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## Negotiating Boundaries: Lived Experiences of Work-Life Balance among Hybrid Workers in the Digital Age

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### Abstract

The transformation of work systems towards a hybrid model has fundamentally changed the psychological dynamics of balancing professional demands and personal life in the digital age, especially in urban communities. This study explores how eight hybrid workers negotiate the boundaries between work and personal space, build emotional balance, and shape their professional identity amid digital flexibility and pressure. Using an interpretive phenomenological qualitative approach, informants from the education, technology, and public administration sectors in Yogyakarta were interviewed in depth to uncover the subjective meaning of their daily experiences. Reflective thematic analysis reveals three main contexts: the separation of work and personal spheres is now psychological in nature; adaptive strategies such as self-regulation and emotional resilience overcome digital fatigue; and the formation of professional identity is performative through dynamic digital interactions. These findings expand the literature on work-life interface and psychological work identity with a non-Western perspective, emphasizing the role of culture, digital autonomy, and emotional support in maintaining psychological well-being. Practically, this research highlights the need for adaptive and psychologically balanced organizational policies, affirming that work-life balance in the hybrid era is a continuous negotiation process between space, time, and the evolving meaning of self.

**Keywords: Negotiation, Life Experience, Work-Life Balance, Hybrid Workers, Digital Era**

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Major changes in the world of work due to digitalization and the COVID-19 pandemic have given rise to a new work pattern known as hybrid work, which is a combination of working in the office and working from home with the support of digital technology. This work model was initially seen as an ideal solution that provides freedom, efficiency, and a balance between work and personal life (Kurniawan & Hamamah, 2024). However, behind this flexibility lies a much more complex psychological reality, where the blending of work space and time with personal life causes emotional stress, concentration problems, and a decline in psychological well-being (Althammer et al., 2025). In this context, work-life balance is no longer merely a matter of time management, but has become a psychological challenge in managing energy, emotions, and self-identity amid nearly limitless digital connectivity.

Studies discussing occupational psychology on work-life balance generally highlight the relationship between role balance and psychological well-being such as job

satisfaction, stress, and burnout (Zhang & Rehman, 2024), but most remain quantitatively oriented and fail to capture the emotional dynamics or subjective meaning individuals assign to negotiating the boundaries between work and personal life (Edith et al., 2025). In the context of hybrid work, these boundaries become increasingly blurred, requiring a new understanding that emphasizes not only time management, but also psychological dimensions such as self-regulation, psychological detachment, and emotional energy management (Rieder, 2025). Recent studies also discuss the phenomena of digital fatigue and technostress (Mikołajczyk, 2024), but most research still focuses on negative impacts without elaborating on the psychological processes underlying how individuals negotiate their boundaries in constant digital connectedness. Furthermore, the literature is dominated by Western individualistic contexts, while collective cultural contexts such as Indonesia, which emphasize social harmony and relational responsibility, have not been explored much. Thus, this study presents conceptual and empirical novelty through the exploration of the lived experience of hybrid workers in negotiating personal boundaries in the digital age. The phenomenological approach used allows for a deeper understanding of how work-life balance is psychologically constructed, by integrating the concepts of boundary theory, self-regulation, and the digital stress framework to build a new model that is more contextual, reflective, and relevant to the reality of work in an era of high connectivity.

This study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of how hybrid workers negotiate the boundaries between work and personal life in the context of increasingly intense digital connectivity. Specifically, this research seeks to uncover the psychological processes underlying how individuals manage emotional, cognitive, and social demands in maintaining a balance between productivity and personal well-being. Through a phenomenological approach, this study aims to explore the subjective meaning of the lived experience of hybrid workers, including how they develop adaptive strategies to maintain psychological autonomy amid the ambivalence of flexible working hours and spaces. Additionally, this study also aims to broaden the theoretical understanding of work-life balance by integrating the perspectives of boundary theory, self-regulation, and the digital stress framework within the context of Indonesian collective culture, which emphasizes the values of harmony and social relations. Thus, this study is expected to provide conceptual contributions to the development of modern work psychology and offer practical implications for organizations in designing more humane, sustainable hybrid work systems that support employee psychological well-being.

