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No time off the clock: when the self becomes a brand with no vacation days

ABSTRACT

Leaving the office used to mean something. This paper asks what happens once that moment disappears, once people are expected to keep managing and marketing themselves as a personal brand well after any official workday has ended. Platform work, social media, and a culture that treats "passion" as a job requirement have chipped away at the line between being an employee and simply being a person, until the self starts to look like something under constant production. Drawing on a critical documentary review across the sociology of work, digital culture studies, organizational psychology, and Foucauldian philosophy, the paper traces why this shift feels voluntary even as it exacts a real psychological toll. Five mechanisms emerge: the breakdown of boundaries between work and personal life, the conversion of the self into a brand requiring constant upkeep, the always-on pressure digital tools create around response time, a neoliberal mode of self-governance recasting the individual as an entrepreneur of the self, and organizational control techniques reaching past the office walls into private life. Together, these are linked to rising burnout and a kind of estrangement from one's own time, at a moment when labor law has largely not caught up. The paper closes by arguing that the ideas of "working hours" and "professional self" need rethinking in a digital economy that keeps erasing the line between them.

Keywords: personal branding; work-life boundaries; burnout; self-governance; workplace telepressure; platform economy.

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Sin tiempo fuera del reloj: cuando el yo se convierte en una marca sin días de vacaciones

RESUMEN

Salir de la oficina solía significar algo. Este artículo se pregunta qué sucede una vez que ese momento desaparece, cuando se espera que las personas continúen gestionando y comercializando su propia marca personal mucho después de que haya terminado cualquier jornada laboral oficial. El trabajo en plataformas, las redes sociales y una cultura que trata la «pasión» como un requisito laboral han ido erosionando la línea entre ser empleado y simplemente ser una persona, hasta que el yo empieza a parecer algo sometido a una producción constante. Basándose en una revisión documental crítica que abarca la sociología

del trabajo, los estudios de cultura digital, la psicología organizacional y la filosofía foucaultiana, el artículo rastrea por qué este cambio se siente voluntario incluso cuando exige un verdadero costo psicológico. Surgen cinco mecanismos: la ruptura de los límites entre el trabajo y la vida personal, la conversión del yo en una marca que requiere un mantenimiento constante, la presión permanente que las herramientas digitales generan en torno al tiempo de respuesta, un modo neoliberal de autogobierno que reformula al individuo como un empresario de sí mismo, y técnicas de control organizacional que se extienden más allá de las paredes de la oficina hacia la vida privada. En conjunto, estos elementos se vinculan a un aumento del agotamiento y a una suerte de extrañamiento respecto del propio tiempo, en un momento en que la legislación laboral en gran medida no se ha puesto al día. El artículo concluye argumentando que las nociones de «horario laboral» y «yo profesional» necesitan repensarse en una economía digital que sigue borrando la línea entre ambos.

Palabras clave: marca personal; límites entre el trabajo y la vida personal; agotamiento; autogobierno; tecnopresión laboral; economía de plataformas.

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Sem tempo livre: quando o eu se torna uma marca sem dias de férias

RESUMO

Sair do escritório costumava ter um significado. Este artigo questiona o que acontece quando esse momento desaparece, quando se espera que as pessoas continuem a gerir e a promover-se como uma marca pessoal muito depois do fim do horário de trabalho. O trabalho em plataformas digitais, as redes sociais e uma cultura que trata a "paixão" como um requisito para o trabalho têm corroído a linha divisória entre ser um funcionário e simplesmente ser uma pessoa, até que o eu começa a parecer algo em constante produção. Com base numa revisão crítica de documentos que abrangem a sociologia do trabalho, os estudos da cultura digital, a psicologia organizacional e a filosofia foucaultiana, o artigo investiga porque é que esta mudança parece voluntária, mesmo que cobre um preço psicológico real. Emergem cinco mecanismos: a quebra das fronteiras entre o trabalho e a vida pessoal, a conversão do eu numa marca que exige uma manutenção constante, a pressão ininterrupta que as ferramentas digitais criam em relação ao tempo de resposta, um modo neoliberal de autogovernança que reformula o indivíduo como um empreendedor de si mesmo e técnicas de controlo organizacional que ultrapassam os muros do escritório e invadem a vida privada. Em conjunto, estes fatores estão ligados ao aumento do esgotamento profissional e a uma espécie de distanciamento do próprio tempo, numa altura em que a legislação laboral ainda não acompanhou esta mudança. O artigo conclui argumentando que as ideias de "horário de trabalho" e "eu profissional" precisam de ser repensadas numa economia digital que continua a apagar a linha divisória entre elas.

