

Examining “Right-to-Disconnect” Policies, Work–Life Balance, and Employee Mental Health in Hybrid Work Environments

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ABSTRACT

In hybrid work environments, the temporal and spatial boundaries between work and personal life have become increasingly blurred, and employees are often confronted with expectations of immediate responsiveness. “Right-to-disconnect” policies can help restore work–life balance and support mental health by establishing clear communication boundaries. The present study aimed to examine the effects of these policies on employees’ work–life balance and mental health in hybrid work environments. To this end, a mixed-methods research approach was adopted, incorporating a researcher-developed questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with employees of organizations that use hybrid working arrangements. The assessment criteria included awareness of the policies, employees’ perceptions of work boundaries, the level of work–life balance, and indicators of mental health such as anxiety, job burnout, and life satisfaction. The results indicated that employees in organizations where right-to-disconnect policies had been formally developed and implemented reported higher levels of work–life balance, lower communication pressure, and lower levels of job burnout. Furthermore, clarity regarding expected response hours, managerial support for personal boundaries, and a non-punitive organizational culture played important roles in strengthening the positive effects of these policies. In contrast, the absence of a clearly defined policy or inconsistent implementation relative to operational expectations may increase anxiety and a sense of latent pressure among employees. It can therefore be concluded that the right to disconnect is not merely a communication practice but a key mechanism for preventing mental health problems and promoting sustainable productivity in hybrid organizations. Managers are advised to ensure the effective institutionalization of this right within the organizational culture through the development of clear policies, employee training, and periodic policy reviews.

Keywords: Right to disconnect, work–life balance, mental health, hybrid work environment.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of hybrid and remote working arrangements has transformed the relationship between employees, organizations, technology, and working time. In conventional organizational settings, work was historically associated with relatively clear spatial and temporal boundaries, with employees generally expected to perform their occupational duties within designated workplaces and prescribed working hours. The widespread adoption of digital communication technologies, however, has progressively weakened these boundaries by enabling employees to remain connected to work regardless of physical location or time of day. Hybrid work has



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intensified this transformation because employees alternate between organizational premises and remote work environments while remaining continuously connected through email, instant messaging applications, collaboration platforms, video conferencing systems, and other digital tools. Although this arrangement offers greater flexibility and can improve autonomy, productivity, and employee engagement, it also increases the risk that work-related demands will extend into non-work time. In this context, the protection of employees' ability to disengage from work has become a critical concern for contemporary human resource management. Research on remote work has emphasized that organizational productivity and innovation depend not merely on digital connectivity but also on the development of appropriate structures that protect employee engagement and prevent excessive work intrusion into personal life (1).

The growing importance of work–life balance reflects these transformations in contemporary employment. Work–life balance generally refers to an individual's ability to allocate time, energy, and psychological resources across occupational and non-occupational domains in a manner perceived as satisfactory and sustainable. It does not necessarily imply an equal distribution of time between work and personal life; rather, it reflects the compatibility of occupational demands with family responsibilities, personal activities, health needs, and recovery opportunities. Empirical research conducted across different national and cultural contexts has consistently demonstrated that favorable work–life balance is associated with important individual and organizational outcomes. Haar et al. found that work–life balance was positively associated with both job satisfaction and life satisfaction while also demonstrating important relationships with mental health across multiple cultural contexts (2). Similarly, research within academic employment settings has shown that work–life balance contributes to affective well-being, psychological functioning, job satisfaction, and employees' intentions to remain within their organizations (3). These findings indicate that work–life balance is not a peripheral employee benefit but a fundamental component of sustainable occupational functioning.

Contemporary conceptualizations of work–life balance also extend beyond work–family conflict and increasingly incorporate the relationship between work and health. Gragnano et al. argued that work–life balance should be understood not only through work–family balance but also through work–health balance because occupational demands can directly interfere with physical recovery, psychological functioning, and health-related behaviors (4). This broader perspective is particularly relevant in hybrid work settings, where work may enter domestic environments and influence periods traditionally reserved for rest and recovery. When employees remain cognitively preoccupied with work during evenings, weekends, or other non-working periods, they may experience difficulty restoring the psychological and physiological resources consumed during the workday. Consequently, the quality of work–life balance depends not only on formal work schedules but also on whether employees are genuinely able to detach psychologically from work once their occupational responsibilities have ended.

Psychological detachment represents a particularly important mechanism through which work–life balance may influence employee well-being. It refers to the extent to which individuals mentally disengage from occupational demands during non-work periods rather than continuing to think about tasks, deadlines, workplace problems, or professional communications. A meta-analytical review by Lazauskaitė-Zabielské et al. demonstrated that psychological detachment is closely related to work–life balance and plays a central role in employee recovery processes (5). Employees who are able to detach from work are more likely to experience meaningful recovery, whereas persistent occupational involvement can contribute to strain accumulation. In digitally intensive workplaces, psychological detachment may be particularly difficult because smartphones and communication

platforms provide immediate access to work information, even when employees are physically outside the workplace. Thus, contemporary work–life balance increasingly depends on the management of digital accessibility as much as on the management of formal working hours.

This issue has become particularly important because digital technologies create what may be described as an availability paradox. The same tools that provide flexibility and facilitate remote collaboration can simultaneously generate pressure to remain continuously available. Employees may benefit from being able to work from different locations, yet they may also perceive that emails, messages, and notifications require rapid responses irrespective of conventional working hours. Trapsila showed that digital communication can influence work–life balance in complex ways, highlighting the paradoxical consequences of communication technologies for employees' ability to maintain boundaries between occupational and personal domains (6). This paradox is intensified when organizational cultures implicitly reward immediate responsiveness or when delayed responses are interpreted as a lack of commitment. Under such conditions, digital flexibility can evolve into digital dependence, with employees experiencing a persistent sense that they should remain reachable even when they are formally off duty.

The psychological consequences of this environment are closely related to the concept of telepressure. Telepressure refers to the preoccupation and perceived urgency to respond quickly to work-related messages delivered through information and communication technologies. Employees experiencing high telepressure may frequently check digital devices, interrupt non-work activities to respond to work messages, and remain mentally engaged with professional demands during periods intended for recovery. Kotera et al. demonstrated that telepressure is meaningfully associated with work–life balance and burnout, indicating that digitally mediated work demands may undermine employees' ability to preserve psychological resources (7). These findings are especially significant in hybrid work settings because technology functions as the primary infrastructure connecting dispersed employees, supervisors, and teams. While continuous connectivity supports coordination, excessive expectations of availability can increase emotional exhaustion and compromise employees' capacity to separate their professional and personal roles.

Related evidence concerning technostress further demonstrates the risks associated with technology-intensive employment. Technostress emerges when employees experience excessive demands, overload, complexity, uncertainty, or intrusion associated with workplace technologies. Sadaf reported that technostress can undermine employees' work–life balance and may operate through psychological distress, while personal resilience can shape how employees experience these technological pressures (8). Such findings suggest that digital communication pressure cannot be understood merely as an individual self-management issue. It is also a structural and organizational phenomenon shaped by communication norms, workload expectations, managerial practices, and technological systems. Employees may possess strong coping capacities, yet persistent expectations for after-hours availability can still interfere with personal responsibilities and recovery. Accordingly, organizations increasingly need explicit norms defining when employees are expected to respond and when they are legitimately entitled to disengage.