Theoretically, this study is based on boundary theory and self-regulation theory to understand the psychological mechanisms underlying an individual's ability to maintain role balance (Love & Lee, 2025). Additionally, the concepts of digital stress and psychological detachment are used to explain how technology acts as a source of psychological ambiguity: on the one hand, it facilitates flexibility, but on the other hand, it increases cognitive and emotional burdens (Mondo et al., 2023). By integrating these theoretical frameworks, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of

work-life balance as a contextual, reflective, and dynamic psychological phenomenon in the era of hybrid work.

In practical terms, the results of this study are expected to assist organizations and industrial psychology practitioners in designing policies and interventions that support the psychological well-being of workers. Programs such as emotional regulation training, digital well-being policies, and increased organizational social support can be concrete steps to prevent burnout and improve the quality of life balance for hybrid workers. Meanwhile, academically, this research is expected to broaden theoretical understanding of how individuals negotiate role boundaries in the increasingly digitized modern work context, as well as enrich the work psychology literature with subjective and affective perspectives that have been underrepresented.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Boundary Management**

Boundary Management is a central theoretical framework for understanding how individuals negotiate the boundaries between work and personal roles. This concept, which is rooted in classic works such as Nippert-Eng and developed through Clark's border theory, emphasizes that individuals are not merely positioned by organizational structures but actively manage the solidity and permeability of boundaries through segmentation, integration, or flexible attitudes depending on context and personal resources (Hislop, 2021). In the context of hybrid work, digitalization changes the nature of boundaries: temporal and spatial boundaries become more fluid as communication technology makes work "always-available," rendering traditional mechanisms less effective (Hopkins, 2024). Recent literature highlights the importance of viewing boundary management not only as an individual preference but as a structured practice influenced by technology, organizational policies, gender, and domestic conditions, encouraging studies that link the micro level (subjective experiences) with the meso/macro level (work policies, organizational culture) (Castro-tranc et al., 2023).

Although the Boundary Management framework is theoretically productive, there are clear research gaps, particularly regarding the experience of translating boundary strategies in hybrid settings and cross-cultural differences (Seinsche et al., 2024). Many quantitative studies measure segmentation/integration preferences, but few explore daily negotiation processes, digital boundary-making tactics, and how economic pressures and productivity expectations narrow individuals' ability to implement desired strategies (Reinke et al., 2023). Most quantitative research focuses on measuring preferences for role segmentation and integration, but few explore in depth how boundary negotiation processes occur in daily life, including the digital strategies individuals use to manage these boundaries (Waizenegger et al., 2024). Furthermore, the influence of economic pressures and productivity demands on individuals' limitations in implementing desired boundary management strategies has rarely been comprehensively studied (Gerald et al., 2025).

Overall, existing boundary management research remains limited in explaining how boundary strategies are enacted in everyday hybrid work, particularly under conditions of constant digital connectivity and productivity pressure. Much of the literature emphasizes preferences for segmentation or integration, while paying less attention to workers' lived experiences, psychological boundary-making, and culturally situated constraints. This study addresses these gaps by examining how hybrid workers subjectively negotiate boundaries in daily life, revealing boundary management as an ongoing psychological and meaning-making process rather than a fixed individual preference.

### **Digital Labour**

Digital labor refers to a form of work mediated by digital technology and online platforms, where economic and emotional value is produced through interactions mediated by software, algorithms, and communication networks (Cruz & Gameiro, 2021). Recent literature emphasizes two key dimensions: first, platformization and algorithmic management, which shift organizational control from human oversight to algorithmic logic, regulating workflows, assessing performance, and determining compensation, so that work autonomy often becomes paradoxical, where formal flexibility increases but work control becomes covert and continuous (Noponen et al., 2024). Second, studies on affective and invisible labor show how emotional, cognitive, and curatorial tasks generate value that is not always reflected in formal reward structures (Cini, 2023). Furthermore, theoretical approaches from work studies, media studies, and the sociology of technology position digital labor as a phenomenon that expands the traditional concept of work, blurs the boundaries between social production and reproduction, between work time and non-work time, and challenges assumptions about autonomy, privacy, and workers' rights (Piasna, 2024).

