

Smartphone Sixty Seconds® – Explore biometric access

- Take out your mobile phone and search for ‘biometric access’.
- Click on the option to view images.
- Have you ever used biometric access? In what context?
- How do you feel about your fingerprints or irises being stored online?

2.4 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE DIGITAL WORKSPACE

According to the European Commission (EU), technology at work can enhance efficiency. The European Commission also believes that technology has a role to play in improving working conditions (2021b: 7): ‘digital technologies can support workers and offer better adapted working environments, with ICT-based personalised systems, wearables and mobile health applications’.

In addition to these opportunities identified by the EU, other issues include the work–life balance and the phenomenon of technostress which is discussed in the next sections.



2.4.1 WORK–LIFE BALANCE

Hybrid working or working from home isn’t fun, or available for everyone. Many people struggle to achieve **work–life balance** (see Key Term). Plus any form of working from home may not be available to people without fast internet access or those who care for relatives or young children with constant interruptions at home.



KEY TERM WORK–LIFE BALANCE

Work–life balance (WLB) is considered to be a situation where individuals gain equal amounts of satisfaction at work and at home (Calvin Ong & Jeyaraj, 2014). It is viewed as a simplistic measure where work and home conflict, competing for attention. If you undertake too much work and your home life suffers, this is having a poor work–life balance.

Within a digital environment, work–life balance has become harder to achieve. Employees who physically go to the office no longer finish work at the end of the day as they may be available at any time via email, direct messages and online tools (e.g. Teams or Zoom). Those working from home may face other challenges, as researchers exploring WLB during the pandemic (Shirmohammadi et al., 2022) identified.

This included stress factors or stressors, as employees had more work to do and for longer hours (work intensity). Many people lacked a dedicated office space and were competing with family members for the kitchen table (workplace limitation).

Shirmohammadi and colleagues identified other factors that impacted on WLB during the pandemic. Employees felt alone (professional isolation) when working without the usual social interaction with colleagues. And in some cases, employees weren't able to deliver the work as needed because they were dependent on other colleagues to deliver some elements of the work (who may have been struggling) and the usual office conversations weren't available (work interdependence).

The WLB also created 'non-work domain stressors' such as having to look after other family members at the same time (care-work intensity). This was especially true when children were not permitted to attend school during the pandemic and the formally organised lockdowns were in place. Working from home – or living at work – created more housework, such as extra cooking and cleaning due to staying at home all the time. This contributed to greater emotional demands and feeling stressed.

In some cases, employees who are unhappy with their work-life balance have started to change their approach to work and focus on only what's needed. This is known as '**quiet quitting**' (see Ethical Insights).

ETHICAL INSIGHTS Quiet quitting

Quiet quitting has been described as 'opting out of tasks beyond one's assigned duties and/or becoming less psychologically invested in work' (Klotz & Bolino, 2022: 1). Effectively you are still at work, but delivering the bare minimum as detailed in your job description, and you've mentally disengaged from the organisation.

- What examples of quiet quitting have you witnessed and what factors do you think contributed to it?
- How can organisations ensure their staff are fulfilled and happy at work?

On the positive side of working from home, many employees had greater flexibility (job autonomy) and were provided with support from their organisations. Some were able to make changes to accommodate the new way of working (personal adaptability) or gained more support from their families.

Figure 2.3 shows the earlier factors that occur (the antecedents) which can lead to different outcomes in the work-life balance.

Although this research was based on lived experiences during the pandemic, many of the work and non-work domain stressors remain for those working from home. After the pandemic, many employees re-evaluated their workplaces and decided to quit their jobs, which resulted in a phenomenon called **The Great Resignation** (see Key Term).