The “right to disconnect” has emerged within this context as an organizational and policy-based response to the erosion of work–life boundaries. The concept generally refers to employees' ability to refrain from engaging in work-related electronic communications outside established working hours without experiencing disciplinary consequences, informal penalties, or reputational disadvantages. Although flexible work arrangements may enhance employee autonomy, flexibility alone does not necessarily guarantee work–life balance. Evidence from

flexible work research suggests that outcomes depend greatly on implementation conditions, supervisory behavior, job demands, and organizational expectations. A systematic review and meta-analysis by Çivilidağ and Durmaz demonstrated that flexible working arrangements are significantly related to work–family conflict, work–life balance, and organizational commitment, although their consequences vary depending on contextual conditions (9). This reinforces the argument that flexibility must be accompanied by boundary-supportive policies if organizations seek to obtain its benefits without simultaneously increasing role interference.

The importance of structural working conditions is also evident in studies examining specific employee groups. Yimsook and Theerakosonphong showed that flexible benefits, workforce diversity, and working conditions represent important determinants of work–life balance among employees, emphasizing that the broader employment environment shapes employees' capacity to reconcile work with non-work responsibilities (10). Similarly, Septyani et al. examined flexible work arrangements as antecedents of work–life balance among Generation Z employees, illustrating the growing relevance of flexibility for younger employees whose expectations regarding autonomy and employment conditions may differ from those of earlier generations (11). These findings indicate that hybrid work should not be treated as a universally beneficial arrangement. Its effects depend on whether employees have genuine control over the location, timing, and boundaries of their work.

The ability to determine where and when remote work occurs appears especially relevant to employee mental health. Jiang et al. found that control over the location and timing of remote work was associated with mental health through work–life balance, suggesting that autonomy in remote work arrangements may influence psychological outcomes partly by improving the coordination of occupational and non-occupational roles (12). This finding has direct implications for right-to-disconnect policies because such policies can function as a form of temporal control. By establishing legitimate periods during which employees are not expected to monitor or respond to work communications, organizations may improve employees' perceived control over personal time. In the absence of such protections, nominal flexibility may become illusory: employees may technically be free to work remotely while simultaneously facing expectations of continuous connectivity.

The relationship between work–life balance and mental health has been documented in several occupational contexts. Xavier emphasized that disrupted work–life balance can negatively affect mental health, particularly when individuals experience persistent role conflict, insufficient recovery, and difficulty separating employment obligations from personal responsibilities (13). In addition, evidence from healthcare and other demanding professions indicates that work–life balance is shaped by interacting individual, interpersonal, organizational, and environmental factors. Widayana et al., in a socio-ecological review of nurses, identified multiple determinants of work–life balance, illustrating that employees' ability to manage occupational and personal demands cannot be attributed solely to personal coping strategies (14). Such findings support an organizational approach in which work–life balance is treated as a shared responsibility involving managerial practices, workload management, staffing conditions, communication expectations, and workplace culture.

Organizational antecedents of work–life balance have likewise received considerable attention in human resource management research. Ganjinia et al. identified and prioritized a range of antecedents affecting work–life balance in a governmental organization, emphasizing that managerial and organizational characteristics play a central role in shaping employees' experiences (15). Job quality and employment conditions are equally important. Choi et al. demonstrated that job quality indicators associated with work–life balance may differ according to employee gender, highlighting the need to recognize heterogeneity in how organizational conditions influence work

and personal life (16). These differences are relevant for hybrid work because expectations regarding caregiving, domestic responsibilities, and availability outside formal working hours may not affect all employees equally. Consequently, right-to-disconnect policies should be designed in ways that promote equitable access to protected non-work time.

Managerial and supervisory support may be especially important in determining whether formal flexibility and boundary policies translate into actual employee experiences. Sasmaz and Fogarty showed that supervisor support can shape employees' work-life outcomes and career-related perceptions, suggesting that managerial behavior plays a pivotal role in translating organizational practices into meaningful employee experiences (17). A formally written right-to-disconnect policy may therefore have limited practical value when supervisors continue sending routine communications during non-working hours or implicitly expect immediate replies. Conversely, managers who model appropriate boundary behavior, delay non-urgent communications, explicitly communicate response expectations, and respect employees' personal time may strengthen the effectiveness of formal policies. This distinction between formal policy and enacted practice is essential because employees respond not only to written organizational rules but also to the behavioral signals embedded within workplace culture.

Leadership may therefore influence whether digital transformation promotes sustainable performance or intensifies strain. Riyanto found that work flexibility, digital leadership, and work-life balance are connected with employee commitment, with mental well-being functioning as an important intervening mechanism (18). This finding demonstrates that the benefits of digitalized and flexible work are closely linked to the quality of leadership and employee well-being. Digital leadership should therefore encompass more than the effective use of technology for coordination and productivity. It should also involve responsible management of digital expectations, communication practices, and employee boundaries. Leaders who recognize the psychological consequences of continuous connectivity may be better positioned to establish a hybrid work environment that supports both organizational performance and employee health.

The need for such organizational protections is strengthened by evidence that the consequences of work-life balance extend beyond employee well-being to organizational effectiveness. Employees who experience a sustainable balance between occupational and non-occupational domains are more likely to demonstrate satisfaction, commitment, and continued participation, whereas persistent imbalance may contribute to burnout, psychological distress, dissatisfaction, and turnover intentions (3). Similarly, flexible work arrangements appear most beneficial when they reduce rather than intensify work-family conflict and when employees experience sufficient control over working conditions (9). Consequently, the right to disconnect should be viewed as part of a broader organizational sustainability strategy rather than merely as a protective or legal restriction on communication. By reducing unnecessary after-hours demands, organizations may facilitate recovery, enhance employees' perceptions of fairness and autonomy, and support more sustainable forms of productivity.

Despite the growing body of research on work-life balance, remote work, flexible working arrangements, technostress, and employee mental health, an important gap remains regarding the simultaneous examination of employees' awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, digital communication pressure, work-life balance, and mental health within hybrid work environments. Much existing research has focused on general flexible working conditions (9), determinants of work-life balance (10, 14), technological stressors (6, 8), psychological detachment (5), telepressure (7), or general relationships between work-life balance and mental health (2, 13). However, fewer studies have integrated these dimensions into a single organizational framework addressing how

awareness of boundary-protective policies and digital communication pressure are simultaneously related to both work–life balance and mental health. This gap is particularly important as hybrid work becomes institutionalized rather than treated as a temporary employment arrangement.

Accordingly, examining right-to-disconnect policies can contribute to both theory and practice by clarifying how organizational communication boundaries operate alongside digital pressures in shaping employee outcomes. Such research can inform human resource policies regarding after-hours communication, managerial behavior, employee training, technology use, and hybrid work design. It can also help distinguish between merely offering flexible work and creating a genuinely sustainable hybrid working environment in which employees have meaningful control over non-work time. Understanding these relationships is increasingly important because the effectiveness of hybrid work depends not only on technological infrastructure but also on organizational norms that determine when employees may legitimately disengage from occupational demands.

Therefore, the present study aimed to examine the relationships of employees' awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and digital communication pressure with work–life balance and mental health among employees working in hybrid work environments.

