

Remote work Flexibility and the Blurring of Personal-Professional Boundaries: Impact on Employee Well-Being

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Abstract

The rise of remote work has redefined traditional workplace structures, providing employees with increased flexibility in managing their work schedules and locations. However, this shift has also led to the blurring of personal and professional boundaries, raising concerns about employee well-being. This study explores the impact of remote work flexibility on mental health, job satisfaction, and work-life balance. While remote work offers autonomy and reduces commuting stress, it also leads to challenges such as overwork, digital fatigue, and difficulty disengaging from work. Theoretical perspectives, including boundary management theory and telepressure, highlight the psychological strain of constant connectivity. Findings suggest that inadequate boundary management contributes to burnout, stress, and diminished job performance. Organizations must implement policies that support structured remote work boundaries to maximize benefits while mitigating adverse effects. By examining these complexities, this research provides insights into how remote work can be optimized to enhance employee well-being and productivity in the evolving digital workspace.

Keywords: Remote work, work-life balance, employee well-being, boundary management, digital fatigue, tele pressure, job satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

The advent of remote work has introduced a paradigm shift in the traditional workplace structure, offering greater flexibility in terms of work location and time management. This flexibility, often perceived as a benefit, has fundamentally altered the relationship between employees and their work environment. In particular, the boundaries that once existed between personal and professional domains, typically demarcated by a physical office space, have become increasingly ambiguous (Lamovsek & Cerne, 2023). The blurring of these boundaries has led to significant changes in the way employees perceive their work and personal life, impacting their well-being. This shift has been particularly pronounced with the widespread adoption of remote work technologies during the COVID-19 pandemic, which not only reshaped organizational structures but also redefined the concept of work-life balance. While remote work promises enhanced flexibility, its unregulated nature has raised concerns regarding employee stress, burnout, and overall mental health. The present study aims to examine the complex interaction between remote work flexibility, the dissolution of personal-professional boundaries, and the subsequent effects on

employee well-being (Muhammed & Sivasuramanian, 2022; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023).

The flexibility inherent in remote work arrangements allows employees to dictate their work hours and locations, offering an increased sense of autonomy. This flexibility is often cited as a key factor in improving job satisfaction and overall work-life balance (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). The reduction of time spent commuting and the ability to work from the comfort of home are seen as primary advantages of remote work (Muhammed & Sivasuramanian, 2022; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). Additionally, the ability to customize work schedules to accommodate personal commitments can potentially lead to a more balanced and fulfilling life. However, despite these advantages, remote work presents notable challenges.

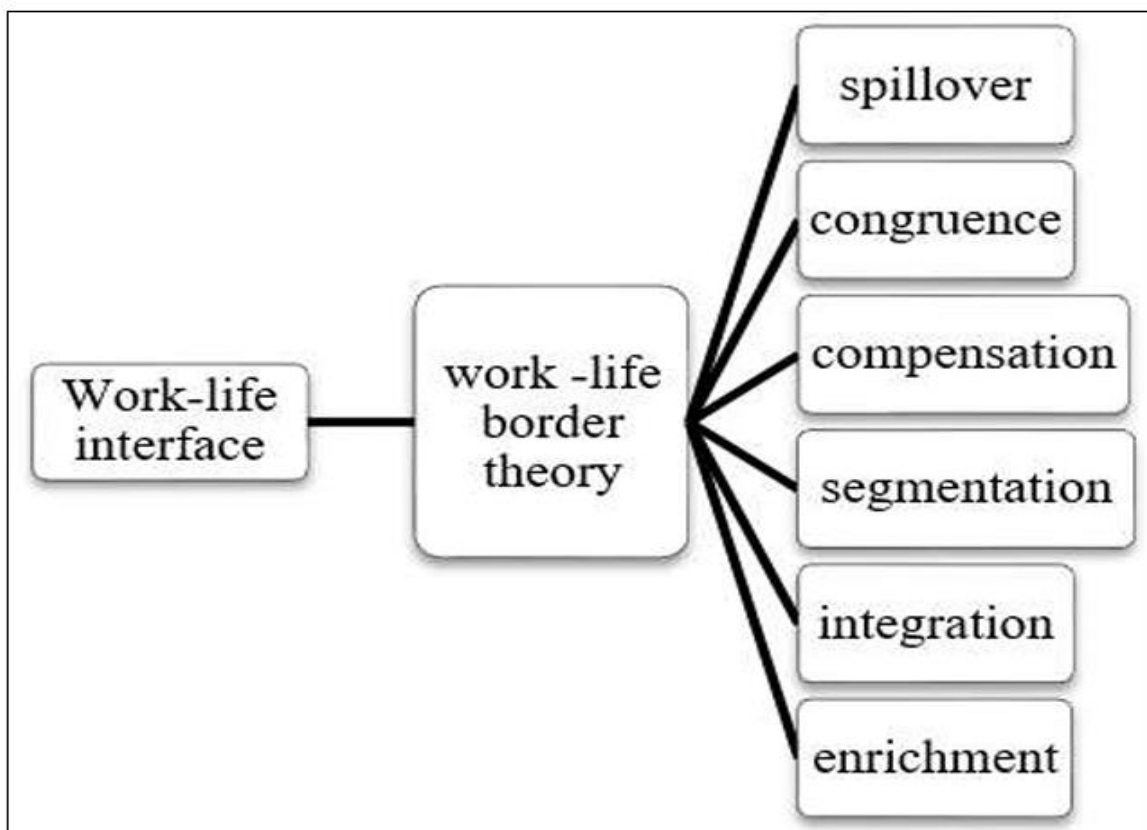


Figure 1: Strategies for Establishing the Work-Life Boundary.