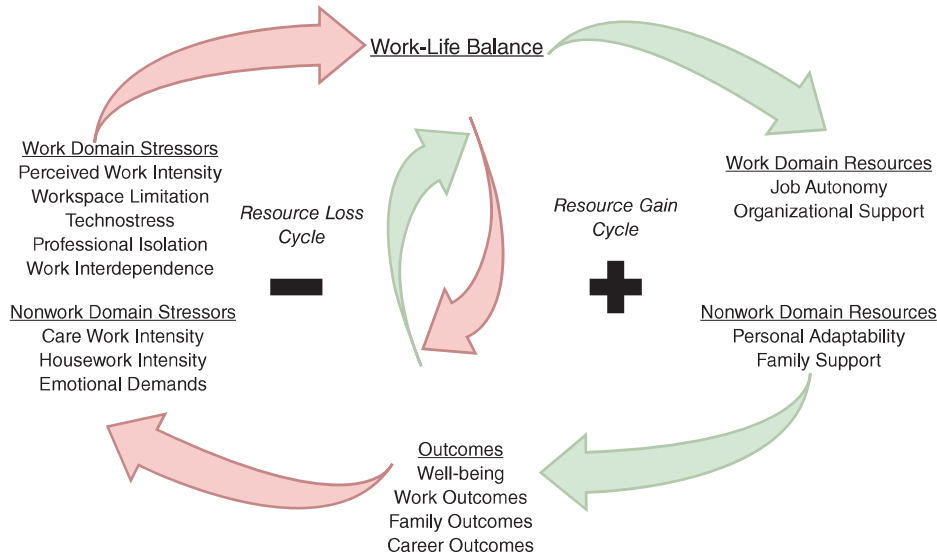


Figure 2.3 An integrative model of the antecedents and outcomes of WLB while working from home during the pandemic

Source: Shirmohammadi et al. (2022: 10)

KEY TERM THE GREAT RESIGNATION

After the COVID-19 pandemic, many people had the opportunity to review their work-life balance and voluntarily quit their jobs; this was termed the ‘Great Resignation’ as over 47 million Americans left their workplace (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). This didn’t just happen in the USA. It was witnessed in many countries in Europe and also recognised in India. In Australia fewer people quit working, but many changed jobs (the great reshuffle). However, there are arguments that this was not because of the pandemic, but due to the Five Rs: retirement, relocation, reconsideration, reshuffling and reluctance (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). The pandemic provided employees with thinking time to decide what they did – and didn’t – want to do.

2.4.2 TECHNOSTRESS

As the research by Shirmohammadi et al. (2022) demonstrated, another factor was trying to manage technostress with excessive use of technology, all day, every day.

One way that technostress became evident was with Zoom fatigue. Dr Robby Nadler (2020: 2) calls this computer-mediated communication exhaustion, as having communication between yourself and another person separated by a screen was both mentally and physically tiring, especially as the volume of online meetings has increased.

Other researchers (Fauville et al., 2021) identified other elements of Zoom fatigue, such as:



- Staring at a larger version of colleagues on screen
- The change in non-verbal behaviour such as putting thumbs-up when on mute, which you wouldn't do if you were face to face
- The way that the online video seems like a mirror where you're suddenly looking at yourself and evaluating your appearance

Professor Géraldine Fauville (2021) and colleagues decided to test the concept of Zoom exhaustion and fatigue, and created a scale, which they later refined based on their evidence from 2,724 participants. The final Zoom Exhaustion & Fatigue Scale is shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2 Zoom Exhaustion & Fatigue Scale

Constructs	Questions
General Fatigue	1. How tired do you feel after video conferencing?
	2. How exhausted do you feel after video conferencing?
	3. How mentally drained do you feel after video conferencing?
Visual Fatigue	4. How blurred does your vision get after video conferencing?
	5. How irritated do your eyes feel after video conferencing?
	6. How much do your eyes hurt after video conferencing?
Social Fatigue	7. How much do you tend to avoid social situations after video conferencing?
	8. How much do you want to be alone after video conferencing?
	9. How much do you need time by yourself after video conferencing?
Motivational Fatigue	10. How much do you dread having to do things after video conferencing?
	11. How often do you feel like doing nothing after video conferencing?*
	12. How often do you feel too tired to do other things after video conferencing?*
Emotional Fatigue	13. How emotionally drained do you feel after video conferencing?
	14. How irritable do you feel after video conferencing?
	15. How moody do you feel after video conferencing?

Source: Fauville et al. (2021: 5). Printed with permission of Elsevier

Activity 2.3 Apply the Zoom Exhaustion & Fatigue Scale

Using Table 2.2, assess how you feel about online lectures and seminars. Score each item on a scale of 1 = 'Not at all' to 5 = 'Extremely'. For questions 11 and 12 (starred), use 1 = 'Never', 2 = 'Rarely', 3 = 'Sometimes', 4 = 'Often' to 5 = 'Always'. The lowest score possible is 15, and the highest possible score is 75.

This is not a competition to see who gains the highest score, but an evaluation to see how you feel about using video-conferencing tools, such as Zoom or Teams. Test yourself and compare your scores with your classmates.

Consider why some had higher scores than others and what actions could be taken to reduce the higher scores.