From the perspective of organizational outcomes and well-being, empirical studies show ambivalent consequences (Bondanini et al., 2025), while some workers report improved work-life balance thanks to spatial and temporal flexibility (Ipsen et al., 2021), many studies also find increased workloads, an always-on culture, digital fatigue, and economic uncertainty exacerbated by task/contract-based remuneration models (Lang et al., 2023). Critical literature highlights segmented impacts according to gender, class, and employment status, with female platform workers bearing additional emotional labor burdens and highly educated workers experiencing increased cognitive demands without proportional compensation (Paris-saclay, 2022). Additionally, there is a need for longitudinal studies on the long-term effects of algorithmic control on careers, qualitative research exploring the negotiation of digital boundaries in domestic spaces, and policy analysis examining new labor protection mechanisms in the platform era. Thus, research on work-life balance among hybrid workers and digital labor literature provide an important framework for interpreting how digital infrastructure shapes the practice of

boundary negotiation, risk distribution, and the construction of contemporary work subjectivity.

Despite rich theoretical insights, digital labour research still lacks qualitative accounts of how workers negotiate digital boundaries and emotional demands in everyday hybrid routines, especially outside dominant Western platform contexts. Existing studies often emphasize structural control and outcomes, leaving the subjective experience of digital fatigue and identity negotiation underexplored. This study contributes by foregrounding hybrid workers' lived experiences of digital pressure, emotional regulation, and performative professional identity in a non-Western urban context, linking digital infrastructure to everyday well-being and boundary negotiation.

### **Hybrid Work**

Hybrid work, which places workers in a combination of office presence and remote work, has become the dominant pattern in the post-pandemic knowledge-based economy and has led to a conceptual shift in how organizations and individuals understand work flexibility (Farivar et al., 2024). In recent literature, hybrid models are described not merely as work location arrangements but as a set of socio-technical practices that reconstruct time, space, and role demands, increasing autonomy in scheduling (Marsh et al., 2024), task management while introducing new challenges in the form of unlimited digital access that can blur the boundaries between work and personal life (Vartiainen & Vanharanta, 2020). Empirical studies and theoretical reviews show that the results of hybrid arrangements are ambivalent for some hybrid workers, increasing job satisfaction, productivity, and well-being through reduced commuting time and increased control over time (Krajč & Schmidt, 2023), but for others, it triggers the “always-on” phenomenon, inequality of opportunity (proximity bias), and pressure to be constantly responsive, which undermines the ability to negotiate personal boundaries (Mdhluli et al., 2023).

In relevant conceptual and qualitative studies, academic attention is now focused on boundary management mechanisms, namely how individuals practice segmentation, integration, or role transition strategies, as well as the role of organizational policies and digital infrastructure in facilitating or hindering these practices (Reinke & Gerlach, 2022). Field research highlights the diversity of tactics (physical, temporal, communicative) that workers choose to maintain their work rhythm and energy, and emphasizes the importance of explicit organizational support to prevent digital fatigue and career inequality (Marsh et al., 2024). Therefore, the literature suggests that evaluating the success of hybrid work must go beyond mere productivity measures and include metrics of well-being, access equity, and quality of working relationships a multidimensional approach that allows hybrid policies to be designed contextually and responsively to the varying needs of the workforce (Tulenheimo-eklund & Reijula, 2025).