The absence of physical separation between home and workplace often results in difficulties in managing the temporal and psychological boundaries that traditionally defined work and non-work time (Lamovsek & Cerne, 2023; McPhail et al., 2024). This lack of separation has been linked to an increased risk of overwork, job stress, and a decline in employee mental health. As a result, understanding the impact of these blurred boundaries on employee well-being is crucial for developing sustainable and effective remote work practices (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The theory of boundary management is central to understanding the challenges posed by remote work. Boundary theory posits that individuals create and maintain boundaries between different domains of their lives, such as work, family, and leisure, in order to manage their time and psychological resources effectively. These boundaries can be categorized into physical, temporal, and psychological domains. In

traditional office settings, employees generally establish clear physical boundaries between their work and personal lives, with the workplace serving as a distinct space for professional activity (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). Temporal boundaries are typically structured around the office hours and commuting schedules, while psychological boundaries help employees mentally disengage from work when they are at home (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023).

However, the shift to remote work has disrupted these established boundaries. Employees working from home often find it difficult to separate their work from personal life, as the physical and temporal cues that previously marked the end of the workday are now absent. The lack of clear demarcation between work and home has led to what has been referred to as "work-life blending," where the demands of work increasingly encroach upon personal time, resulting in cognitive overload and difficulty in disengaging from work-related tasks. This phenomenon has been linked to increased stress levels, decreased job satisfaction, and burnout, particularly among employees who are unable to establish clear boundaries between their professional and personal responsibilities (Muhammed & Sivasuramanian, 2022; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). Studies have shown that individuals who experience difficulty in managing these boundaries tend to report higher levels of anxiety, sleep disturbances, and diminished physical and psychological well-being (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023).

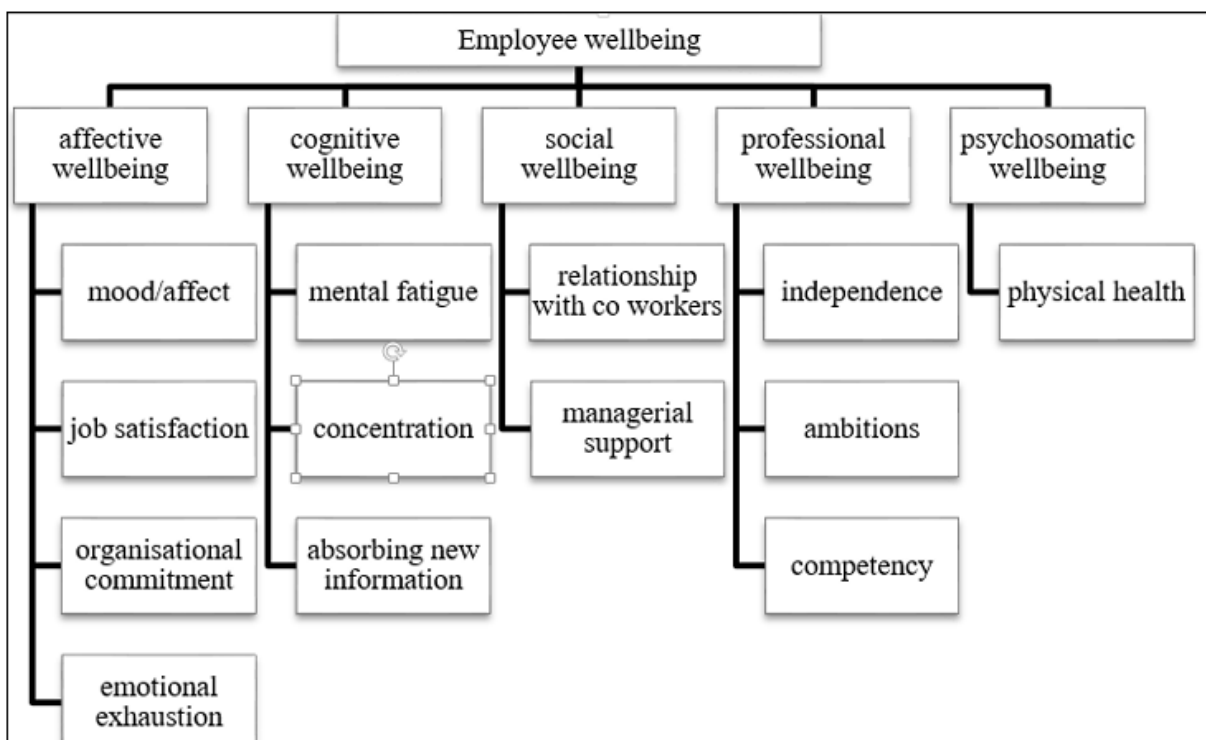


Fig 2: Five dimensions of well-being demonstrated according to Van Horn et al. (2004)

Further, the concept of "telepressure" has emerged as a key concern in remote work environments (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). Telepressure refers to the pressure employees feel to respond to work-related communications outside of regular office hours, often driven by the constant connectivity enabled by digital technologies. This constant expectation of availability can contribute to the erosion of personal boundaries, as employees feel compelled to remain engaged with work even during non-working hours (Muhammed & Sivasuramanian, 2022; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). The pervasive nature of digital

communication tools, such as email, instant messaging, and video conferencing, has further exacerbated this issue, leading to heightened expectations for work availability and responsiveness. Research has highlighted the negative impact of telepressure on employee well-being, particularly in terms of burnout, work-life conflict, and overall job satisfaction (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023).