Palavras-chave: marca pessoal; limites entre a vida pessoal e profissional; esgotamento profissional; autogestão; telepressão no local de trabalho; economia das plataformas.

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INTRODUCTION

There was a time when leaving work meant something concrete. A factory worker walked out the gate; an office employee shut off the lights at five. Whatever else separated "the employee" from "the person," there was at least a clear moment, fixed in place and time, that marked the switch between the two. That moment has gotten harder to find. Smartphones, instant messaging, LinkedIn and its endless self-presentation, and the broader rise of what might be called a personal-brand economy mean that many people now carry their job with them wherever they go, and some are expected, openly or not, to keep producing and displaying themselves even during hours that used to be unambiguously their own.

This paper starts from a mismatch worth naming directly. Earlier work on organizational loyalty has shown that the structural guarantees once used to justify employee commitment have been quietly eroding for years. What has grown in their place, oddly, is the sheer amount of time and mental energy people are expected to pour into improving and marketing themselves, whether or not that labor is paid at all. A content creator told to "stay visible" so the algorithm does not punish them, an employee nudged to build a personal brand on LinkedIn after hours, a gig worker chasing a star rating that follows them from job to job: all three are living some version of the same thing, where the self, not just the work product, has become the thing that has to stay on display, polished, and more or less always available.

Before going further, it is worth being precise about what "self as brand" means here, since it can be read more cynically than intended. Traditional professional identity was usually tied to a specific place and time, and it built up gradually over years of actual experience and accomplishment (Bal & Dóci, 2018). The branded self is a different animal: an ongoing, deliberate project of managing one's own impression across multiple channels, requiring conscious and more or less continuous work, often unpaid in any direct sense, to produce a coherent, appealing personal narrative, regardless of when or where that work of self-presentation happens to take place.

The stakes here go beyond an academic curiosity about changing work habits. Scientifically, HR and organizational-psychology research still tends to treat work-life boundaries as a scheduling problem solvable through flexible-work policy, whereas media and digital-culture scholarship suggests something considerably deeper is going on: a genuine reworking of what the self is, now treated as an economic asset that needs continuous management and growth. Practically, the consequences show up directly in people's mental health and in labor regulations that, for the most part, still assume a clear line between "work time" and "one's own time", an assumption a lot of contemporary work simply does not honor anymore.

A fair amount of scholarship bears on pieces of this puzzle, even if the pieces rarely get put together. On the organizational-boundaries side, Ashforth et al. (2000) and Ashforth y Mael (1989) offered an influential framework describing how people move between roles, work, family, everywhere else, by crossing boundaries that can be sharply segmented or heavily blended, and showed that blending, while it smooths the transition between roles, makes those boundaries much harder to build and maintain in the first place. Around the same period, Hearn (2008) developed the idea of the "branded self" to describe how what Giddens once called the reflexive project of the self has turned into an explicit, outward-facing form of labor under post-Fordist capitalism, where producing oneself follows the visual grammar of mainstream culture industries and gets folded into the extraction of economic value.

Duffy's (2017) field study of the social-media economy adds a more grounded, empirical layer to this picture: she documented how a great many content creators perform what she calls "aspirational labor," often unpaid, on the hope that a passion project will eventually turn into paid work, and how that hope turns into a round-the-clock job of managing one's image across platforms. On the technology side, Barber and Santuzzi (2015) coined the term "workplace telepressure" for the compulsive urge to respond quickly to work-related messages, and showed that this pressure interferes with the psychological recovery people need after a workday, regardless of whether the message in question arrived during business hours or not.

At a deeper philosophical level, Foucault's (2008) lectures on the birth of biopolitics introduce the notion of homo oeconomicus as "an entrepreneur of himself," describing how neoliberal reasoning reframes the individual as a form of human capital to be invested in and grown continuously, rather than simply someone who sells a fixed number of hours. Rose (1999) extended this line of analysis in his landmark study of "governing the soul," showing how techniques of social control have shifted from overt external coercion toward subtler forms of "work on the self" that people undertake voluntarily, genuinely believing it expresses their own freedom rather than compliance with an outside logic. A handful of legal frameworks

have begun responding to this reality, if only partially, France's (2016) right-to-disconnect law, in force since the start of 2017, being the clearest example, even though its practical reach still depends heavily on collective bargaining within individual firms.