Hybrid work scholarship highlights mixed outcomes but remains limited in explaining how flexibility is translated into daily boundary practices and psychological

experiences. Much of the literature focuses on productivity and satisfaction, offering less insight into ongoing boundary negotiation, digital exhaustion, and identity work. This study responds to these gaps by exploring hybrid workers' lived experiences, showing how work–life balance in hybrid settings emerges as a continuous process of negotiating boundaries, meanings, and professional selves under digitally mediated conditions.

### 3. METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study consists of eight hybrid workers in Yogyakarta who regularly work in a combination of face-to-face and online systems. The selection of individuals as the unit of analysis was based on the research objective to understand the psychological and subjective experiences related to work-life balance in the digital age. Each participant is viewed as an experiencing subject who has personal meanings, reflections, and strategies in negotiating the boundaries between professional and personal roles. This study does not aim to make statistical generalizations, but rather to explore the depth of experience and meaning structures that shape the phenomenon of work-life balance in the context of hybrid work.

This study uses an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) qualitative approach that focuses on gaining a deep understanding of the participants' lived experiences. This approach was chosen because it is able to reveal how individuals interpret and give meaning to their daily experiences in dealing with the ambiguity of the boundaries between work and personal life. IPA also allows researchers to explore the emotional dynamics, self-reflection, and psychological strategies that individuals use to maintain life balance amid the pressures of digital connectivity. Thus, this method is in line with the research objective of explaining the meaning structure and psychological processes that underlie the negotiation of boundaries by hybrid workers.

The data used in this study is primary qualitative data obtained from narratives of experiences, personal reflections, and subjective perceptions of participants. The data took the form of in-depth interview transcripts that captured the emotions, body language, and psychological context of the daily experiences of hybrid workers. In addition, secondary data was obtained from scientific articles published in reputable journals, remote work guidelines, and online communication records, which were used as supplementary data to strengthen the understanding of the organizational and technological context surrounding the participants' experiences.

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: (1) having undergone a hybrid work system for at least one year, (2) coming from a digital-based or high-communication-intensity sector, (3) having dual responsibilities in the professional and personal spheres, and (4) willing to participate in in-depth interviews. A total of eight informants agreed to share their experiences, representing the education, technology, finance, and government sectors. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in person at flexible locations between January 2025 and September 2025. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, was

recorded with the participants' permission, and was then transcribed verbatim. To maintain data credibility, member checking and reflexive journaling were conducted during the research process.

**Table 3.1. List of informants in the study**

Code	Subject	Sector/position	Age (year)	Length of hybrid work (year)	Family status/dual role
P1	AY	Education/Lecturer	34	2.5	Housewife with school-aged children
P2	BD	Information Technology/Software Engineer	29	1.5	Single and still living with parents
P3	CT	Finance	38	2	Housewife and caregiver for the elderly
P4	DI	Government employee	41	3	Father, husband, and head of household
P5	EK	Education/junior school teacher	high 31	1.5	Single and active in external organizations
P6	FJ	Project management consultant	36	2	Husband, working remotely while caring for a toddler
P7	GT	E-commerce, Customer Experience Lead	27	1	Single, sharing a room with a coworker
P8	HD	Media, journalists	45	3.5	Father, head of the family, and freelance worker

Data analysis was conducted following the stages of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) according to (Motta & Larkin, 2023). The analysis process included: (1) repeated reading of transcripts to gain a comprehensive understanding, (2) identification of significant themes in participants' narratives, (3) grouping of themes into superordinate themes that represented collective experiences, and

(4) interpretation of the psychological meaning of each theme in a cultural and social context. The validity of the results is maintained through peer debriefing and triangulation of sources to ensure that the interpretations produced represent the authentic experiences of the participants. From this process, three main contexts of hybrid workers' experiences were obtained, namely: (1) negotiation of self-boundaries and emotional regulation, (2) collective values and relational expectations, and (3) pressure of connectivity and ambivalence of flexibility.

