

RESEARCH ARTICLE:

Exigency of Work-Life Balance in the Wake of Digitalised Workspace for Information Technology Staff in the Banking Sector

Hazel Mubango¹, Hlanganipani Ngirande² and Khathutshelo Khashane³

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Abstract

Digitalisation has enabled ubiquity, transformed the conventional workspace, and reshaped how work is designed, performed and managed in organisations. Technology is increasingly infiltrating workspaces, with digitalisation catalysing employee work-life balance as it allows work to fit better around home and family responsibilities. Leveraging digitalisation in workspaces has enabled organisations to move towards working from home, embracing flexibility, employee productivity and autonomy. While this arrangement has been advocated for as 'accommodating', the risk of infringing on employees' personal lives and negatively affecting their work-life balance (WLB) and performance remains. This article examines the exigency of employee work-life balance and performance in digitalised workspaces in a Zimbabwean bank. The study employed qualitative methodology to obtain in-depth insights into the phenomenon. Using semi-structured interviews, data saturation was reached on the 10th interview of purposively sampled participants. Data were thematically analysed using the software ATLAS.ti Version 8. The themes raised in the study indicated that digitalisation offered the flexibility of working from home, giving employees time to do their own things. Digitalisation also enabled flexibility and autonomy, multitasking, and working from home, which were convenient in balancing employee work and personal lives, thus ensuring performance. However, work-life balance was affected by the blurry boundaries between work and personal lives caused by connectivity, polychronicity, health threats and lack of task prioritisation brought about by working from home. The study concluded that digitalised workspaces in the Zimbabwean bank allowed for employee work-life balance despite some challenges. Therefore, employees need to establish boundaries and block time to eliminate the risks impeding work-life balance.

Keywords: digitalisation; digitalised workspaces; IT employee; work-life balance; banking sector

Introduction

The advent of digitalisation has facilitated widespread availability and fundamentally altered the conventional workspace, leading to a reconfiguration of how work is conceptualised, executed, and overseen within businesses. Digitalisation occurs and spreads rapidly at an exponential rate (Bresciani *et al.*, 2021). Various elements of work, including the characteristics, structure, and procedures, have been significantly impacted by agile and substantial disruptions caused by advancements in new information technologies. Information technology (IT) is progressively permeating workspaces, with digitalisation accelerating the achievement of a harmonious work-life balance for employees, enabling work to be more integrated with home and family obligations. Work-life balance refers to the optimal harmony and compatibility between an individual's work and personal life (McDonald *et al.*, 2023). This not only enhances the well-being of employees and their acquaintances but also enhances job productivity. An

¹University of Venda, hazmub@gmail.com | <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4695-8056>

²University of Venda, hlanganipai@gmail.com | <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2604-2156>

³University of Venda, khathutshelo.khashane@univen.ac.za | <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-6304-5842>

important point to note is that this not only alters the business model but also the organisational culture by shaping the system of values and the mindset of employees (Kaufman and Horton, 2015).

A digitalised workspace is a unified platform that enables employees to work remotely and collaborate using digital technology (Stofberg *et al.*, 2021). Digitalisation encompasses using digital technologies to revolutionise conventional company procedures and operations (Adomako *et al.*, 2021). It facilitates the creation of digital workspaces where employees can work at their preferred locations and times and utilise any digital tools of their choice. Technological advancements and their adoption by firms, such as banks, have facilitated remote work for teams, allowing them to operate outside the confines of a typical physical workplace (St. Amant, 2015). This ensures the uninterrupted functioning of businesses (Reuschl *et al.*, 2022). Implementing innovative technologies like blockchain, artificial intelligence (AI), cybersecurity, cloud computing, and digital payment and deposit systems can aid in effectively managing business operations and promote business growth within the banking ecosystem (Zahoor *et al.*, 2023).

