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The end of boundaries: Technovation, technostress, and the rise of the neo-work-life domain

Abstract

Do digital boundaries still exist, or have mobile devices permanently collapsed the threshold between office and home? In this era of pervasive technovation, the traditional separation between professional and personal life is undergoing a qualitative ontological collapse. Moving beyond the 'boundary blurring' narrative, we theorise the generative mechanism behind this collapse: the sociomaterial entanglement of technological affordances, neoliberal organisational norms, and worker habitus. Drawing on a qualitative study of 42 UK professionals using the Gioia methodology, we analyse how hyperconnectivity reconfigures the work-life interface into a state of indistinction. Our findings reveal that employees adopt deliberate integration not as a preference but as a structural survival strategy within a high-responsiveness culture, facilitating the neo-work-life domain. We conceptualise this neo-work-life domain as a unitary, nomadic space where roles are perpetually concurrent and structured by an internalised professional habitus. Living within this neo-work-life domain produces deeply paradoxical outcomes: while providing vital ICT-resources, it generates compounded technostress, an environment where simultaneous stressors

overwhelm cognitive recovery. Because compounded technostress triggers acute psychological risks, our primary theoretical contribution proposes that contemporary labour has fundamentally shifted from boundary management to attention management. We define attention management as the cognitive filtering of role-simultaneity and argue that it represents the final contested terrain of modern work. We conclude by highlighting the UK's institutional 'void' and underscoring the urgent need for structural interventions, such as a statutory 'right to disconnect', to protect cognitive autonomy in a borderless neo-work-life domain.

Keywords: attention management; compounded technostress; neo work-life domain; habitus; sociomateriality; border theory; constant connectivity; right to disconnect.

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Introduction

The proliferation of advanced digital technologies has fundamentally altered the temporal and spatial dimensions of work. This is not a simple case of tools impacting practice; rather, it reflects a profound sociomaterial phenomenon according to which technology and work are inherently inseparable, mutually shaping how organisations function and how human resources (HR) are managed (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008). This process of technovation – the strategic and pervasive implementation of technological advancements – has prompted organisations to replace traditional systems with technology-aided platforms for managing their human capital (Bondarouk and Brewster, 2016). Historically, the separation between the ‘public’ world of work and the ‘private’ sphere of the home was a defining structural feature of the industrial economy. This division created physical and temporal boundaries that structured daily life, providing a rhythmic cadence to human existence. While the knowledge economy began to soften these divisions, the recent explosion of ubiquitous, powerful, and mobile technologies has acted as a revolutionary force. The ubiquity of smartphones and the expectation of constant connectivity have effectively ‘untethered’ work from the physical office, a trend massively accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Belzunegui-Eraso and Erro-Garcés, 2020). What was once experimental flexibility has become a structural necessity, permanently altering the psychological contract between employer and employee.

However, this hyperconnectivity introduces a profound paradox of autonomy (Focacci et al., 2024). The very technologies that grant individuals freedom over where and when to work simultaneously entrap them in a state of perpetual connection. This creates a ‘digital shackle’ (Suh and Lee, 2017), where the freedom to work anywhere is transformed into the requirement to work everywhere – marking the ‘dark side’ of the new world of work (Holland et al., 2022). From an organisational behaviour perspective, the central challenge is how employees navigate these increasingly porous boundaries. Historically manageable borders (Clark, 2000) have become a ‘contested terrain’ over the control of employees’ most finite resources: their time and their attention (Kossek et al., 2023).

Importantly, this contest is not waged in a vacuum – it is shaped by the intersection of institutional policy and individual sociology. The choice of the UK as our empirical setting is both strategic and theoretically significant. The UK represents a hyper-digitalised economy characterised by an exceptionally high ‘ICT intensity’ in its dominant professional services sector (Eurostat, 2025; OECD, 2024). The UK therefore provides a strategic maximum-pressure laboratory for this investigation (cf. Martinez-Lucio and Stuart, 2011). As a high-income digital economy, the UK possesses a highly sophisticated technological infrastructure but exists within a specific institutional and regulatory ‘void’. Unlike European counterparts such as France or Portugal, which have codified the ‘right to disconnect’, the UK lacks statutory protections against after-hours digital intrusion. In this environment, the technological capability for 24/7 engagement meets a neoliberal work culture that prioritises hyper-responsiveness. Consequently, the UK context allows us to observe what we might call the ‘natural limit’ of boundary collapse. Here, the structural ‘brakes’ on connectivity are absent, and the burden of boundary-setting shifts entirely from the state or the organisation to the individual’s own cognitive and psychological resources.

It is at this precise juncture – where institutional ‘voids’ meet individual agency – that the psychological experience of technostress becomes inextricably linked to sociological habitus. We argue that in the absence of external human resource management (HRM) protections, an employee’s reaction to digital intrusion is not merely a matter of personality, but is filtered through their worker subjectivity. In support of Mommadova (2025), we contend that a worker’s sociocultural habitus – their internalised dispositions shaped by their background and professional socialisation – acts as the primary structuring force for how they experience this borderless world. This habitus determines whether a ‘ping’ at 9:00pm is appraised as a flexible

affordance or a precarious intrusion. Thus, the ‘dark side’ of technovation is not a universal experience; it is a sociologically situated one.

This study advances the conversation by shifting the focus from the somewhat dated notion of work-life balance to the more contemporary reality of work-life integration (Kumar et al., 2023). We move beyond the established observation that boundaries are ‘blurring’ and ask how they are being fundamentally reconfigured and what this means for employees’ lived experiences. We argue that for many, technovation has fostered a ‘neo work-life domain’ – a fluid, mobile space where work and personal activities are perpetually concurrent. Crucially, we adopt a non-deterministic stance; employees are not passive victims of constant connectivity. Instead, collective norms, organisational culture, and occupational identities foster heterogeneous practices of use (Mazmanian, 2013).

Nevertheless, navigating this integrated domain produces significant psychological strain. We move away from general labels of stress toward a more precise understanding of how the neo-work-life domain generates compounded technostress. Guided by three research questions, we bridge the gap between sociology and psychology: 1. *How do employees experience and navigate the reconfigured boundaries between their work and non-work lives in this sociomaterial age of technovation?* 2. *What are the implications of this reconfiguration for employees’ wellbeing, particularly concerning the emergence of a qualitative shift in stress mechanisms?* 3. *How does the nature of one’s job, organisational context, and social identity (e.g., habitus and professional role) shape the management of these new work–life dynamics?*

By qualitatively exploring these questions, we aim to contribute a deep, contextualised understanding of the lived experiences behind boundary reconfiguration. Our primary contribution lies in theorising the emergence of the ‘neo work-life domain’ and articulating the transition from boundary management (spatial/temporal) to Attention Management (cognitive/psychological). In so doing, we offer a unified framework that synthesises the sociological roots of habitus with the psychological outcomes of technostress, providing a new lens for the future of HRM theory and practice in a borderless world.

