

# The dilemma of connectivity to work: investigating the impact of constant connectivity to work on psychological well-being of employees<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

**Frame of the research:** Existing studies highlight the benefits and drawbacks of digital connectivity for work flexibility and efficiency. However, the literature largely overlooks how constant connectivity during non-work hours undermines employees' psychological well-being by intensifying work-life conflict. Moreover, prior research has not sufficiently addressed how individual boundary management strategies—segmentation versus integration—moderate these effects.

**Purpose of the paper:** This study examines the effects of constant connectivity to work through digital devices on employees' psychological well-being and work-life conflict. It investigates how boundary management practices moderate these relationships, providing insights into their impact on employee well-being.

**Methodology:** This study is grounded in boundary management theory and digital work-life conflict frameworks. We hypothesize that constant connectivity to work negatively impacts psychological well-being through work-life conflict and that boundary enactment moderates these effects. The study tests these relationships using structural equation modeling (SEM) with data from IT professionals in India. Additionally, a multi-group analysis is conducted to explore the moderating effect of boundary management practices (segmentation vs. integration).

**Findings:** Results indicate that employees who remain constantly connected to work during non-work hours experience heightened work-life conflict, leading to a significant decline in psychological well-being. Furthermore, segmentation-oriented employees report lower levels of work-life conflict and better psychological detachment than integration-oriented employees, emphasizing the role of boundary management strategies in mitigating digital stress.

**Research limits:** The study does not consider different connectivity and boundary behavior with respect to different mobile applications. In addition, different sectors might report varied levels of connectivity, suggesting a need to explore the underlying variables in different organizational contexts.

**Practical implications:** Organizations should implement structured digital disconnection policies to regulate after-hours connectivity and promote healthier work-life boundaries. Employees should be encouraged to adopt segmentation strategies to minimize work-life conflict. Training programs on digital boundary management can enhance well-being by fostering autonomy and psychological detachment from work.

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**Originality of the paper:** *This study expands current knowledge by empirically demonstrating the impact of constant connectivity on employee well-being and work-life conflict. It uniquely examines how boundary management preferences moderate these relationships, offering new insights into managing digital stress in modern workplaces.*

**Keywords:** *constant connectivity; work-life conflict; psychological well-being; employee well-being; digital devices; boundary management theory.*

## 1. Introduction

The modern digital landscape is transforming significantly, with digital devices becoming essential daily (Kushlev *et al.*, 2019). The widespread availability of these technologies keeps employees connected to work beyond regular hours (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Farveh Farivar *et al.*, 2024), preventing detachment even during non-work hours (Baek *et al.*, 2023). Interconnectivity, facilitated by mobile devices and high-speed internet, alters job dynamics and enables seamless transitions between work and personal life (Waizenegger, 2015; Tennakoon, 2018). This trend has intensified post-pandemic, with remote and hybrid working models changing organizational dynamics (Farveh Farivar *et al.*, 2024).

Unremitting internet access via digital devices has led to porous work-life boundaries, resulting in work-related device usage during non-work hours and vice versa (Farveh Farivar *et al.*, 2022, 2024). “Anytime anywhere” connectivity offers benefits like flexibility and multitasking (Piszczek, 2017; Loeschner, 2018; Dagnino, 2020; Yang *et al.*, 2022) but also leads to burnout, technostress, and reduced well-being (Büchler *et al.*, 2020), as well as work-life conflict (Diaz *et al.*, 2012; Tennakoon, 2018; Zoonen *et al.*, 2020) and decreased psychological detachment from work (Büchler *et al.*, 2020).

The digitally transforming workplace culture has established new norms for a hybrid lifestyle, where employees are expected to be available around the clock, even if it is not part of their official job profile. Organizations often assume constant availability as part of employee services (Hoeven, 2021; Mazmanian and Erickson, 2014). This leads to competitive pressure and fear of missing out (Barnecllo, 2021; Mazmanian and Erickson, 2014), making it challenging for employees to disconnect and maintain personal boundaries. Continuous digital engagement, fueled by push notifications, creates permeable boundaries and cross-domain interruptions, contributing to work-life conflict and psychological fatigue (Zoonen *et al.*, 2020). Constant connectivity during non-work hours is detrimental to psychological well-being (Vorderer *et al.*, 2018; Kondrysova *et al.*, 2022), highlighting the need for digital disconnection to manage inter-domain conflict (Neuhofer and Ladkin, 2017).

This study aims to understand employees’ perceptions of constant connectivity to work during non-work hours and its impact on work-life conflict and psychological well-being. The relationship between continuous connectivity and psychological well-being remains unclear

(Vorderer *et al.*, 2018), and this study seeks to examine this connection empirically. Understanding this relationship can help address current challenges and aid organizations and employees in mitigating future issues. Additionally, the study explores how individual boundary management preferences influence the relationship between constant connectivity, work-life conflict, and psychological well-being. Limited literature exists on the mediation effect of work-life conflict between constant connectivity and psychological well-being, and this study aims to address this gap by examining this relationship.