Impact on Employee Well-being

The blurring of personal-professional boundaries due to remote work flexibility has profound implications for employee well-being. On one hand, the autonomy afforded by remote work arrangements can lead to improved mental health outcomes for employees who can better manage their work schedules and integrate personal activities into their day (Bouncken et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2021; Lewis & Cooper, 2005; McPhail et al., 2024). For example, employees may experience reduced stress levels due to the elimination of commuting and the ability to attend to personal matters during the workday. This flexibility can contribute to an improved work-life balance, which is associated with higher job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, and greater overall well-being (Tarafdar et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the lack of clear boundaries between work and personal life can lead to negative outcomes such as burnout, stress, and decreased psychological health. When employees are unable to disconnect from work, they may experience chronic fatigue, feelings of overwhelm, and an increased risk of depression and anxiety (Bouncken et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2021; Lewis & Cooper, 2005; McPhail et al., 2024). The inability to mentally disengage from work-related tasks, coupled with the expectation to remain constantly available due to digital connectivity, can contribute to a sense of "always being on," which is detrimental to recovery and overall well-being. Additionally, the social isolation often associated with remote work can lead to feelings of loneliness and a sense of disconnection from colleagues, further exacerbating mental health challenges.

2. RELATED WORK

Working from Home Since information and communication technology (ICT) advancements have made it possible for employees to work remotely, they may connect and interact with supervisors and coworkers via technology while working remotely (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007). Globalization and digital transformation processes have contributed to the rise of distributed virtual teams, in which members must cooperate despite their geographical separation (McPhail et al., 2024). This enabled the growth of alternative hiring practices and helped big businesses overcome financial and spatial limitations (Thompson, 2018; Ferreira et al., 2021; Vial, 2019). There are now several definitions, conceptualizations, and terminologies for distributed work (such as telework, remote work, work from home, virtual work, hybrid work, and e-work) due to the academic field's explosive expansion (Schafer et al., 2023). As a consequence, the idea that encourages the division of research into subdomains has been fragmented (Lamovsek & Cerne, 2023). These words varied only little, despite their strong resemblance. The term "telecommuting" (Nilles, 1975) was originally thought to refer to the use of ICT to alleviate the burden of commuting to and from work. The phrase has changed to telework and, more recently, e-work to refer to work that may be done remotely using digital tools with little to no in-person connection with coworkers and superiors (Kirk & Belovics, 2006; Charalampous et al., 2019). Moreover, while teleworking allows for the use of ICT, remote work confines work to locations outside of the company's premises, and work from home restricts work to the employee's main house (Lamovsek & Cerne, 2023; McPhail et al., 2024). In this study, we use the term "remote work" as a catch-all to describe the shared experience of people who spend at least some of their time working somewhere other than the company's headquarters (Cuel et

al., 2020; Orlandi et al., 2024) and who rely on digital and technological tools to plan, communicate, and coordinate their work and interactions with other employees (Kirkman & Mathieu, 2005; Lamovsek & Cerne, 2023). The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the actions taken to stop its spread led to a sudden increase in remote work modes (Sikhondze et al., 2024). While teleworking in the US has expanded from 5.7% to 17.9% (Bureau, 2022; Sikhondze et al., 2024), teleworking in Europe has increased from 5% in 2019 to 12% in 2020 (Eurofound, 2022). Knowledge workers were still compelled to operate from home throughout the lockdown, and a number of other activities were restricted, creating an exceptional circumstance (Khan & Nasim, 2024; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). This often meant that workers had to balance job, family, education, homemakers, and leisure activities while living in the same physical space as other household members. The majority of workers have returned to their actual jobs when COVID-19 limitations were lifted. However, not every employee who went back to work did so willingly, according to Eurofound (2022). Women were more likely than males to say that they wanted more flexible work schedules and working from home at least some days of the week. In order to preserve some of the advantages of remote work while preserving a closer physical connection to the office, several businesses have chosen hybrid working arrangements (Mohammed et al., 2022). The growing number of employees operating under hybrid regimes supports the notion that remote work is here to stay and has fundamentally altered the nature of work in the future (Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). In terms of the individual (flexibility, work-life balance, well-being, and job satisfaction), the organization (cutting expenses and productivity), and the environment (cutting emissions, fuel, and energy consumption), the literature supports a number of advantages and benefits that these working models achieve (Bouncken et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2021; Lewis & Cooper, 2005; McPhail et al., 2024). However, conflicting data also points to potential risks, such as those related to workers' performance, workload, mental health and stress (Sandoval-Reyes et al., 2021), and work-family balance (Ferreira et al., 2021). These factors should be taken into account by both individuals and organizations when implementing these flexible work arrangements (Muhammed & Sivasuramanian, 2022; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023).

2.1 Remote Work Outcomes for Employees

The digital transformation brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic has led to a great deal of research on remote work in recent years (e.g., Khan & Nasim, 2024). Research on its impacts on people is still ongoing, however, and there is conflicting data on how it affects people's physical and mental health as well as their work satisfaction and performance (Charalampous et al., 2019; Chatterjee et al., 2022). It is well acknowledged that remote work helps employees by allowing them more freedom and flexibility at work and by enhancing work-life balance (Lewis & Cooper, 2005). Furthermore, it is thought that cutting down on home-to-work commuting (such as transportation) may save money and time, which can lead to increased productivity and less work-family conflicts (Molino et al., 2020). Ferreira et al. (2021) contrast the top five benefits of working remotely that have been documented in the literature with those that e-workers have mentioned in their interviews. The majority of the points—such as lower total costs, work-life balance, better worker autonomy, and higher productivity and morale—converge, if not precisely in that order. Furthermore, although interviewers discuss using remote knowledge and creating a competitive edge, the research concentrates on work happiness and decreased burnout. High levels of personal well-being have been linked to all of these advantages (e.g., Muhammed & Sivasubramanian, 2022). According to Van Horn et al. (2004), wellbeing is a multifaceted notion that may be seen via emotional, cognitive, social, professional, and psychosomatic aspects. Examples of this include happiness and life satisfaction (Khan & Nasim, 2024). Despite the benefits of remote work, a number of studies suggest that this type