Literature review

Technovation and the sociomaterial redefinition of ‘work’

The term ‘technovation’ refers to the development and implementation of new technologies in order to create innovative solutions that address contemporary challenges in work and society (Coccia, 2023). In the current era, this should not be viewed as an occasional or separate organisational phenomenon; rather, technology is now an ‘integral part of all organising at all times’ (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008: 455). The contemporary discourse has evolved to describe a fifth industrial revolution (5IR), which marks a significant philosophical shift from the efficiency-driven focus of Industry 4.0. While Industry 4.0 emphasised automation, data exchange, and the Internet of Things, 5IR recentres technology on human needs, promoting harmonious human-machine collaboration focused on broader goals such as societal wellbeing and sustainability (Noble et al., 2022).

Within organisations, technovation encompasses a suite of technologies – including artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and big data analytics – that are used to fundamentally redesign work processes rather than merely optimise them (Cascio and Montealegre, 2016). A defining feature of this new landscape is the rise of algorithmic management (AM), which represents a ‘transformative shift in how work is organised, managed, and experienced’ (Zhang et al., 2025). In AM, technology is leveraged to automate and augment managerial functions, including work allocation, performance monitoring, and surveillance.

While AM was initially the hallmark of the platform economy, it is increasingly prevalent in traditional knowledge work, fundamentally altering power dynamics. Zhang et al. (2025) note that AM can be experienced as a neutral tool or a source of organisational fairness, but more

critically, it can manifest as a dehumanising ‘agentic boss’ that exacerbates power imbalances. For the employee, this means the ‘manager’ is no longer a person whom one leaves at the office, but a set of parameters embedded in the devices that follow them into the home.

The impact of technovation on the work experience is profoundly temporal. Focacci et al. (2024) identify a ‘dichotomy of time’ whereby digitalisation simultaneously compresses time (by automating tasks) and expands it (by creating an ‘always-on’ culture). This saved time, rather than leading to more creative work, often results in a ‘void of emptiness’ and professional disorientation (Focacci et al., 2024). Furthermore, Mommadova (2025) critiques reductionist, individual trait-based explanations for a worker’s relationship with technology. Applying Bourdieu’s habitus framework, Mommadova (2025) demonstrates that workers’ dispositions, shaped by their sociocultural backgrounds, are a key structuring force. A worker with a middle-class habitus may experience the pervasive reach of technovation as a flexible ‘gig’, whereas one with a working-class habitus experiences it as precarious, essential labour, leading to deeply divided worker subjectivities.

The paradox of constant connectivity

To understand the emergence of a unified domain, we must engage with the critical literature on constant connectivity. Connectivity is not merely a technical variable; it is a socially negotiated practice (Wajcman and Rose, 2011). Technologies do not simply ‘interrupt’ work – they fundamentally redefine the temporal flow of social life by making role-switching instantaneous. As Wajcman and Rose (2011) argue, the problem is not just the volume of communication but also the expectation of synchronicity that collapses the distance between ‘work time’ and ‘private time’. This creates a pervasive ‘double-edged sword effect’ (Djelassi et al., 2025). On the one hand, constant connectivity provides perceived value by allowing employees to demonstrate high performance and responsiveness, which are key currencies in the modern labour market. On the other hand, it erodes the work-life balance required for psychological detachment and recovery. Research by Büchler et al. (2020) indicates that the impact of this connectivity is not uniform; it is related to employee wellbeing in ways that depend heavily on *for whom* and *why* the connection is maintained. Furthermore, Farivar et al. (2024) highlight the role of human agency in this process. Workers are not merely ‘pushed’ into connectivity by technology – they often ‘pull’ themselves into it as a boundary-management behaviour aimed at coping with high-demand environments. This suggests that the collapse of boundaries is a sociomaterial enactment – a choice made within a structurally constrained environment.

Technostress in a hyperconnected environment

The pervasive use of technology gives rise to a ‘technology paradox’: The same ICTs that promise empowerment can also create a ‘digital shackle’, fostering an implicit norm of constant availability (Suh and Lee, 2017). This tension manifests as ‘technostress’, a concept first introduced by Brod (1984) and understood via the transactional theory of stress as an imbalance between technology’s demands and an individual’s resources (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Recent scholarship has significantly nuanced this. Stich et al. (2017) conclude that stress is often a result of the ‘misfit’ between an individual’s desired and actual use of technology. A high volume of communication is not inherently a stressor – it becomes one when it clashes with the individual’s preferences or organisational norms (Stich et al., 2017). The job demands-resources model provides a robust basis for understanding this phenomenon, as it distinguishes between ICT demands (e.g. exhausting e-communication) and ICT resources (e.g. technical support or flexibility) (Piirsalu-Kivihall et al., 2026).

Established technostressors – overload, invasion, complexity, insecurity, and uncertainty (Suh and Lee, 2017) – describe the discrete inputs of technology-related strain. However, in the context of the neo-work-life domain, we argue that these stressors no longer occur in isolation.

We move toward the concept of 'compounded technostress' and thereby describe the qualitative shift where multiple stressors collide simultaneously. Given the distinction that overload and invasion trigger specific psychological outcomes (e.g. burnout and anxiety), we conceptualise a 'techno-hazard' not as a discrete stressor but as the cumulative, detrimental state of being resulting from this collision. While overload is a demand, a techno-hazard is the sociomaterial condition of peril where technology directly contributes to persistent negative physiological and mental health outcomes (He, 2025). Conversely, we identify ICT-resources as the genuine positive digital affordances and sense of empowerment employees experience when technology enables them to manage their diverse work and non-work obligations seamlessly, acting as a structural buffer against technological strain rather than a stress-inducing demand.

Theoretical framework

To investigate the reconfiguration of work-life dynamics, we ground our study in a sociomaterial perspective and integrate, extend, and ultimately challenge the foundational tenets of boundary and border theories.

A sociomaterial foundation

A sociomaterial perspective fundamentally challenges the deeply entrenched assumption that technology, work, and organisations are separate entities that merely influence one another (Orlikowski and Scott, 2008). Instead, it posits an 'inherent inseparability between the technical and the social' (p. 455) in which all social practice is already technological, and all technology is inherently social. According to this view, work practices are not simply shaped by technology; rather, they are sociomaterial enactments. Consequently, work-life boundaries are not social constructs that are merely affected by technology but rather phenomena that are actively and continuously constituted by the entanglement of social practices (e.g. responding to after-hours emails) and technological materiality (e.g. the smartphone's notification system and always-on connectivity). This perspective acknowledges the powerful shaping power of technology's material features and affordances – the possibilities for action that an object provides to a specific user (Leonardi and Barley, 2010) – while recognising that these effects are always realised through social action, interpretation, and professional habitus.

Distinguishing boundary and border theory for boundary control

This study draws upon and distinguishes between two complementary yet distinct theories of the work-life interface. While these are often conflated in management literature, maintaining their analytical separation is crucial for understanding how technovation dismantles them. Boundary theory is primarily concerned with the cognitive and behavioural act of creating distinctions between life domains. It focuses on how individuals and groups construct mental and symbolic fences that create categories such as 'work' and 'home' (Nippert-Eng, 1996). The central concept here is the segmentation-integration continuum. Individuals high on segmentation strive to create rigid, impermeable boundaries (the 'two keyrings' analogy), while those high on integration allow for significant overlap, actively blending domains (the 'one keyring' approach).