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## 2. Conceptual background

### 2.1 Constant Connectivity and Psychological Well-Being

Over the past few decades, mobile devices' rapid advancement and adoption have transformed global interactions, making them integral to daily life and significantly increasing interconnectivity (Baek *et al.*, 2023). This widespread presence of digital devices reshapes connectivity perceptions, altering work culture, job nature, and communication modes (Wajcman and Rose, 2011; Baek *et al.*, 2023). Mobile devices now enable employees to access work from anywhere, fostering constant connectivity (Büchler *et al.*, 2020; Dong *et al.*, 2022; Gonçalves and Santos, 2022). Employees face expectations of after-hours availability, feeling obliged to remain accessible during non-work hours (Kondrysova *et al.*, 2022).

Constant connectivity, defined as the perpetual availability of employees for work via digital devices (Büchler *et al.*, 2020; Wajcman and Rose, 2011), involves being connected during both work and non-work hours (Büchler *et al.*, 2020). Baek *et al.* (2023) describe it as a state where employees remain connected beyond assigned work hours, leading to a lack of detachment from work. This connectivity offers benefits like work-life flexibility and multitasking (Waizenegger, 2015; Piszczek, 2017; Dagnino, 2020; Gonçalves and Santos, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2022) but also places demands on employees' psychological detachment and well-being, causing stress, anxiety, and burnout (Büchler *et al.*, 2020; Dong *et al.*, 2022; Gonçalves and Santos, 2022).

Psychological well-being, a complex and multidimensional concept, has been extensively researched. Ryff's framework (1989) includes six dimensions of wellness. Kubzansky *et al.* (2023) view psychological well-being as feelings, cognitions, and strategies associated with positive functioning. Literature suggests that constant connectivity impacts various psychological facets. Studies show it affects psychological detachment (Kondrysova *et al.*, 2022; Mellner, 2016), psychological capital (Tao *et al.*, 2023), well-being (Kushlev *et al.*, 2019; Truța *et al.*, 2023), psychological disengagement (Sonnentag and Bayer, 2005), psychological distress (Dong *et al.*, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2023), and overall well-being (Büchler *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2024; O'Driscoll *et al.*, 2010; Reinke and Gerlach, 2021; Vorderer *et al.*, 2018).

Connectedness to the organization reduces psychological detachment, decreasing psychological well-being (Kondrysova *et al.*, 2022). Psychological detachment, the ability to “switch off” from work during non-work hours (Sonnentag and Bayer, 2005), correlates with higher well-being (Büchler *et al.*, 2020). Conversely, those constantly connected during non-work hours struggle to disengage, reducing their well-being. Digital device usage is crucial in altering psychological well-being, with the “always on” culture posing various risks (Vorderer *et al.*, 2018). This behavior necessitates exploring connectedness’s role in employees’ well-being. Researchers have found that constant connectivity reduces well-being (Büchler, ter Hoeven, *et al.*, 2020; O’Driscoll *et al.*, 2010; Reinecke *et al.*, 2017, 2018; Vorderer *et al.*, 2018).

Maintaining well-being in a constantly connected environment depends on autonomy over digital device usage (D. Liu *et al.*, 2019; Reinecke *et al.*, 2018; Vorderer *et al.*, 2018). The effect of constant connectivity on well-being remains unclear (Vorderer *et al.*, 2018). The increasing integration of mobile devices into daily life necessitates confirming the relationship between constant connectivity during non-work hours and well-being. Constant connectivity reduces psychological detachment, blurring work and non-work boundaries and leading to feelings of alienation. Thus, the following hypothesis is formed:

*H1: Constant connectivity to work during non-work hours significantly leads to reduced psychological well-being.*

## 2.2 Work-Life Conflict as a Mediator

In recent years, the advancement of digital technologies has profoundly impacted organizational operations, policies, and practices, altering how employees manage their work-life demands. The significant increase in mobile device use has enabled constant connectivity with work, resulting in workplace hyperconnectivity (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Yang *et al.*, 2022). Scholars note that this hyperconnectivity affects work and life domains (Wright *et al.*, 2014; Yang *et al.*, 2022). While constant connectivity via digital devices offers benefits like autonomy (van Zoonen *et al.*, 2022), many employees feel it intrudes on personal time, creating a sense of obligation to remain available (Sarker *et al.*, 2021).

Constant connectivity reshapes traditional work-life domains, presenting challenges in maintaining boundaries and managing roles, leading to work-life conflict. Work-life conflict is an inter-role conflict wherein performing one domain role complicates another (Netemeyer *et al.*, 1996). Technology enables employees to perform duties across domains, generating inter-role conflicts.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, organizational policies have shifted, with employees remaining connected around the clock. The “Bring Your Own Device” lifestyle has blurred boundaries between work and life, leading to cross-domain interruptions. Constant connectivity via digital devices is a double-edged sword, offering flexibility, autonomy, and mobility (van Zoonen *et al.*, 2022) but also increasing work-life conflict

(Dong *et al.*, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2023; Santos *et al.*, 2023; Seedoyal Doargajudhur and Hosanoo, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2022).

