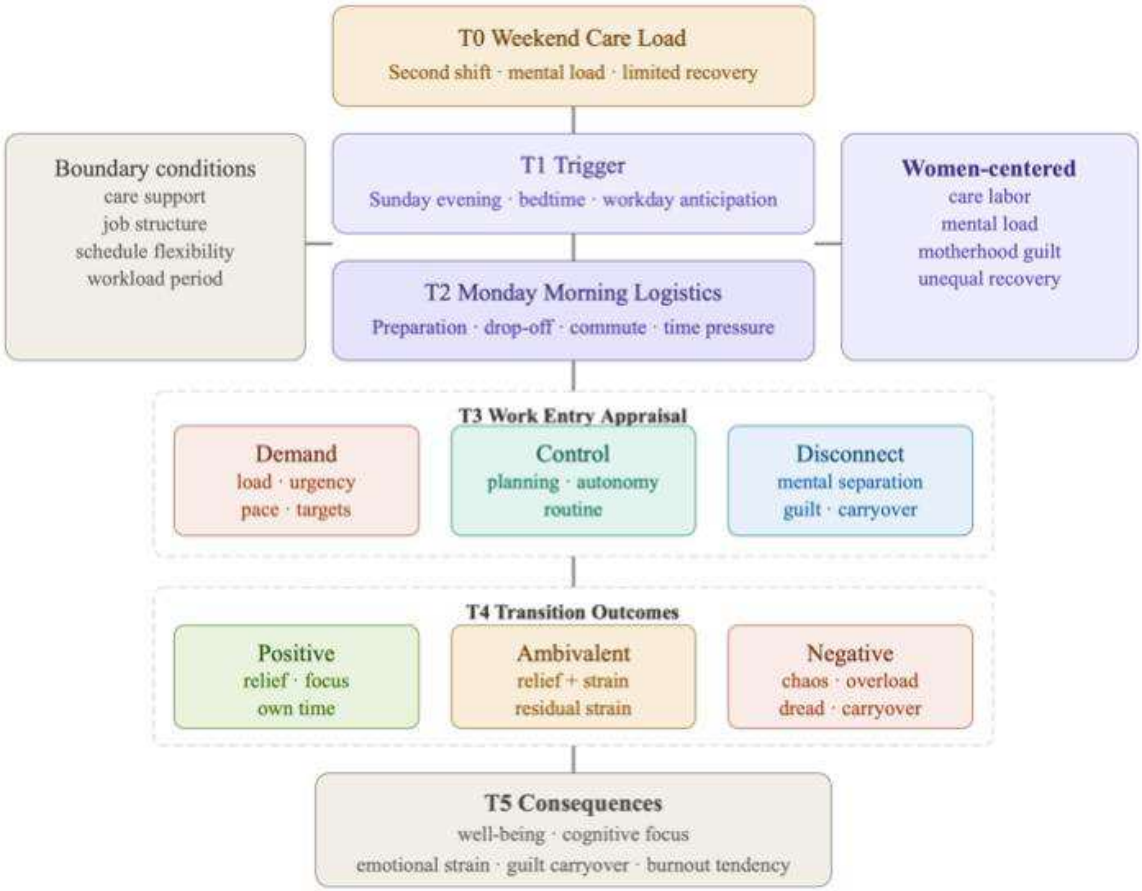


Figure 1. Gendered Cognitive Monday Transition Model (GCMTM): From Weekend Care Load to Monday Work Entry

2.5 Ethical considerations, anonymization, and reporting logic

All participants were reported through anonymized case IDs (e.g., KA, KH, KB). Any short direct expression or quotation used in the Results was paired with an anonymous code ID to preserve both participant voice and analytic traceability. Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Uşak University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision

No. 2026-61, 12 February 2026). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. All participants participated voluntarily and provided informed consent prior to interview.

The manuscript is reported through three figures and three tables, including a full case-level analytic matrix presented at the end of the main manuscript. This reporting logic was used to make the cross-case patterning transparent while preserving anonymity and keeping participant language visible within the analysis.

3 Results

3.1 Monday transition showed three main patterns across cases

Cross-case reading of the master matrix showed that Monday transition was not a single, uniform experience. Instead, the 30 cases clustered around three main pathways: a reset or breathing-space transition, a continuation-of-burden transition, and a partial-relief or ambivalent transition. The distribution of outcomes reflected this plurality, with 9 positive, 10 ambivalent, and 11 negative cases. Taken together, these findings indicate that Monday transition among employed mothers is best understood as a differentiated psychosocial transition rather than a uniform experience. A detailed case-level analytic matrix for all 30 cases is provided in Table 1.

3.2 Outcome was shaped not by demand alone, but by how demand combined with control and disconnect

Across cases, demand alone did not distinguish outcomes. Demand appeared high or very high in many cases, yet transition outcomes still differed. The more meaningful variation emerged in control and disconnect at work entry. Cases with relatively stronger control and disconnect more commonly aligned with positive outcomes, whereas cases with lower control and lower disconnect more often aligned with negative outcomes. This suggests that the decisive distinction in Monday transition lies not only in the amount of burden present, but in how that burden is appraised and managed at the point of work entry. In

the cross-case pattern map (Figure 2), positive outcomes were clustered around high demand combined with relatively higher control and disconnect; negative outcomes around high demand combined with lower control and lower disconnect; and ambivalent outcomes around high demand combined with partial or moderate levels of control and disconnect. The three pattern families are summarized comparatively in Table 2.