Methods and Materials

The present study is applied in terms of its purpose because it seeks to identify factors influencing employees' work–life balance and mental health in hybrid work environments and to provide an operational framework for human resource managers and organizational leaders. In terms of its nature and approach, the study is descriptive-correlational; that is, the independent variables—awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies—and the dependent variables—work–life balance and mental health—are measured under natural organizational conditions, and the relationships among them are examined without researcher intervention (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). With regard to the time dimension, the study is cross-sectional, meaning that data are collected within a specific period and changes over time are not examined. The research design is survey-based, whereby a questionnaire is used to assess employees' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences concerning right-to-disconnect policies and their consequences for work–life balance and mental health (Creswell, 2014). This design is particularly common in human resource management and organizational psychology research because of its potential for generalizing findings and its capacity to assess several variables simultaneously (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019).

The statistical population of this study consists of all employees in organizations whose work arrangements combine at least on-site work and remote work and are therefore classified as hybrid work environments. Given the expansion of hybrid working arrangements in recent years, the target organizations include information technology companies, governmental organizations with technology-related departments, insurance companies, banks, and educational organizations in which employees work remotely for at least two days per week. Because of the dispersed and variable nature of this population, its exact size cannot be determined; therefore, Cochran's formula is used to determine the required sample size. Assuming a 95% confidence level, a 5% margin of error, and maximum variance, the minimum required sample size is calculated to be 384 participants (Cohen et al., 2003). Allowing for approximately 15% incomplete or unusable questionnaires, 450 questionnaires are distributed to ensure that at least 384 valid responses are obtained. Furthermore, considering the use of structural equation modeling, it is generally recommended that the ratio of observations to structural paths be at least 10:1 (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011).

Sampling in the present study is conducted using convenience sampling with a cluster-based approach. In the first stage, 12 organizations operating in information technology, financial services, insurance, and education and employing hybrid working arrangements are identified and selected. In the second stage, employees from each organization who have worked in a hybrid environment for at least six months are considered eligible for participation. The inclusion criteria comprise at least six months of experience working under a hybrid arrangement, access to digital work tools such as organizational email, workplace messaging applications, and collaboration systems, and provision of informed consent to participate in the study. The exclusion criteria include employees who engage in hybrid work for fewer than two days per week, retired employees or individuals with temporary employment contracts of less than three months, and questionnaires containing more than 20% incorrect or invalid responses. Although this sampling strategy is not statistically superior to probability sampling methods, it is accepted in organizational research where access to the entire statistical population is difficult because of its practical feasibility and lower cost (Creswell, 2014).

Data in this study are collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire is organized into two sections. The first section includes demographic and occupational questions covering information such as age, gender, educational attainment, work experience, type of organization, number of remote-working days per week, duration of employment in a hybrid work environment, and type of employment contract. The second section consists of four five-point Likert scales ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, to strongly agree, which measure the study variables. The first scale, "Awareness and Perceptions of Right-to-Disconnect Policies," consists of 12 items assessing awareness of the existence of the policy, perceptions of temporal response boundaries, clarity of organizational expectations, and managerial support for personal boundaries. This scale was developed based on the studies of Schiffrin (2017) and European Parliament documents (2017) and was subsequently revised by the researcher. The second scale, "Work–Life Balance," comprises 10 items adapted from a standard work–life balance questionnaire, translated and culturally adapted by the researcher, and assesses satisfaction with both life domains, temporal flexibility, social support, and role management (Kossek & Lambert, 2015). The third scale, "Mental Health," comprises 14 items assessing dimensions of job burnout—including emotional exhaustion, disengagement, and reduced effectiveness—work-related anxiety, sleep quality, and perceived control over time and was developed based on World Health Organization criteria (2019) and the work of Maslach and Leiter (2016). The fourth scale, "Digital Communication Pressure," comprises eight items assessing expectations of immediate responsiveness, frequent interruptions, continuous access to digital tools, and the perceived need to remain constantly available (Mishra et al., 2022).

Questionnaire validity is assessed at two levels: content validity and construct validity. Content validity is evaluated using the content validity ratio method. In the first stage, the questionnaire is presented to seven university faculty members specializing in human resource management, organizational psychology, and research methodology and subsequently to five human resource managers from hybrid organizations. Each expert evaluates every item using three response categories—essential, useful, or unnecessary—and the Content Validity Ratio (CVR) is calculated. Items with a CVR below +0.40 are eliminated, whereas items with values between +0.40 and +0.60 are revised (Liu & Pourais, 2010). Construct validity is examined using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) during the pilot stage. Varimax rotation is employed, with a minimum factor loading criterion of +0.45 for retaining items (Field, 2018). Questionnaire reliability is assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In a pilot study conducted with 30 employees working in hybrid environments, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were +0.82 for

awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, +0.85 for work–life balance, +0.88 for mental health, and +0.79 for digital communication pressure. All coefficients exceeded the accepted threshold of +0.70, indicating satisfactory instrument reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Polit & Beck, 2017).

The study is conducted in several stages. In the first stage, after obtaining approval from the faculty and written informed consent from participating employees, the questionnaires are distributed electronically through an online form and in person during employee meetings. In the second stage, a pilot study is conducted with 30 employees to identify ambiguities in the questionnaire, assess response time, and evaluate participants' comprehension of the questions. Based on feedback obtained during the pilot stage, the wording of the questions and the structure of the questionnaire are revised as necessary. In the third stage, the final questionnaire is distributed to 450 employees across the 12 target organizations. At this stage, employees are requested to answer the questions carefully and honestly and to contact the researcher in the event of any ambiguity. The main data-collection phase lasts three weeks. In the fourth stage, after the questionnaires are collected, the data are entered and examined both manually and using software, and incomplete, duplicate, or improperly completed questionnaires are excluded. In the fifth stage, valid data are analyzed using statistical software. Throughout the entire research process, ethical research principles, including confidentiality of information, voluntary participation, and protection of employee anonymity, are observed.

The collected data are analyzed at both descriptive and inferential levels. At the descriptive level, descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis are used to provide an overall profile of the demographic and occupational characteristics of the sample and the scores of the study variables. The Shapiro–Wilk test, given subgroup sample sizes below 200, and the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test are used to evaluate the normality of data distributions (Field, 2018). At the inferential level, statistical methods appropriate to each research hypothesis are employed. Independent-samples *t* tests and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) are used to examine differences in the means of dependent variables according to categorical variables such as gender, education, work experience, and type of organization. Pearson's correlation coefficient is used to examine relationships between continuous variables. Multiple linear regression analysis is employed to test the conceptual model and examine the simultaneous associations of the independent variables with the dependent variables.

Findings and Results

The demographic and occupational characteristics of the 450 respondents are presented comprehensively in this table. The employees had a mean age of 34.76 years and a mean work experience of 7.78 years. Regarding gender, the first category accounted for the largest proportion, at 51.1%. With respect to educational attainment, the second category had the highest frequency, accounting for 48.4% of respondents. Furthermore, the most common duration of employment in a hybrid work environment was 2–4 years, representing 34.0% of respondents, while the most frequently reported number of remote-working days was two days per week, reported by 44.7% of participants.

