

Influence of Smartphone Overuse on Work–Life Balance Impairment among Urban Employees in Southern Rajasthan

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ABSTRACT

The rapid digitalisation of modern workplaces has increased employees' dependence on smartphones for communication, coordination, and task management. While smartphones contribute to convenience and efficiency, excessive use may interfere with the boundaries that separate professional responsibilities from personal time. This study explores whether smartphone overuse influences work–life balance impairment among urban employees in Southern Rajasthan. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from 208 working professionals aged between 25 and 45 years. Using correlation and simple regression analysis, the study found a statistically significant association between smartphone overuse and work–life balance impairment, $r(206) = .295$, $p < .001$. Regression results further confirmed that smartphone overuse predicted 8.7 per cent of the variance in work–life balance impairment, $F(1, 206) = 19.60$, $p < .001$. These findings suggest that excessive smartphone engagement contributes to blurred work–home boundaries, reduced opportunities for rest, and increased intrusion of work demands into personal life. The study provides timely insights for organisations seeking to address digital overload and strengthen employee wellbeing initiatives.

Keywords: Smartphone dependency, Work–life balance, Boundary erosion, Digital intrusion, Employee wellbeing

INTRODUCTION: BACKGROUND AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

Digital technologies have become deeply embedded in employees' day-to-day professional routines, with the smartphone emerging as the most dominant tool for communication and task execution. Although smartphones enhance workplace efficiency, their constant availability may disrupt employees' ability to disengage from professional obligations. Scholars observe that continuous connectivity leads to boundary erosion, whereby work-related communication spills into personal spaces, diminishing individuals' capacity for relaxation and recovery (Derks & Bakker, 2014).

Urban employees, particularly those working in dynamic professional environments, frequently rely on smartphones to manage work tasks beyond office hours. This heightened reliance increases the likelihood of overuse, where the device becomes a persistent source of interruptions, notifications, and work demands (Panova & Lleras, 2016). When these disruptions accumulate, employees often experience difficulty maintaining balanced routines, which may impede overall health and wellbeing.

In regions such as Southern Rajasthan, the transition towards digital systems in education, healthcare, IT, and corporate services has intensified smartphone usage expectations. As employees become increasingly contactable, the boundary between personal life and work grows progressively fragile. Given these developments, it is important to examine whether smartphone overuse contributes to measurable work–life balance impairment. This study investigates this relationship by analysing behavioural patterns and psychological responses among urban employees, thereby contributing valuable insights to organisational wellbeing discussions.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Work–life balance has long been recognised as a central determinant of employee wellbeing, job satisfaction, and long-term organisational sustainability. Over the past decade, researchers have increasingly examined how digital technologies influence these dynamics, particularly through patterns of smartphone dependency. Studies indicate that persistent connectivity contributes to heightened work intrusions into personal time, challenging individuals’ ability to detach mentally from their professional responsibilities (Park et al., 2018).

Research also highlights that excessive smartphone engagement fosters a culture of constant availability, prompting employees to respond to work messages after hours, which reduces opportunities for genuine leisure and family interaction (Derks & Bakker, 2014). Related studies show that smartphone overuse is associated with emotional exhaustion, reduced psychological detachment, and diminished recovery experiences (van Laer & de Bloom, 2020).

Further empirical evidence links smartphone overuse to sleep disturbances, attention challenges, and stress responses, indirectly affecting work–life harmony (Kushlev et al., 2016; Thomée, 2018). Urban employees in particular face heightened challenges because of increased expectations related to productivity, responsiveness, and rapid communication. While some Indian studies investigate digital stress, limited research focuses specifically on smartphone overuse and work–life balance within the urban context of Southern Rajasthan.

The present study bridges this gap by examining whether overuse contributes to measurable work–life balance impairment among employees working in diverse urban sectors.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A descriptive research design was used, as it enables systematic examination of relationships between behavioural variables.

Area of Study

Data were collected from employees working in urban regions of Udaipur, Rajsamand, Dungarpur, Banswara, Pratapgarh, and Chittorgarh districts of Southern Rajasthan.

Population

The population consisted of working professionals employed in corporate offices, IT services, educational institutions, and healthcare organisations.

