

Telepressure: A Source of Pressure for Work-Life Balance

Azelin Aziz & Attia Aman-Ullah*

School of Business Management, College of Business, Universiti Utara Malaysia

**Email: attiaamanullah@yahoo.com*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37134/jcit.vol15.1.5a.2025>

Abstract

In the face of the rapid expansion of information and communication technology usage in the workplace, telepressure started increasing resulting in a disturbance of work-life balance. The purpose of this study is to test the influence of telepressure on work-life balance through the moderating effect of job tenure on the relationship. The data for this study were collected through structured questionnaires from 472 volunteers from Malaysia following convenience sampling. The PROCESS macro was used in the moderation analysis. The result revealed that telepressure has a significantly negative relationship with work-life balance while job tenures showed a strong moderation effect between telepressure on work-life balance. The present study has tested the influence of telepressure on work-life balance at different spans of their job, which was not explored previously and extends the literature in this context. Likewise, the present study contributes to the literature on the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model in the Malaysian context.

Keywords: Workplace telepressure; Job tenure; Work-life balance; Job demands resource theory

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic brought about an enormous change in the work environment, including a widespread adoption of remote work at an unusual level. Before Covid-19 businesses were dependent on physical locations and on-site work as it was difficult for employers to trust employees that they would contribute fully. However, COVID-19 opened up another window of discussion that anything can happen any time so we need to consider these facts and find out alternative ways that will not get affected during emergencies. One alternate method is remote work or work from home which became popular after covid crisis.

Although this transformation provided more freedom and independence, it also intensified a phenomenon called telepressure Aman-Ullah et al. (2023), which is the strong need to promptly reply to work-related communication, regardless of the time or situation (Jämsen et al., 2022). In the past, office hours served as a clear separation between one's professional and personal life. Nevertheless, due to the transition to remote work, the formerly clear borders between business and personal life have become indistinct, resulting in a significant number of workers feeling obligated to be continuously accessible (Chen et al., 2024).

Consequently, the conventional nine-to-five job has transformed into a continuous effort throughout the day and night for some people. The lack of physical segregation between the workplace and home setting has posed difficulties for workers in disengaging Žiedelis et al. (2023), resulting in heightened stress, exhaustion, and compromised work-life balance. In addition, the widespread presence of multinational corporations sometimes results in

employees experiencing the need to adapt to the schedules of coworkers and customers in several time zones Haist and Novotný (2023), leading to an even longer workday.

The combined pressures of work, including health concerns, caregiving obligations, and economic instability, have increased the incidence of telepressure among workers. To minimise the negative consequences, organisations must give priority to the establishment of explicit communication standards, encourage workers to define limits, advocate for regular intervals of rest, and cultivate a work environment that places equal importance on both well-being and productivity in this current era of remote work.

The most significant advantage of fast technology adaptation is that employees can work at their convenience anytime. However, this adaptability has consequences as well. Organizations begin to believe that since employees are reachable, they must remain ready to respond anytime. In ICT-based work communications, messages are designed to be responded to at the receiver's convenience. Nonetheless, some individuals see these communications as requiring instant answers. This obsession with and need to react to ICT-based work communications is seen as a fundamental ICT-related work demand known as telepressure (Aziz and Aman-Ullah, 2023; Barber et al., 2019).

A worker's psychological response to perceived job demands, such as the requirement to respond to work-related ICT communications right away, is known as "workplace telepressure." Workplace telepressure has been demonstrated to promote job burnout and result in poor quality sleep, even if workers are not always performing labour-intensive tasks while monitoring and responding to ICT demands (Hu et al., 2019). Additionally, telepressure at work hinders recovery, lowers work engagement, and adds to employee burnout. However, it is believed that this effect is not universal, rather it is unique to individuals' characteristics, one of which is employees' job tenure.