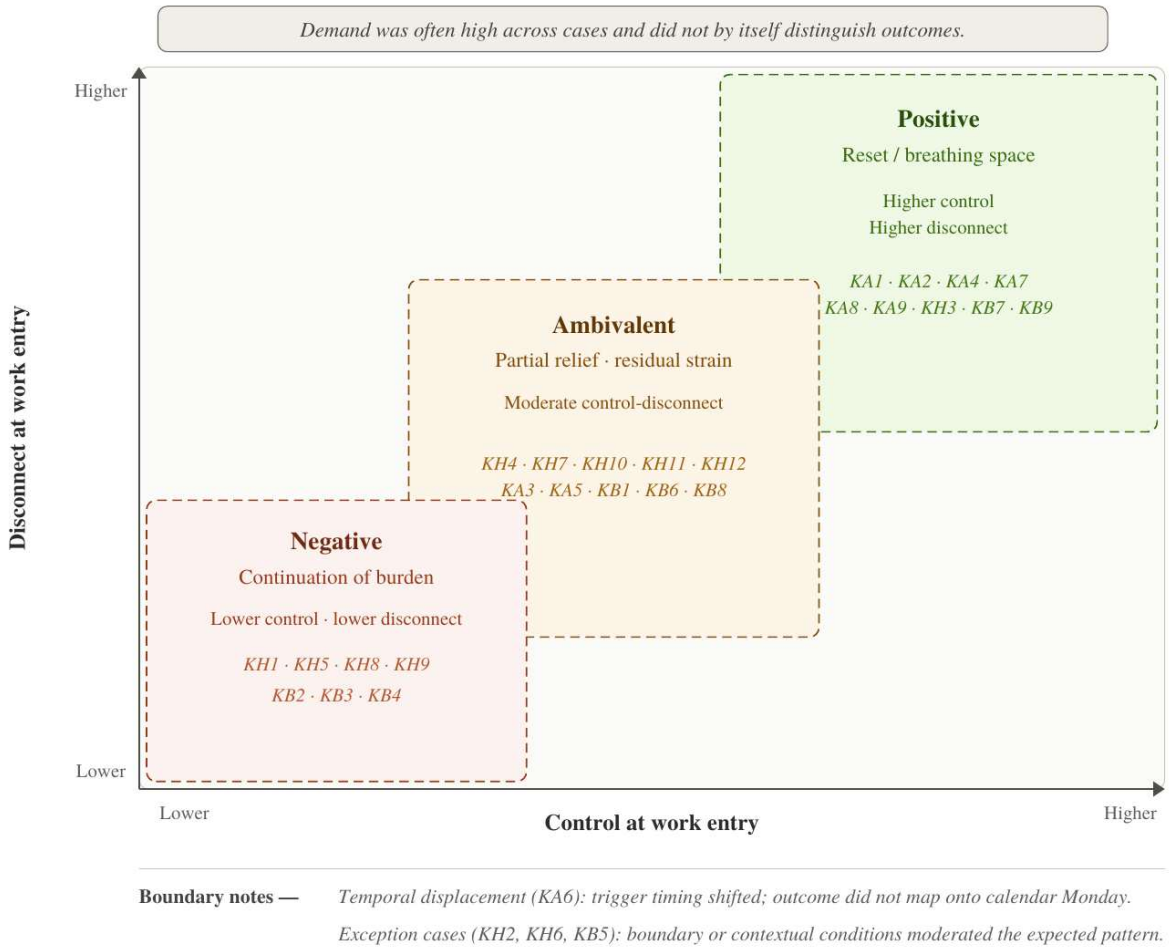


Figure 2. Cross-Case Pattern Map of Monday Transition Outcomes.

3.3 Monday as reset / breathing space ("Happy Monday")

The first pattern captured cases in which Monday work entry created a relative space of self-return, focus, or breathing after care-heavy weekend time. Importantly, this did not mean that weekend burden was absent. Rather, these cases showed that heavy care load and intense Monday preparation did not

automatically produce a negative transition if work entry opened a more manageable and psychologically separable space. In this pattern, Monday was not simply endured; it could become a moment of relative relief, order, and a renewed sense of self.

[KA7] described Monday as “Happy Monday,” “şükür saatleri” (“hours of relief/thankfulness”), and even a form of “kaçış” (“escape”). [KA8] used the language of “reset” and “yeni başlangıç” (“new beginning”). [KA9], despite very high weekend care burden, described Monday as a “mükafat” (“reward”), “Happy Monday,” and an “özgürlük alanı” (“space of freedom”). [KH3] called it a “yeni sayfa” (“new page”), while [KB7] described work entry as “dinlenme” (“rest”) and “kendimle baş başa kalmak” (“to be alone with myself”).

Cross-case comparison showed that this was not a superficial positivity effect. Several of these cases still involved high demand, heavy weekend care work, or very hard Monday mornings. What differentiated them was that work entry became more manageable, less guilt-saturated, and less mentally divided. In short, positive Monday transition did not mean the absence of burden; it meant the opening of a controllable, relatively undivided space after burden.