of operation may have negative consequences for both employers and employees (Muhammed & Sivasubramanian, 2022). Due to their heavy reliance on ICTs, remote workers are particularly vulnerable to issues related to extended usage of these gadgets. One often documented consequence of the stress caused by ICT usage is technostress (Thurik, 2024). Research indicates that the more reliant an employee is on ICT, the more likely it is that their performance and well-being would suffer (Tarafdar et al., 2020). Workload and technostress are common complaints from remote workers (Khan & Nasim, 2024), particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when high performance expectations, emotional fortitude, and uncertainty have contributed to this rise (Rodríguez-Lopez et al., 2021; Sahut & Lissillour, 2023). The primary causes of remote workers' decreased levels of pleasure, wellbeing, and satisfaction have been shown to be stress, workload, and the fuzziness of the lines between work and personal life (Charalampous et al., 2019). These employees frequently express feelings of isolation and loneliness as a result of not being able to interact with others in person (Ferreira et al., 2021), as well as a lack of social support and effective communication from coworkers and superiors, all of which are known to have an impact on employee engagement (Muhammed & Sivasubramanian, 2022). In certain ways, communication issues or the kind of work that is not readily "seen" may make employees feel invisible despite their efforts. This often leads to working beyond of regular business hours, putting in more effort to be seen, and raising work pressure levels (Muhammed & Sivasubramanian, 2022; Seeman et al., 2023). As a result, this raises the possibility of family disputes, increases workload, and causes stress. Employee productivity is also lowered by psychological strain shown as exhaustion, particularly when job tasks include prolonged use of synchronous media (Sikhondze et al., 2024). This is known to lower employee well-being, which is seen in a number of facets of a person's life, both personally and in terms of how well the company performs (Kalimo et al. 2003; Khan & Nasim 2024; Thurik et al. 2024). Vanden Abeele (2021) used the phrase "digital wellbeing" to describe the balance between the advantages and disadvantages of ICT use, combining the issues and difficulties that come with using digital media. Nonetheless, there is now proof that remote work has an effect on workers' health, including their digital well-being (Lunde et al., 2022; Seeman et al., 2023). Table 1 uses Van Hornetal's (2004) categories of well-being to describe the negative consequences based on the information presented in the literature. Notwithstanding the difficulties that come with working remotely, in the correct situations, this style of operation may have more beneficial effects than detrimental ones (Ferreira et al., 2021). For example, many of its drawbacks may be solved with the right organizational and social assistance (Muhammed & Sivasubramanian, 2022). Technology-provided flexibility may have positive effects on time management, mobility, and work-family balance, which can raise one's level of happiness with life in general and their employment in particular (Ferreira et al., 2021). Organizations must use suitable tactics and suggestions to safeguard their human resources and encourage workplace well-being in order to reap these advantages (Clausen et al., 2023). In order to put up the essential processes that enable them to reap the anticipated advantages from these flexible working models, organizations must assess and increase awareness of the harmful connotations of remote work.

Table 1. Negative Outcomes of Remote Work on Well-Being.

| | |
|--|--|
| Well-being Dimension (Van Horn et al., 2004) | Negative outcomes of remote working |
|--|--|

| | |
|----------------------|---|
| Psychosomatic | Includes the effects of prolonged use of necessary or common digital devices when working remotely, such as smartphones or computers, which tend to cause eye strain and lead to blurred vision and head and neck pain, may also cause poor posture, and can reduce sleep quality (Wynn & Jones, 2023), as well as other health complains (Seeman et al., 2023). |
| Social | Social isolation and the lack of interactions with colleagues, particularly face-to-face interactions and other social relationship resources (Muhammed & Sivasubramanian, 2022). Previous studies also identify trust issues in supervisors as impacting long-term employers' well-being (Iqbal et al., 2021). Besides, blurred boundaries between work and personal life affect individuals' well-being (Muhammed & Sivasubramanian, 2022). |
| Cognitive | The “always-on culture” often prevents employees from switching off from work, which results in poor well-being of employees (Charalampous et al., 2019). Additionally, mental fatigue from extensive synchronous media usage impacts employee well-being (Sikhondez et al., 2024). |
| Professional | Includes autonomy and competence. Frequently, remote workers feel the need to be always available to meet job expectations and to accomplish subjective norms of “always” connected. This “always-on culture” results in long working hours and the difficulty to switch off from work, which in turn translates into an increase in techno-overload (Charalampous et al., 2019). |
| Affective | Includes negative emotions, emotional exhaustion, and loss of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The impact of the psychological and mental components includes stress, anxiety, depression, addiction, and burnout. In fact, (Ferreira et al., 2021) showed that participants described technology dependency problems as one of the top 5 disadvantages of remote work. |

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design using a survey-based approach. A cross-sectional method is used to assess the impact of remote work flexibility on employee well-being and work-life balance. Likert-scale questions will be analyzed statistically to determine trends and correlations in employee perceptions and experiences.

Data Collection Methods

Primary data will be collected through structured online surveys distributed to employees working remotely across various industries. The survey consists of Likert-scale questions and demographic items to analyze work flexibility and well-being. Convenience sampling will be used to reach participants through professional networks, social media, and corporate contacts.