The Zimbabwean banking industry has been resilient in the face of socio-economic shocks, including the impact of COVID-19 on many aspects of the economy (Muparadzi and Rodze, 2021). Zimbabwe has a diversified financial sector consisting of 19 domestic and foreign-owned licensed banking institutions. These banks play a significant role in supporting the country's socio-economic activities and promoting sustainable development (Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe, 2023). Digitalisation has led to the establishment of digital workspaces and has gradually transformed how banking business operations are carried out in Zimbabwe. The emergence of COVID-19 has accelerated the trend of digitalising banking operations, transitioning from manual procedures to paperless banking through e-banking services. The implementation of digital workspaces resulted in most IT employees engaging in teleworking or working remotely from their homes. While this flexibility was beneficial, it infringed upon personal domains, particularly while working remotely, impacting their work-life balance and well-being. As employees face the difficulties of digitalisation in their workspaces, pursuing a work-life balance continues to be a dynamic and crucial endeavour.

Several studies have been conducted on various aspects of digitalisation. For example, some researchers have examined the influence of digitalisation on human resources practices and processes (Akshay and George, 2016; Kovačević, 2019; Muchowe *et al.*, 2023). Other studies have analysed the impact of digitalisation on the labour market and the number of jobs replaced by new technologies (Arntz *et al.*, 2020; Frey and Osborne, 2017). However, there is a dearth of knowledge on the exigency of work-life balance in the wake of digitalised workspaces of bank IT staff, particularly in Zimbabwe. This article provides empirical evidence for the ongoing discussion on the influence of digitalisation on work-life balance within the Zimbabwean banking industry. The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore the opportunities presented by digitalised workspaces for improving employee work-life balance in a selected bank in Zimbabwe.
- To assess the challenges posed by digitalised workspaces on employee work-life balance in a selected bank in Zimbabwe.
- To provide recommendations on how digitalised workspaces can be optimised to enhance employee work-life balance in the Zimbabwean banking sector.

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study is grounded in the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) proposed by Venkatesh *et al.* (2003). The UTAUT asserts that technology adoption is determined by four primary constructs: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating factors (Venkatesh *et al.*, 2016). These constructs can directly influence employees' capacity to maintain their work-life balance. The UTAUT explains the psychological mechanisms and elements that impact employees' utilisation of digital tools in their workspaces. The model highlights the importance of social influence and favourable factors in deciding the uptake and utilisation of digital technology. Employees are more likely to adopt digital tools when they feel pressure or receive encouragement from influential individuals such as supervisors, colleagues, family members, and peers. The utilisation of technology to extend work responsibilities into non-work hours poses a challenge to employees' ability to maintain a healthy work-life balance, affecting their ability to allocate enough time to fulfil obligations at home and work (Adisa *et al.*, 2017). For employees to participate in cross-domain behaviour, such as remote work or teleworking, they need to perceive the technology as user-friendly, providing advantages for both their

professional and personal lives, and backed by suitable conditions, particularly if they strongly desire to blend their work and personal activities. The UTAUT profoundly impacts work-life balance, especially as organisations increasingly depend on digital tools and technologies.

Achieving work-life balance means properly aligning this equilibrium between work responsibilities and responsibilities outside paid labour for an individual (Dhas and Karthikeyan, 2015; Dissanayaka *et al.*, 2013). Work-life balance fosters employee self-motivation and enhances self-learning, innovation, and productivity (Ongaki, 2019). Furthermore, realising a work-life balance mitigates internal conflicts within the business and positively influences employees, enhancing their dedication to their work and minimising employee turnover (Alegre and Pasamar, 2018). The organisation's strong emphasis on work-life balance empowers employees to exercise self-control, particularly in effectively managing their work hours. In a study based on the 2010 EU Working Conditions Survey, individuals with a good work-life balance and the ability to choose their working hours independently were more likely to produce and practice innovative ideas (Dediu *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, work-life balance enables one to manage personal and work responsibilities effectively. Thus, it enhances employees' emotional and physical well-being. Digitalisation has also been found to be an important factor pertaining to work-life balance. Digitalisation refers to the integration and utilisation of digital technologies within businesses to enhance and streamline commercial operations (Johansson, 2017). It also involves the ongoing reassessment of business strategies and implementation of fundamental innovations in business processes (Parida *et al.*, 2019). Digitalisation aims to augment efficiency, reduce expenses, and amplify the capacity of organisations to swiftly and flexibly provide services and products to clients (Adomako *et al.*, 2021). It necessitates a comprehensive reform of business operations to achieve and maintain optimum corporate performance. This includes the modification of the organisational culture, re-evaluation and enhancement of existing business models, and the creation of new ones.