Besides this, the present study is supported by The Job Demands-Resource Model (JD-R) model. The concept categorises working circumstances into two distinct groups: job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to the physical or emotional pressures that are present in your position (Lesener et al., 2019). These factors include time constraints, a substantial amount of tasks, a demanding work atmosphere, uncertainty in job responsibilities, the need to manage emotions, and unsatisfactory interpersonal connections (Vincent-Höper et al., 2020). Therefore, when the influence of high demand from work creates telepressure, it eventually disturbs the work-life balance of employees. Over time, when this situation worsens, it will cause more and more problems among employees. For instance, Ware-Gilmore et al. (2023) say that for shorter periods families might tolerate if their family member is not giving time to them. However, if the situation remains the same for a longer time, they start getting panic and it will worsen the situation.

After the above discussion, we can conclude that this study is unique from several perspectives. First of all, the present study is unique as none of the studies have been conducted previously testing the effect of telepressure on the work-life balance of young Malaysian citizens. Secondly, time is one of the most important factors affecting our daily life, which mostly remains ignored, while the present study filled this gap by testing job tenure as a moderator between workplace telepressure and work-life balance.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Workplace telepressure

Previous literature shows the increasing trend of information and communication technologies (ICT) related demands that harm employees' wellbeing by increasing their stress levels. Some prominent examples are technology difficulties (computer freezes and failures), expectations to be accessible or contacted outside of work hours (on-call duties), information overload, and employee monitoring (recording keystrokes and performance monitoring). Pressure to provide immediate response for electronic communications, either by phone calls, instant messages or emails, is seen as another crucial ICT-related job requirement, which is of particular significance to this study. This is not explicitly related to the pressure built by the compliance of external demands. However, it is also related to the psychological condition that keeps employees engaged in work-related technologies. For such stress and pressure, 'workplace telepressure' is an obsession and need to reply to the information and communications technology-based (ICT-based) messages'.

Telepressure in the workplace refers to the integration of response norm expectations. Such expectations are more likely associated with higher worker stress and poor well-being. It not only comes from inside organisations but also from outside associations, such as the pressure caused by social media involvement, FOMO and self-control. These pressures are in addition to the usual pressures faced by employees. Upon examining the literature, it is thought that some facets of telepressure in the workplace still require investigation. The varying conditions that lead to telepressure perception have not yet been fully investigated, even though the literature on telepressure regarding job demands is well-studied and comprehended. Expectation-based telepressure varies regularly; this field needs more research. These stressors are similar to the findings of past investigations about job stressors and employee strain experiences. Previous researchers working on general telepressure (work and nonwork) revealed that differences in telepressure occur at least twice a month. Further, interference with job recovery processes was considered a possible reason behind telepressure's harmful effects on employees' well-being, which is also aligned with past literature.

Work-life balance.

Resources always remain scarce; therefore, employees always have to be very careful while utilizing their limited resources such as 'energy, time, and attention to fulfil their work and nonwork demands. High levels of engagement with job demands require resources that might be diverted from engagement in the home domain and vice versa. As a result, individuals are often required to make critical choices about managing these resources between work and home domains. Furthermore, regarding the personal resource allocation paradigm, these choices might lead to differing personal perceptions of 'balance', particularly depending on individual inclinations to participate in certain activities. One method for conceptualising work-life balance is from a global measuring standpoint, focusing on individuals' overall perceptions of managing work and home responsibilities (Hu et al., 2019; Reverberi et al., 2022).

According to studies, lengthy work hours imply a worse effect on employee satisfaction with work-life balance, which is consistent with the resource drain viewpoint. However, following the personal allocation framework, the motivating content of continuous engagement with work is equally important. Thus, feeling pressured to reply to work communications is non-autonomous and may play an important role in these balancing assessments. There is an increasing concern that technology usage beyond conventional work hours has serious negative consequences for work-life balance. In particular when workers do not feel in control over their technology usage. From this viewpoint, individuals who feel compelled to reply rapidly to work-related ICT communications, such as 'the people who experience high levels of workplace telepressures', are driven to redirect resources to work responsibilities. This may detract time and focus from home responsibilities, given that this urge to react is a compulsion - i.e. a response that is a 'have to' rather than a 'want to' demand. It is further anticipated that these sentiments would affect well-being outcomes and work-life balance ratings. This is because concentrating on reacting to work ICT communications such as 'work demands' may result in the neglect of critical nonwork duties and obligations.