For all this richness, these separate bodies of work, organizational boundary theory, research on the branded self and aspirational labor, telepressure studies, and the Foucauldian analysis of self-governance, mostly get treated as separate conversations rather than pieces of a single story. This paper tries to close that gap. Its aim is to analyze the mechanisms that turn the individual self into a brand expected to stay "productive" even outside official working hours, through a critical theoretical review that pulls these fields together into one interpretive account of how this shift works and what it costs, psychologically and socially.

Methodology

This is a qualitative, documentary study, an integrative or critical narrative review rather than a systematic review in the strict sense. That fits the subject: the collapse of boundaries between work and self is not the kind of thing that reduces cleanly to a handful of measurable variables without losing most of what makes it worth studying. Rather than testing a causal hypothesis, the aim was to synthesize a scattered body of prior work into a coherent explanatory account of how the individual self comes to be treated as a brand under constant obligation to perform.

The design sits at the intersection of critical management studies and media and digital-culture scholarship, combining organizational-analysis tools drawn from industrial and organizational psychology with critical tools drawn from cultural sociology and political philosophy (Katz & Kahn, 1978). A field study built around surveys or interviews was set aside deliberately, on the grounds that the more pressing task right now is conceptual, building a coherent framework out of literatures that have developed largely apart, so that framework can later be tested empirically.

Epistemologically, the study adopts an interpretive-critical stance that treats "the professional self" not as some fixed, natural given but as a social and historical construct, shaped by particular discourses and technologies that shift along with economic and technological context. That stance fits comfortably within the Foucauldian tradition behind concepts like the "entrepreneur of the self" and "governing the soul," while it is deliberately paired here with tools from empirical organizational psychology, boundary theory and the concept of workplace telepressure in particular. Combining these two distinct traditions was a conscious methodological choice, meant to avoid flattening the phenomenon into either a purely critical or a purely functionalist account, and to keep the analysis honest about what each tradition can and cannot explain on its own.

A number of procedural safeguards were built in to keep a review of this kind reasonably rigorous. On the source-selection side, the search stayed within material indexed in recognized academic databases and university presses, deliberately excluding the substantial popular, non-peer-reviewed literature on "personal branding" and "work-life balance" that circulates well beyond academic circles. On the coding side, each source's placement within the five analytical categories was revisited more than once, at separated intervals, to check that the classification held up rather than reflecting a single, hurried read. Wherever possible the analysis traced a concept back to its originating text rather than resting on secondary citations of it, going back, for instance, to Foucault's (2008) own lectures on biopolitics rather than settling for later summaries of them.

The unit of analysis was the body of published scholarship bearing directly on work-life boundaries, personal branding and aspirational labor, telepressure, and neoliberal self-governance. Sources were included based on several criteria: publication in a peer-reviewed journal or by a recognized academic press; direct relevance to one of four predefined theoretical strands; priority given to foundational texts within each strand, supplemented by

more recent work applying these ideas to contemporary settings such as the platform economy and remote work; and exclusion of non-academic or non-peer-reviewed material.

Data collection combined systematic keyword searches across academic databases and search engines with citation tracing. Search terms included work-life boundaries, branded self, aspirational labor, workplace telepressure, entrepreneur of the self, and right to disconnect. This direct search was supplemented by a snowballing technique, following reference lists from key sources to locate further relevant material.

Analysis proceeded through qualitative thematic coding, repeated close reading, extraction of core arguments from each source, and iterative sorting of those arguments into emerging categories. That process produced five main categories, presented in the next section, which together form the interpretive framework proposed here: the breakdown of work-life boundaries, the conversion of the self into a constantly-producing brand, telepressure and forced connectivity, neoliberal self-governance, and the extension of organizational control tools beyond the workplace. Wherever feasible, the analysis went back to a concept's originating text rather than resting on secondary citations of it, and a deliberate effort was made to search out counter-evidence describing more balanced individual and institutional practices, so as not to stack the deck in favor of the paper's own thesis.

RESULTS

Thematic analysis of the literature produced five categories that together explain how the individual becomes a brand obligated to stay productive around the clock. Each is presented on its own terms below, with deeper interpretation left for the discussion section. As with any thematic review, these categories overlap more than they sit apart, many sources touch on more than one at once, and the five-way split here is mainly a matter of analytical convenience.