The utilisation of mobile devices enables the digitalisation of work processes and facilitates online communication, thus providing increased flexibility in both the location and timing of work (Duan *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, digitalisation replaces workers in executing routine work, which encompasses manually operated and cognitive duties that can be articulated through explicit rules (Autor, Levy and Murnane, 2003). Replacing human effort in non-routine tasks, which include complex decision-making, problem-solving, and communication tasks, has proven to be significantly more challenging. Autor *et al.* (2003) demonstrate that in businesses undergoing rapid digitalisation, there has been a change in labour input from regular duties to a preference for non-routine tasks. In this study's context, the digitalisation process has further enhanced bank customers' experience by enabling them to conduct cashless transactions using internet banking or mobile banking platforms. Customers no longer need to visit the bank to deposit or withdraw money physically, but can conduct transactions at any location and time. Utilising digital technologies to enhance banking services and products is a significant indicator of digitalisation (Mergel *et al.*, 2019). Digital workplaces have allowed technology to enhance the efficiency of workspaces by utilising data, applications, and collaboration tools to work on any device, at any time, and from any location. Sharma (2022) posits that digitalisation of the workplace has created a more adaptable and dynamic environment for workers, offering advantages such as remote work capabilities, effective collaboration, enhanced control, and efficient task coordination.

Despite the benefits of digitalisation, it is crucial to acknowledge the profound negative aspects of digitalised workspaces that affect work-life balance among employees (Jain and Ranjan, 2020). This is caused by a lack of the necessary support in digitalised workspaces (Bregenzer and Jimenez, 2021). Meda (2019) noted that the digitalisation process resulted in the blurring of distinctions between work and personal life, the reduction of skill requirements, the division of society into polarised groups, and the transformation of work into an Uber-like model. Digital tools are utilised to enhance authority over and productivity of workers, leading to the emergence of 'Neo-Taylorism' (Gautié *et al.*, 2020). This establishes new divisions of labour, notably the emergence of remote work and its gendered implications. Thus, human resources strategies that advocate for the democratisation of work and work technology can potentially empower individuals who work in digitalised workspaces. Technological advancements have contributed to the speed at which the world of work is changing, enabling individuals to work at any time and from any location (Schlachter *et al.*, 2018). Technological progression enhances staff efficiency, fosters harmonious integration of work and personal life, enhances workplace security, and elevates profits (Grimshaw, 2020). According to Duan *et al.* (2023), using digital technology enhances coordination and knowledge exchange among employees, improves work-life balance, and enhances job performance. Studies have generally

found that the effect of digitalisation on work-life balance presents several opportunities among which include flexibility and autonomy, multitasking, work from home, among others.

Methodology

The study employed an interpretivist research philosophy to get insights into the lived experiences of bank IT professionals who operate in digitalised workspaces. The study utilised a qualitative research approach, specifically explanatory research, to assess the significance of work-life balance in digitalised workspaces at a selected Zimbabwean bank (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The IT staff population of the bank is 68 employees. Bank employees were purposively selected based on their being part of the employees who operated in digitalised workspaces. Employees who did not work with IT systems and came to the office every day were excluded. The participants were chosen from the different units of the IT department. The researcher chose participants who worked in digitalised workspaces that are not office spaces. Semi-structured interview data were gathered using audio recording after getting participants' approval. Notable exceptions occurred when participants declined to be recorded, prompting the researchers to make written notes during the interview. The interviews averaged 30 minutes. Data saturation was achieved after conducting interviews with the tenth participant. The data was thematically analysed using the software ATLAS.ti Version 8. Firstly, the researchers were thoroughly engaged with the data to get a comprehensive understanding of the contents (Braun and Clark, 2006). This was to identify patterns and annotate segments relevant to the research objectives. After selecting probable themes, researchers evaluated them to confirm that they constitute a coherent narrative and are distinct from one another. This was followed by the creation of a comprehensive report that integrated the thematic analysis with the research questions and relevant literature, incorporating illustrative data extracts to exemplify each theme and elucidate their significance within the broader context of the study (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The researchers obtained permission from the organisation first as well as informed consent from the participants before they were interviewed. The researchers ensured the confidentiality of their information by not revealing their names.