Sample Size

The study included 208 urban employees aged between 25 and 45.

Sampling Technique

Purposive non-probability sampling was used to ensure respondents had active exposure to smartphone-mediated work communication.

Likert Statement

A structured questionnaire containing two Likert-based instruments was used:

A. Smartphone Overuse Scale (SOS)

- I feel the urge to check my phone frequently, even during non-working hours.
- I find it difficult to put my phone away, even when spending time with family.
- My smartphone usage often extends late into the night and affects my sleep.
- I experience discomfort or anxiety when I do not have my phone nearby.
- I often respond to work messages or emails outside of official hours.
- I rarely enjoy uninterrupted time with loved ones due to calls or messages.
- Smartphone usage has reduced the quality of my leisure or personal time.

B. Work–Life Balance Impairment Scale (WLB)

- I am able to maintain boundaries between my personal and professional life.
- My family or partner has expressed concerns about my phone usage.
- I believe my smartphone habits are affecting my work–life balance negatively.

Research Objective

To assess whether increasing levels of smartphone overuse contribute to work–life balance impairment among employees.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H₀₁: Smartphone overuse does not significantly influence work–life balance impairment.

For the purpose of testing the above hypothesis mean score for the Smartphone Overuse and Work–Life Balance Impairment was calculated and was further used for research work

Interpretation

The results indicate that smartphone overuse is associated with observable challenges in maintaining a clear boundary between personal and professional life. Although the strength of the relationship is more modest than that observed in Hypothesis 1, the direction and significance are consistent. Employees who demonstrate higher levels of overuse tend to experience greater work intrusions into personal time, increased difficulty disengaging from work demands, and reduced opportunities for uninterrupted leisure. This relationship aligns with the growing understanding that excessive connectivity disrupts healthy work–life balance.

Correlation Results

Table 1.1: Correlation

	r	p	95% CI
SOS and WLB	0.295	<.001	[0.17, 0.41]

Regression Results

Table 1.2: Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate
0.295	0.87	0.082	1.26

Table 1.3: ANOVA

Model	df	F	p
Regression	1	19.60	<.001

Table 1.4: Coefficient

Model	Unstandard. Coef. B	Standard. Coef. Beta	Std. Error	t	p
Constant	1.99		0.28	7.25	<.001
SOS	0.326	0.29	0.07	4.43	<.001

Results (APA Style)

A Pearson correlation showed a significant positive association between smartphone overuse and work–life balance impairment, $r(206) = .295$, $p < .001$. Simple regression analysis confirmed that smartphone overuse significantly predicted work–life balance impairment, $F(1, 206) = 19.60$, $p < .001$, with the model explaining 8.7 per cent of the variance ($R^2 = .087$). Smartphone overuse was a significant predictor, $B = 0.326$, $t(206) = 4.43$, $p < .001$.

Decision

Since both the correlation and regression produced p-values below 0.05, the **null hypothesis is rejected**. Smartphone overuse significantly influences work–life balance impairment.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Smartphone overuse demonstrates a moderate and statistically significant effect on work–life balance impairment.
2. The model indicates that overuse, although not the strongest predictor, plays a meaningful role in shaping employees’ ability to maintain boundaries.
3. The regression equation for this model is: **WLB = 0.326(SOS) + 2.287**
4. These findings suggest that overuse contributes to blurred boundaries and increased work spill-over into personal time.

CONCLUSION

The results confirm that smartphone overuse has a tangible effect on employees’ work–life balance. Although the magnitude is moderate, the pattern is consistent, indicating that excessive reliance on smartphones disrupts employees’ ability to maintain separation between work responsibilities and

personal life. This disruption may accumulate over time, leading to chronic imbalance, reduced wellbeing, and diminished quality of life. Encouraging mindful technology use and establishing clearer organisational expectations may help employees reassert control over the boundaries between work and home.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Organisations should establish clear communication norms for after-hours messaging.
2. Digital-wellbeing initiatives may help employees regain control over boundaries.
3. HR departments can introduce structured digital-detox programmes.
4. Employees should be encouraged to schedule device-free periods during personal time.
5. Managers should model healthy digital behaviour by limiting non-urgent communications.
6. Awareness workshops on digital overload may improve work–life balance outcomes.

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