3.4 Monday as continuation of burden

The second pattern captured cases in which Monday did not open a new space, but instead carried weekend care burden forward into work in another form. In these cases, Monday work entry did not produce meaningful separation from the domestic line of strain. Rather, care, guilt, time pressure, and work demand remained psychologically continuous. This was the clearest negative pathway in the matrix and was most consistently associated with lower control and lower disconnect at work entry.

[KH5] was marked by “KAOS” (“chaos”). [KH9] stated “Keşke pazartesi olmasa” (“I wish it were not Monday”) and “Pazartesi çok kötü” (“Monday is very bad”). [KB2] described “karın ağrısı” (“stomach ache”), while [KB3] spoke of “karın ağrısı” (“stomach ache”), “ayaklarımın geriye gitmesi” (“my feet pulling backward”), and an “istenmeyen gün” (“an unwanted day”). [KB4] used “Pazartesi sendromu”

("Monday syndrome"), "döngü" ("cycle"), and "çocuklarımdan ayrıldığım gün" ("the day I separate from my children").

Across these cases, the transition did not break from weekend care strain; it extended it. The strongest negative pattern was not defined simply by hard mornings or high demand, but by a specific combination: high demand, limited control, and weak psychological separation from home and children. In that configuration, even when short regulatory moments appeared later, they did not reorganize the transition as a whole. Monday therefore functioned less as a beginning than as the continuation of an already overloaded line.

3.5 Monday as partial relief / ambivalent transition

The third pattern captured cases in which work entry did provide relief, but the transition did not become fully positive. These were not analytically weak or indecisive cases. On the contrary, they showed that relief and burden could coexist within the same Monday. Work offered some order, focus, or emotional release, but that relief remained incomplete because fatigue, guilt, physical strain, or work pressure continued to accompany it.

[KH7] was summarized as "stres; işe gelince rahatlama" ("stress; relief upon arriving at work"). [KH12] combined "Annelerin kaçışı" ("mothers' escape") with "curcuna" ("commotion/chaos"). [KA5] emphasized "kendime zaman ayırma" ("making time for myself") and "odak" ("focus"). [KB1] carried both "stres" ("stress") and "Haydi Bismillah" ("here we go"), while [KB6] used "Evden kaçış" ("escape from home") and "dinlenme" ("rest").

These cases did not point to pure positivity. Rather, they indicated a partial transition: work brought some breathing space, yet not enough to cancel the weight of the morning, the body, or the emotional remainder of care. Cross-case comparison showed that this pathway was most often associated with high demand combined with partial or moderate control-disconnect. In that sense, ambivalence was not residual data. It marked a distinct transition logic in which women moved into work with some relief, but not a full

conversion of the overall experience into a clearly positive Monday. Table 2 summarizes this ambivalent pathway alongside the other two pattern families.

Table 2. Comparison of the Three Main Monday Transition Pattern Families

Pattern family	Core transition logic	Typical appraisal pattern	Typical outcome	Brief analytic note
Reset / Breathing Space	Work entry opens a relative space of focus, recovery, or self-return after weekend care burden	High demand + relatively higher control + relatively higher disconnect	Positive	Heavy T0 or intense T2 does not automatically block this pathway
Continuation of Burden	Weekend care burden continues into Monday in transformed form rather than giving way to relief	High demand + lower control + lower disconnect	Negative	Work entry is experienced less as a new space than as the continuation of existing burden
Partial Relief / Ambivalence	Work entry provides some relief, but the transition does not become fully positive	High demand + partial or moderate levels of control and disconnect	Ambivalent	Relief is present, but guilt, fatigue, or work pressure remains active

3.6 Occupation did not determine outcomes, but it shaped the context in which different transition patterns emerged

The occupational groups showed visible differences in outcome distribution, but these differences should not be read deterministically. Positive outcomes clustered more strongly among academics, whereas negative and ambivalent outcomes were more prominent among nurses and bankers. Specifically, among academics 6 of 9 cases were positive, 2 ambivalent, and 1 negative; among nurses 1 of 12 cases was positive, 5 ambivalent, and 6 negative; among bankers 2 of 9 cases were positive, 3 ambivalent, and 4 negative. This occupation-based distribution is shown in Figure 3 and Table 3.

The academic group was especially important because it showed stronger positive clustering without constituting a uniformly protected group. Cases such as [KA7], [KA8], and [KA9] illustrated how some academic arrangements more readily supported planning, self-direction, and mental separation at work entry. Yet the same occupational group also contained ambivalent cases such as [KA5] and [KA6], indicating that positive clustering did not amount to automatic occupational advantage.

The nurse group, by contrast, more often reflected a movement from care labor to clinical labor rather than from burden to relief. In several cases, Monday was experienced less as an exit from care than as the continuation of intense, embodied work in a different form. The banker group showed the clearest performance-saturated work-entry context: demand was often articulated not only as busyness, but as target pressure, sales pressure, monitoring, customer density, and the need for instant explanation. In these settings, work entry more often intensified or only partially softened strain rather than reliably opening a respite space. Occupation therefore did not function as fate, but as a contextual condition shaping the psychosocial circumstances under which Monday transition more often took a particular form.