Findings and Discussions

The findings below indicate the sample profile of the ten study participants and the main and sub-themes emanating from their responses. Regarding the gender profile of the participants, the results showed that the majority, 6 (60%), were males and 4 (40%) were women. This shows that the bank's IT division is male-dominated. The age of the participants indicated that 4 (40%) of the participants were between 36 and 45 years of age, 3 (30%) were 56 years and above, while 2 (20%) were in the 46-55 years age range. One participant (10%) was in the 25-35 age range. The findings also indicated the marital status of the IT participants, where the majority, 7 (70%), were married, followed by divorced participants, 2 (20%). There was one widowed participant 1 (10%), and there were no single participants. In terms of the IT banking employee work experience, 5 (50%) had more than 10 years of experience, 3 (30%) had between 6-10 years of experience, and 2 (20%) had less than 5 years of experience working in bank IT. On the highest qualifications, most of the participants, 6 (60%), had an undergraduate degree, and 4 (40%) had a Master's degree.

Theme 1: Opportunities of digitalised workspaces on employee work-life balance

To answer objective one, which sought to examine the opportunities of digitalised workspaces on employee work-life balance in the Zimbabwean banking sector, three sub-themes were identified. The sub-themes from the opportunities of digitalised workspaces were flexibility and autonomy, multitasking and working from home as shown in Figure 1 below. The results from the sub-themes are presented and discussed below:

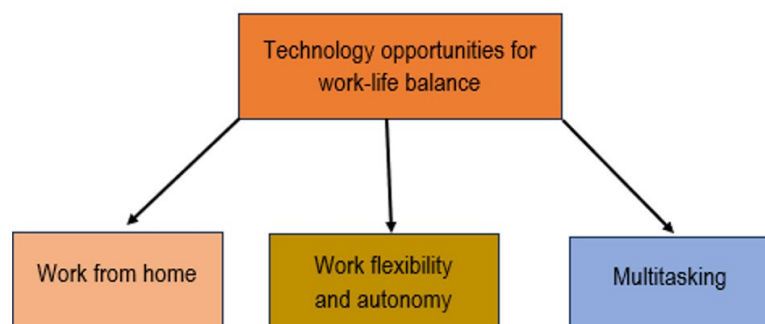


Figure 1: Opportunities of digitalised workspaces on employee work-life balance

The study revealed that digitalisation provided IT staff working in the bank with increased flexibility. Employees can telecommute, allowing them to allocate their time and workspace effectively. Within the realm of the digital workspace, employees possess a greater degree of autonomy in managing their work schedules. This adaptability enables individuals to modify their schedules according to their unique requirements, such as familial obligations or personal pursuits. Participant 3 said:

I had greater flexibility when our bank underwent digitalisation. When I wake up in the morning, I know my workstreams, and I can manage how and when I am going to work. Whether it involves resolving a customer's issue with a failed ATM card transaction or internet banking issues or troubleshooting an employee's inability to access the system, I possess the flexibility to prioritise which query to address first. Also, I can work remotely from any location if I have a stable network connection and a good gadget.

This finding is consistent with the 2010 EU Working Conditions Survey, which revealed that individuals with a good work-life balance and the ability to choose their working hours independently are more likely to produce and implement innovative ideas (Dediu *et al.*, 2018). Participant 7 emphasised that the use of technology tools such as laptops and smartphones allows flexibility in terms of location. The participant expressed that:

...working in a digitalised environment provides me with a significant amount of flexibility. I can select between a laptop or a tablet as my preferred ICT gadget, as long as I can successfully access the bank system to do my tasks. In addition to being flexible, I am also capable of tending to personal matters such as engaging in a round of golf or grab a cup of coffee with friends or enjoying a trip to the cinema with my spouse.