Boundary breakdown between work and personal life. Ashforth et al. (2000) framework on organizational boundaries and micro role transitions offers a foundational account of this category, distinguishing highly segmented roles, logically easy to move between, though harder to cross physically, from highly integrated ones, which are easier to cross but much harder to keep clearly bounded. The literature suggests that mobile technology and remote work have pushed a great many professional roles toward the more integrated end of that spectrum, so that maintaining any clear line between work and personal life now requires deliberate, ongoing "boundary work" from the individual, rather than something that used to come more or less automatically from physical and temporal arrangements. Later work extends this framework by noting that boundaries are not only spatial or temporal but psychological too, tied to how a given activity gets mentally sorted as "work" or "not work", sorting that gets harder the more the same tools serve both purposes, as with a single smartphone carrying a work inbox and a personal social-media account side by side.

The self turned into a constantly producing brand. Hearn (2008) showed how "work on the self", once, per Giddens, an inward-facing reflexive project, has become an explicit, outward-directed form of labor under post-Fordist capitalism, where producing the self follows the visual codes of mainstream culture industries and the person becomes responsible for narrating a coherent, appealing story about themselves across multiple channels. Duffy (2017) documented this empirically through her study of content creators, showing how "passion" turns into ongoing, often unpaid labor that its practitioners market in the hope of eventually turning it into income, labor with no clean boundary between leisure and output, because staying visible on a platform is the whole point of this kind of work. Duffy (2017) also flags a clear gender dimension in her sample: women in particular carry a disproportionate share of the invisible, unpaid work of building a commercially appealing self-image, which raises real questions about how unevenly the costs of this phenomenon get distributed.

Telepressure and forced connectivity. Barber and Santuzzi (2015) coined "workplace telepressure" for the compulsive urge and preoccupation with responding quickly to work-related messages sent through asynchronous tools like email, and their empirical work showed that this pressure predicts burnout and poor sleep quality independent of other factors such as job engagement or actual workload. This finding has fed directly into some legislative responses, most notably France's (2016) right-to-disconnect law, in force since the start of 2017, which requires firms with fifty or more employees to negotiate rules governing digital-tool use outside working hours, though how effective the law is in practice still depends heavily on how seriously that negotiation gets taken at each company. Later studies suggest that telepressure often does not come from any explicit management directive demanding instant replies at all; it more commonly grows out of unwritten norms that employees infer from watching how quickly their colleagues or bosses respond, making self-imposed pressure an effective substitute for direct oversight, and a harder problem to fix than simply rewriting a formal policy.

Neoliberal self-governance. Foucault's (2008) lectures on the birth of biopolitics offer a foundational account of how the neoliberal subject gets recast as an "entrepreneur of himself", human capital to be invested in and grown continuously, rather than an employee who sells a fixed block of time. Rose (1999) developed this line of analysis further in his study of "governing the soul," showing how techniques of social control shift from overt external coercion toward subtler forms of self-work that people take on voluntarily, genuinely convinced it expresses their personal freedom and self-realization rather than compliance with an external economic logic demanding they stay productive without pause (Cropanzano et al., 2023). Later scholars in this tradition add that the real power of this mode of governance lies precisely in needing no expensive enforcement apparatus at all, since the individual becomes their own chief overseer, through habits of self-tracking and the constant peer comparison that professional social-media platforms make almost unavoidable.

Organizational control extending past the workplace walls. This category connects to earlier work on neo-normative control inside organizations: Fleming and Sturdy (2011) showed that inviting employees to "just be themselves" does not stop at shaping their behavior during working hours, but extends to absorb their personal lifestyles and identities outside work as further resources the organization can draw on. This dovetails with Hochschild's (1983) earlier account of emotional labor, which showed how certain occupations are trained into "feeling rules" that serve a commercial purpose; more recent scholarship suggests that this logic of emotional labor is no longer confined to official working hours either, but now extends, through personal-branding tools and constant digital presence, into an employee's entire private life.