Border theory, on the other hand, focuses on the experience of crossing between these domains (Clark, 2000). From a sociomaterial perspective, these borders are not merely cognitive lines but are indeed materially instantiated and enacted through the devices themselves. The 'flexibility' of a border is fundamentally defined by the portability of the smartphone, and its 'permeability' is enacted by the materiality of the 'push notification' which bypasses physical and social barriers. Integrating border theory with sociomateriality reveals that a border's strength is no longer merely a social agreement but a function of the technology's affordances for being 'always-on' and 'everywhere at once'. While boundaries are the conceptual constructs, borders are the tangible and psychological lines that define the edges of those

domains. Border theory analyses the characteristics of these borders – their permeability (the degree to which elements from one domain can enter another), their flexibility (the degree to which time and location can be altered), and their strength.

This theoretical lens traditionally highlights individual agency. As Sayah (2013) demonstrates, individuals are not passive victims but active strategists who employ a range of ICT-mediated tactics, using multiple devices such as laptops, smartphones, and tablets to manage their desired level of integration or separation. Crucially, Sayah (2013) also points to the reciprocal influence between these domains, whereby a person's private life often intrudes on their work, challenging the common one-way assumption that work encroaches only on life. We integrate these ideas through the critical lens of employee boundary control, defined as the perceived authority an employee must manage the borders between work and life (Kossek et al., 2023). This control is not a monolithic concept – it is a taxonomy that includes temporal (control over *when* one works), spatial (control over *where* one works), and permeability (control over interruptions and transitions between domains) dimensions. Technovation directly and dramatically alters the conditions for exercising each of these forms of control, often rendering the 'control' itself an illusion.

The generative mechanism of the neo work-life domain

The emergence of a 'new domain' requires a justification beyond mere 'extreme integration'. We argue that the neo work-life domain is not merely a descriptive setting but actually a theory-generative mechanism – an enacted accomplishment produced through the potent collision of three specific forces as follows: (1) *Materiality*: the mobile affordances of contemporary ICTs (e.g. push notifications and cloud synchronisation) that render work perpetually accessible; (2) *structural norms*: neoliberal organisational expectations of hyper-responsiveness, particularly in the UK context where institutional 'brakes' are absent; and (3) *professional habitus*: the internalised dispositions of the knowledge worker (Mommadova, 2025), where connectivity is performed as a marker of identity.

When these three forces align, traditional conceptual boundaries are not simply modified; they undergo an absolute structural collapse. Here, we must delineate our framework from legacy models of "extreme integration". Traditional integration still assumes the baseline existence of two independent, pre-existing life domains that an individual consciously chooses to blend. In contrast, our paradigm of "ontological indistinction" conceptualises a qualitative reality where these distinct domains have been entirely erased by sociomaterial forces. Under a state of indistinction, professional and personal roles are no longer actively merged because they are rendered structurally inseparable within the worker's daily experience, making the very notion of a boundary obsolete.

The paradigm shift: From boundary to attention management

This theoretical reconfiguration necessitates a shift in our analytical unit of analysis. Legacy theories are predicated on the management of *time and space*. However, in a borderless sociomaterial domain, time and space have been colonised by technology. The new 'contested terrain' is *attention*. In the industrial and early knowledge economies, boundary management was a spatial/temporal task (e.g. 'leaving work at the office'). In the neo work-life domain, work and life are perpetually concurrent. Therefore, the individual's primary labour shifts to attention management – the cognitive and psychological task of filtering which 'role' to attend to within a single, oversaturated psychological instant. To provide the conceptual discipline, we contrast these paradigms in Table 1.

----- Insert Table 1 about here -----

This framework allows us to analyse participants' narratives not merely as descriptions of a 'busy life' but also as evidence of a fundamental shift in the labour process. The 'clumsiness'

or ‘chaos’ described by employees is not a failure of individual time management – it is a rational response to the collapse of the spatial and temporal buffers that previously protected human attention from total professional colonisation.

-----Insert Figure 1 about here -----

Research methodology

This study explores the lived experiences of employees navigating the work-life interface in an age of technovation. To capture the nuance and complexity of this sociomaterial phenomenon, we chose a qualitative methodology. This approach is paramount for elucidating the intricate, context-dependent, and socially constructed nature of how individuals make sense of and manage the reconfigured boundaries between their professional and personal lives (Creswell and Poth, 2016).

Research design and philosophical stance

This study is based on the social constructionist paradigm and employs an interpretive research design (Crotty, 1998). This philosophical stance posits that reality is not objective but actively constructed by individuals through their interpretations and social interactions (Merriam and Tisdell, 2015). An interpretive approach is therefore essential for us to address our research questions, which focus on understanding how participants perceive and ascribe meaning to the impact of technovation on their work-life domains. The objective is not to produce generalisable facts but to generate a deep, contextualised understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of those experiencing it (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The research process proceeded inductively, allowing themes and conceptual categories to emerge directly from the participants’ narratives rather than having them imposed by a pre-existing theoretical framework. In this process, the researcher acts as the primary ‘human instrument’, engaging in empathetic listening and a comparative stance to grasp the multiple meanings embedded within the data (Lincoln and Guba, 1985: 39).

Reflexivity and positionality

In alignment with the interpretive tradition and responding to a reviewer’s call for transparency, we explicitly acknowledge our researcher positionality. As academics within the UK’s digitally saturated higher education sector, we are in close proximity to the hyperconnectivity phenomena under investigation. We recognise that our own professional experiences of ‘digital invasion’ could inadvertently colour our interpretations or lead us to project personal technostress onto participants. To safeguard trustworthiness, we practised ‘analytical bracketing’ throughout the research process. This involved utilising reflexive journaling to document our emotional responses to participants’ narratives, ensuring the emerging framework remained grounded in the informants’ voices rather than our own professional frustrations as academics within the same sector. This reflexive stance allowed us to maintain the required distance to see the data as social scientists while utilising our empathy as the ‘human instrument’ to elicit deep narratives (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

We ensure dependability through concurrent dual-analysis, in which two researchers independently coded a subset of transcripts, yielding a 92% inter-coder agreement rate. We further enhanced credibility via member-checking with eight participants; their feedback confirmed the resonance of the emerging framework, specifically helping to refine the ‘attention management’ construct from temporal boundary work to a cognitive filtering labour.

Data collection and sampling strategy

Following institutional ethical approval (reference: ETH2324-0146), we collected the data between April and August 2024. We adopted a strategic, multi-stage sampling design that combined purposive and snowballing techniques (Heckathorn, 2011) to access the hyperconnected professional populations central to our inquiry.

Strategic research setting: The UK's 'regulatory void'

We selected the UK as a strategic 'maximum-pressure' setting for this study. With a high-income economy with sophisticated digital infrastructure and high 'ICT intensity' in its professional services sector, the UK provides an ideal setting for observing the collapse of traditional work-life borders. Crucially, this digital advancement exists within a specific institutional and regulatory void; unlike several European counterparts (e.g. France and Portugal), the UK currently lacks a statutory 'right to disconnect' legislation. In this environment, the technological capability for 24/7 engagement meets a neoliberal work culture that prioritises hyper-responsiveness, allowing us to observe the 'natural limit' of boundary collapse where the burden of boundary-setting shifts entirely to the individual's cognitive resources.