The literature also supports the idea that digitalised workspaces provide employees with increased flexibility in work scheduling and location, giving them more choice over when and where they work (Lee, 2019). When employees believe that technology improves their performance (performance expectancy), they are more inclined to use it, resulting in heightened productivity and potentially more adaptable work arrangements (Zhu *et al.*, 2019). Based on the aforementioned adaptability, the researchers argue that through digitalisation, ICT devices such as laptops, tablets and smartphones may enhance the flexibility and productivity of working at any time and from any location, positively impacting work-life balance.

The second sub-theme derived from the results was multitasking. The study's results suggest that implementing a digitalised workstation fosters multitasking among IT personnel, thus facilitating the efficient execution of certain activities within a limited timeframe. Multitasking is characterised by polychronic behaviour, where employees attempt to meet important deadlines while simultaneously fulfilling family obligations. Participant 1 expressed that:

...digitalised workspaces enable me to handle various workstreams and personal stuff concurrently. For example, I'm capable of writing a work report or attending a meeting while simultaneously cooking or tending to my children. However, the primary obstacle lies in my focus being divided, potentially causing me to overlook crucial aspects of the meeting.

Participant 10 emphasised that:

... when I'm faced with multiple equally critical duties, I try to manage them by utilising various digital gadgets. I'm capable of utilising my tablet for simple duties such as assisting a client to use an online platform or assisting a work colleague in logging into the banking system. Meanwhile, my laptop will be engaged in more intricate work, such as attempting to restore a malfunctioning Internet banking system.

These results align with the findings of McCloskey (2016), who asserted that family members can impose personal obligations on teleworking individuals at home, thus intensifying the need for multitasking. Furthermore, digital technology can enhance IT services and product distribution to the bank's internal and external customers (Mergel *et al.*, 2019). Thus, employees can balance their work and personal obligations.

Digitalisation also enables organisations to implement flexible working methods, particularly remote work from home. For example, telecommuting or remote working allows employees to work from non-traditional office locations. According to a study by Ratna and Kaur (2016), digitalisation allows individuals to choose whether to work from home, such as by preparing IT reports or performing system analysis. This minimises the time spent commuting and improves the balance between work and personal life. Participant 2 concurs with this sentiment:

Rather than being delayed by traffic while commuting to work...working from home eliminates the time I've to spend on commuting and allows me to begin my work early... I diligently prepare for my morning meetings far in advance of my colleagues who travel to the office.

Another participant emphasised that he once participated in a meeting while in transit somewhere, necessitating him to park his vehicle on the side of the road to join an emergency meeting remotely. This aligns with the results of a study conducted by Laundon and Williams (2018), which demonstrated that digitalised workspaces enable flexibility in terms of the amount, timing, and location of employees' work.

Theme 2: Challenges of digitalised workspaces on employee work-life

Research objective two also seeks to assess the challenges of digitalised workspaces on the work-life balance of IT staff working at a selected Zimbabwean bank. Navigating work-life balance in digitalised workspaces for IT employees presents unique challenges due to the connectivity and integration of technology into IT employees' daily lives. This study derived five sub-themes: incessant connection to work, polychronicity, technological diversions, task prioritisation and health hazards. These themes are shown in Figure 2 below and discussed thereafter.

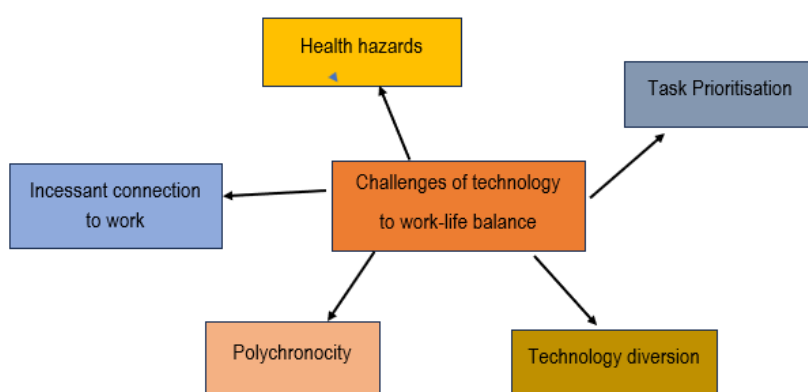


Figure 2: Sub-themes of challenges of digitalised workspaces on employee work-life balance