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 100 respondents was selected using a purposive sampling method to ensure participants had remote work experience. The sample included full-time employees, part-time workers, freelancers, and self-employed professionals to provide diverse perspectives on work-life balance challenges.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria: Participants must be 18 years or older, currently working remotely (full-time/part-time/freelance), and have at least six months of remote work experience.

Exclusion Criteria: Individuals who never worked remotely, unemployed individuals, and those working in on-site-only jobs will be excluded.

Ethical Considerations

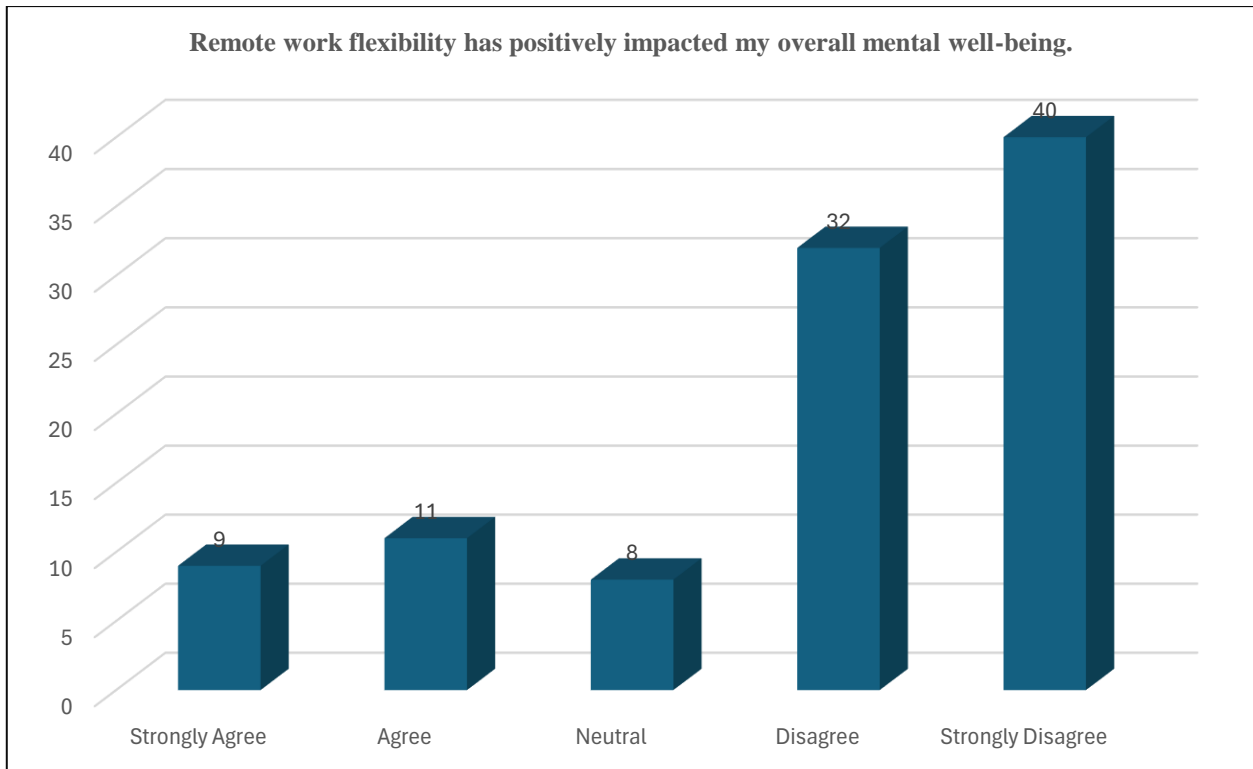
Participants will provide informed consent before survey participation. Their anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured, with data used solely for research purposes. Ethical approval will be obtained, and participants will have the right to withdraw at any stage without consequences. No personally identifiable information will be collected.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