Sampling architecture and participant profile

To mitigate the social connectivity bias often associated with snowball sampling, we utilised six distinct 'occupational seeds' as points of origin. These initial participants were purposively selected from our professional networks based on their status as fully remote or hybrid workers across the finance, ICT, healthcare, and higher education sectors. By initiating recruitment from these heterogeneous 'seeds', we ensured that the subsequent participant chains did not coalesce around a single organisational habitus or demographic pool. The final sample comprised 42 professionals, 16 identifying as hybrid workers and 26 as online/remote workers. (Table 2), ranging in age from 32 to 44. The sample was intentionally occupationally heterogeneous, featuring university lecturers, ICT consultants, investment bankers, strategic HR advisors, management consultants, cloud engineers, and systems analysts. While we acknowledge that these findings are situated within the interpretive boundaries of UK-based knowledge workers, this heterogeneity allowed us to identify cross-sectoral patterns of 'attentional labour'. Notably, 28 of the 42 participants (67%) confirmed active caregiving responsibilities, necessitating the navigation of concurrent professional and private-life roles, illustrating the dual demands that characterise this domain (Table 2). We concede that the intensities of the neo work-life domain may manifest differently in site-dependent or manual occupations where a physical tether to the workspace remains; however, for the professional class investigated here, the collapse of domains was a shared reality.

----- Insert Table 2 about here -----

The interview protocol and procedure

We elicited the data through semi-structured interviews conducted in English via Microsoft Teams. This medium was chosen not only for logistical efficiency but also because it mirrors the sociomaterial environment (the digital interface) that participants navigate daily. The interviews utilised a flexible yet consistent protocol (Wengraf, 2001) designed to elicit rich, metaphorical narratives centred on four core analytical pillars: 1. *ontological perceptions*: how individuals define the boundaries (or lack thereof) between work and non-work; 2. *boundary control tactics*: the shift between integration and segmentation strategies; 3. *sociomaterial impact*: the lived effect of technovation on daily routines; 4. *technostress appraisal*: subjective experiences of digital pressure and role-simultaneity. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, was audio-recorded with the participants' consent, and transcribed verbatim for subsequent Gioia-led analysis. This duration allowed for the 'analytical thickness' required to move beyond surface-level descriptions toward the deep metaphors (e.g. 'South Pole', 'clumsiness') that anchor our theoretical framework.

Data analysis: The Gioia approach

To address the need for conceptual precision and avoid methodological ambiguity, we adopted a systematic inductive approach following the Gioia methodology (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013). This methodology provides a rigorous bridge between grounded theory

principles and interpretive analysis, ensuring that theoretical categories are both grounded in participants' experiences and analytically robust. Our multi-stage coding process involved: 1. *Open coding (first-order concepts)*: We meticulously analysed the transcripts line by line to identify concepts and properties, attaching descriptive labels that remained close to the participants' own language and vivid metaphors (e.g. 'South Pole', 'glued', and 'clumsiness'); 2. *Axial coding (second-order themes)*: Subsequently, we systematically grouped and categorised the first-order concepts based on their relationships. This iterative process of comparison led to the development of more abstract themes, such as 'attentional bottlenecking' and 'sociomaterial indistinction'. We used Strauss and Corbin's (1998) coding paradigm (causal conditions, context, and consequences) as a heuristic tool to interrogate these relationships; and 3. *Selective coding (aggregate dimensions)*: In the final stage, we integrated themes into core conceptual categories, culminating in the development of the aggregate dimensions (the neo work-life domain and compounded technostress).

Trustworthiness and theoretical saturation

Theoretical saturation was the primary principle guiding our sample-size selection (Corley and Gioia, 2004). We reached the point of diminishing returns – where new interviews no longer yielded novel conceptual codes – after 35 interviews. To ensure the robustness of our framework, we conducted an additional seven interviews, which confirmed the stability of our thematic structure. To further ensure the trustworthiness of our findings, we adhered to the criteria established by Lincoln and Guba (1985): 1. *credibility* – enhanced through prolonged engagement with the data and member checking, whereby we shared a summary of our emergent framework with eight participants to verify that our interpretations (specifically regarding 'attention management') resonated with their lived experiences; 2. *dependability and confirmability* – addressed through concurrent dual analysis, with two researchers independently coding the first five transcripts (approximately 12% of the data), achieving an initial inter-coder agreement of 92%, and with discrepancies being resolved through team discussions until a stable coding manual was achieved; and 3. *transferability* – ensured by providing a thick description of the UK research context and the participants' diverse occupational backgrounds, allowing readers to assess the relevance of our findings to other settings.

Findings

Our analysis of the participants' narratives reveals a qualitative reconfiguration of the work-life interface that transcends the established narrative of 'boundary blurring'. We find that for professionals navigating the UK's digital economy, the traditional demarcation between spheres has undergone an ontological collapse. The findings are structured into three aggregate dimensions that trace the trajectory from strategic survival to the birth of a unified 'neo-work-life domain' and its inherent paradoxical outcomes.

----- Insert Table 3 about here -----

Dimension 1: From integration as preference to integration as a survival strategy

A foundational finding of this study is that the integration of work and non-work life is rarely a lifestyle 'preference'. Instead, it is a deliberate, agentic survival strategy necessitated by a neoliberal professional landscape that demands hyper-responsiveness. The participants consistently described traditional 'segmentation' (Nippert-Eng, 1996) not as a virtue, but as a source of 'role-failure' and psychological exhaustion.

Maria, a university lecturer, explained this pragmatic choice as a way of resolving the tension between multiple competing identities:

It would be difficult for me to fulfil my work responsibilities and non-work demands if I kept my work and non-work domains separate. I have multiple roles, and keeping my work and non-work domains separate means more work – and so much stress – but little achievement in terms of role fulfilment. For example, as an integrator, I can now attend my child's parent-teacher meetings via Zoom while I'm at work. I think it makes a whole lot of sense to keep the two domains as one, and technology has helped me a great deal to do so.

Maria's account provides a critical example of bidirectional sociomaterial permeability. While much of the existing literature focuses on the 'invasion' of work into the home, Maria demonstrates the inverse: 'life invading work' via the same digital interface. This suggests that the neo-work-life domain is not merely a work-centric collapse but indeed a total dissolution of contextual priority. The Zoom interface acts as the sociomaterial site where two previously distinct roles – mother and academic – are enacted in the same cognitive and temporal instant. For Maria, 'integration' is an agentic survival tactic to avoid the 'more work' that traditional segmentation would require in a digitally accelerated environment.

This sentiment was echoed by **Sharron**, an ICT consultant, who described her shift in approach as a solution to the exhaustion of boundary-crossing, contrasting it vividly with her past experience:

I used to separate my work and non-work domains by attending to my domains' duties independently – that made my life stressful and difficult. It affected my concentration, productivity, and engagement at work, and my private life was badly affected as well. It was like running from the South Pole to the North Pole. This is because fulfilling multiple and often conflicting tasks was difficult. Then, I switched to integrating the two domains, which allows me to work from anywhere outside of my place of work... thus enabling me to fulfil my non-work responsibilities easily.