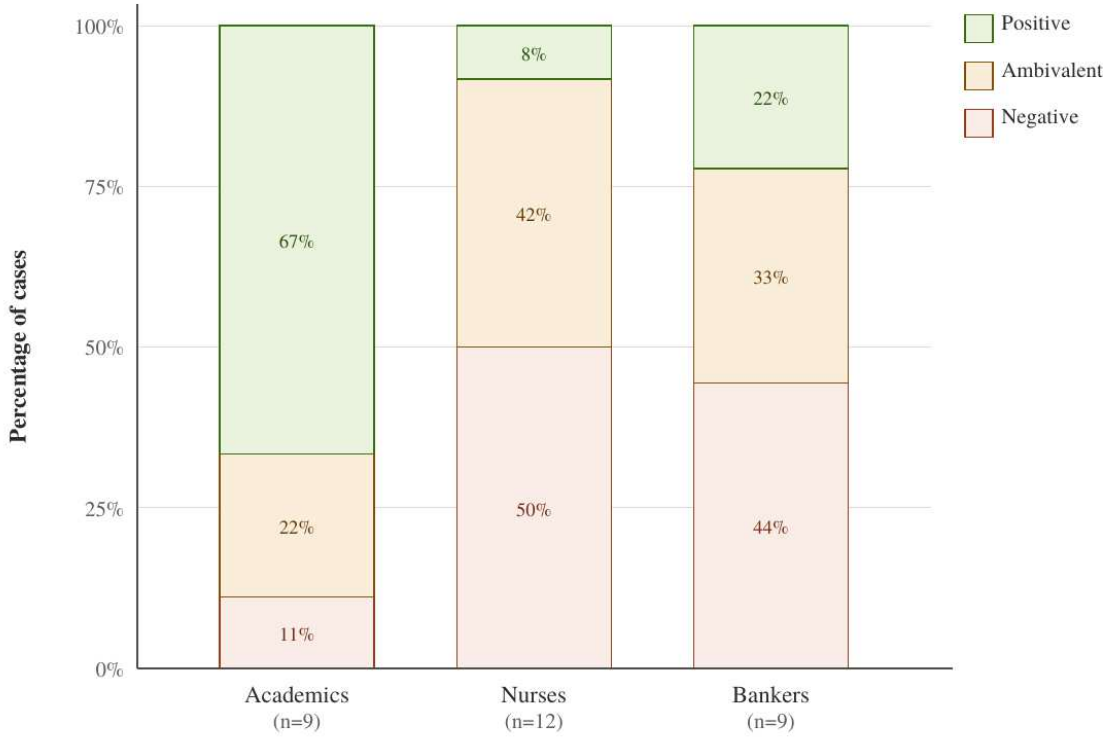


Figure 3. Distribution of Monday Transition Outcomes by Occupation.

Table 3. Occupational Distribution of Monday Transition Outcomes

Occupation	n	Positive	Ambivalent	Negative / brief cross-case note
Academics	9	6	2	1; positive clustering is stronger, but internal variation remains
Nurses	12	1	5	6; negative and ambivalent transitions are more prominent; burden more often shows continuity
Bankers	9	2	3	4; negative outcomes are more visible, but the pattern is not uniform

3.7 Weekend care load and Monday morning logistics mattered, but they did not determine the outcome on their own

Weekend care load and Monday morning logistics were clearly important across cases, but they did not by themselves determine the outcome. As shown in Figure 2, several positive cases still involved very heavy weekend burden, fragmented preparation, or demanding Monday starts, while some negative and ambivalent cases persisted even where partial supports or routines were present. These exception cases did not weaken the three-pattern structure; rather, they clarified that burden alone was insufficient to explain transition outcomes across cases.

4 Discussion

This study shows that Monday work entry is not a trivial scheduling moment for employed mothers, but a differentiated psychosocial threshold with consequences for women's day-level mental and emotional well-being. Across cases, Monday was lived in three main ways: as reset or breathing space, as continuation of burden, and as partial relief or ambivalent transition. These patterns suggest that the beginning of the workweek is not experienced uniformly among mothers under unequal care arrangements. Rather, it is a recurrent point at which weekend care load is emotionally reorganized rather than simply left behind. For some women, work entry briefly opened focus, relief, or self-return; for others, it prolonged guilt, overload, and divided attention. In this sense, Monday mattered not because of calendar symbolism alone, but because it condensed maternal mental load, strain, and possible relief at a recurring weekly boundary (Offer, 2014; Daminger, 2019; Dean et al., 2022; Cooklin et al., 2016).

A second contribution concerns mechanism. Negative outcomes were not produced by demand alone. The sharper distinction appeared in whether high demand was accompanied by some degree of control and psychological disconnect at work entry. This shifts interpretation away from a simple volume-of-burden account. Heavy weekend care load or intense Monday morning logistics did not automatically yield negative outcomes, and protective elements did not automatically yield positive ones. What mattered more was whether mothers could enter work with some manageability, planfulness, and temporary mental

separation. In that respect, the findings extend work–family and transition-based scholarship by showing that women's psychosocial well-being at the start of the week depends not only on how much care work preceded Monday, but on how that burden is appraised and carried into paid work (Ashforth et al., 2000; Allen et al., 2019; Darouei et al., 2024). This is also why "Happy Monday" is analytically important: it does not indicate the absence of burden, but moments in which work becomes a relative breathing space within an otherwise unequal care arrangement.