Digital practices like remote working and flexible schedules have given employees more autonomy over when and where they work. However, this has increased the potential for work to encroach on non-work domains, causing inter-domain conflict (Feery and Conway, 2023). Changing organizational practices are reshaping traditional work-life domains, with employees feeling obligated to be responsive during non-work hours. Mobile devices and communication technology ease have led employees to handle work-related tasks during their free time (Wright *et al.*, 2014; Yang *et al.*, 2022). Studies report that employees who frequently use communication technology outside work hours significantly increase work-life conflict (Wright *et al.*, 2014; Dong *et al.*, 2022; Yang *et al.*, 2022; Santos *et al.*, 2023). Sarker *et al.* (2021) found that constant connectivity via mobile devices increases work-life conflict, with employees perpetually available beyond dedicated hours, leading to higher conflict levels (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Diaz *et al.*, 2012).

Technology allows employees to traverse seamlessly between work and leisure, blurring boundaries and increasing work-life conflict (Tennakoon, 2018). Organizations are increasingly adopting hybrid workplace models, with more individuals working remotely. Researchers have found that inter-domain availability for work results in increased work-life conflict, which can decline psychological well-being and increase psychological distress (Badri and Yunus, 2022; Dong *et al.*, 2022; Rizwan and Sivasubramanian, 2022). Psychological well-being encompasses environmental mastery, autonomy, personal growth, positive relations with others, purpose in life, and self-acceptance (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). The work-from-home culture has led to prolonged connectivity, blurring work-life boundaries and increasing inter-domain conflicts, negatively impacting psychological well-being (Dong *et al.*, 2022; Hipolito, 2023).

Researchers highlight that long work hours generate role conflicts in work and life domains, with increased work-life conflict leading to reduced psychological well-being (Badri and Yunus, 2022; Dong *et al.*, 2022; Hipolito, 2023; Hogan and Victoria, 2013; Taufik *et al.*, 2021). Studies have explored the mediating role of work-life conflict in altering the effects of after-hours work connectivity on employee psychological distress (Dong *et al.*, 2022). However, there is a paucity of studies examining the mediating role of work-life conflict between constant connectivity during after-work hours and psychological well-being. Understanding this mediating role is timely and imperative given the current organizational shift. From the above information, we can conclude that constant connectivity to work via mobile devices during non-work hours increases work-life conflict, reducing employees' ability to maintain psychological well-being. Thus, the following hypotheses are proposed:

*H2: Constant connectivity to work in the non-work hours significantly lead to increased work-life conflict.*

*H3: Work-life conflict significantly leads to reduced psychological well-being.*

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*H4: Work-life conflict mediates the relationship between constant connectivity to work in non-work hours and psychological well-being.*

### 2.3 Boundary Enactment

Boundary theory explores the dynamics of work-life boundaries and their influence on individuals and society. Boundaries are physical, temporal, emotional, cognitive, mental, and relational dividing lines separating one social domain from another (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000). Ashforth *et al.* (2000) proposed that individuals psychologically transition between work and non-work domains, with these transitions termed boundary-crossing activities. One domain of role transition involves work-home transitions. Individuals tend to segment or integrate their domain roles, focusing on minimizing the difficulty of transitions or the frequency of undesired interruptions. Preferences for segmentation or integration practices vary, leading to inflexible, impermeable or flexible, permeable boundaries that allow cross-domain interruptions. Boundary enactment is an individual's adoption of segmentation or integration practices to satisfy their domain roles, considering their environmental conditions and preferences (Martineau and Trottier, 2022; Wepfer *et al.*, 2018).

In the current phase of organizational transition, employees remain constantly connected to the organization, even during post-work hours. The post-pandemic period has led to more blurred boundaries and altered work behaviors (Farveh Farivar *et al.*, 2024). This constant connectivity behavior influences employee boundary management behavior (Farveh Farivar *et al.*, 2024). Employees now have more temporal and spatial flexibility, allowing them to work from any place and at any time (Chen and Casterella, 2019; Kossek *et al.*, 2006). There is a scarcity of studies exploring the moderating role of boundary enactment. Studies have shown that perceived boundary control is associated with levels of work-life conflict. Employees perceiving low boundary control tend to face high work-life conflict, while those perceiving high control and preferring segmentation practices tend to have better work-life balance (Kossek *et al.*, 2012; Mellner, 2016). Constant connectivity leads to various stressors resulting in work-life conflict, depending on an individual's boundary preference (Feery and Conway, 2023). Segmentation behavior impacts work connectivity behavior after hours, regulating psychological detachment (Wang *et al.*, 2023).

Boundary behavior in a constantly connected environment can act as a resource requiring self-control, self-regulation, and self-policing, or it can be a challenge resulting in constant connectivity compulsion (Feery and Conway, 2023). Employees must maintain and adjust their connectivity boundaries (Waizenegger *et al.*, 2024). The role of boundary management preferences is complex and may result in different outcomes for employees and employers (Farveh Farivar *et al.*, 2024). The impact of constant connectivity to work during non-work hours on employees' psychological well-being varies based on individual and organizational contexts, suggesting a need to explore the moderating role of boundary enactment.

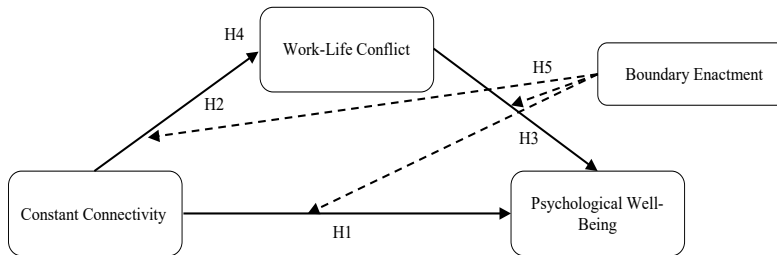
H5: Boundary enactment moderated the relationship between constant connectivity to work in non-work hours and psychological well-being through work-life conflict.