#### **4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

##### **Negotiating Boundaries between Work Space and Personal Space**

Negotiating the boundaries between work and personal space is a crucial aspect of the hybrid worker experience, as the flexibility offered does not always align with individuals' ability to maintain a balance between work demands and personal life. Workers actively adjust their time, space, and energy to ensure that their professional and personal roles can run concurrently, even though these boundaries often become blurred due to constant digital access (Farivar et al., 2024). This negotiation process requires self-awareness and personal strategies to determine when and how work ends, and how personal space can be maintained without being disrupted by professional demands (Demerouti, 2025). Thus, the ability to negotiate boundaries between work and personal space is key to creating balance, productivity, and well-being in the context of hybrid work. This context aligns with statement (P1), which explains as follows:

“I find it difficult to separate work from my personal life because my laptop and cell phone are always nearby. Sometimes I want to focus on my family or relax, but work notifications keep coming in, so I have to decide for myself when to close my laptop or turn off notifications so I can really rest.”

In line with the above statement, (P5) also explains as follows: “I usually designate a specific room in my house as a ‘work zone’ and try as much as possible not to bring work into my personal space, such as my bedroom or living room. This strategy helps me feel that there is a clear boundary between work and personal life, even though I am sometimes tempted to check my email outside of working hours.”

Negotiating the boundaries between work and personal space, as illustrated by the experiences of hybrid workers, shows that work flexibility does not automatically result in a balance between work and personal life (Diani et al., 2021). The main obstacle arises from the penetration of digital technology, which makes work always “present” in personal space, so workers must actively establish strategies to negotiate these boundaries (Van Bavel et al., 2024). Efforts such as establishing dedicated work zones, disabling notifications, or negotiating time with supervisors and coworkers reflect the need for personal control over space and time to maintain productivity without sacrificing well-



being (Demerouti, 2025). Thus, boundary negotiation is not merely a matter of formal rules or organizational policies, but a dynamic practice that requires self-awareness, discipline, and individual adaptability in the face of constantly changing demands. This context is also in line with statement (P2), which explains as follows:

“I find it somewhat difficult to negotiate the boundaries between work and personal life because I still live with my parents. The space at home is limited and there isn't always a specific place to work, so sometimes work and family life overlap. I try to set specific hours to focus on work and avoid distractions, but sometimes I still have to adjust to the needs of my family or divide my attention between work and the people at home.”

The experience of a hybrid worker as an engineer who still lives with his parents shows that negotiating the boundaries between work and personal space becomes increasingly complex when physical space is limited and family roles remain present in daily life (Brogle et al., 2024). This situation requires workers to develop more flexible personal strategies, such as setting specific working hours, prioritizing important tasks, or adjusting their work rhythm to the needs of family members. This confirms that the flexibility of hybrid work cannot be understood merely as freedom of location or time, but rather as the individual's ability to actively negotiate existing boundaries in order to maintain productivity and well-being (Datta et al., 2025). Thus, the effectiveness of hybrid work depends heavily on employees' capacity to balance professional demands with the social and physical context at home, which requires self-awareness, discipline, and high adaptability skills.

The experiences of hybrid workers reflect that negotiating the boundaries between work and personal space is not merely a matter of time management or physical space, but also relates to interpersonal dynamics and the social context in which individuals live. For workers who still depend on family space or live with their parents, the flexibility of hybrid work presents additional challenges: the need to adapt to the routines and expectations of household members while still meeting work demands (Kurowska & Cukrowska, 2025). This situation highlights the importance of self-awareness and adaptability as core skills in hybrid work, where successfully balancing professional and personal life is determined not only by organizational policies, but also by how individuals understand, negotiate, and reflect on the boundaries they navigate every day.

### **Psychological Strategies for Building Balance and Resilience**

Psychological strategies for building balance and resilience are important for hybrid workers who face overlapping demands of work and personal life. Flexible work experiences, while providing autonomy, often cause psychological stress because the boundaries between work and personal space become blurred, triggering stress, fatigue, and potential burnout. To overcome this, workers must develop internal strategies such as prioritization, emotion management, and mindfulness practices, which allow them to

stay focused, reduce anxiety, and maintain energy throughout the day (Sentin et al., 2025). With this psychological management, individuals are not only able to balance professional and personal demands, but also strengthen their resilience to uncertainty and the ever-changing dynamics of hybrid work (Singh et al., 2024).