The study also contributes to women-centered understandings of motherhood at work by making visible a threshold that has largely remained under-described. Feminist care-labor scholarship has long shown that mothers' lives are structured by unequal and often invisible responsibility patterns, but Monday work entry has rarely been theorized as a distinct transition through which those burdens may be temporarily softened, reorganized, or intensified (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Offer, 2014; Daminger, 2019; Dean et al., 2022). The present findings suggest that employed mothers do not simply move from "home" to "work." Rather, they move from one socially organized domain of demand into another, and the quality of that movement depends on whether work opens a manageable and psychologically separable space or reproduces pressure in a new form. This is why the visibility of participant expressions such as "Happy Monday," "reset," "kaos," "karın ağrısı," or "annelerin kaçışı" is analytically important: these were not decorative phrases, but compact indicators of how transition was lived and appraised across cases.

Occupation should also be interpreted carefully. The pattern was visible, but it was not deterministic. Positive outcomes clustered more strongly among academics, whereas negative and ambivalent outcomes were more prominent among nurses and bankers. Yet no group was internally uniform. What this suggests is not that one occupation is inherently protective and another inherently harmful, but that occupational settings condense structural conditions into different work-entry environments. In the present data, some academic arrangements more readily supported planning, self-direction, and uninterrupted time at work entry; many nursing contexts reflected a movement from care labor into another form of urgent and embodied labor; and many banking cases reflected performance-saturated

entry environments marked by target pressure, monitoring, and customer density. The crucial issue, therefore, is whether a given setting allows some degree of planfulness, autonomy, and mental separation at the point of Monday re-entry. The occupation-based distribution shown in Figure 3 and Table 3 should be read in that contextual rather than deterministic sense. Occupation therefore did not function as fate, but as a contextual condition shaping the psychosocial circumstances under which Monday transition was more likely to take a particular form (Crompton & Lyonette, 2011; Costantini et al., 2022).

One further contribution concerns time. Several exception cases showed that Monday transition did not always begin on Sunday evening and did not always map neatly onto calendar Monday. In some cases, the felt transition shifted toward another day or began earlier, depending on when work intensity, anticipated workload, or role pressure became salient. This matters because it suggests that Monday transition should not be treated as a single clock-time event. Rather, it is a temporally variable boundary process. That reading is consistent with time-sensitive work-family research and with the idea that micro role transitions are socially organized rather than naturally given (Ashforth et al., 2000; Allen et al., 2019; French et al., 2022).

4.1 Implications for women's psychosocial well-being and mother-sensitive workplace practice

The practical implication of this study is not that all employed mothers need the same workplace response. Rather, the findings suggest that organizations should recognize Monday work entry as a potentially sensitive point for women's psychosocial well-being, especially where weekend care burden, anticipatory mental load, and low control converge. What the present study supports is not a universal intervention claim, but a more limited and practice-oriented point: the start of the workweek should not be assumed to be psychosocially neutral for employed mothers.

Where genuinely feasible, mother-sensitive start-of-week workplace arrangements may help reduce the immediate carryover of overload and support a more manageable work entry. Such arrangements could include flexible Monday start windows, lower early-Monday meeting density, more predictable scheduling, hybrid or remote starts where appropriate, protection from non-essential first-hour demands,

or work-entry routines that increase predictability and reduce immediate overload. These implications should remain context-sensitive rather than one-size-fits-all. In health-service settings, the issue may center more on shift handover burden, staffing pressure, and the immediate intensity of clinical labor. In performance-saturated office work, the issue may be the concentration of target pressure, monitoring, and customer-facing demands at the start of the week. In more self-directed knowledge work, the relevant factor may be whether workers can preserve a protected corridor of planning, pacing, and mental separation at entry (Allen et al., 2013; Grice et al., 2008; Pilarz, 2021; Völker et al., 2024; Ernawati et al., 2022; McCardel et al., 2024).

The study should also be read within clear boundaries. This is a qualitative cross-case analysis of 30 employed mothers in three occupational groups, so it does not claim prevalence estimates or universal occupational effects. It does not directly observe household negotiations over time or include partner accounts. The women-centered framing is deliberate, but it also sets a limit: the study does not include a comparative male sample and therefore does not claim that these Monday processes are unique to mothers in an absolute sense. Relatedly, the occupational pattern should not be read as independent of correlated structural conditions such as schedule flexibility, care access, or partner support, which could not be fully disentangled here. Within these boundaries, however, the study provides a transparent cross-case account of Monday transition and identifies a concrete explanatory mechanism through which different outcomes emerge.

Future research can build on this foundation in several sensible ways. Additional occupational groups and family arrangements could test how robust the three-pattern structure remains in other contexts. Diary or short longitudinal designs could clarify how stable these Monday patterns are across weeks and life stages. Future qualitative and mixed-method research could also examine how Monday transition relates to return-to-work periods, workplace wellness arrangements, and day-level health-related outcomes among working mothers (McCardel et al., 2024; Ernawati et al., 2022). What should remain central,

however, is the study's core claim: the key issue is not whether burden exists, but whether Monday work entry opens a manageable and psychologically separable space after weekend care load.