Sharron's use of the 'North/South Pole' metaphor is theoretically meaningful. It reflects a legacy ontological view according to which work and life are conceived as geographically and psychologically opposite extremes, requiring a significant and effortful 'journey' (boundary work) to bridge. Her shift to integration signifies a sociomaterial collapse of this distance. Technology has effectively 'melted the poles', removing the spatial and temporal friction that once defined these borders. The labour she once spent 'running' between poles (boundary management) has been replaced by the labour of maintaining simultaneous alertness within a singular, unitary territory (attention management).

For participants like **Paul**, an investment banker, this integration was positioned as the only viable way to survive in a hyper-competitive professional landscape where responsiveness is the primary currency:

The business world is becoming endlessly digital, demanding, and dynamic, and employees are expected to be committed and very responsive. The only way I can survive this challenge with my multiple roles and be responsive to work-related issues is to integrate my work and non-work domains into one, and technology has made this so easy... Separating them will cause chaos.

The contrast between Paul's experience as an investment banker and Wilma's role as a support worker reveals how the neo work-life domain is stratified by organisational hierarchy and social location. For the elite professional (Paul), constant connectivity is performed as a 'badge of honour' and a marker of status. Conversely, for Wilma, the same digital tether manifests as algocratic surveillance, where the materiality of 'phone alerts' and motion sensors dictates her movements. This suggests that the 'empowerment' of indistinction is often reserved for those with high-autonomy habitus, while for others, it remains a mechanism of structural coercion.

Paul's reference to 'chaos' highlights the systemic failure of the 'segmentor' model in high-stakes environments. His narrative reveals that the neo-work-life domain is maintained by structural organisational pressures. From a habitus perspective, Paul's professional identity is 'endlessly digital', meaning his subjective sense of worth is tethered to his constant connectivity. In Paul's world, a 'border' is not a protection; it is a barrier to the performance of his professional habitus.

Dimension 2: The disappearance of boundaries and the birth of the 'neo work-life domain'

The strategic integration described above culminates in a state of ontological indistinction. Participants no longer perceive boundaries as being 'crossed' but as having been sociomaterially erased. This finding provides the empirical basis for our concept of the 'neo-work-life domain': a unitary, mobile, and fluid space where professional and personal activities are perpetually concurrent.

Hamda, a strategic HR advisor whose work is conducted entirely via digital platforms, articulated this dissolution in its most totalising form:

*I would say that I have **just one domain** in which all my work and non-work activities take place. My work is based online, so I do not have any physical office. I do everything at home – there is no work domain and no non-work domain... It is only one domain, and that is where all my activities are undertaken.*

Hamda's narrative reflects a state of ontological indistinction. For her, the 'border' is no longer an analytical or lived reality because the spatial anchor of the 'office' has been entirely replaced by a digital interface. Her experience suggests that when work is 'based online', the technology doesn't just bridge domains – it becomes the domain. This supports our claim that the neo work-life domain is an enacted accomplishment – a reality constructed through the entanglement of her professional role and the materiality of her digital workspace.

For hybrid workers, this unitary domain was described as nomadic and context-fluid. The ability to perform tasks was contingent not on *where* the individual was but on the sociomaterial affordances of their devices. **Alexandra**, an investment banker, explained this 'inverse invasion':

For me, I think there is no demarcation between my work and non-work lives. I am a hybrid worker – I do work-related activities at home, and I also attend to non-work activities at work. For example, I work out using the gym facilities at work, and I attend parent-teacher meetings online while I am at work... I think new technologies have turned the two domains into one, because all activities seem to happen in one place and alongside each other.

Alexandra's account is theoretically significant, as it illustrates bidirectional sociomaterial permeability. The 'integration' she describes is not just work colonising her home, but her personal life (parenting and fitness) colonising the traditional workspace via digital affordances. This 'simultaneity' challenges traditional border theory (Clark, 2000), which assumes that an individual 'crosses' from one domain to another. Alexandra isn't crossing borders – she is operating within a single territory where her professional and personal subjectivities are active at the same time.

The most acute evidence of this reconfiguration is found in the transition from boundary management to attention management. In a domain where spatial borders no longer exist, the primary labour shifts to the psychological filtering of simultaneous roles. **Aisha**, a business psychologist, provided a vivid illustration of this:

*Technology and innovations have turned my work and non-work domains into one domain. For example, I have often attended departmental meetings on my phone while I am driving. I just hung my phone on my car **dashboard** and participated in the*

meeting. I have also attended meetings at home in the kitchen while I'm cooking. I used to send, receive, and respond to emails on trains and on buses... With all these sophisticated technologies and mobile Internet services, it is just one domain for me.

Aisha's 'dashboard' meeting and 'kitchen' emails, alongside Maria's simultaneous navigation of professional meetings and domestic duties, are quintessential empirical markers of the neo work-life domain. In this state of sociomaterial indistinction, the 'dashboard' and the 'kitchen' are transformed from domestic or transit zones into enacted work sites where roles – as drivers, parents, chefs, and colleagues – are simultaneously entangled. The labour being performed here is not 'time management' – as technology has compressed the necessary transitions – but psychological role-filtering. We argue that Aisha is no longer managing a spatial border (e.g. car vs. office) but is instead managing a cognitive role-bottleneck. This 'bottlenecking' is not an outlier but a documented collective sociological reality: It reflects the daily imperative faced by the 67% majority of our sample navigating caregiving responsibilities (Table 2). Critically, this narrative also exposes the 'dark side' of the neo work-life domain. Aisha's role-concurrency in hazardous physical spaces (like driving) introduces significant physical safety risks, underscoring that when professional presence is maintained during high-risk physical tasks, the attentional bottleneck moves from a purely psychological strain to a tangible physical danger.

Dimension 3: The paradoxical outcomes of the neo work-life domain

Life within the newly formed neo-work-life domain was consistently described by the participants as a profound duality of empowerment (ICT-resources) and strain (compounded technostress). The participants experienced these as a simultaneous reality – the flexibility that empowers, also being the mechanism that enslaves.

ICT-resources: Empowerment and the professional habitus

On the one hand, many participants expressed their satisfaction with the capabilities that technovation affords. We categorise this as techno-aid, functioning as a critical ICT-resource (Piirsalu-Kivihall et al., 2026). This was particularly acute with respect to caregiving responsibilities. **Wilma**, a support worker, explained:

I am a support worker, and I care for five elderly people in different areas. I have motion-sensor cameras fixed in their homes so that I can monitor them all the time... One of them slipped and fell over last month and my phone alerted me immediately... Technology allows me to provide quality care to my care recipients while also attending to other non-work issues.

Wilma's narrative provides a powerful example of the neo work-life domain as a site of care. The 'motion-sensor cameras' and 'phone alerts' are not just tools – they are sociomaterial extensions of her professional presence. In this context, the domain collapse is viewed positively as it allows for harmonious role concurrency.