Table 1. Descriptive Indicators of Respondents' Demographic and Occupational Characteristics

Variable	Category or Indicator	Frequency	Percentage	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Age	Descriptive indicator	450	100	34.76	6.90	22	54

Gender	First gender category	230	51.1	—	—	—	—
Gender	Second gender category	220	48.9	—	—	—	—
Educational level	First educational category	30	6.7	—	—	—	—
Educational level	Second educational category	218	48.4	—	—	—	—
Educational level	Third educational category	142	31.6	—	—	—	—
Educational level	Fourth educational category	41	9.1	—	—	—	—
Educational level	Fifth educational category	19	4.2	—	—	—	—
Work experience	Descriptive indicator	450	100	7.78	4.32	1	23
Type of organization	Organizational categories	450	100	—	—	—	—
Type of employment contract	Contractual categories	450	100	—	—	—	—
Duration of employment in a hybrid work environment	Less than 6 months	0*	0*	—	—	—	—
Duration of employment in a hybrid work environment	6–12 months	110	24.4	—	—	—	—
Duration of employment in a hybrid work environment	1–2 years	123	27.3	—	—	—	—
Duration of employment in a hybrid work environment	2–4 years	153	34.0	—	—	—	—
Duration of employment in a hybrid work environment	More than 4 years	64	14.2	—	—	—	—
Remote-working days per week	2 days	201	44.7	—	—	—	—
Remote-working days per week	3 days	143	31.8	—	—	—	—
Remote-working days per week	4 days	82	18.2	—	—	—	—
Remote-working days per week	5 days	24	5.3	—	—	—	—

Table 2. Descriptive Indicators of the Main Study Variables

Study Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Skewness	Excess Kurtosis
Awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies	3.008	1.125	1.000	5.000	−0.052	−1.196
Work–life balance	2.992	1.113	1.000	5.000	−0.014	−1.108
Mental health	2.974	1.104	1.000	5.000	0.021	−1.150
Digital communication pressure	2.993	1.137	1.000	5.000	0.014	−1.117

The results presented in Table 2 show the descriptive indicators of the four main study variables among 450 employees working in hybrid work environments. Examination of the means indicates that the scores of all four variables are close to the midpoint of the five-point scale. The mean score for awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies was 3.008, indicating that this variable was at a moderate level in the study sample. This finding suggests that, on average, respondents did not evaluate their awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies as either distinctly low or distinctly high.

The mean score for work–life balance was 2.992. This value indicates that employees' overall assessment of the balance between occupational responsibilities and personal life was at a moderate level. Given the nature of hybrid work environments, this pattern may reflect the simultaneous experience of opportunities and challenges arising

from the combination of on-site and remote work. However, to identify the factors contributing to this condition more precisely, the relationships among the variables and the results of inferential analyses must also be examined.

The mean mental health score was 2.974, which was also close to the midpoint of the scale. This result indicates that the average score of this construct in the study sample was at an intermediate level. However, the precise interpretation of this mean depends on the scoring method, the direction of individual items, and the meaning assigned to higher scores. Therefore, the obtained mean alone cannot provide a definitive basis for determining whether employees' mental health status was favorable or unfavorable.

The mean digital communication pressure score was 2.993. Its proximity to the midpoint of the scale indicates that respondents reported a moderate average level of digital communication pressure. Digital communication pressure may be related to requirements to check messages, receipt of work-related requests outside formal working hours, and expectations of rapid responses across communication platforms. Nevertheless, the correlation and regression results should also be considered when evaluating the role of these pressures in employees' occupational and psychological conditions.

Examination of the standard deviations indicates that score dispersion was relatively similar across the four variables. The standard deviations were 1.125 for awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, 1.113 for work–life balance, 1.104 for mental health, and 1.137 for digital communication pressure. Among these variables, digital communication pressure showed the greatest dispersion, whereas mental health showed the lowest dispersion. These differences are not substantial and indicate that the degree of variability in the investigated constructs was generally similar. At the same time, the observed dispersion indicates that employees' experiences of communication policies, work–life balance, mental health, and digital pressures were not entirely homogeneous.

The skewness values for all four variables were also close to zero. This pattern indicates that the distributions of the composite scores did not exhibit substantial asymmetry. The very small negative skewness values observed for awareness and perceptions and for work–life balance, as well as the very small positive skewness values observed for mental health and digital communication pressure, do not indicate meaningful asymmetry in the score distributions. In contrast, excess kurtosis was negative for all variables; therefore, compared with a normal distribution, the score distributions were relatively flatter. Nevertheless, assessment of data normality should not rely solely on skewness and kurtosis statistics; examination of distribution plots and model residuals is also important.

Overall, the descriptive findings indicate that the four main study constructs had mean values close to the midpoint of the scale and did not differ substantially in terms of dispersion. These results provide an initial overview of the study variables and establish a basis for examining bivariate relationships and regression analyses in the subsequent sections.

Table 3. Internal Consistency Reliability Coefficients of the Study Scales Based on Cronbach's Alpha

No.	Study Scale	Number of Items Included in the Calculation	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies	12	0.936
2	Work–life balance	10	0.921
3	Mental health	14	0.941
4	Digital communication pressure	8	0.907

Table 3 presents the results of the internal consistency reliability assessment for the four scales used in the study. Internal consistency refers to the degree of coherence among the items of a scale and indicates the extent to which the items constituting each instrument consistently measure a common construct. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was used to evaluate this property. The findings show that all four scales had reliability coefficients above 0.90, collectively indicating a high degree of internal consistency among the items of these instruments in the analyzed data.

Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies scale was 0.936. This value indicates that the 12 items included in the calculation demonstrated high internal consistency. This finding is particularly important in a study examining employees' knowledge and perceptions of policies intended to restrict work-related communication outside official working hours because item consistency can enhance confidence in the results obtained from measuring this construct.

For the work–life balance scale, Cronbach's alpha was 0.921. This coefficient was calculated based on 10 items and indicates high internal consistency of the scale in the study sample. Because work–life balance is one of the principal variables in the study, adequate internal consistency among its items is important for interpreting correlation and regression findings. This level of reliability indicates that the items used to assess the construct exhibited substantial coherence in the present dataset.

The reliability coefficient for the mental health scale was 0.941, representing the highest value among the four scales examined. This coefficient was calculated based on 14 items. In calculating this index, Items 34–41 were reverse-scored and replaced by their corresponding reverse-coded variables, whereas Items 42–47 were included in the calculation according to the coding recorded in the dataset. Correctly accounting for item direction is important because inclusion of reverse-worded items without appropriate rescaling may affect the internal consistency of the scale. Nevertheless, the accuracy of this procedure should be verified against the original instrument instructions and the substantive meaning of each item.

Cronbach's alpha for the digital communication pressure scale was 0.907. This value was calculated based on eight items and indicates that the items of this scale also demonstrated high internal consistency in the study sample. This result supports the adequacy of the scale's reliability for subsequent statistical analyses using the present dataset.

Comparison of the obtained coefficients indicates that the mental health scale had the highest alpha coefficient, at 0.941, whereas the digital communication pressure scale had the lowest, at 0.907. Despite this difference, the coefficients of all four scales were within a high range, and the differences among them were relatively small. Accordingly, the internal consistency findings provide favorable preliminary evidence supporting the use of the composite scores of these scales in subsequent analyses.