Taken together, these five categories converge on a single point: the declining effectiveness of "boundaries" as a traditional protective mechanism, whether spatial (office versus home), temporal (working hours versus free time), or psychological (professional identity versus personal identity). The first and third categories explain the direct technological and behavioral mechanisms eroding these boundaries, while the second and fourth explain the deeper motivations that lead people to participate willingly in that erosion, and the fifth connects the phenomenon back to its older institutional roots in the organizational-control literature (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Meyer et al., 2002). It is also worth noting an asymmetry in the underlying evidence: telepressure rests on a growing quantitative base built around fairly recent, standardized psychometric measures, while the branded-self and neoliberal-governance categories still lean more heavily on qualitative, ethnographic, and interpretive work, an asymmetry worth keeping in mind when weaving these categories together, as the discussion below does (Weber, 1978). It is also worth noting a particular overlap between the first and third categories in recent literature on remote work: several reviews suggest that removing the spatial separation between office and home, which accelerated sharply after the COVID-19 pandemic, has made it considerably harder to maintain clear temporal and

psychological boundaries even where a nominal spatial boundary, a dedicated home office, say, still exists.

DISCUSSION

Read together, the five categories add up to something more coherent than a list of unrelated technological side effects, they describe an integrated system for producing what might be called permanent productivity. Read through a Foucauldian lens on self-governance, what is happening here is not simply an outside demand that people work past official hours; it is a deeper process in which people internalize the logic of continuous self-investment as an expression of their own freedom and legitimate ambition, rather than experiencing it as institutional pressure. That is exactly what makes this phenomenon harder to resist than more openly coercive forms of organizational control: when someone believes they are building their "personal brand" entirely of their own free will, it becomes genuinely difficult for them to tell the difference between authentic desire and the structural pressure quietly shaping that desire in the first place. Foucault's (2008) notion of human capital adds another layer here: once a person is redefined as a bundle of investable assets, skills, a network, a digital presence, it follows, within that framework, that they ought to keep developing those assets without pause, the way a rational investor is not supposed to let capital sit idle.

This reading takes on added weight in light of Barber and Santuzzi's (2015) empirical findings on telepressure, which show that this pressure predicts burnout independent of factors like emotional commitment to the job. In other words, the psychological cost of eroding work-life boundaries is not limited to people who dislike or feel trapped in their work, it reaches, perhaps especially, those who appear most enthusiastic and invested in their own "self project," which helps explain why burnout today seems so common even among people who describe themselves, on the surface, as passionate about what they do. Recent reports on the state of the global workplace continue to show elevated burnout and depressed wellbeing across large swaths of the workforce (Gallup, 2025), a pattern consistent with this account linking constant expected presence to the erosion of genuine recovery time.

This connects to Sennett's (1998) argument about the corrosion of character, which holds that the no-long-term logic of new capitalism undermines the temporal conditions, privacy, continuity, that stable personal virtues need in order to take root. Once every hour becomes a potential hour for production and self-display, people lose that safe margin of "non-productivity" that has historically been necessary for building a personal identity independent of one's professional one. Kunda's (1992) and Fleming and Sturdy's (2011) work adds a further layer: once neo-normative control tools expand to absorb even a person's private life, home and free time stop being a neutral refuge from organizational logic and become an extension of it, an indirect extension, mediated through platforms a person believes they control freely.

Bringing these threads together offers a genuine theoretical contribution: linking literatures that usually stay apart, organizational boundary theory from industrial psychology, branded-self research from media sociology, and Foucauldian analysis from political philosophy, into a single interpretive account of how these different levels, from the technological to the psychological to the philosophical, converge to produce one lived experience that plenty of people working today would recognize: the sense that there really is no time outside work anymore, even when a person is physically nowhere near their job (Weber, 1978).

That said, none of this should be read as some inescapable fate. Some of the literature reviewed here, particularly around legislative responses like the right to disconnect, points to genuine institutional and legal counter-currents, even if those remain early-stage and of limited practical reach so far. The evidence base is also uneven, as noted in the results: quantitative research on the branded self and neoliberal self-governance remains thinner than the well-established survey tradition around telepressure, which counsels some caution before generalizing too broadly from those two categories across every occupation and sector.

Practically speaking, this reading suggests the effect of these mechanisms varies with occupation and with how central digital visibility is to a person's line of work. In fields where an online presence is essentially inseparable from the value of the work itself, content creation, independent consulting, drawing any clean line between "self" and "brand" becomes genuinely difficult, leaving these occupations more exposed to the costs of permanent productivity. In fields with historically clearer organizational boundaries, the bigger burden seems to come from telepressure specifically rather than from personal-branding pressure as such. That has a direct implication for HR policymakers and legislators alike: rather than a one-size-fits-all "work-life balance" policy that assumes uniform, clear boundaries across every kind of job, the findings point toward differentiated responses that account for the real gap between traditional work and work built around constant digital presence.