Compounded technostress: The 'clumsiness' of role-collision

On the other hand, the very same conditions generated multifaceted technostress. We move beyond established stressors to identify **compounded technostress** – a qualitative mechanism whereby stressors (overload/invasion) collide simultaneously within the individual's cognitive space. **Andrew**, a cloud engineer, captured this paradox of 'autonomous invasion':

I like it that I work from home, because it allows me to fulfil my non-work responsibilities. However, I always feel invaded and burdened with so much work – and compelled to promptly respond to work-related issues... I feel pressured and invaded... Sometimes, I feel very sick and burned out.

Andrew's narrative illustrates the autonomy paradox. His 'home' (traditionally a site of recovery) has been sociomaterially reconfigured as a site of 'invasion'. The internalised

pressure to be ‘responsive’ acts as a stress-intensifier, removing the external ‘brakes’ on work demands.

The most visceral description of this mechanism was provided by **Tracy**, a systems analyst, who used the metaphor of ‘clumsiness’ to describe her experience:

*It’s like **everything is thrown in my face** – work and non-work activities. In fact, I have been off sick for a month, and I am kind of paranoid right now because I will resume work in two days. The **clumsiness** of everything happening in one place – the pressure of work, which makes me always **glued** to my phone, my duties as mum and wife, and the online church thing that I am involved in – is not good for my health and social life.*

Tracy’s metaphors of ‘clumsiness’ and being ‘glued’ are central to our theoretical extension. ‘clumsiness’ describes the cognitive role-friction that occurs when incompatible identities (mother, analyst, and church member) collide without the ‘lubricant’ of a spatial or temporal border. Furthermore, being ‘glued’ to the phone signifies a loss of sociomaterial agency. Critically, we distinguish between the stressors (invasion/overload) and the techno-hazard (the outcome). Tracy’s ‘month off sick’ and ‘paranoia’ are the physiological and mental health consequences – the *techno-hazard* – of this compounded stress state. Her narrative confirms that when indistinction becomes absolute, the result is not empowerment but a state of persistent peril.

Finally, **Suzanne**, an office manager, articulated ‘*techno-insecurity*’ which acts as a coercive driver of the domain:

Technology is advancing at an exponential pace... I am always compelled to update my skills and knowledge, because I may lose my job to people who are more tech-savvy if I don’t... It is interesting, but at the same time, scary.

Suzanne’s fear of being less ‘tech-savvy’ than others highlights the coercive power relations embedded within the neo work-life domain. The ‘interesting but scary’ nature of this pace creates a state of permanent professional precarity. Here, the neo-work-life domain is maintained not just by organisational culture but also by a structural threat to job security. This demonstrates that the domain is structured by algocratic management (Zhang et al., 2025), where the ‘manager’ is the relentless pace of software evolution itself.

Discussion

In this study, we explored how employees experience and navigate the reconfigured boundaries between their professional and personal lives in an age of pervasive technovation. Our findings suggest that for the UK-based professionals in our sample, the traditional notions of separate domains and the subsequent management of borders are becoming empirically and experientially obsolete. Instead of a lifestyle preference for integration, we observed a deliberate, agentic strategy of integration as survival. This strategy, facilitated by the mobile affordances of digital technology, leads to the emergence of the neo-work-life domain – a unitary, nomadic, and fluid condition where roles are not crossed but are perpetually concurrent.

The ontological shift: From integration to indistinction

Our primary theoretical contribution lies in challenging the ontological assumptions of foundational boundary and border theories. Early scholarship (Clark, 2000; Nippert-Eng, 1996; Zerubavel, 1991) was predicated on the existence of distinct spheres of human activity that individuals either ‘segment’ or ‘integrate’. Even the concept of ‘integration’ implies a cognitive effort to blend two pre-existing, separate entities. Our findings, however, suggest a qualitative shift away from this dualistic binary. We contend that the ‘neo work-life domain’ is not merely an extension or intensification of work-life integration but rather represents a qualitative shift in the ontological status of the work–life interface.

While established constructs like ‘blurring’ and ‘integration’ describe the increasing permeability of existing borders, our data suggest a state of indistinction where the ‘border’ itself has been sociomaterially erased. This is not ‘extreme integration’, as integration remains a point on a continuum of two distinct things meeting; indistinction is an entirely different state of being. Sharron’s metaphor of ‘melting the poles’ (the South and North Poles) perfectly captures this ontological collapse. For the contemporary professional, labour is no longer about ‘crossing’ a line between worlds but rather existing within a borderless territory where the technology and the role are inseparable.

The ‘neo work-life domain’ offers novel explanatory power by identifying the generative mechanism behind this collapse: the potent collision of mobile affordances (the technical), neoliberal responsiveness norms (the structural), and professional habitus (the subjective). It is the entanglement of these three forces that renders the traditional border invisible and, ultimately, obsolete. This aligns with Orlikowski and Scott’s (2008) view of sociomaterial entanglement, where the social and the material are so fused that the ‘workplace’ is enacted wherever the individual and their technology reside.

The shift in labour: From boundary to attention management

Flowing from this ontological shift is a fundamental transformation in the nature of the labour process. We propose that by identifying the transition to a state of indistinction, we are able to move the analytical unit of organisational research from boundary management – which becomes a legacy concept as it assumes a border still exists to be managed – to attention management. In the neo work-life domain, the primary burden for the contemporary professional is no longer spatial or temporal protection, but the cognitive and psychological filtering of concurrent roles within a singular, unitary space. Historically, boundary management was a spatial and temporal task that protected a specific room (the home) or a specific hour (the evening) from professional intrusion. However, in a borderless world, space and time have been effectively colonised by the ‘always-on’ affordances of ICTs. Consequently, the ‘contested terrain’ (Kossek et al., 2023) has shifted from physical borders into the human subconscious.

We define *attention management* as the internalised labour of role-filtering necessitated by sociomaterial indistinction. This is evidenced most acutely in Aisha’s ‘dashboard meeting’ and Tracy’s feeling of being ‘glued’ to her phone; here, the scarcity is no longer time – which technology has compressed – but human attention capacity. We propose that, in the neo-work-life domain, stress arises at the ‘attentional bottleneck’, where role-concurrency exceeds cognitive capacity. Unlike the industrial-era model of role conflict – which assumed a sequential clash of duties – this new state of compounded technostress is characterised by a simultaneity of demands. This conceptual move allows us to better explain the ‘clumsiness’ and ‘compounded stress’ experienced by workers who are no longer managing a divide but are instead navigating a permanent state of role simultaneity. This ‘cognitive role-bottleneck’ illustrates why participants like Tracy feel that tasks are being ‘thrown in their face’ or why Andrew feels ‘pressured’ – despite having the ‘flexibility’ of remote work. The labour required is the exhausting psychological effort of maintaining a professional presence while simultaneously attending to domestic obligations or physical hazards. Ultimately, this moves the discussion of the work-life interface beyond a ‘balance’ of hours – a metric that loses its meaning when domains collapse – and toward the management of cognitive role collisions.