5 Conclusions

This study showed that Monday work entry among employed mothers should not be treated as a neutral or uniform beginning to the workweek. Rather, it emerged as a differentiated psychosocial transition shaped by how weekend care load was carried into work, appraised at entry, and reorganized under different occupational conditions. Across the cases, Monday took three main forms: a relative reset or breathing space, the continuation of burden, and a partial or ambivalent transition in which relief and strain coexisted.

The findings also suggest that outcome was not explained by demand alone. The more meaningful distinction emerged in how demand combined with control and psychological disconnect at work entry. In this respect, the study contributes by showing that the transition from weekend care time to Monday work is patterned, but not reducible to workload volume alone. Occupation mattered, yet not deterministically; what appeared more important were the psychosocial conditions under which work entry became more or less manageable.

Taken together, the study conceptualizes Monday transition among employed mothers as a women-centered, psychosocially patterned, and well-being-relevant threshold rather than a simple scheduling routine. This framing has implications for future research on care, work, and weekly transition, as well as for research and practice concerned with women's psychosocial well-being.

List of abbreviations

GCMTM: Gendered Cognitive Monday Transition Model

T0: Weekend care load

T1: Trigger

T2: Monday morning logistics

T3: Work-entry appraisal

T4: Outcome

T5: Consequences

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Uşak University Social and Human Sciences Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision No. 2026-61, 12 February 2026). All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. All participants participated voluntarily and provided informed consent prior to interview.

Consent for publication

Not applicable.

Availability of data and materials

The qualitative interview materials generated and/or analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to participant confidentiality and the potentially identifiable nature of the data, but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Competing interests

MZÇ declares that he has no competing interests.

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Authors' contributions

MZÇ conceived the study, developed the research design, collected the data, conducted the analysis, interpreted the findings, and wrote the manuscript. MZÇ read and approved the final manuscript.

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Authors' information

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Table 1. Full Analytic Case Matrix of Monday Transition Patterns (n = 30)

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
KH1	Nurse	Heavy weekend care load; child care largely on her shoulders; weekend felt like a second shift.	Monday thinking began on Sunday morning through housework and getting-ready pressure.	No major extra morning logistics; the child was cared for at home.	High	Low–Moderate	Low	Negative	Rest did not begin after work; relief came only after the child slept.	Weekend care work extended into Monday; work entry remained stressful while her mind stayed with the child.
KH2	Nurse	High weekend load with children's homework, courses, cleaning, food, and care.	The transition began on Sunday evening/night.	School drop-off was tiring, but the commute briefly opened a small solitary relief space.	High	Moderate	Moderate–High	Negative	Some easing appeared later in the afternoon when intensity dropped.	Weekend home and childcare load became so heavy that even work stress felt more bearable by comparison.
KH3	Nurse	Weekend was heavy with housework, food, childcare, and domestic	No clear negative trigger; she looked forward to Monday.	Morning preparation and school drop-off felt tedious, but responsibilities clearly	High	Moderate–High	High	Positive	No clear negative carryover; fatigue was felt more on Friday	Despite a tiring weekend, Monday was experienced as re-entry into flow

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		responsibility.		lightened afterward.					than Monday.	and work with willingness.
KH4	Nurse	Laundry, children's clothing, lessons, homework, nursery preparation, bathing, and closing the house turned the weekend into a second shift.	The trigger settled in on Sunday afternoon/evening as the day was ending.	Very intense: dropping children off one by one while handling work calls and coordination on the way.	Very high	Moderate	Moderate–High	Ambivalent	Little breathing space before noon; relief came only later.	Child logistics and work crises began simultaneously, creating a very stressful but not entirely one-directional transition.
KH5	Nurse	Weekend was not rest; housework, school tasks, and care work continued, with very low partner support.	Sunday afternoon/evening brought an "eyvah" feeling with stomach pain.	Very intense morning rush: child preparation, self-preparation, and school drop-off.	High	Low–Moderate	Low	Negative	Mental overload continued at work; no full relief was described.	A bodily Sunday trigger combined with low support and low disconnect to produce a clearly negative transition.

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
KH6	Nurse	Moderate–high weekend load; one day for housework and another for errands, shopping, and family tasks.	The transition began on Sunday evening, around 9 pm.	Partner handled child drop-off; she left early for work, but still felt stress on the way.	High	Moderate	Moderate–High	Negative	Relief appeared later in the afternoon, especially after three o'clock.	Even when child logistics were softened, the non-deferrable structure of the workday kept Monday difficult.
KH7	Nurse	Heavy weekend with homework, meals, cleaning, and general care; no time for herself.	The Monday thought began on Sunday evening after baths and bag preparation.	Dense and hurried; she described it as finishing one shift and starting a second.	Moderate–High	Moderate	Moderate	Ambivalent	Relief and calm were felt after arriving at work.	The morning line was difficult, but arriving at work felt more peaceful than the weekend.
KH8	Nurse	Weekend was full of house cleaning, childcare, and leftover weekday	Stress became clear on Sunday evening, especially after dinner.	Partner handled nursery drop-off, but the morning transition still did not	High	Low–Moderate	Low	Negative	The low-energy misfit eased somewhat by midweek.	Weekend load, pregnancy-related strain, and work-carried guilt