The development of these psychological strategies is often proactive and reflective, whereby workers consciously evaluate their own capacities, recognize signs of fatigue, and adjust their work rhythms according to their physical and mental conditions. For example, some workers implement strict time management techniques, such as breaking tasks down into short blocks of focus and taking structured breaks, or establishing a morning routine that prepares them mentally before starting the workday. In addition, emotional regulation practices, including breathing exercises, meditation, or reflective journaling, help individuals process work pressures and role conflicts that arise in daily life (Mehler et al., 2024). Thus, psychological strategies not only serve as mechanisms for adapting to the demands of hybrid work, but also act as a foundation for strengthening resilience, enabling workers to maintain productivity, mental health, and long-term well-being in the face of the complexities of professional and personal roles (Singh et al., 2024). This context is also consistent with statement (P3), which explains as follows:

“As a financial administrator and homemaker, I have to manage my time and energy very carefully. I usually divide my work into small parts and take breaks between tasks so that I don't get exhausted, while also taking care of my children and household chores. In addition, I often take a short break to meditate or just take a deep breath before continuing my work, because it helps me stay calm and focused even though I have a lot to take care of.”

In line with the above statement, (P4) also explains as follows: "As a government employee and head of the family, I have to balance the demands of my job, which can sometimes be urgent, with my responsibilities of taking care of my family at home. To that end, I always set daily priorities, divide work and family tasks in a structured manner, and set aside time for rest or reflection so that I don't get overwhelmed. This approach helps me stay focused, manage stress, and maintain productivity, while ensuring that my role at home is still fulfilled properly."

The experiences of these two informants confirm that psychological strategies for dealing with work demands and family responsibilities are key to building balance and resilience. Whether for workers who have dual roles as financial administrators and homemakers, or government staff who are also heads of households, the practices of time management, priority setting, and setting aside space for personal reflection have proven effective in reducing stress and increasing focus. This shows that the success of hybrid

work or flexible work does not only depend on organizational policies, but also on the individual's capacity to consciously negotiate roles, manage energy, and develop psychological adaptation mechanisms (Jaß et al., 2024). Thus, such internal strategies are not merely time management techniques, but an important foundation for long-term resilience, enabling workers to maintain productivity while preserving the quality of their personal lives and family relationships (Bernuzzi et al., 2022). This context is also in line with statement (P6), which explains as follows:

“Working from home as a project consultant while taking care of a toddler is not easy. I usually adjust my schedule, for example, doing work that requires focus when my child is sleeping or playing with his mother, and making sure there is special time to play and care for my child. This method helps me get my work done while still being present as a father, even though there are sometimes stressful moments when work and family responsibilities collide.”

The experience of a father working remotely as a project consultant while caring for a toddler highlights the complexity of role negotiation in a hybrid work context. This situation emphasizes that flexibility in work time and location does not automatically guarantee a balance between professional demands and family responsibilities, but rather encourages individuals to develop adaptive strategies for managing energy, focus, and emotional engagement. The practice of scheduling blocks of time for focused work when the child is sleeping or playing independently, while also setting aside dedicated time for family interaction, reflects a proactive and self-aware form of role management (Signore et al., 2024). Thus, this experience underscores the importance of individuals' capacity to dynamically negotiate personal and professional boundaries, so that productivity, psychological well-being, and the quality of family relationships can be maintained within a flexible work framework and the complex demands of domestic life.