The study's findings indicated that, although the ability to connect remotely has enabled flexible work arrangements for IT employees, it has also generated a situation where employees feel compelled to be constantly accessible. Their widespread use of smartphones and incorporation of business-related applications into their personal devices created challenges in separating work and personal life, merging professional and personal boundaries. As a result, employees encountered difficulties in disengaging from work tasks and completely engaging in personal activities when they were consistently tied to work. Many employees, even after finishing their workday at around 16:30, continued working until midnight because they had all the necessary tools with them. Hence Participant 4 expressed that:

while I aim to complete my work by the end of the normal working day, I often find myself working into my family time. The persistent notion of incomplete tasks consistently troubles me, prompting me to diligently complete the work in order to meet deadlines. I have observed that my family consistently experiences problems due to my lack of sufficient attention to them.

In line with the above findings, the use of digital workspaces leads to uncertainty over specific times when one's workday begins and concludes, particularly when there is no physical distinction between office and home. In agreement with this, a study conducted by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (2019) found that greater use of technology in the workplace negatively impacted workers' mental health by reducing their interaction with colleagues, family, and social support networks. As organisations implement digital tools to improve productivity and efficiency, the distinction between work and personal life has become ambiguous, necessitating appropriate work-life balance methods (Hartner-Tiefenthaler *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, Derks *et al.* (2014) concluded that maintaining a connection to work at home reduces an individual's ability to recuperate from job-related exertions.

The study revealed that the digital landscape promotes multitasking, which can diminish concentration and efficiency in both professional and personal responsibilities. IT employees experienced difficulty fully dedicating

their focus to either work tasks or personal interests, resulting in decreased productivity and satisfaction in both areas. Participant 8 highlighted that:

... I found out that it is challenging for me to engage in many tasks simultaneously and has a negative impact on my performance outcomes. I have seen that one of the tasks that I'm engaging concurrently with another task becomes negatively affected. For example, either my work report or the child's schoolwork is negatively affected.

Participant 6 said:

We humans are generally inclined to focus on one activity at a time, but there are situations where I'm compelled to handle many tasks simultaneously. In this case, there are situations in which I must attend to both customer and other employee inquiries, which are of equal importance. I find naturally myself multitasking to get things done on time... but at the end of the day... I do achieve little as a result. In short, there is no balance there...

Mokana *et al.* (2016) validate these findings by asserting that digitalised workspaces cause excessive job demands to have a detrimental and significant impact on work-life balance. Thus, multitasking can lead to work overload, causing individuals to struggle to give their undivided focus on either work or personal activities. This can result in reduced productivity and satisfaction in both areas. The plethora of digital entertainment alternatives and social media platforms has proved to be a distraction during work hours. The study found out that the quest for virtual validation and the dopamine responses triggered by receiving 'shares' and 'likes' introduce an additional level of intricacy to the struggle of maintaining a healthy balance between work and personal life. This frequently results in employees experiencing difficulty concentrating on crucial tasks because of their engagement with social media platforms. This can result in a decline in productivity and potentially necessitate longer work hours to compensate for time wasted on diversions. Participant 9 noted that:

I personally like to work with my cellphone at hand, and social media sites such as WhatsApp and Facebook which unfortunately pose a significant temptation to me. While performing my tasks, every 10-15 minutes or so, I often catch myself involuntarily diverting my attention from work and scanning through the various social media platforms. I consistently strive to stay updated with current events outside of work in real-time.