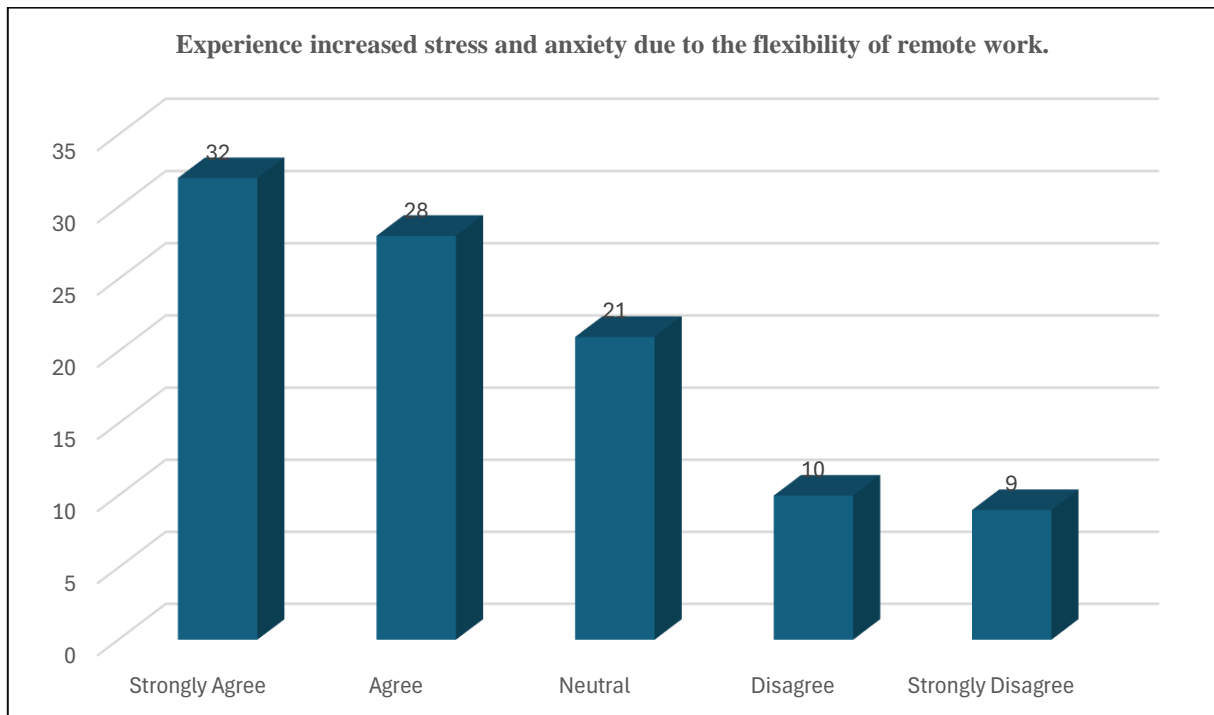
Demographic Profile

| Age Group | |
|--|----|
| 18–25 years | 12 |
| 26–35 years | 25 |
| 36–45 years | 18 |
| 46–55 years | 26 |
| 56 years and above | 19 |
| Employment Type | |
| Full-time | 53 |
| Part-time | 12 |
| Freelance/Contract-based | 9 |
| Self-employed | 26 |
| Years of Remote Work Experience | |
| Less than 1 year | 20 |
| 1–3 years | 23 |
| 4–6 years | 35 |
| More than 6 years | 22 |

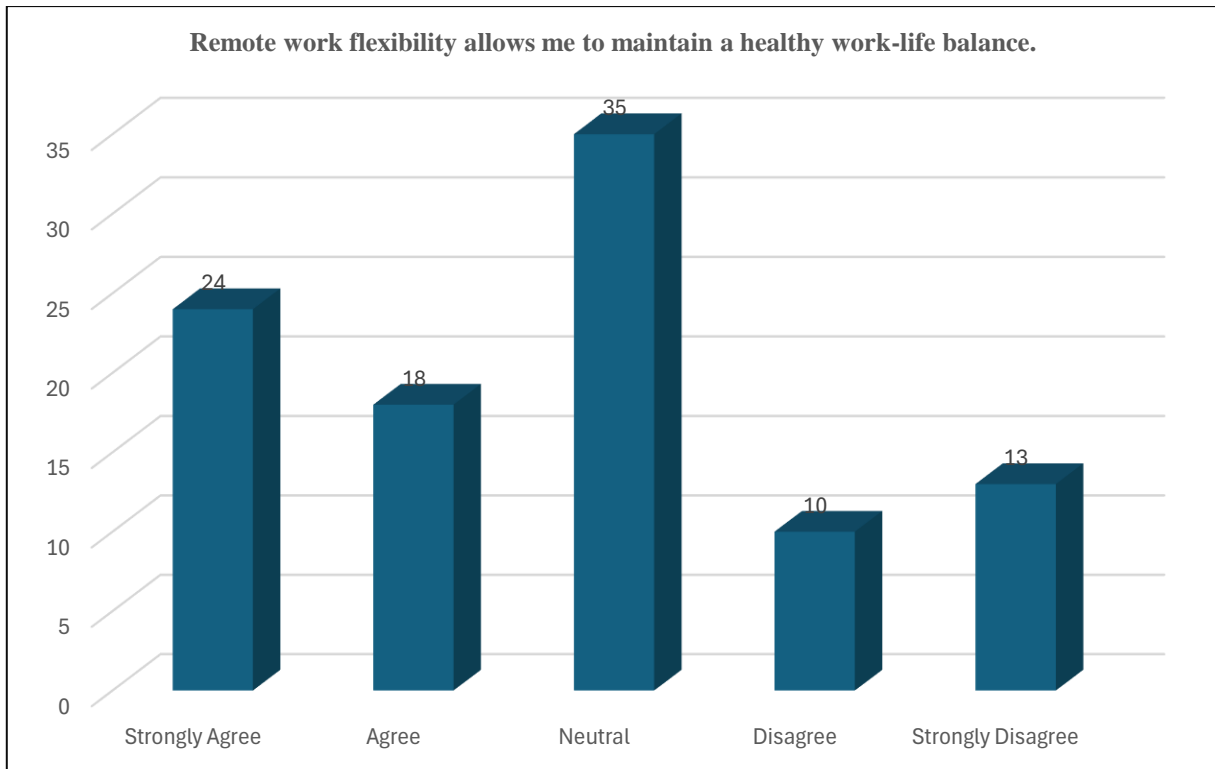
The data provides insights into the demographics and work experiences of remote workers. The largest age groups are 26–35 years (25) and 46–55 years (26), indicating that remote work is popular among mid-career professionals. Full-time employees dominate (53), followed by self-employed individuals (26), showing a mix of stability and entrepreneurial flexibility. Remote work experience varies, with the highest number having 4–6 years (35), followed by 1–3 years (23), suggesting that many workers have adapted well to remote settings. However, 20 respondents have less than a year’s experience, highlighting a growing trend in remote work adoption.