The experiences of various hybrid workers, ranging from financial administrators and housewives, government staff who are also heads of households, to fathers who work remotely while caring for toddlers, reflect that the balance between work and personal life is not an automatic result of work flexibility, but rather a process of continuous negotiation and adaptation. Each individual develops psychological and practical strategies tailored to their life context, whether through time scheduling, role division, energy management, or physical space arrangement at home (Howes et al., 2024). This process emphasizes that hybrid work requires self-awareness, discipline, and a high degree of adaptability, where success in maintaining productivity and psychological well-being depends on the ability to negotiate professional demands with personal needs and family dynamics (Bloom et al., 2024). Thus, this reflection underscores that planned and conscious internal strategies form the primary foundation for building resilience and a balanced quality of life in the era of digital and hybrid work.

### **The Transformation of Professional and Emotional Identity in the Digital Space**

The transformation of professional and emotional identity in the digital space is becoming an increasingly real phenomenon as remote and hybrid work practices become more widespread. In this context, individuals not only face constant performance demands, but also have to navigate how they project themselves professionally through digital platforms while maintaining their emotional well-being. The digital space allows for greater flexibility and connectivity, but at the same time presents challenges in the form of pressure to always be responsive, blurring of personal-professional boundaries, and demands for virtual performance (Moraiti et al., 2024). Therefore, identity transformation in the digital context is not merely a matter of professional roles or status, but also involves emotional and psychological reconstruction, where individuals adjust their interaction strategies, self-expression, and stress management in order to maintain authenticity and productivity in an ever-changing work ecosystem (Cunha et al., 2024).

This process of identity transformation is evident in how workers adjust their behavior, communication, and self-expression in the digital space to meet professional expectations without losing control of their emotional well-being. Individuals can develop coping mechanisms, such as managing their self-image in online meetings, using written messages to regulate social interactions, or taking mental breaks to recharge after periods of intense work (Tartler et al., 2025). Additionally, engagement in digital spaces requires high self-awareness, as rapid responses and constant exposure can influence self-perception and social interactions (West et al., 2024). Thus, professional and emotional identities are no longer understood statically, but rather as dynamic constructs that are continuously shaped through experiences, interactions, and self-regulation strategies in a complex and interconnected digital ecosystem (Zou et al., 2024). This context is in line with statement (P7), which explains as follows:

"Because I work in e-commerce and live in a boarding house with my coworkers, I often feel that my work and personal life are intertwined. I have to be smart about when to reply to messages, how to appear on video calls, and maintaining a positive mood so that the work atmosphere remains positive. Sometimes I need a short break or to step away from the screen to calm down, because if I keep focusing on work, my emotions get drained quickly, and it feels hard to separate work matters from my personal life."

In line with the above statement, (P8) also explains as follows: "As a freelance journalist as well as a father and head of the family, I have to constantly balance news deadlines with my responsibilities at home. Sometimes work comes unexpectedly and demands my full attention, while my children and family still need my attention. I usually make a flexible daily schedule, prioritize between work and family, and set aside special time for my children so that I can still be present as a father. This method helps me remain productive while maintaining the quality of my

family relationships, even though I often have to adjust when work and family matters collide."

The experiences of informants who work in e-commerce and live with coworkers in boarding houses, as well as freelance journalists who are also fathers and heads of families, confirm the complexity of professional and emotional identity transformation in the digital space. Both cases demonstrate that constant connectivity with work through digital platforms requires individuals to manage their self-image, adjust emotional expressions, and negotiate boundaries between professional and personal roles (Mdhluli et al., 2023). Adaptation strategies such as setting break times, prioritizing tasks, or allocating time for family are key to maintaining emotional well-being and productivity. Thus, the digital space not only offers work flexibility but also demands self-awareness, discipline, and emotional regulation skills, so that professional and emotional identities continue to be dynamically constructed to face ever-changing demands that collide with personal life (Matthews et al., 2021). This context is also in line with statement (P1), which explains as follows:

"As a lecturer and a homemaker, I understand how academic work and family responsibilities often go hand in hand, especially when I have to prepare lecture materials, mentor students, and take care of the house. I usually divide my time strictly, setting aside blocks of time for work and specific times for family, and occasionally taking a break to calm my mind so I don't feel overwhelmed. This strategy helps me stay productive and maintain the quality of my interactions with my family, while managing stress and emotions so I can balance my professional and personal roles effectively."