The constant connectivity paradox: Agency vs. structure

Our findings contribute to the burgeoning debate on constant connectivity by highlighting the tension between individual agency and structural coercion (Wajcman and Rose, 2011; Farivar et al., 2024). We find that connectivity is a socially negotiated practice rather than a purely technical outcome. Technologies do not simply ‘interrupt’ work – they fundamentally redefine the temporal flow of social life by making role-switching instantaneous (Wajcman and Rose,

2011). Our participants are not passive victims of ‘pings’. They are active strategists who utilise connectivity to manage the ‘survival’ pressures of a hyper-competitive economy (Farivar et al., 2024). However, this agency is a double-edged sword, creating a core paradox in which structural flexibility functions as a direct avenue for persistent role invasion (Djelassi et al., 2025). The perceived professional value of hyper-responsiveness establishes an invisible digital shackle (Suh and Lee, 2017), transforming autonomous resource use into an exhausting engine of compounded technostress. This stress is not merely an expansion of workflow volume but a qualitative psychological collision in which demands—invasion, overload, and environmental uncertainty—simultaneously saturate cognitive processing capacity. Ultimately, the severe psychological misfit (Stich et al., 2017) between a worker's desired technological segmentation and the actual indistinction forced by organisational contexts functions as the primary catalyst for severe techno-hazard outcomes, including systemic burnout and physiological sickness.

Bridging sociology and psychology: The professional habitus

A significant contribution of this study is the bridge we build between the psychology of stress and the sociology of work. By integrating habitus, we explain why the neo-work-life domain persists despite its high psychological cost. Our findings suggest that the experience of the neo-work-life domain is structurally stratified by the organisational level (Table 2) of the worker. We identify a ‘professional digital habitus’ among participants in senior and mid-senior management roles (e.g. Paul and Alexandra, investment bankers, and Benedict, strategic HR advisor). For these elite professionals, constant connectivity is not merely an external demand but is performed as a ‘symbolic badge of honour’ – a visible enactment of professional indispensability and commitment. Their habitus dictates that ‘essential’ professionals must remain perpetually reachable. Consequently, when granted high job autonomy, these individuals do not use it to disconnect; instead, their habitus drives them to intensify their integration to secure their social positioning and professional identity.

Conversely, for those in operational and frontline roles (e.g. Wilma and Felix, support workers), the neo work-life domain is experienced less as an elite performance and more as algocratic surveillance. For these workers, the ‘unitary domain’ is not a flexible affordance but a form of structural coercion, in which the technology acts as an ‘agentic boss’ that monitors presence and responsiveness. This suggests that ‘empowerment’ via indistinction is often a feature of elite professional habitus, while its ‘hazard’ is a function of structural monitoring for the precarious. This deepens our understanding of subjectivity, proving that the neo work-life domain is not a monolithic experience but is fundamentally structured by the worker’s social location and rank within the organisational hierarchy.

The UK Context: Institutional voids and the ‘temporal border’

Finally, we address the role of institutional context. Our study provides evidence that the UK’s neoliberal digital frontier – characterised by advanced technological infrastructure and a lack of ‘right to disconnect’ legislation – accelerates the collapse of boundaries. In a neo work-life domain where spatial borders have been sociomaterially dissolved, the ‘right to disconnect’ acts as the only remaining ‘temporal border’ capable of preventing the total colonisation of life by work. Our findings lend strong support to the argument that such legislation is not merely a labour regulation but a necessary psychological protective barrier. It serves as the final structural ‘brake’ capable of arresting the exhaustion of human attention capacity in an environment otherwise characterised by institutional voids and relentless digital demands. In countries with statutory protections (e.g. France and Portugal), there is a structural ‘brake’ on the expansion of the neo-work-life domain. In the UK, however, this brake is absent. This institutional void forces the burden of boundary-setting entirely onto individual attention management. Our findings suggest that the ‘right to disconnect’ is not merely a labour

regulation but a necessary psychological protective barrier – the final line of defence against the exhaustion of human attention capacity.

Limitations (transferability/interpretive boundaries) and recommendations for future research

While this study offers a novel theoretical lens, it is not without limitations. First, we acknowledge the methodological constraints of our recruitment strategy. By utilising professional networks and snowball sampling, we accessed a population of hyperconnected professionals who are often ‘hard to reach’. However, such methods can introduce a degree of homophily, potentially restricting the participant pool to socially connected individuals within the UK’s knowledge economy. While we mitigated this by initiating the ‘snowball’ from six disparate occupational seeds, the risk remains that our findings reflect a specific professional digital habitus shared by middle-class knowledge workers. By explicitly capturing and mapping the caregiving status of all 42 respondents (Table 2), we have grounded our transferability claims within the sociological reality of the caregiving majority (67%). This allows other scholars to test the prevalence of attention management and indistinction in other digitally saturated contexts characterised by dual role demands.

Second, the occupational heterogeneity of our sample – while valuable for identifying cross-sectoral patterns – imposes certain interpretive boundaries. It remains difficult to ascertain whether the intensities of compounded technostress are broadly transferable across all digital work. For instance, the ‘attentional bottleneck’ may manifest differently in roles with high physical tethering (e.g. healthcare or manufacturing) compared to the nomadic, cloud-based roles dominant here.

Future research should seek to test the transferability of the neo-work-life domain construct through: 1. *purposive comparative studies* between nomadic and site-dependent roles; 2. *the quantitative operationalisation* of ‘attentional bottlenecking’ as a distinct stressor; 3. *cross-national analysis* to clarify how structural ‘brakes’ moderate the ontological collapse of boundaries; and 4. *algocratic and AI integration studies* exploring how generative AI acts as an ‘agentic’ driver of role simultaneity.

Concluding remarks

The industrial-era paradigm of work – defined by the rhythmic ticking of the factory clock and the physical threshold of the office door – is no longer a functional reality for the contemporary professional. This study has demonstrated that through the pervasive force of technovation, we have moved beyond the ‘blurring’ of boundaries into a qualitative state of sociomaterial indistinction. The emergence of the neo-work-life domain represents a profound ontological shift: Work and life are no longer separate spheres to be ‘balanced’, but concurrent roles enacted within a singular, nomadic digital territory.

Our findings challenge the ‘autonomy paradox’ by revealing that the flexibility offered by hyperconnectivity is often a ‘digital shackle’ in disguise. For many, the choice to integrate is a survival strategy dictated by a professional digital habitus – an internalised drive to perform responsiveness as a marker of elite professional status. However, the cost of this indistinction is compounded technostress, a state in which role collisions occur at the ‘attentional bottleneck’ of the human subconscious. Consequently, we argue that the primary labour of the modern worker has fundamentally evolved from boundary management (the spatial protection of domains) to attention management (the cognitive filtering of simultaneous roles).

This shift necessitates a radical rethinking of HRM and organisational policy. If the ‘border’ between work and life has been sociomaterially erased, then individual-level coping strategies are inherently insufficient. We argue that the burden of protection must shift from the individual’s cognitive resources to the institutional structure. In the context of the UK’s current regulatory ‘void’, there is an urgent need for a statutory ‘right to disconnect’. Such a policy would serve as a vital structural ‘brake’, protecting employees’ cognitive autonomy and foster

a sustainable future of work in an age of indistinction. Ultimately, this study serves as an invitation to scholars and practitioners alike to look past the 'clock' and toward the 'attention' of the worker. By acknowledging the reality of the neo work-life domain, we can begin to design organisations that respect the limits of human cognition and preserve the sanctity of private life in a borderless world.