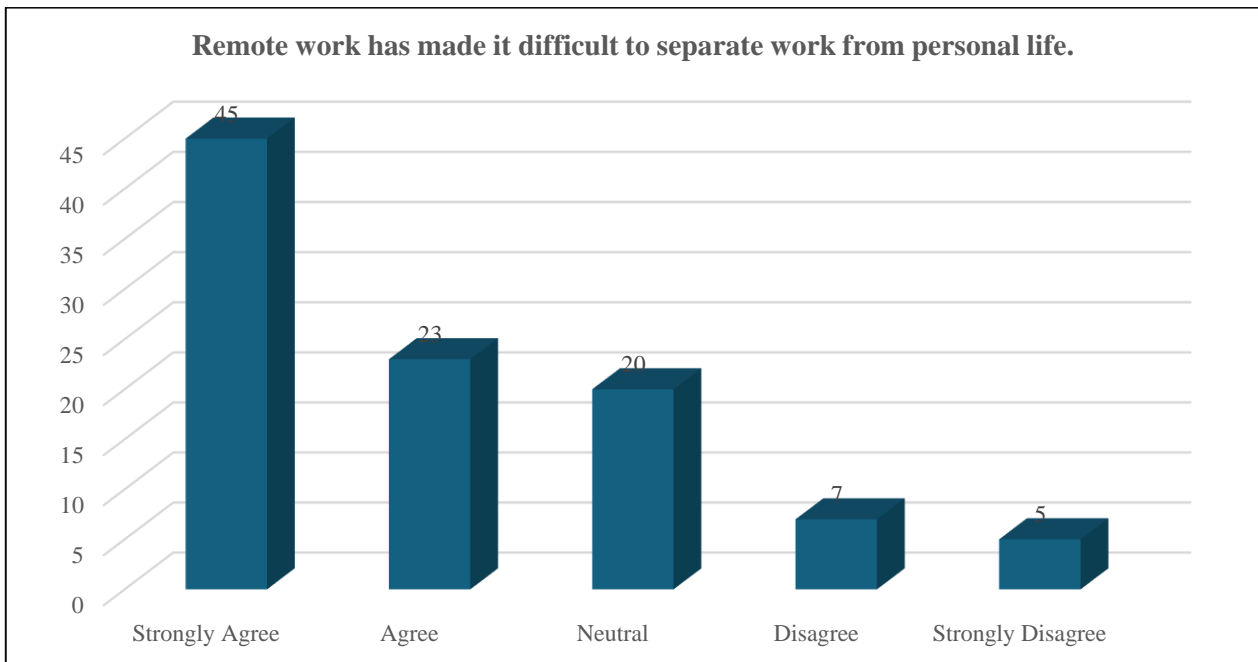
The Graph reveals that a majority of respondents (72%) either disagree or strongly disagree that remote work flexibility has positively impacted their mental well-being. This suggests that remote work may contribute to increased stress, isolation, and blurred work-life boundaries, potentially leading to negative psychological effects and reduced overall well-being.



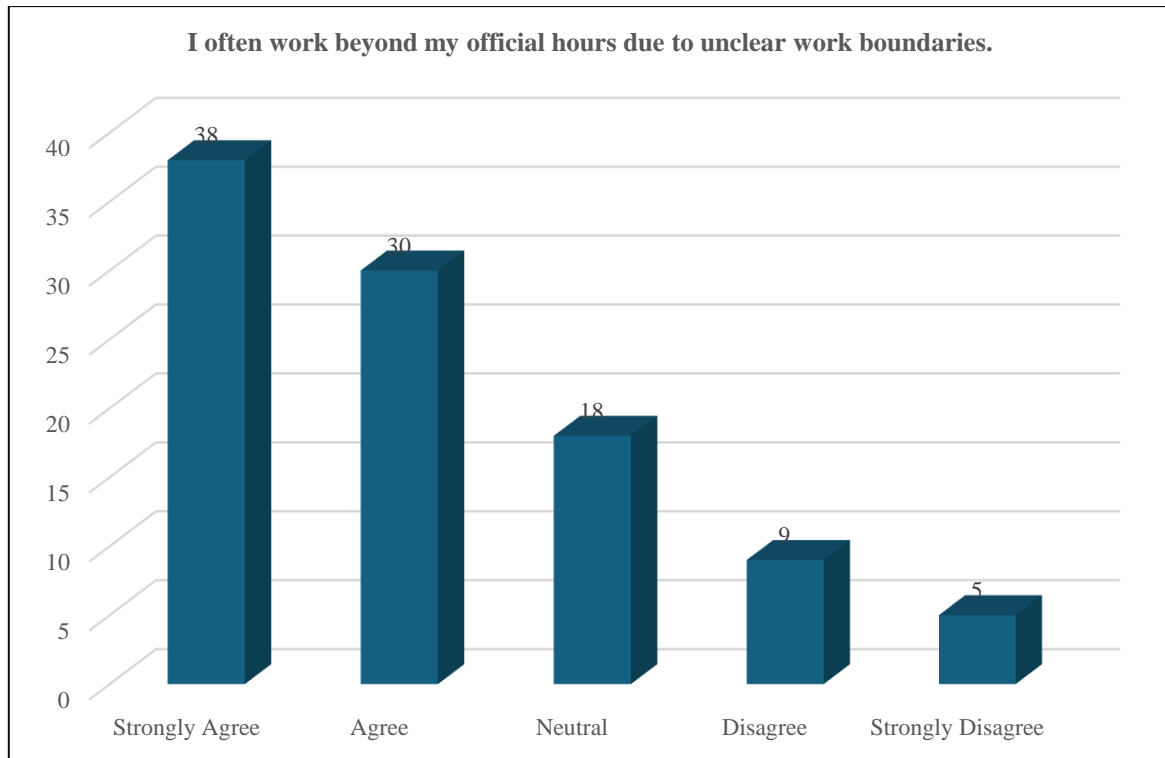
The above Graph indicates that a majority of respondents (60 out of 100) either strongly agree or agree that remote work flexibility has increased their stress and anxiety. This suggests that while flexibility offers benefits, it may also lead to work-life imbalance, excessive workload, and mental strain.