The experience of lecturers who also play the role of housewives confirms that the transformation of professional and emotional identities in the digital space requires complex and contextual adaptation strategies (Babashahi et al., 2024). Academic work that demands focus, deadlines, and interaction with students, when combined with family responsibilities, can pose challenges in negotiating the boundaries between professional and personal roles. Efforts such as strict time management, setting focus blocks for work, and setting aside specific time for family are forms of self-regulation that enable individuals to maintain productivity and emotional well-being (Muir et al., 2023). This indicates that success in coping with the demands of hybrid work or digital work does not only depend on technological flexibility, but is greatly influenced by an individual's capacity to consciously, adaptively, and balancedly build their professional and emotional identity with their personal life (Hanzis & Hallo, 2024).

Reflections on the findings of the study based on the experiences of various workers, ranging from e-commerce professionals who live with coworkers, freelance journalists who are also heads of households, to lecturers who are also housewives, show that the transformation of professional and emotional identities in the digital space is not

a static process, but rather a dynamic and contextual journey (Soh et al., 2024). Each individual must adapt their strategies according to job demands, environmental conditions, and family responsibilities, including through time management, emotional regulation, and balancing focus between professional and personal roles. This process emphasizes that digital flexibility and hybrid work will only be effective if accompanied by self-awareness, discipline, and reflective abilities to negotiate the boundaries of life (Hopkins, 2024). Thus, the development of professional and emotional identities in the digital ecosystem is key to well-being, productivity, and the quality of interpersonal relationships amid the complexity of the roles being played.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study shows that work-life balance in the context of hybrid work can no longer be understood as a stable state between two separate domains, but rather as a dynamic process of psychological negotiation. Workers are not only adapting to the new work system, but actively constructing and renegotiating the boundaries between professionalism and personality. This process confirms that balance is not universal, but rather rooted in individual reflection, cultural values, and technological dynamics that shape the work experience. Thus, this study expands the theoretical understanding of the work-life interface by adding reflective and contextual dimensions, particularly in the context of collectivist cultures such as Indonesia.

The findings in this study enrich the occupational psychology literature through three main contributions. First, the concept of boundary negotiation is understood not only as time and space management, but as a form of self-awareness to maintain emotional well-being amid extreme work flexibility. Second, the dimension of resilience-based balance emphasizes that psychological balance is built through reflection, self-regulation, and the ability to restore emotional balance. Third, this research expands the theory of psychological work identity by showing that professional identity is now formed in a fluid digital space, where individuals manage authenticity and performativity simultaneously. These findings collectively show that hybrid work has transformed how individuals perceive themselves and their well-being in an increasingly digitized work context.

In practical terms, the results of this study provide important direction for organizations to develop hybrid work policies that are oriented towards psychological well-being. First, organizations need to foster a trust-based work culture that allows workers to set their own work boundaries autonomously without feeling guilty. Second, emotional self-regulation and digital wellbeing training need to be integrated into human resource development programs to help workers manage digital stress and maintain personal balance. Third, organizational leaders need to model healthy balance practices by not normalizing excessive digital presence. Thus, work-life balance is not only an individual responsibility, but the result of an adaptive and humane organizational ecosystem.

From an academic perspective, this study opens up new avenues for understanding work-life balance through the lens of reflective psychology and digital culture. Further research is recommended to examine the relationship between digital boundary negotiation and subjective well-being using a longitudinal approach to observe the long-term dynamics of this balance. In addition, a cross-cultural approach can be used to explore how collectivity, gender, and religiosity values influence how workers negotiate the boundaries between their personal and professional lives. Future research also needs to involve broader emotional dimensions, such as digital guilt, moral fatigue, and the need for authenticity, as new psychological factors in work-life balance in the era of hybrid work.

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