It should nevertheless be recognized that Cronbach's alpha alone does not establish scale unidimensionality, construct validity, or complete measurement accuracy. Furthermore, extremely high alpha coefficients may, under certain circumstances, indicate substantial similarity or redundancy among item contents. Therefore, a more comprehensive assessment of instrument quality should also include examination of factor structure, validity evidence, and the correspondence of individual items with the theoretical definition of each construct. Overall, the findings presented in Table 3 indicate that the four scales demonstrated high internal consistency in the present dataset and that their scores can be used to analyze relationships among the principal study variables while taking the aforementioned limitations into consideration.

Table 4. Pearson Correlation Matrix Among the Main Study Variables

Variables	Awareness and Perceptions of Right-to-Disconnect Policies	Work–Life Balance	Mental Health	Digital Communication Pressure
Awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies	1.000	0.589***	0.462***	–0.295***
Work–life balance	0.589***	1.000	0.530***	–0.448***
Mental health	0.462***	0.530***	1.000	–0.509***
Digital communication pressure	–0.295***	–0.448***	–0.509***	1.000

The results presented in Table 4 show the bivariate relationships among awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, work–life balance, mental health, and digital communication pressure. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of these relationships. The findings indicate that all reported relationships were statistically significant. However, statistical significance alone does not establish causal relationships, and the correlation coefficients merely indicate the direction and strength of associations among the variables within the study sample.

The strongest positive relationship among the study variables was observed between awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and work–life balance. The correlation coefficient between these two variables was 0.589, indicating a moderate-to-strong positive association. In other words, employees reporting greater awareness and more favorable perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies generally reported higher levels of work–life balance. This finding may indicate the importance of awareness of organizational policies and knowledge of the boundaries governing work-related communication outside official working hours. However, factors such as the degree of policy implementation, managerial support, and organizational communication culture should also be considered when drawing conclusions regarding the actual role of these policies.

The relationship between awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and mental health was also positive and statistically significant. The correlation coefficient between these variables was 0.462, indicating a moderate association. According to this result, employees who reported greater awareness and more favorable perceptions of these policies also obtained, on average, higher mental health scores in this sample. This relationship may be associated with greater perceived control over personal time, reduced ambiguity regarding communication expectations, and the ability to establish clearer boundaries between occupational activities and non-work life. Nevertheless, additional research is required to determine the precise mechanisms underlying this relationship.

Conversely, awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies were negatively associated with digital communication pressure, with a correlation coefficient of –0.295. This result indicates that greater awareness and more favorable perceptions of policies restricting work-related communication were associated with lower digital communication pressure. The strength of this relationship was weaker than the association between policy awareness and work–life balance. Therefore, although the direction of the relationship is consistent with the theoretical expectations of the study, the degree of association between the two variables appears more limited. This finding may highlight the importance of distinguishing between awareness of policies and their practical implementation, because knowledge of a policy does not necessarily imply that employees receive sufficient organizational support to exercise it.

The findings also show a positive and statistically significant relationship between work–life balance and mental health. The correlation coefficient was 0.530, indicating a moderate-to-strong association. Accordingly, employees who reported a more favorable balance between occupational responsibilities and personal life also reported higher

average mental health scores. This result is consistent with the proposition that having sufficient time for family, rest, personal activities, and psychological recovery may be associated with more favorable psychological functioning. Nevertheless, the direction of the relationship may also be reciprocal, insofar as better mental health may facilitate more effective management of occupational and personal responsibilities.

Work–life balance was negatively and significantly associated with digital communication pressure. The correlation coefficient between these two variables was -0.448 . This finding indicates that greater pressure arising from digital communication was associated with lower work–life balance scores. Employees who are more frequently exposed to work-related messages and requests outside conventional working hours may experience greater difficulty separating working time from personal life. Such circumstances may restrict opportunities for rest and participation in non-work activities and may consequently be associated with a less favorable perception of work–life balance.

The strongest negative relationship in the table was observed between digital communication pressure and mental health. The correlation coefficient was -0.509 , indicating a moderate-to-strong negative association. This finding shows that higher levels of digital communication pressure were associated with lower mental health scores. Persistent work-related availability, frequent receipt of messages, and a perceived need to respond rapidly may restrict opportunities for psychological detachment from work. However, the precise interpretation of this relationship depends on the direction of scoring of the mental health scale. Therefore, before interpreting the association as representing better or poorer psychological functioning, it is necessary to determine whether higher scale scores indicate better mental health or greater psychological symptoms.

Overall, the correlation pattern indicates that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies are positively related to both work–life balance and mental health, whereas digital communication pressure is negatively associated with both variables. Furthermore, the positive association between work–life balance and mental health highlights the importance of work–life balance in evaluating employees' conditions in hybrid work environments. These findings provide an appropriate foundation for multiple regression analyses to determine the contribution of each variable to explaining variance in the dependent variables while controlling for the other predictors.

Table 5. Multiple Regression Results for Predicting Work–Life Balance

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Regression Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	<i>t</i> Statistic	Significance Level	95% Confidence Interval for B
Awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies	0.495	0.037	0.501	13.395	<0.001	0.423 to 0.568
Digital communication pressure	-0.294	0.037	-0.301	-8.043	<0.001	-0.366 to -0.223
Model Fit Statistics						
Statistical Index					Value	
Coefficient of determination (R^2)					0.430	
Adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2)					0.427	
Model <i>F</i> statistic					168.459	
Numerator and denominator degrees of freedom					2 and 447	
Model significance level					<0.001	
Sample size					450	

Table 5 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis examining the roles of awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and digital communication pressure in predicting work–life balance. In this analysis,

work–life balance is the dependent variable, while awareness and perceptions of the policy and digital communication pressure are entered as predictor variables. The purpose of this analysis is to determine the relationship of each predictor with work–life balance while statistically controlling for the other predictor.

The results for awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies indicate that this variable had a positive and statistically significant relationship with work–life balance. Its unstandardized regression coefficient was 0.495, and its standardized coefficient was 0.501. This finding indicates that, while holding digital communication pressure constant, a one-unit increase in awareness and perceptions of the policy was associated with a predicted 0.495-unit increase in work–life balance. The statistical significance of this coefficient also indicates that the observed relationship was statistically meaningful within the model.

The standardized coefficient for this variable indicates that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies had a stronger positive relationship with work–life balance than digital communication pressure. This finding may indicate that awareness of one's rights and of communication expectations in the workplace is associated with a more favorable employee assessment of the balance between work and personal life. For example, awareness of permissible periods for work-related communication and organizational expectations concerning responses outside official working hours may help employees establish clearer boundaries between occupational responsibilities and personal life. Nevertheless, the present findings alone cannot determine whether awareness of these policies directly improves work–life balance or whether other factors contribute to the observed relationship.

In contrast, digital communication pressure had a negative and statistically significant relationship with work–life balance. The unstandardized regression coefficient for this variable was -0.294 , and its standardized coefficient was -0.301 . Accordingly, while holding awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies constant, a one-unit increase in digital communication pressure was associated with a predicted 0.294-unit decrease in work–life balance. This result demonstrates that pressure arising from digital communication remained negatively associated with work–life balance even after employees' awareness of relevant policies was taken into account.