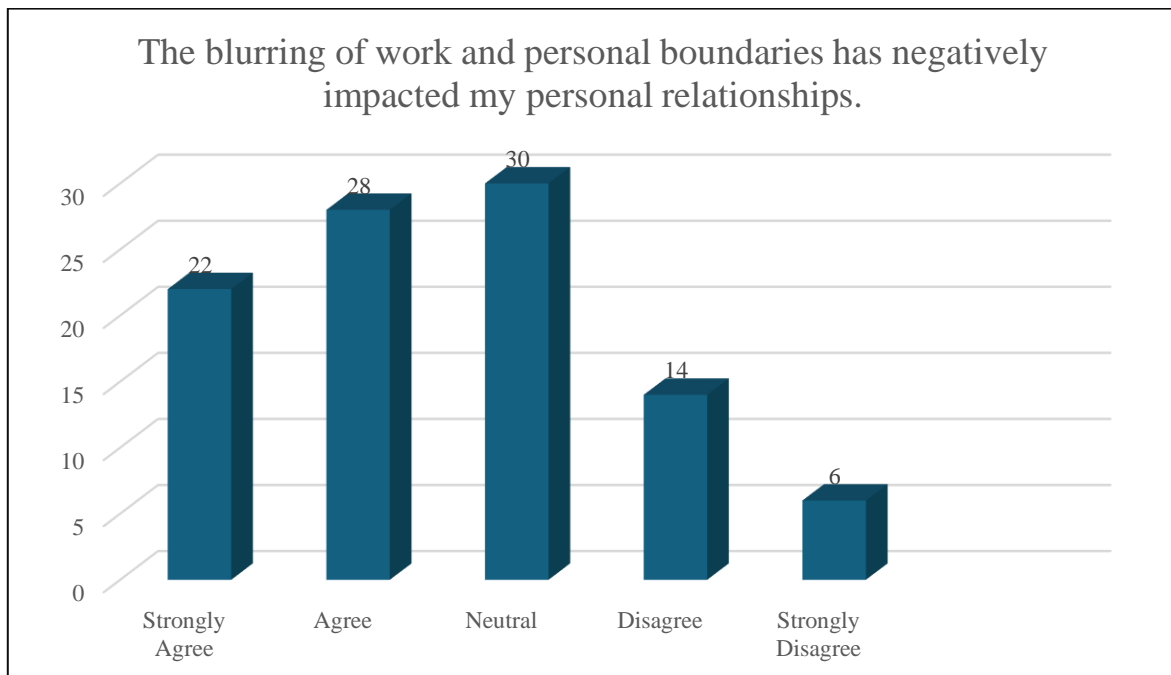
The chart shows diverse perspectives on remote work flexibility and work-life balance. While 42% (Strongly Agree and Agree) feel it supports balance, 35% remain neutral, and 23% (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) find it challenging. This indicates that remote work’s impact on balance depends on personal circumstances and job demands.



The chart indicates that a majority (68%) of respondents (Strongly Agree and Agree) find it difficult to separate work from personal life due to remote work. About 20% remain neutral, while only 12% (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) do not see it as a challenge. This highlights significant work-life boundary issues.



The chart reveals that 68% of respondents (Strongly Agree and Agree) frequently work beyond official hours due to unclear work boundaries, indicating a prevalent issue of work-life imbalance. Meanwhile, 18% remain neutral, and only 14% (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) do not experience this challenge, highlighting a concerning trend in remote work settings.



The chart indicates that 50% of respondents (Strongly Agree and Agree) feel that blurred work and personal boundaries have negatively impacted their personal relationships. Meanwhile, 30% remain neutral, and only 20% (Disagree and Strongly Disagree) do not see an impact. This suggests a significant concern regarding work-life integration challenges.

5. DISCUSSION

The discussion on remote work flexibility and its impact on employee well-being highlights both advantages and challenges. On the positive side, remote work offers greater autonomy, reduces commuting stress, and enhances work-life balance. Employees gain control over their schedules, leading to improved job satisfaction and productivity. However, the blurring of personal-professional boundaries poses significant concerns. Without clear separations, employees often struggle to disconnect from work, leading to increased stress, burnout, and reduced mental well-being. The concept of "tele pressure," where employees feel compelled to remain constantly available, exacerbates work-life conflicts and heightens anxiety. Additionally, excessive reliance on digital communication can lead to social isolation, diminishing workplace collaboration and support networks. To mitigate these issues, organizations must implement structured policies, such as designated work hours and digital disconnection strategies, to foster a healthier work environment. Balancing flexibility with well-defined boundaries is crucial to ensuring employee well-being in the evolving landscape of remote work.

6. CONCLUSION

Remote work has revolutionized workplace dynamics, offering employees greater control over their schedules while simultaneously challenging the separation between personal and professional life. This study highlights both the advantages and drawbacks of remote work flexibility, emphasizing its profound impact on employee well-being. While remote work facilitates autonomy and work-life integration, it also increases the risk of burnout, stress, and diminished psychological health due to blurred boundaries and constant digital connectivity. The findings underscore the importance of organizational policies that encourage boundary management strategies, such as designated work hours, digital disconnection policies, and employee support programs. Employers must foster a balanced approach that preserves flexibility while safeguarding mental well-being. Future research should focus on long-term effects, industry-specific challenges, and adaptive strategies for sustainable remote work practices. By addressing these concerns, organizations can create a healthier and more productive remote work environment that prioritizes both efficiency and employee satisfaction.

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