H5a: Constant connectivity to work in non-work hours and work-life conflict are less positively associated in segmentation than integration.

H5b: Work-life conflict and psychological well-being are less negatively associated in segmentation than integration.

H5c: Constant connectivity to work in non-work hours and psychological well-being are less negatively associated in segmentation than integration.

Fig. 1: Research Theoretical Model



Source: Authors' elaboration

## 2.4 Rationale of Industry

The IT industry in India has experienced significant growth over the past few years. As a developing country, India has established itself as a major player on the global stage. With a large employment pool of 5.1 million in FY 21-22 and 5.4 million in FY 22-23 (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, 2023) and a highly skilled workforce, India has become a preferred destination for global IT sector investment. In FY 23-24, over 0.65 million professionals were trained in Gen-AI, with re-skilling efforts predicted to boost the Indian IT sector by FY 2025. Government initiatives, such as 100% automatic FDI in the IT-BPM industry, have increased foreign investment in this sector (Make in India, 2023).

The IT industry is characterized by the widespread use of digital devices, which are essential in various job roles. This extensive use makes the IT sector more susceptible to the effects of digital device utilization. According to NASSCOM (2023), there are seven major IT hubs in India. Data has been collected from two of these hubs, Delhi-NCR and Bengaluru, representing the northern and southern regions.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Participants and Procedures

The data has been collected from the employees of IT industry in India. The questionnaire was administered and data was collected in two ways. Firstly, the HR department of the IT organizations contacted their

employees to participate in our research by filling up the questionnaire. Secondly, the employees were contacted through LinkedIn to fill the questionnaire and share it among their colleagues. The sample consist of junior level employees (258=58.28%), senior level employees (158=33.12%) and executive rank employees (41=8.6%). The final sample consisted of 477 employees out of which majority of employees were males, where 306 (64.15%) are male and 171(35.85%) are female.

### 3.2 Study Measures

Psychological well-being is measured using an 18-item instrument developed by Ryff and Keyes (1995). This instrument assesses various indicators such as autonomy, self-acceptance, personal growth, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, and purpose in life. Work-life conflict is measured with a 15-item scale assessing work-family and family-work conflict (Kossek *et al.*, 2012). Constant connectivity to work during non-work hours examines how individuals perceive their availability for work during these times, their sense of obligation to be available for the organization, and their need to disconnect from work. A nine-item scale, adapted from Büchler *et al.* (2020), Thomas *et al.* (2016), and Zoonen *et al.* (2023), was used to assess employees' constant connectivity to their organization during non-work hours. The scale consisted of two components: six items measuring perceptions of mobile device connectivity, based on Büchler *et al.* (2020) and Zoonen *et al.* (2023), followed by three items assessing employees' connection habits, as suggested by Thomas *et al.* (2016). To ensure contextual relevance in the study of IT employees in India, the scale was adapted to reflect contemporary digital communication tools commonly used in the industry, such as instant messaging applications and project management platforms. Additionally, modifications were made to capture the effects of remote and hybrid work models. The revised scale was validated through exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, demonstrating strong internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.938$ ) and construct validity.

Responses are recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly agree; 5 = Strongly disagree). Additionally, two items measure employees' digital device usage and their feelings toward technology utilization. All items, after reliability and validity testing, are reported in Annexure 1. To measure boundary enactment, a two-item scale from Wepfer *et al.* (2018) and Martineau and Trottier (2022) is used. This scale includes two polarized statements measuring employees' preferences for segmentation and integration on a continuum (e.g., "I often work after hours or on weekends" vs. "I never work after hours or on weekends"). Individuals are asked to respond by selecting one of the two categories.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

Table I reports the mean, standard deviation and correlations of constant connectivity, psychological well-being and work-life conflict. The feelings of employees were assessed if they were forced to go without accessing technology. The question measures the continuum of feelings from anxious to relaxed. The results reveal that 29.77% of respondents feel bored for not assessing digital devices for more than 24 hours followed by 22.64% respondents feel relaxed and 18.23% feel anxious (Table II). Furthermore, the results for individual digital device usage highlights that 67.92% of respondents cannot go over one to three hours without assessing their instant messaging application (e.g., Whatsapp etc.). On the other hand, 31.45 % individuals responded that they can go over more than a week without assessing video calls (Table III). It is revealed that the highest utilization is of instant messaging applications, wherein the highest number of employees cannot access instant messaging services for longer than 1 to 3 hours. The lowest utilization is video calls, where employees can go without accessing it for a day or longer (N=171) or even more than a week (N=150).

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Tab. 1: Descriptive Statistics and the Bivariate Correlations

	M	SD	CC	PWB	WLC
Constant Connectivity	3.455	.965	-		
Psychological well-being	2.414	.927	-.649**	-	
Work-Life Conflict	3.659	.984	.676**	-.753**	-

\*\* Correlation is significant at  $p < 0.01$ .