Furthermore, social media sites can foster a sense of comparison and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), as some employees may be compelled to match their peers' professional happenings and lives. Moreover, social influence can significantly impact behaviour; if peers and superiors endorse specific technologies, employees may experience pressure to utilise them, potentially resulting in an imbalance if the technology requires disproportionate time and focus (Oosthuizen, 2019). Servidio *et al.* (2021) corroborate these findings and indicate that people trying to close the perceived gap between their experiences and those of others may utilise social media sites more frequently due to FOMO. This can result in heightened levels of stress and discontentment, as individuals may regard their career or personal lives as insufficient compared to others. According to this study, working remotely has presented many problems for IT employees as they navigate the complexities of digital workspaces. Consequently, some individuals neglected prioritising their household or professional responsibilities because they believed they were equally important. While the transition to a digitalised workplace resulted in increased flexibility in work schedules, such as replacing quick office talks with Zoom meetings, it also resulted in a shift from the traditional 8 to 4:30 work day to a constant influx of emails at all night hours. The prioritisation of tasks has become difficult for employees. The incessant influx of urgent emails and impromptu meetings has been a significant cause of distress and unease for many IT personnel, and it has stretched the limits of attaining a harmonious work-life balance. Participant 3 expressed in detail that:

When we transitioned to remote work, it was during the Covid pandemic, we were instructed to create our own daily routine and take breaks when there was no work pressure. However, it is frequently the case that the normal 8:00-4:30 work day has disappeared, and a significant number of us are now working evenings and weekends. I cannot even make a workable work schedule for the day. We are bound to our computers and concerned about allocating time for breaks and prioritising our personal lives and our families. Currently, I am utilising my lunch break for work, dedicating my evenings to work during family

time, and frequently being requested to engage in weekend work. I sense that I am approaching a state of exhaustion and mental fatigue.

Another participant expressed a similar predicament, expressing concern about the consequences of not promptly attending to work emails or calls, such as the risk of job loss or the worry of being perceived as dispensable. Participant 5 remarked:

I have a fairly insignificant work-life balance, as I frequently take calls and work late, even on my days off. I never have a proper lunch break or time for myself. I feel compelled to do these things in order to keep my job and maintain a positive relationship with my supervisors. Most times despite having listed my tasks in terms of priority I end up doing the impromptu so-called urgent tasks the supervisor gives me.

Jääskeläinen (2015) highlighted the challenge of managing working hours when one has the flexibility to work remotely, which exacerbates feelings of stress, job insecurity and anxiety. The extensive utilisation of virtual meetings and collaboration tools can lead to a continuous flow of video calls and messages, which can cause fatigue and a persistent feeling of being “on”. Employees may encounter stress and exhaustion as they navigate a virtual workspace, characterised by prolonged screen time and diminished in-person interactions. Participant 10 states:

My excessive use of technology, particularly being continuously online or on the computer, has resulted in technostress due to the overwhelming workload. Occasionally, I find myself engaged in meetings lasting from 8 am to 4 pm, with minimal intervals in between. Following these meetings, I proceed to work on the reports or action items that have arisen from them. This routine may be rather exhausting. When am done I barely have enough quality time with my family.

The results of Kalischko and Riedl's (2021) study support the findings that increased dependence on technology in the workplace can lead to higher levels of stress among employees. This can result in fatigue, disappointment, decreased productivity, and reduced job satisfaction. This finding also aligns with the research conducted by Stacey *et al.* (2018), which provided evidence on the impact of digitalisation in blurring the boundaries between work and private life, which leads to work-life conflict, ultimately resulting in elevated levels of stress. Furthermore, a study conducted by Cijan (2019) suggests that continuous online employment can result in heightened stress levels for individuals, consequently leading to health problems. The mental well-being of certain individuals may be compromised due to continual disagreements with immediate supervisors or colleagues, as they feel compelled to meet the given deadlines. Participant 4 admitted:

I was once given a task by my supervisor with a deadline of the next day. During that period, I was tending to my ailing family member who was admitted to the hospital, and the supervisor refused to assign the task to another person or extend the deadline. We engaged in a heated verbal exchange and I came close to experiencing a breakdown. We were reconciliation by a superior who held a higher position than the supervisor. The experience was quite intense.