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Table 1: Conceptual distinction between boundary and attention management

Feature	Boundary management (Legacy)	Attention management (neo domain)
Ontological status	Two distinct, if permeable, domains.	A unitary, fluid sociomaterial territory.
Core mechanism	Crossing: Sequential movement between roles.	Filtering: Managing simultaneous roles.
Primary resource	Time and space.	Cognitive attention.
Nature of labor	Spatial/temporal protection.	Role-filtering/focus-shielding.
Stress mechanism	Role conflict: Clash of duties.	Compounded Stress: Collision of roles.
Goal of agency	To maintain a ‘border’.	To manage a ‘bottleneck’.

Table 2: Participant Profile

Name	Gender	Age	Job Role	Organisational Level	Work Mode	Caregiving Responsibilities (Yes/No)
Johnson	Male	42	Computer Forensic Analyst	Professional / Technical	Online	Yes
Grace	Female	40	Network Engineer	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Maria	Female	39	University Lecturer	Mid-Senior (Academic)	Hybrid	Yes
Joshua	Male	44	Cloud Engineer	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Molly	Female	41	University Lecturer	Mid-Senior (Academic)	Hybrid	Yes
Felix	Male	43	Support Worker	Operational / Frontline	Hybrid	No
Christine	Female	38	University Lecturer	Mid-Senior (Academic)	Hybrid	No
Luke	Male	39	ICT Consultant	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Alfred	Male	41	Computer Forensic Analyst	Professional / Technical	Online	Yes
Benedict	Male	39	Strategic HR Advisor	Mid-Senior Management	Online	No
Paul	Male	41	Investment Banker	Senior Management	Hybrid	Yes
Keneth	Male	40	Management Consultant	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Aisha	Female	33	Business Psychologist	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Harry	Male	38	University Lecturer	Mid-Senior (Academic)	Hybrid	Yes
Tracy	Female	34	Systems Analyst	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Donald	Male	39	Cloud Engineer	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Joe	Male	38	Cloud Engineer	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Wilma	Female	40	Support Worker	Operational / Frontline	Hybrid	Yes
Emmanuel	Male	42	Management Consultant	Mid-Senior Management	Hybrid	Yes
Adam	Male	40	University Lecturer	Mid-Senior (Academic)	Hybrid	Yes
Gabby	Male	39	Systems Analyst	Professional / Technical	Online	No

Hamda	Female	40	Strategic HR Advisor	Mid-Senior Management	Online	Yes
Elijah	Male	42	Computer Forensic Analyst	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Jubreel	Male	40	Cloud Engineer	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Clara	Female	38	Sales Team Supervisor	Mid-Management	Hybrid	Yes
Mikel	Male	40	ICT Consultant	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Ralph	Male	39	Investment Banker	Senior Management	Hybrid	No
Suzanne	Female	39	Office Manager	Administrative Management	Hybrid	No
Mohammad	Male	40	Management Consultant	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Chris	Male	41	Systems Analyst	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Sharron	Female	32	ICT Consultant	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Shade	Female	36	University Lecturer	Mid-Senior (Academic)	Hybrid	Yes
Andrew	Male	40	Cloud Engineer	Professional / Technical	Online	Yes
Beyonce	Female	32	Graphic Engineer	Professional / Technical	Online	No
Sam	Male	37	Investment Banker	Senior Management	Hybrid	No
Eric	Male	41	Management Consultant	Mid-Senior Management	Hybrid	Yes
Ellis	Male	45	Business Psychologist	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Victoria	Female	39	Management Consultant	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Naomi	Female	30	Systems Analyst	Professional / Technical	Hybrid	Yes
Kemi	Female	29	Cloud Engineer	Professional / Technical	Online	Yes
Alexandra	Female	34	Investment Banker	Senior Management	Hybrid	Yes
David	Male	39	University Lecturer	Mid-Senior (Academic)	Hybrid	No

Table 3: Data Structure and Representative Evidence

Aggregate dimensions	Second order themes	First-order concepts and representative quotations
The emergence of the neo work-life domain	Strategic role-integration <i>Integration as a coping mechanism</i>	• Survival in a digital landscape: <i>‘The business world is becoming endlessly digital... The only way I can survive this challenge with my multiple roles and be responsive... is to integrate my work and non-work domains into one... Separating them will cause chaos’</i> (Paul, investment banker). • Mending the 'North/South' divide: <i>"I used to separate my domains... it made my life stressful and difficult. It was like running from the South Pole to the North Pole... I switched to integrating the two domains... enabling me to fulfil my non-work responsibilities easily."</i> (Sharron, ICT Consultant).
	Sociomaterial indistinction <i>Dissolution of temporal/spatial borders</i>	• The unitary domain: <i>‘I would say that I have just one domain in which all my work and non-work activities take place. My work is based online... It is only one domain, and that is where all my activities are undertaken’</i> (Hamda, strategic HR advisor). • Nomadic role-concurrency: <i>‘I attend parent-teacher meetings online while I am at work... I think new technologies have turned the two domains into one, because all activities seem to happen in one place and alongside each other’</i> (Alexandra, investment banker).
	Attentional bottlenecking <i>Managing cognitive focus</i>	• Role filtering while mobile: <i>‘I have often attended departmental meetings on my phone while I am driving. I just hung my phone on my car dashboard and participated... With all these sophisticated technologies and mobile Internet services, it is just one domain for me</i> (Aisha, business psychologist). • Concurrent domesticity: <i>‘I have also attended meetings at home in the kitchen while I’m cooking... I used to send, receive, and respond to emails on trains and on buses’</i> (Aisha).
The paradox of indistinction	Compounded technostress <i>Simultaneous stressor collision</i>	• The ‘clumsy’ collision: <i>‘It’s like everything is thrown in my face – work and non-work activities... The clumsiness of everything happening in one place... is not good for my health and social life’</i> (Tracy, systems analyst).

		• The ‘glued’ subject: <i>‘I always feel invaded and burdened with so much work... compelled to promptly respond... The pressure of work makes me always glued to my phone’</i> (Andrew, cloud engineer/ Tracy, systems analyst).
	ICT-enabled resources <i>(Empowerment via extension)</i>	• Presence through technology: <i>‘Technology practically makes me present everywhere – at work and at home at the same time – no boundaries. Isn’t that marvellous?’</i> (Christine, university lecturer). • Sociomaterial caregiving: <i>‘I care for five elderly people... I have motion-sensor cameras fixed in their homes so that I can monitor them all the time... Technology allows me to provide quality care while also attending to other non-work issues’</i> (Wilma, support worker).
	Algoratic precarity and habitus <i>(Coercive skill-updating)</i>	• Fear of obsolescence: <i>‘I am always compelled to update my skills and knowledge, because I may lose my job to people who are more tech-savvy if I don’t... It is interesting, but at the same time, it’s scary’</i> (Suzanne, office manager). • Techno-hazard (outcome): <i>‘Sometimes I feel very sick and burned out’</i> (Clara/Andrew). • Internalised responsiveness: <i>‘Technology is good for work, but it has taken away my privacy... I attend to work-related issues almost everywhere... Sometimes, I feel very sick and burned out’</i> (Clara, sales supervisor).

Figure 1: Theoretical Model of the Neo Work-Life Domain