Source: our elaboration

Tab. 2: Employee perception towards digital dysconnectivity

Statement: It forced to go without technology, I would feel:		
Feelings	Number of users	Percentage
Anxious	87	18.23
Bored	142	29.77
Indifferent	59	12.37
Free	81	16.98
Relaxed	108	22.64

Source: our elaboration

Tab. 3: Employee perception towards digital dysconnectivity

Statement: I would typically go without accessing the following (a-d) for:								
Time Period without accessing digital Media	Email		Instant Messages		Social media		Video Calls	
	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage	N	Percentage
1-3 hr	138	28.9%	324	67.9%	164	34.4%	55	11.5%
3-6 hr	152	31.8%	100	20.9%	181	37.9%	27	5.7%
6-12 hr	108	22.6%	49	10.4%	88	18.4%	74	15.5%
A day or longer	58	12.1%	3	0.62%	32	6.7%	171	35.8%
More than a week	21	4.4%	1	0.2%	12	2.5%	150	31.4%

Source: our elaboration

#### 4.2 Preliminary analysis

The initial item pool of 42 items has been generated to measure the relationships between constant connectivity, psychological well-being and work-life conflict. The item generation process was based on the review of literature, theoretical conceptions and the examination of qualitative data. The scale's content validity has been assessed in two stages a suggested by (Hardesty and Bearden, 2004). Firstly, three judges were provided with the explanation along with the definitions of all the three dimensions. The judges were asked to evaluate which items of a particular dimension is applicable, which item is repetitive and which item is not applicable. After elimination of items which failed to describe the dimensions under the study only 32 items were retained. This pool of 32 items was further submitted to two other judges. The judges were asked to categorize the items pertaining to the dimensions as their clear representative or non-representative. Only the items that were categorized as clear representative were retained for further analysis. After completion of this process 28 items remained. Furthermore, items were measured on 5-point Likert scale.

A pilot test was conducted with the help of 100 respondents. The data set was tested for its factor structure with the help of exploratory factor analysis (EFA). All the items loaded in their respective factors with loadings more than 0.5. Therefore, all the items were retained in this step. The instrument was then administered for main survey, including response from 477 respondents. The data set was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis measurement model to confirm the factor structure that emerged in EFA. Lastly, two items in the instrument were included to measure the moderating relationship of boundary enactment. These two items were categorical in nature.

#### 4.3 The Measurement Model

The reliability analysis was analyzed with the help of Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , and structural equational modelling (SEM) based tests of composite reliability (CR) and average variance extracted (AVE). The acceptable range for Cronbach's  $\alpha$  is more than 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Malhotra *et al.*, 2017). Further the acceptable values for CR and AVE are 0.7 and 0.5 respectively

(Malhotra *et al.*, 2017) (Table IV). The validity was analyzed in terms of convergent and divergent validity. Fornell and Larcker (1981) suggested the methods of measuring convergent and divergent validity. The acceptable values for convergent validity are AVE greater than 0.5, standardized factor loadings greater than 0.5 and CR greater than 0.7 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2010, Cheung and Wang, 2017) (Table IV). For discriminant validity the square root of AVE should be greater than the correlations between the two variables (Cheung and Wang, 2017; Fornell and Larcker, 1981) (Table V). Additionally, the discriminant validity can be proven if the AVE is higher than the maximum squared variance (MSV) and average squared variance (ASV) (Almén *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the measurement model generated the good model fit indices with: CMIN/df= 1.638, GFI=.926, CFI=.986, TLI=.984 and RMSEA=0.037. Hence, the data set produced all the measures within acceptable range, confirming reliability and validity of the scale.

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Tab. 4: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Cronbach's $\alpha$	CR	AVE	Indicators	Standardised factor loadings
CC	.938	0.934	0.669	CC1	.807
				CC2	.778
				CC3	.775
				CC4	.820
				CC5	.836
				CC6	.838
				CC7	.867
PWB	.971	0.971	0.703	PWB1	.824
				PWB2	.828
				PWB3	.818
				PWB4	.810
				PWB5	.818
				PWB6	.812
				PWB7	.882
				PWB8	.875
				PWB9	.861
				PWB10	.872
				PWB11	.850
				PWB12	.855
				PWB13	.811
				PWB14	.821
WLC	.950	0.949	0.787	WLC1	.904
				WLC2	.889
				WLC3	.852
				WLC4	.905
				WLC5	.908

Note: CC- Constant Connectivity, PWB- Psychological Well-Being, WLC- Work-Life Conflict; CR-Composite Reliability, AVE- Average Variance Extracted

Source: our elaboration

Tab. 5: Discriminant Validity

Variable	CR	AVE	MSV	ASV	CC	WLC	PWB
CC	0.934	0.669	0.516	0.492	0.818	-	-
WLC	0.949	0.787	0.629	0.572	0.718	0.887	-
PWB	0.971	0.703	0.629	0.548	-0.684	-0.793	0.839

Source: our elaboration

#### 4.4 The Structural Model

We tested direct relationships between all the underlying variables with the help of structural model. Overall, all the direct relationships are found to be statistically significant. Hypothesis 1 proposes that constant connectivity to work even after work hours reduces psychological well-being. The regression model demonstrated a good model fit with  $\chi^2/df=1.738$ , GFI=.937, AGFI=.921, CFI=.987, TLI=.985 and RMSEA= 0.039. The path coefficient between constant connectivity and psychological well-being was significant with  $\beta=-.68$  ( $p<0.001$ ). Thus, findings support the assumption that constant connectivity reduces psychological well-being. Path coefficient for direct relationship between constant connectivity to work and work-life conflict is statistically significant ( $\beta=.71$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Thus, supporting hypothesis 2, that constant connectivity increases work-life conflict. Lastly, path coefficient for direct relationship between work-life conflict and psychological well-being is statistically significant ( $\beta=-.78$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Thus, this supports hypothesis 3 that work-life conflict results in reduced psychological well-being.