One last point is worth drawing out, the relationship between this phenomenon and Rousseau's (1995) notion of the psychological contract, developed in a rather different context. If the traditional psychological contract describes the unspoken mutual expectations between employee and employer within the bounds of work, what this study points to is something that might be called an extended psychological contract, one that reaches past formal working hours into a person's entire private life. Without ever signing anything to this effect, the individual becomes implicitly expected to stay perpetually "on call" and on display, such that any lapse, not answering a work message over the weekend, going quiet on a professional account for too long, risks being read as a signal about their commitment or ambition, even though nothing in any employment contract ever said so explicitly. What makes this extended contract particularly dangerous is its vagueness: unlike a breach of the traditional psychological contract, which tends to register as a single identifiable event, this one accumulates gradually as chronic burnout whose real cause a person may not connect until well after the fact.

CONCLUSIONS

This review concludes that the traditional boundaries between working time and personal time, boundaries that once protected people from open-ended emotional and mental depletion, have worn thin under the weight of five interlocking mechanisms: the breakdown of traditional organizational boundaries driven by mobile technology and remote work; the conversion of the self into a brand expected to stay constantly visible; the telepressure created by asynchronous messaging tools; a neoliberal mode of self-governance in which people internalize the logic of the "entrepreneur of the self" as an expression of personal freedom; and the extension of neo-normative organizational control tools past the workplace to absorb an employee's entire private life.

The main scholarly contribution here lies in bringing together literatures that have developed largely apart, organizational boundary theory, research on the branded self and aspirational labor, telepressure studies, and Foucauldian analysis of self-governance, into a single interpretive account of how these mechanisms combine to produce the experience of permanent productivity that so many people working today recognize, particularly in occupations with a high degree of digital visibility. This experience is not simply a side effect of neutral technological change; it results from a genuinely tangled interaction between economic structure, available technology, and a cultural discourse that treats "passion" and "self-realization" as more or less mandatory.

For HR decision-makers, the practical takeaway is a case for reconsidering policies that implicitly reward constant digital presence outside working hours, in favor of approaches that take the long-term mental-health and performance costs of telepressure seriously. For policymakers working on updating labor law, the same logic argues for expanding legislative experiments like the right to disconnect and strengthening how they actually get enforced, given how much less clear the very idea of "working hours" has become.

One final point deserves to be made explicitly. Unpacking the mechanisms behind permanent productivity here is not meant to cast doubt on people's legitimate ambition to build independent careers or express themselves through their work. It is meant, instead, to encourage sharper awareness of the real difference between voluntary, time-bounded investment in one's professional self and a slide into a permanent state of productivity that leaves no safe space of non-productivity in which to recover a sense of self apart from the logic of supply and demand. The narrower that space gets, the higher its long-term psychological cost, for the individual, and eventually for the sustainability of their own professional performance.

LIMITATIONS

Several limitations bear on how these findings should be read. First, this was a purely documentary and theoretical study; it did not include primary field data, which limits how directly the proposed relationships among the five mechanisms and actual psychological outcomes can be empirically verified at this stage. Second, the literature reviewed draws predominantly on Western academic sources, which constrains how far these findings can be generalized to other cultural and institutional settings, where norms around privacy and personal boundaries may differ considerably from those assumed in the literature reviewed here. Third, given the nature of an integrative theoretical review, the process of selecting the five categories and sorting sources into them retains, despite the procedural safeguards described earlier, an inevitable element of researcher interpretation. Fourth, the study did not examine in sufficient depth how different generational cohorts navigate this phenomenon, even though the mechanisms of permanent productivity likely play out quite differently across age groups.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Building on these limitations and findings, several avenues for future work stand out. There is a clear need for quantitative and qualitative field studies that empirically test the five-mechanism framework proposed here, measuring how each mechanism relates to burnout and life satisfaction across a range of occupational samples. Comparative research across cultural and institutional contexts, Arab organizational settings in particular, would help establish whether the mechanisms described in this largely Western literature hold up elsewhere, or take different shapes. It would also be worth digging deeper into generational differences in how people navigate work-life boundaries, given that cohorts who grew up with digital technology may have developed different coping strategies than earlier generations did. Finally, future studies might usefully examine how effective existing legislative responses like the right to disconnect actually are in practice, and how transferable they are to legal and economic contexts quite different from the French one in which the law originated.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the conduct, analysis, interpretation, or publication of this study.

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