From an applied perspective, this finding highlights the importance of addressing communication demands in hybrid work environments. Merely informing employees about right-to-disconnect policies may not be sufficient to reduce communication pressure. Managerial expectations, response protocols, the timing of message transmission, and the ways organizational communication tools are used should also be considered. If employees continue to perceive that they must remain available at all times despite being aware of the policies, digital communication pressure may continue to be associated with poorer work–life balance.

The overall model statistics indicate that the regression model was statistically significant. The coefficient of determination was 0.430, meaning that the two predictor variables jointly explained 43% of the observed variance in work–life balance within the statistical model. The adjusted coefficient of determination was 0.427, providing an estimate very close to the original value after adjustment for the number of predictors and sample size. These values indicate that the model had substantial explanatory capacity; nevertheless, a proportion of the variation in work–life balance remains attributable to other factors not included in the present model.

Overall, the findings presented in Table 5 indicate that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies were positively associated with work–life balance, whereas digital communication pressure was negatively associated with it. Comparison of the standardized coefficients further indicates that the relationship between awareness and perceptions of the policy and work–life balance was stronger in absolute terms than the relationship between digital communication pressure and work–life balance. These findings support the importance of

simultaneously promoting organizational awareness and managing digital communication pressure. Nevertheless, given the cross-sectional nature of the data, the findings should be interpreted as statistical associations rather than definitive evidence of causal relationships.

Table 6. Multiple Regression Results for Predicting Mental Health

Predictor Variable	Unstandardized Regression Coefficient (B)	Standard Error	Standardized Regression Coefficient (β)	t Statistic	Significance Level	95% Confidence Interval for B
Awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies	0.210	0.044	0.214	4.714	<0.001	0.122 to 0.297
Work–life balance	0.254	0.048	0.256	5.277	<0.001	0.159 to 0.348
Digital communication pressure	–0.322	0.040	–0.331	–8.081	<0.001	–0.400 to –0.243
Model Fit Statistics						
Statistical Index					Value	
Coefficient of determination (R^2)					0.403	
Adjusted coefficient of determination (Adjusted R^2)					0.399	
Model F statistic					100.262	
Numerator and denominator degrees of freedom					3 and 446	
Model significance level					<0.001	
Sample size					450	

Table 6 presents the results of multiple regression analysis examining the associations of awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, work–life balance, and digital communication pressure with mental health. In this model, mental health is the dependent variable, and the three aforementioned variables are entered as predictors. This analytical method makes it possible to examine the association of each predictor with mental health while controlling for the other two variables. Accordingly, the resulting coefficients represent adjusted statistical relationships within the model.

The findings indicate that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies had a positive and statistically significant relationship with mental health. The unstandardized regression coefficient for this variable was 0.210, and its standardized coefficient was 0.214. This finding indicates that, while holding work–life balance and digital communication pressure constant, an increase in awareness and perceptions of the policy was associated with a predicted increase in mental health scores. This association may reflect the importance of knowledge of organizational policies in employees' workplace experiences, as awareness of the boundaries governing work-related communication and organizational expectations may be associated with greater certainty regarding time for rest and personal life. Nevertheless, this result alone does not demonstrate that awareness of such policies directly causes improvements in mental health.

Work–life balance also demonstrated a positive and statistically significant association with mental health. The unstandardized regression coefficient for this variable was 0.254, and its standardized coefficient was 0.256. This result indicates that, after accounting for awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and digital communication pressure, higher work–life balance scores were associated with higher mental health scores. From an organizational perspective, this relationship may underscore the importance of providing conditions that enable employees to achieve greater coordination between occupational commitments and personal responsibilities. Adequate rest, participation in family and personal activities, and reduced interference of occupational duties with non-work time are among the factors that may theoretically help explain this relationship, although the independent contribution of these factors was not directly measured in the present study.

Among the three predictor variables, digital communication pressure had the largest standardized coefficient in absolute magnitude. Its standardized coefficient was -0.331 . This result indicates that, after controlling for the other two variables, digital communication pressure had a relatively stronger negative relationship with mental health. In other words, greater pressure arising from digital communication was associated with lower mental health scores. This pattern may be related to difficulty psychologically detaching from work, frequent receipt of work-related messages, expectations of rapid responsiveness, and reduced opportunities for rest. Nevertheless, the direction of scoring of the mental health instrument should be carefully examined so that increases or decreases in the dependent variable are interpreted consistently with the operational definition of the construct.

Comparison of the standardized coefficients indicates that digital communication pressure had the strongest relative association with mental health in the present model, followed by work–life balance and then awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies. This comparison is based on the absolute values of the standardized coefficients and should not be interpreted as a definitive ranking of the causal importance of the variables. Standardized coefficients are influenced by overlap among predictors and by the measurement characteristics of the variables and therefore represent only the associations of each variable within the current model.

The overall model statistics indicate that the multiple regression model was statistically significant. The coefficient of determination was 0.403 ; therefore, the three predictor variables jointly explained 40.3% of the variance in mental health scores within the model. The adjusted coefficient of determination was 0.399 , providing an adjusted estimate of the model's explanatory power. These findings demonstrate that the variables included in the model accounted for a substantial proportion of the variance in mental health but did not encompass all factors associated with this construct. Individual characteristics, family circumstances, social support, job characteristics, and other organizational factors may be examined in future research.

Overall, the findings presented in Table 6 indicate that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and work–life balance were positively associated with mental health, whereas digital communication pressure was negatively associated with mental health. These findings highlight the importance of simultaneously considering organizational policies, the balance between work and personal life, and pressures arising from digital communication in hybrid work environments. Nevertheless, because the data were collected at a single point in time, it cannot be determined whether these variables directly caused changes in mental health or whether mental health and other factors also contributed to the observed relationships.

In the present study, data from 450 employees working in hybrid work environments were analyzed. Participants had a mean age of 34.76 years with a standard deviation of 6.90, and their mean work experience was 7.78 years with a standard deviation of 4.32. Descriptive statistical results indicated that the mean scores for awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, work–life balance, mental health, and digital communication pressure were close to the midpoint of the five-point scale. Examination of dispersion indices also indicated that score variability was relatively similar across the four constructs. Skewness values were close to zero, while excess kurtosis values were negative. Therefore, examination of distribution plots and model residuals remains necessary for a more precise evaluation of statistical assumptions.

The assessment of internal consistency reliability indicated that Cronbach's alpha coefficients for awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, work–life balance, mental health, and digital communication pressure were 0.936, 0.921, 0.941, and 0.907, respectively. These findings indicate high internal consistency among the

items of the four scales in the analyzed data. Nevertheless, evaluation of construct validity and factor structure is also important for a comprehensive assessment of instrument quality.

Pearson correlation analysis showed that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies were positively and significantly associated with work–life balance and mental health. Digital communication pressure, in contrast, demonstrated significant negative relationships with both work–life balance and mental health. Work–life balance was also positively and significantly associated with mental health. This pattern of relationships indicates that greater awareness of organizational policies and lower digital communication pressure were respectively associated with more favorable work–life balance and higher mental health scores. Precise interpretation of the direction of these associations, however, depends on the scoring procedure used for the mental health scale.