#### 4.5 Mediation Analysis

Hypothesis 4 assumes that work-life conflict mediates the relationship between constant connectivity and psychological well-being. The mediating relationship has been tested based on Baron and Kenny's (1986) and Hayes (2018) suggestions. To test the mediation, the direct relationship between constant connectivity to work after working hours and psychological well-being is examined for its significance. These results were supported by hypothesis 1. Further, the direct relationship is found to be statistically significant between constant connectivity and work-life conflict ( $\beta=.71$ ,  $p<0.001$ ); and between work-life conflict and psychological well-being ( $\beta=-.78$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Thus, the results were supported for hypothesis 2 and hypothesis 3. In mediation model, bootstrapping has been used to test the indirect effect of constant connectivity on psychological well-being via work-life conflict. The mediation model (Figure 2) explained the significant indirect effect of -.433 with  $p<0.001$  at 5000 bootstrap sample on 95% significance level. In addition, the constant connectivity is found as the predictor of work-life conflict with  $\beta=.72$  at  $p<0.001$ , and work-life conflict is found to predict psychological well-being with  $\beta=-.61$  at  $p<0.001$ . The introduction of mediating variable resulted in the reduction of direct effect between constant connectivity and psychological well-being from  $\beta=-.68$  to  $\beta=-.25$  while still being significant ( $p<0.001$ ), with regression model

demonstrated a good model fit with  $\chi^2/df=1.638$ ,  $GFI=.926$ ,  $AGFI=.911$ ,  $CFI=.986$ ,  $TLI=.984$  and  $RMSEA=0.037$ . Thus, work-life conflict is found to mediate the relationship between constant connectivity and psychological well-being (Table VI, Figure 2), thus supporting hypothesis 4.

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 The dilemma of connectivity to work: investigating the impact of constant connectivity to work on psychological well-being of employees

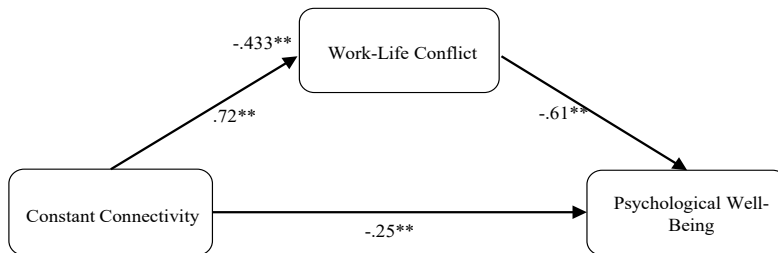
Tab. 6: Standardized Path coefficients using Bootstrapping

Hypothesis	Direct Effect without mediator	Bootstrapping*					Result
		Direct effect with mediator	Indirect effect	Lower Bounds	Upper Bounds	p	
H1: Constant Connectivity → Psychological Well-Being	-.684	-	-	-.739	-.671	<0.001	Supported
H2: Constant Connectivity → Work-life Conflict	.71	-	-	.671	.873	<0.001	Supported
H3: Work-life Conflict → Psychological Well-Being	-.78	-	-	-.761	-.625	<0.001	Supported
H4: Constant Connectivity → Work-Life conflict → Psychological Well-Being	-.68	-.25	-.433	-.508	-.358	<0.001	Supported-Partial Mediation

Note: 5000 bootstrap sample on 95% level of significance

Source: our elaboration

Fig. 2: Model Path Diagram



Source: our elaboration

#### 4.6 Multi-group Analysis

The study aims to explore the moderating role of boundary enactment. A multi-group analysis has been performed to examine any changes in the path coefficient of the proposed structural model. The study utilizes two nested models for each group of moderating variable (Alrawad *et al.*, 2023; Collier, 2020). Where one model is unconstrained i.e. built without any constraints, and other model is restricted with factor loadings to be similar across every group of nested models. Further, chi-square difference was calculated to test the differences between constrained and unconstrained model across the two groups (H5). Lastly, all the model paths were tested to analyze the differences across the two groups on the path level (H5a, H5b, H5c). Table 7 presents the results for model comparison in terms of chi-square difference, where two groups of boundary enactment (segmentation and integration) were found significantly different ( $\Delta\chi^2=40.577$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

Tab. 7: Multi group Analysis

Results of Structural Measurement Analysis for Segmentation and Integration preference						
Group- Boundary Enactment				df	CMIN	p-Value
Unconstrained v/s Structural Weights				26	40.577	0.034
Model	CMIN/df	NFI	CFI	TLI	AGFI	RMSEA
Goodness of fit indices for the nested structural model of segmentation (N=197) and integration (N=250)						
Unconstrained Model	1.279	.941	.987	.985	.862	0.025