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		domestic work.		feel mentally easy.						combined to intensify Monday.
KH9	Nurse	Weekend remained laborious with little personal time; the child's sleep difficulties added burden.	The trigger began on the afternoon before the 24-hour shift, not in a classic Sunday-evening pattern.	Active and difficult; getting to work became harder after motherhood.	High	Low	Low	Negative	Longing and guilt continued at work; motherhood had changed how she experienced Monday.	Shift structure, a young child, and low disconnect turned Monday into a day clearly to be avoided.
KH10	Nurse	Children's homework, school routines, housework, and sometimes shift duties intensified the weekend.	Stress emerged on Sunday evening, especially between 8 and 10 pm.	Markedly hectic because children had to get ready for school while she also had to get to work.	High	Moderate	Moderate–High	Ambivalent	The narrative emphasized regaining order and some relief after work began.	Sunday evening and Monday morning were stressful, but work offered a more controlled space than endless domestic labor.
KH11	Nurse	Weekend involved children's	Monday thinking started early,	Very intense morning routine with	Moderate–High	Moderate	Moderate	Ambivalent	The account emphasiz	An early-triggered morning

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		activities, visits, and ongoing household responsibilities, though sleeping later helped somewhat.	on Sunday morning.	children's breakfast, lunches, preparation, and her own preparation for work.					ed the morning transition and first feelings on entering work.	rush brought partial relief once work began and the scrambling ended.
KH12	Nurse	Weekend was busy with courses, shopping, homework, and housework, though also experienced as being with the children.	No clear negative trigger; mentally Monday felt good despite difficult sleep timing.	Very intense and difficult; she described the pre-work period as "curcuna".	Moderate–High	Moderate	High	Ambivalent	The Monday-specific negativity stayed mostly in the morning line; later the routine settled.	Weekend and morning were physically hard, but work entry itself was not negative; professional attachment kept Monday mentally positive.
KA1	Academic	Weekend looked like a second shift, with	The transition began after Sunday dinner	Hurried morning after the weekend	Moderate	Moderate–High	Moderate	Positive	Monday felt like the most enjoyable	While the weekend felt like a heavy

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		courses, care work, domestic tasks, and little time for herself.	but was not negative.	rhythm; it eased once the children were dropped off.					day, though this faded later in the week.	second shift, Monday became a more orderly, calmer, more self-owned space.
KA2	Academic	Saturday was dominated by childcare, laundry, cleaning, and household order; the weekend felt like a second shift.	After Sunday dinner she began mentally organizing the next day and the week.	Dense and hurried because of child preparation, breakfast timing, and drop-off arrangements.	Moderate–High	Moderate–High	High	Positive	Work entry created a clear sense of “time for myself”.	Despite a chaotic morning, arriving at work meant moving out of domestic load into self-owned time.
KA3	Academic	Very heavy weekend; domestic work, childcare, piled-up academic	The transition began on Sunday afternoon through food, school, and course organization.	Very stressful because one car, an early class for the spouse, and compressed preparation	Moderate–High	Moderate	High	Ambivalent	Physical weekend fatigue remained on Monday morning.	Despite Sunday-afternoon anxiety, work entry became a space for thinking

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		tasks, and hobbies felt like a third or fourth shift.		crowded the exit from home.						without interruption.
KA4	Academic	Very heavy weekend with home responsibilities, childcare, and work demands still running in the background.	Trigger was conditional rather than classic; she often could not think much about Monday because weekend work continued late.	Very intense and messy morning with school bag, breakfast, food, and homework checks.	High	Moderate–High	Moderate	Positive	Work entry created renewal, energy, and time of her own.	Even after a very tiring weekend, Monday was experienced as a motivating reset with renewed control.
KA5	Academic	Weekend housework, laundry, children's homework, and activities accumulated into a second shift.	Monday thinking appeared on Sunday evening and was accompanied by expectation of relief and happiness about going to work.	Very dense and hurried because the children were still on weekend rhythm and the morning was full of school lunch preparation and	Moderate	Moderate–High	High	Ambivalent	Fatigue and concentration problems lasted until noon.	Monday was mentally anticipated positively, but weekend fatigue continued into the first work hours.

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
				forgotten items.						
KA6	Academic	Moderate weekend burden: lesson preparation, time with the child, and domestic life together, buffered somewhat by partner support.	Conditional trigger; not a classic Sunday-evening pattern because the heaviest day was Tuesday in this period.	Low–moderate intensity; no morning class made the transition lighter, but child drop-off remained emotionally difficult.	High	Moderate	High	Negative	Relief emerged later, on the drive back after the teaching day.	The felt transition shifted away from classic Monday and toward the day on which work actually became heavy.
KA7	Academic	High weekend burden with home order, child homework, care, and planning for the academic week.	Monday thinking began on Sunday afternoon/evening as class timing and child preparation came into view.	Somewhat rushed and stressful after the slower weekend rhythm.	Moderate	Moderate–High	High	Positive	Work entry opened a space for planning, focus, and feeling better.	Despite weekend burden, Monday became a day of planning, focus, and even gratitude for returning to work.
KA8	Academic	High weekend	The trigger came on	Intense and constraining	High	Moderate–High	High	Positive	Monday functione	Despite a constrainin