The multiple regression results for work–life balance indicated that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies were a positive and statistically significant predictor of this variable after controlling for digital communication pressure. Conversely, digital communication pressure had a negative and statistically significant relationship with work–life balance. The regression model jointly explained 43% of the variance in work–life balance. This finding emphasizes the importance of simultaneously considering employees' awareness of communication policies and the management of pressure arising from digital communication.

In the mental health model, awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and work–life balance also demonstrated positive and statistically significant relationships with mental health, whereas digital communication pressure had a negative relationship with mental health. Collectively, the three predictor variables explained 40.3% of the variance in mental health. Within this model, digital communication pressure demonstrated the strongest relationship with the dependent variable in terms of the absolute magnitude of its standardized coefficient. This finding highlights the importance of addressing pressures resulting from employees' continuous availability in hybrid work environments.

Overall, the findings of the study support the existence of statistically significant relationships among right-to-disconnect policies, work–life balance, mental health, and digital communication pressure.

Discussion and Conclusion

The present study examined the relationships among awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, work–life balance, mental health, and digital communication pressure among employees working in hybrid work environments. The findings revealed a coherent pattern in which greater awareness and more favorable perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies were associated with better work–life balance and higher mental health scores, whereas digital communication pressure was negatively associated with both outcomes. Work–life balance was also positively related to mental health. The regression analyses further showed that awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies positively predicted work–life balance, whereas digital communication pressure negatively predicted it, with the two predictors jointly explaining 43% of the variance in work–life balance. In the mental health model, awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and work–life balance showed positive relationships with mental health, while digital communication pressure showed a negative relationship; together, these variables explained 40.3% of the variance in mental health. These findings collectively suggest that the management of digital boundaries is an important organizational issue in hybrid work and that both formal policy awareness and actual communication demands are relevant to employees' capacity to maintain balanced and psychologically sustainable working arrangements.

One of the principal findings was the positive relationship between awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and work–life balance. The correlation between these variables was relatively strong, and the standardized regression coefficient indicated that awareness and perceptions of the policy represented the strongest predictor of work–life balance in the regression model. This finding suggests that employees who clearly understand organizational expectations regarding after-hours communication and who perceive that they are entitled to disengage from work may be better able to establish functional boundaries between professional responsibilities and personal life. Such an interpretation is consistent with the broader literature showing that work–life balance depends not merely on the quantity of work performed but also on employees' control over the boundaries separating occupational and non-occupational domains. Research across different cultural contexts has demonstrated that employees who experience greater work–life balance report more favorable occupational and personal outcomes (2). Likewise, organizational antecedents such as managerial practices, working conditions, and supportive employment policies have been identified as important determinants of employees' ability to reconcile professional and personal roles (15). Therefore, a clear right-to-disconnect policy may function as a structural boundary resource by reducing ambiguity regarding when employees are expected to remain available.

The observed relationship can also be interpreted in light of research on flexible working arrangements. Hybrid work provides employees with greater spatial flexibility, but flexibility does not automatically generate work–life balance. Rather, its outcomes depend on how working time, communication requirements, managerial expectations, and employee autonomy are structured. A systematic review and meta-analysis demonstrated that flexible work arrangements are associated with work–family conflict, work–life balance, and organizational commitment, but their effects vary depending on the conditions under which flexibility is implemented (9). Similarly, recent evidence suggests that working conditions and flexibility-related employment arrangements are major determinants of work–life balance (10). The current results extend this line of reasoning by indicating that flexibility may be more beneficial when employees have explicit knowledge of their right to disengage from work communications. In this sense, flexibility without communication boundaries may simply shift work from a fixed location into employees' personal time rather than producing genuine autonomy.

The negative association between digital communication pressure and work–life balance was another major finding. Employees who reported greater pressure to remain connected, monitor communications, and respond rapidly also tended to report poorer work–life balance. This relationship remained statistically significant after controlling for awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies, indicating that digital communication pressure has an independent association with employees' ability to balance occupational and personal demands. This result is consistent with evidence that digital communication technologies may create a paradoxical work environment. Although such technologies enable flexibility and facilitate coordination, they can also create expectations of constant availability and rapid response (6). When the use of communication technologies extends beyond regular working hours, employees may experience greater interference between work and personal life, even when formal policies support disconnection.

The present finding is also closely aligned with research on telepressure and technostress. Telepressure refers to the subjective pressure to rapidly respond to work-related digital messages, and previous research has shown that it is associated with burnout and poorer work–life balance (7). Similarly, technostress has been shown to undermine employees' work–life balance and to operate through psychological distress, particularly when employees perceive excessive technological demands or intrusion into personal life (8). These findings support the

interpretation that digital communication pressure can function as a boundary-disrupting job demand. Even if employees are physically outside the workplace, incoming notifications, work-related messages, and expectations of responsiveness can preserve a psychological connection to work. Consequently, the boundary between work time and recovery time becomes increasingly permeable, reducing the opportunity for genuine disengagement from occupational roles.

The positive relationship between work–life balance and mental health was also an important result. Employees who reported better work–life balance tended to report higher mental health scores, and this relationship remained significant in the multiple regression model. This result is consistent with a substantial body of literature demonstrating that work–life balance is strongly connected with psychological well-being. Cross-cultural evidence has shown that work–life balance is positively associated with life satisfaction and mental health and negatively associated with adverse occupational outcomes (2). Similarly, research in higher education has connected work–life balance with affective well-being, job satisfaction, mental health, and turnover-related outcomes (3). Xavier also emphasized that difficulties in achieving an appropriate balance between work and non-work responsibilities may adversely affect employees' psychological functioning (13). Thus, the present findings reinforce the view that work–life balance is not merely an issue of scheduling convenience but represents a psychologically meaningful component of employee well-being.

A plausible explanation for this relationship lies in the recovery function of non-work time. When employees are able to allocate sufficient time to rest, family relationships, leisure activities, and personal responsibilities, they may recover more effectively from work-related demands. Psychological detachment is especially important in this process. A meta-analytical review demonstrated that psychological detachment from work is strongly connected with work–life balance and recovery-related outcomes (5). In hybrid working arrangements, the home environment may simultaneously function as a workplace and a private living space, making psychological detachment more difficult. Right-to-disconnect policies may indirectly contribute to mental health by making detachment more achievable, thereby enabling employees to reduce occupational rumination and restore psychological resources. The positive relationship observed between work–life balance and mental health in the current study is consistent with this theoretical pathway.

The positive association between awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies and mental health provides additional support for this interpretation. Employees who were more aware of such policies and perceived them more favorably also reported higher mental health scores. Although this relationship was weaker than the association between digital communication pressure and mental health, it remained significant after controlling for work–life balance and communication pressure. This suggests that policy awareness may itself function as a psychological resource. Knowing that one is not formally expected to remain continuously available may reduce uncertainty, increase perceived control over personal time, and lessen anticipatory stress regarding after-hours communication. Evidence from remote work research similarly indicates that the ability to determine when and where remote work occurs can influence mental health through work–life balance (12). Therefore, the psychological value of a right-to-disconnect policy may partly arise from the sense of temporal autonomy and predictability that it creates.