Source: our elaboration

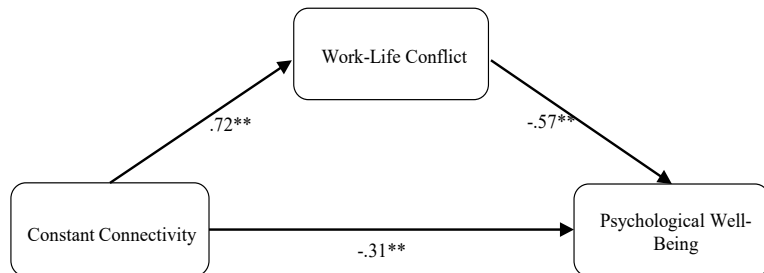
The results reveal that for both the groups i.e. integration and segmentation, the path from constant connectivity to psychological well-being is found to mediate through work-life conflict partially. Further, to analyze the level of moderation between the variables across integration and segmentation type of boundary enactment, path differences between the two groups were calculated as shown in table 8. These results suggest that the relationship between constant connectivity of employees to work in non-work hours and psychological well-being through work-life conflict is significantly different based on employee boundary enactment behavior. Further, the path coefficients for both the models reveal that relationship between constant connectivity to work in non-work hours vis-à-vis work-life conflict and psychological well-being is statistically higher for employees with integration behavior (Figure 3, Figure 4). However, the path from work-life conflict to psychological well-being was not found to be significantly different across the two groups.

Tab. 8: Path Coefficients for Multi-Group Analysis

Path Coefficients	Segmentation		Integration		Hypothesis
	Path Coef.	p-Value	Path Coef.	p-Value	
CC→WLC	.66	0.001	.72	0.001	H5a→Supported
WLC→PWB	-.57	0.001	-.57	0.001	H5b→Not Supported
CC→PWB	-.29	0.001	-.31	0.001	H5c→Supported

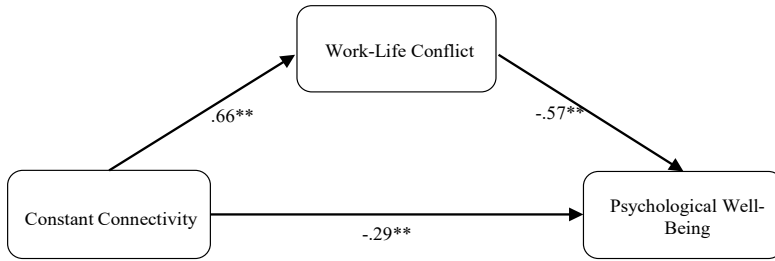
Source: our elaboration

Fig. 3: Integration Behavior



Source: our elaboration

Fig. 4: Segmentation Behavior



Source: our elaboration

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## 5. Discussion and conclusion

The first aim of this study was to investigate how constant connectivity to work in the non-work hours affects employee's psychological well-being and further influence their work-life conflict. The results of the structural equation modelling established a strong and significantly negative relationship between constant connectivity to work in non-work hours and employee's psychological well-being. Further, the second aim of this study was to explore the mediating role of work-life conflict. The study's results demonstrated that with the introduction of work-life conflict the strength of the direct relationship between constant connectivity and employee psychological well-being lessens while resulting in significant and negative indirect relationship between constant connectivity and psychological well-being through work-life conflict. Therefore, the results support the partial mediation. It suggests that work-life conflict negatively mediates the relationship between constant connectivity and employee psychological well-being. The constant connectivity increases work-life conflict, while work-life conflict reduces psychological well-being. Lastly, the study examines how these relationships vary based on an individual's segmentation and integration preferences. The results reveal that constant connectivity to work non-work hours results in lower work-life conflict levels for employees following segmentation behavior. Further, no significant difference was found in the levels of psychological well-being based on work-life conflict with respect to employee's integration or segmentation practices. Lastly, the employees following segmentation behavior found higher levels of psychological well-being based on their constant connectivity to work in the non-work hours compared to those following integration practices.

Constant connectivity to work after work hours leads to increased levels of conflict between the work and life domain of employees. The study advances on previous research (Ashforth *et al.*, 2000; Kossek *et al.*, 2006). The results reveal that employees following segmentation practices establish clear boundaries between work and non-work domains and experience lower levels of work-life conflict and improved psychological well-being. The study reinforces the idea that employees face more work-life conflict due to their constant connectivity to work based on increased flexibility

and permeability of boundaries (integration behavior). Further, the study's findings enhance existing knowledge base by providing empirical evidence by establishing a relationship between constant connectivity to work in non-work hours and psychological well-being. Furthermore, this study found that on the one end of the connectivity continuum, employees usually are on their digital devices due to boredom or anxiety arising from fear of missing out.

On the other hand, on the other end of the continuum, some employees would like to stay away from technology for at least 24 hours to feel relaxed. In addition, the employees' digital device usage is high as they cannot go without assessing instant messages, emails and social media for an average time of 1 to 6 hours. Digital device usage acts as a primal individual-level antecedent for constant connectivity. Employees can regulate their digital device usage to reduce work-life conflict and maintain better psychological well-being.