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		burden with housework, childcare, and late-night academic work; rest had long disappeared.	Sunday night when she realized she had not completed what she intended.	because she had to prepare herself and her daughter simultaneously.					d as a reset, a motivational moment, and a way to place the week in order.	g morning transition, Monday opened space for resetting and rebuilding control.
KA9	Academic	Very high weekend burden; when the spouse was away, all childcare could fall on her, and academic work began only late at night.	No clear negative trigger; she thought of Monday as a chance to breathe, drink tea or coffee alone, and sit at the computer.	Very intense; waking and preparing the children and getting out of the house could take up to 45 minutes.	High	Moderate	High	Positive	Work entry functioned as breathing space, mental clearing, sociability, and time of her own.	Despite a very heavy weekend and a difficult morning, entering work felt like relief, freedom, and breathing space.
KB1	Banker	High weekend burden; housework, childcare, and family tasks piled	The trigger began with Sunday dinner; she explicitly called it the standard Sunday-to-	Intense morning with early waking, child breakfast, lunchbox,	High	Moderate	Moderate	Ambivalent	The narrative focused more on entry into work than on	Monday was stressful because of job intensity, yet also

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		up on the weekend.	Monday syndrome.	preparation, and school drop-off with her spouse.					longer-term consequences.	relatively relieving because it meant exiting weekend domestic load.
KB2	Banker	High weekend burden; even if Saturday began with slight relief, housework, re-ordering, personal needs, and childcare dominated.	The trigger began on Sunday afternoon and was accompanied by stomach pain.	Moderate–high intensity as alarm-setting, rescheduling, and nursery drop-off restarted the cycle.	Very high	Moderate	Low–Moderate	Negative	After adapting to Monday, the rest of the week flowed more easily.	Performance pressure and customer intensity made Monday difficult both mentally and physically.
KB3	Banker	Moderate–high weekend burden with children, shopping, and family routines,	The emotional trigger came mainly on Sunday night, though difficult customers and targets could bring it	Intense and panicked; oversleeping, rushing, and urging the older child to hurry created	Very high	Low–Moderate	Low	Negative	By day's end she could go home exhausted, irritable, and less tolerant	Even with some organization at home, real-time targets and surveillance kept Monday

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		partly buffered by cleaning help and spreading tasks across the week.	forward to Friday.	guilt in the car.					with her children.	strongly negative.
KB4	Banker	High weekend burden with twin children, care work, meals, cleaning, and large household tasks; the weekend felt like a second shift.	The trigger came at bedtime on Sunday night.	Very intense morning with breakfast, ironing, waking, dressing, persuading the children, and rushing.	Very high	Low–Moderate	Low	Negative	Monday tiredness spread across the whole week rather than remaining a brief morning effect.	Weekend care fatigue and Monday work pressure piled up into a heavy cycle under low disconnect.
KB5	Banker	High weekend burden; cleaning, childcare, and physical domestic	The trigger began on Sunday afternoon and intensified when she thought about waking early.	Moderate–high intensity; partner helped carry and escort the child downstairs,	High	Moderate	Moderate	Negative	The worst part lasted until she switched the computer	The negativity peaked before actual work started and then partly faded once

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		tempo meant the weekend was not rest.		but the main preparation load remained hers.					on; it eased inside the routine.	routine took over.
KB6	Banker	High weekend burden; with twins, tasks left undone during the week had to be completed on the weekend.	The "tomorrow is Monday" thought began on Sunday evening while handling children's preparations, food, and housework.	Intense morning with school drop-off and then catching the shuttle or getting to work; some days she left so early she could barely see the children.	High	Moderate	Moderate	Ambivalent	The discomfort of separation from the children continued into the day.	After a child-heavy weekend, work entry felt at once stressful and like a short-lived breathing space.
KB7	Banker	High weekend burden; she said weekends were more exhausting and left almost no time for herself.	The trigger came on Sunday night, once it was past bedtime.	Very intense and stressful: waking and preparing the children, leaving the house at the last minute, school drop-off, and reaching the branch by 9.	Moderate–High	Moderate	High	Positive	Once the week started, days passed quickly, especially when the branch was not exceptionally busy.	Even though the morning line was very stressful, work entry was organized around relief and self-space

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
										rather than guilt.
KB8	Banker	Moderate weekend burden; recently she experienced it more as rest and mental clearing, though earlier it had felt more like a second shift.	No clear negative trigger; she did not experience a classic Sunday-afternoon or Sunday-evening Monday syndrome.	Tiring morning with waking the child, preparation, breakfast, and school drop-off; extra tasks required even earlier rising.	Very high	Moderate	Moderate	Ambivalent	The narrative emphasized entering a dense routine rather than a clear longer-term consequence.	Liking her job reduced classic Monday collapse, but child preparation and high tempo still kept the transition stressful.
KB9	Banker	Low–moderate weekend burden; she described it as quality time with her child, rest, and maintained sleep rather than	No clear negative trigger; Monday felt like a natural routine cycle.	Low morning intensity; she liked early waking and prepared things the night before.	High	Moderate–High	High	Positive	No distinct later negative consequence was described; energy and a positive tone at the start of	When the weekend was not lived as a second shift and the morning routine stayed under control, Monday became a clearly

Case ID	Occupation	T0 Weekend Care Load	T1 Trigger	T2 Monday Morning Logistics	Demand	Control	Disconnect	Outcome	T5 Consequences / Salience	Short Analytic Note
		a second shift.							Monday stood out.	positive start despite work intensity.

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