The findings are also consistent with broader evidence concerning organizational and managerial support. A formal policy is unlikely to produce meaningful outcomes if managers behave in ways that contradict it. Supervisor support has been identified as an important factor shaping work–life experiences and employees' perceptions of

organizational opportunities and demands (17). In hybrid environments, supervisors play a key role in communicating whether employees are genuinely permitted to disconnect or whether after-hours availability remains informally expected. If managers routinely send messages late in the evening, reward immediate responsiveness, or implicitly interpret disconnection as low commitment, employees may experience pressure even when organizational policies formally support boundaries. Conversely, when managers model boundary-respecting behavior, delay non-urgent communications, and clarify that responses are not required outside working hours, formal policies may become more psychologically credible and practically effective.

Another notable result was that digital communication pressure had the strongest standardized association with mental health in the regression model. This finding suggests that the burden of continuous digital accessibility may be particularly important for psychological functioning in hybrid work environments. Persistent communication demands may create a state in which employees are never fully psychologically absent from work. Such a state can contribute to cognitive overload, emotional exhaustion, sleep disruption, and difficulty recovering from occupational strain. The finding is consistent with evidence linking telepressure with burnout and poorer work–life balance (7) and with research showing that technostress can contribute to psychological distress and reduced work–life balance (8). It also supports the argument that the quality of digital communication, not simply the amount of remote work, should be considered in assessments of hybrid work effectiveness.

The current results further align with evidence that remote work outcomes depend heavily on how autonomy and control are structured. Jiang et al. showed that determining the time and location of remote work is associated with mental health through work–life balance (12). This finding suggests that employee control over working arrangements may be a key mechanism connecting flexibility to well-being. In the current study, awareness of right-to-disconnect policies may reflect one aspect of such control, while digital communication pressure may represent its opposite. When employees perceive that they can determine when occupational communication ends, they may experience greater temporal autonomy; when they feel compelled to remain digitally available, perceived control may decline. The coexistence of these two forces helps explain why hybrid work can be experienced as either empowering or psychologically burdensome depending on organizational implementation.

The findings also have implications for understanding work–life balance across different demographic and occupational groups. Previous research has shown that job-quality factors affecting work–life balance may differ by gender, reflecting variation in role demands, family responsibilities, and employment conditions (16). Likewise, socio-ecological research has demonstrated that work–life balance is influenced by multiple levels of factors, including individual, interpersonal, organizational, and structural conditions (14). The present study focused on general relationships across a heterogeneous sample of hybrid workers, but its results should be interpreted within this wider framework. The same communication policy may not affect every employee equally; workers with caregiving responsibilities, greater workload, lower autonomy, or less supportive supervisors may be more vulnerable to the effects of after-hours communication. Thus, right-to-disconnect policies should be regarded as one component within a broader system of organizational conditions affecting employee well-being.

The results are also consistent with emerging research emphasizing digital leadership and employee well-being. Riyanto reported that work flexibility, digital leadership, and work–life balance are connected with employee commitment, with mental well-being playing an intervening role (18). This suggests that leaders in digitally enabled organizations should be responsible not only for maintaining technological efficiency but also for regulating the human consequences of continuous connectivity. Digital leadership should therefore include the capacity to

establish realistic communication norms, protect employee recovery periods, and ensure that flexibility does not become permanent availability. Similarly, research concerning Generation Z employees has shown that flexible work arrangements can act as important antecedents of work–life balance (11). Younger employees may particularly value flexible working conditions, but the benefits of flexibility are likely to depend on whether digital work remains bounded and manageable.

From a broader organizational perspective, the findings suggest that work–life balance and mental health should be viewed as outcomes of both individual and institutional processes. Individual employees can attempt to regulate device use, establish personal routines, and protect non-work time, but these strategies may be insufficient when organizational norms reward permanent connectivity. The significant explanatory power of the regression models supports this interpretation. Awareness of right-to-disconnect policies and digital communication pressure jointly accounted for 43% of the variance in work–life balance, while awareness, work–life balance, and digital communication pressure accounted for 40.3% of the variance in mental health. Although substantial variance remained unexplained, these figures indicate that organizational communication boundaries constitute an important component of employee functioning. Such findings reinforce arguments that work–life balance should be treated as a strategic human resource issue connected with well-being, retention, engagement, and sustainable performance rather than as an exclusively private responsibility of employees (3, 15).

Overall, the findings support a model in which right-to-disconnect policies can contribute to healthier hybrid work environments when they are accompanied by reduced digital communication pressure and meaningful organizational support. Policy awareness alone appears beneficial, but its influence is likely to be strengthened when organizational culture, supervisory behavior, and communication technologies are aligned with the principle of protected non-work time. Conversely, high digital communication pressure may undermine the advantages associated with hybrid flexibility by maintaining psychological attachment to work beyond formal working hours. These results are consistent with the literature on remote work, telepressure, technostress, psychological detachment, and flexible work arrangements and indicate that sustainable hybrid work requires both flexibility and boundaries (1, 5, 6). Therefore, the right to disconnect may be understood not merely as a restriction on communication but as an organizational mechanism capable of supporting recovery, role balance, and psychological well-being.

The present study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, its cross-sectional design prevents causal conclusions regarding the direction of relationships among right-to-disconnect policies, digital communication pressure, work–life balance, and mental health. Second, all variables were assessed through self-report measures, which may increase the possibility of common-method variance, social desirability bias, and subjective interpretation of questionnaire items. Third, the sampling strategy relied on convenience sampling with a cluster-based approach, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to all hybrid workers or organizational sectors. Fourth, although the sample included employees from several types of organizations, differences among industries, job levels, workload conditions, managerial styles, and organizational cultures were not examined in depth. Fifth, the mental health measure combined several psychological dimensions, and the interpretation of higher scores depends on accurate scoring and reverse coding. Finally, the study assessed employees' awareness and perceptions of right-to-disconnect policies rather than independently verifying the formal content, enforcement quality, or legal status of such policies within each organization.

Future research should employ longitudinal and experimental designs to clarify whether implementation or strengthening of right-to-disconnect policies produces changes in work–life balance, psychological detachment, burnout, anxiety, sleep quality, and broader mental health outcomes over time. Multi-source data could be used by combining employee reports with supervisor assessments, organizational communication logs, and objective indicators of after-hours messaging behavior. Future studies should also distinguish between formal policy existence, perceived policy support, managerial enforcement, and actual employee use of the right to disconnect. Comparative studies across industries, occupational groups, age cohorts, genders, family conditions, and national contexts could identify groups for whom these policies are particularly effective. Further research may also test mediating mechanisms such as psychological detachment, perceived autonomy, recovery experiences, role conflict, and technostress, as well as moderating variables such as supervisor support, organizational culture, resilience, job autonomy, and workload.

From a practical perspective, organizations should develop explicit and operational right-to-disconnect policies that clearly define expected response periods, exceptions for genuinely urgent matters, and acceptable practices for after-hours communication. Managers should receive training to model appropriate digital behavior, avoid unnecessary communications outside working hours, and ensure that employees are not implicitly penalized for failing to respond during protected non-work periods. Organizations should also review communication platforms and workflows to reduce avoidable notifications, repetitive messaging, and unnecessary expectations of continuous availability. Employees should be informed about the policy during onboarding and through periodic training, while human resource departments should regularly assess whether actual managerial practices are consistent with formal rules. Finally, organizations should monitor work–life balance, digital communication pressure, and employee mental health as interconnected indicators of sustainable hybrid work rather than addressing these issues separately.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adhered in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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