### *5.1 Theoretical Implications*

This study advances the theoretical understanding of digital connectivity, boundary management, and employee well-being by presenting a structured model that highlights the mediating role of work-life conflict. While prior research has largely focused on the general effects of digital connectivity on stress and work engagement (e.g., Vorderer *et al.*, 2018; Zoonen *et al.*, 2020), our findings provide robust empirical evidence that constant digital engagement-especially during non-work hours-intensifies work-life conflict and consequently undermines psychological well-being.

Our analysis reveals that employees who perceive themselves as constantly connected to the workplace, primarily through instant messaging and emails, experience heightened role conflict between their work and non-work domains. This is particularly evident in scenarios where employees rarely disconnect for periods exceeding one to six hours, suggesting that the very tools designed to offer work flexibility may inadvertently contribute to adverse psychological outcomes. In contrast to the abundant literature emphasizing the benefits of digital connectivity for work-life balance, our study uniquely demonstrates that excessive connectivity can diminish psychological well-being by fostering continuous role conflict.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the emerging discourse on boundary enactment by demonstrating that proactive, segmentation-oriented boundary strategies significantly moderate these adverse effects. Building on Ashforth *et al.*'s (2000) boundary theory and extending the foundational perspectives of Kossek *et al.* (2012) and Mellner (2016), our findings indicate that employees who clearly delineate between work and personal life experience lower levels of work-life conflict and greater psychological detachment compared to their integration-focused counterparts. This evidence resonates with recent work (Wang *et al.*, 2023) on the benefits of segmentation in mitigating digital stress, while also highlighting that adaptive boundary strategies-not rigid segmentation

practices-empower employees to effectively manage their work-life interfaces. Further, in the scenario of obligatory technology use, employees go through competitive pressure and anxiety about being away from work while their colleagues are available for work (Hoeven, 2021; Mazmanian and Erickson, 2014). On the other hand, from the perspective of digital dysconnectivity, employees report a need to be away from technology for a sense of relaxation.

Additionally, our research underscores the cumulative nature of digital stress, a phenomenon documented by Reinecke *et al.* (2017) and Vorderer *et al.* (2018), and highlights the competitive pressure and anxiety associated with obligatory connectivity (Hoeven, 2021; Mazmanian and Erickson, 2014). These findings emphasize the critical need for effective boundary regulation mechanisms, particularly within hybrid work models, and suggest that organizations must proactively implement policies and interventions that promote healthier connectivity practices (Piszczek, 2017).

## 5.2 Practical Implications

Our study provides significant practical implications for employees, organizations, managers, and policymakers by elucidating strategies to mitigate the negative impacts of constant connectivity on psychological well-being. At the individual level, our findings indicate that employees should actively regulate their digital device usage after work hours to foster psychological detachment and reduce work-life conflict. In today's work environment-characterized by a surge in mobile device usage and evolving work dynamics-blurred boundaries between professional and personal domains necessitate proactive digital boundary management. Employees who adopt segmentation-oriented strategies, thereby clearly delineating work from personal time, experience lower levels of stress, burnout, and overall work-life conflict compared to those with integration-based approaches.

From an organizational standpoint, our research underscores the critical need for clear IT policies that govern employee connectivity. Organizations must support and monitor technology use to ensure that employees do not feel compelled to remain perpetually available. The implementation of structured digital disconnection policies, such as 'right to disconnect' protocols, is recommended to establish explicit guidelines for after-hours communication. Such measures can alleviate undue pressure on employees, thereby reducing stress, burnout, and the erosion of work-life balance.

Moreover, our findings advocate for the development of tailored training programs on digital boundary management. By equipping employees with adaptive boundary-setting strategies, organizations can move beyond rigid segmentation practices and empower individuals to autonomously manage their schedules and technological engagement. HR policies should be refined to promote flexible work arrangements that accommodate varying needs across the workforce, acknowledging that managerial interventions may need to be tailored according to employee seniority. Notably, junior employees-who often face higher expectations

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for constant availability-may benefit from targeted support to mitigate the adverse effects of incessant connectivity.

At the policy level, our study highlights the necessity of regulatory frameworks that address the mental health consequences of pervasive work connectivity, particularly in high-intensity sectors such as IT. The implementation of digital wellness programs and enhanced employer accountability for maintaining work-life balance are imperative steps. These initiatives are not only relevant for individual organizations but also carry significant implications for management and entrepreneurship communities at both national and international levels.

In summary, our study offers actionable insights into how employees and organizations can collectively foster healthier digital engagement practices. By balancing connectivity during work hours with structured disconnection after work, stakeholders can safeguard psychological well-being, reduce work-life conflict, and ultimately enhance overall organizational performance.

### 5.3 Limitations and future research

Our study has certain limitations. Primarily, it examines the impact of employees' constant connectivity during non-work hours on their psychological well-being, focusing on overall mobile device connectivity. However, the study reveals that connectivity levels vary across different mobile applications. Future research should explore connectivity and boundary behaviors specific to various mobile applications. Additionally, other sectors may exhibit varied connectivity levels, indicating a need to investigate underlying variables within different organizational contexts. Connectivity perceptions may also differ across generations, as individuals from different age groups may adopt varied behaviors related to work-life boundaries and inter-domain roles. Therefore, studying these underlying concepts concerning different age groups is essential.

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