In a recent online study conducted in Austria, Germany, and Switzerland by Bregenzer and Jimenez (2021), it was found that employees may feel increased levels of stress, especially when they have limited access to emotional and physical support in using digital technologies in their workspaces. Also, a study by the ILO, Eurofound (2017) highlighted that the isolation resulting from teleworking can have adverse impacts on occupational health and well-being. Nonetheless, if the technology is regarded as challenging to utilise (effort expectancy), it may induce dissatisfaction and stress, adversely impacting work-life balance (Hartner-Tiefenthaler *et al.*, 2019). The study has established that digitalisation has overtaken traditional work processes and procedures; hence, work-life balance is very important to the IT staff who work in these digitalised workspaces. Consequently, although UTAUT offers a framework for comprehending technological acceptance, it underscores the necessity for organisations to evaluate the impact of new technologies on people's work-life balance, ensuring they facilitate rather than obstruct personal well-being. The study recommends the development and implementation of policies that accommodate employees who work in digitalised spaces. This encompasses offering tools for mental health assistance, advocating for regular breaks, and fostering a culture that prioritises employee well-being over basic production (Awada *et al.*, 2021). It is noted that home digitalised spaces are different from office or organisation digitalised spaces. The study was limited to one bank in Zimbabwe, qualitative methodology and the sample size. Future research could focus on a wider sample size which includes the whole population of Zimbabwean commercial banks. Future research

would also involve a quantitative or mixed methods study to gather sufficient data. This would provide a holistic and broader perspective of the phenomenon in the industry.

Conclusion

The conventional boundaries between employees' professional and personal domains have grown more permeable in the current digitalised work environment characterised by constant connectedness. The widespread use of digital technologies and the ability to work remotely have created a work culture in which work is expected to be done at all times, making it difficult to distinguish between work and personal life. Continuous connectivity, polychronicity, health threats, technological diversions, and task prioritisation were major themes impeding work-life balance among the bank's IT staff. Furthermore, the study posits that IT personnel faced challenges in regulating their work-related technology usage because of their responsibility for providing 24/7 banking systems support services. Constant and uninterrupted access to technology is a notable difficulty, as people struggle with the expectation of always being accessible, which can result in a potential decrease in the balance between work and personal life. Therefore, the work-life balance is indistinct at the bank, as workers struggle to disengage from work while at home. On the other hand, digitalised workspaces enhance employee flexibility and autonomy, multitasking, and working from home and enable extended working hours, thereby promoting work-life balance.

In the face of the negative impact of digitalised workspaces on work-life balance, the study recommends that IT employees should be conscious of their time, enabling them to recognise patterns, make appropriate changes, and allot time for both work and personal life. Establishing clear boundaries and utilising time blocking and task prioritisation enables IT employees to allocate specific periods for work-related responsibilities, personal pursuits, self-care, and leisure. Flexibility and adaptability enable employees to modify plans and reorganise priorities, allowing them to accept unexpected situations while maintaining a harmonious balance between work and personal life. Also, social dialogue encompasses subjects pertaining to restructuring and digitalisation, including working hours, emerging forms of mobile work facilitated by information and communication technology, the right to detach from work, and the proactive measures to anticipate and alleviate job losses. The imperative for organisations to establish policies that foster a healthy work-life balance is becoming critical, as employees manage the intricacies of remote work while preserving both their physical and mental health (Gualano *et al.*, 2020). For example, a remote working policy that incorporates elements such as designated start and stop times, as well as the adoption of teleworking, can improve work-life balance. Telecommuters should be entitled to the same legal safeguards as employees working on-site. By addressing the demands of work-life balance in a digital workspace, organisations may enhance employee satisfaction, decrease attrition, and eventually improve their performance in the banking sector. Therefore, the above assertions conclude that work-life balance has never been necessary for employees who work in digitalised workspaces, as they are equally important as any other employee.

Declarations

Interdisciplinary Scope: This study integrates perspectives from IT, health, human resources management and management to explore employee worklife balance in the banking sector. This approach offers a holistic approach in understanding the importance of digitalisation in workspaces whilst maintaining work life balance and employee well being and organisational productivity.

Author Contributions: Conceptualisation, literature review (Mubango and Khashane), methodology and analysis (Mubango and Ngirande), Investigation (Mubango, Ngirande and Khashane), drafting and preparation (Mubango and Ngirande), review and editing (Ngirande and Khashane). All authors have read and approved the final published version.

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Availability of Data: All relevant data are included in the article. However, more information is available upon reasonable request from the corresponding author.

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