Job tenure and telepressure

Job tenure refers to the length of time an employee has worked for their current employer. Long-tenured employees typically have worked for a company for more than five years, while short-tenured employees often have worked there for less than five years. Employees with longer tenure may have more control over their work environment, which may help them manage their work-related ICT demands more effectively. This may be because employees with longer tenure have more experience and knowledge about the organization and its culture, which can help them navigate the organization's landscape more effectively.

Generally, employees with longer tenure are older than those with shorter tenure. The finding of this study suggests that older employees are better at psychologically detaching from work under high availability and response expectations concerning work-related ICT demands. Following these arguments, it is expected that employees with longer tenure have a more adaptive response towards response expectation to work-related ICT demands- i.e. telepressure than those with shorter tenure. Hence, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: The association between telepressure and work-life balance is influenced by job tenure.

Theoretical support

The present study is supported by JD-R model. The theory presumes that each occupation entails distinct requirements, such as workload and time pressure, as well as resources, such as autonomy and social support (Gerich and Weber, 2020). Telepressure, which refers to the need to promptly reply to work-related communications and requests, may be classified as a job requirement (Cambier and Vlerick, 2020). The duration of employment, known as job tenure, may impact how demands and resources are seen and experienced by a person within an organisation. The theory emphasises the need to achieve work-life balance, which is determined by the interaction between job demands, available resources, and individual traits (Rashmi and Kataria, 2023).

According to the JD-R model, when individuals experience high work demands, such as telepressure, it may result in strain and diminished well-being (Rashmi and Kataria, 2023).

However, this negative impact can be mitigated if there are sufficient job resources or personal resources available. Extended duration of employment might mitigate some pressures as a result of heightened familiarity with the position and company, but it may also lead to the gradual buildup of stresses (Rashmi and Kataria, 2023). Work-life balance is influenced by the equilibrium between the requirements and available resources of work, as well as the coping mechanisms and approaches used by individuals to manage boundaries (Perreault and Power, 2023). Hence, we applied JD-R model to examine the interaction and impact of telepressure, job tenure, and work-life balance within a professional setting. It is also useful to test the impact of various workplace resources (such as social support and autonomy) and personal resources (such as coping mechanisms and resilience) on the link between telepressure and work-life balance. Additionally, it can help to evaluate the length of time workers have been with the company as a possible component in this interaction.

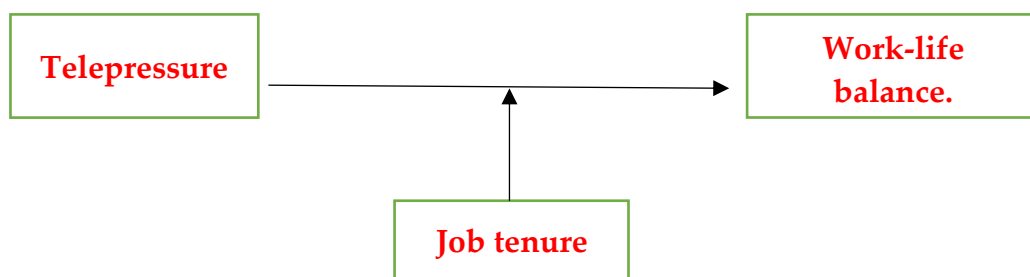


Figure 1: Conceptual model

3. Methodology

Participants were recruited using a convenience sampling technique on employed people in Malaysia who participated voluntarily. The reason for choosing convenience sampling is based on the fact that this study was initiated during MCO and hence it was not possible to reach out to people. Therefore, we decided to collect the data from those who are available and willing to answer. Further, we got to know from the past literature that several researchers dealing with similar situations also used convenience sampling (Abdalqader et al., 2020; Ithnain et al., 2023; Ridzuan et al., 2021; Soekarno et al., 2023). Questionnaires were distributed online during the MCO period through emails and WhatsApp. To answer the questions, a five-point Likert scale was used. In total 472 were used in the analysis. All measures were adopted from published literature. Further, pre-tested questionnaires were adapted in the present study such as: for telepressure was assessed using six items while confirming the reliability at $\alpha = .87$. Example items read, "I feel a strong need to respond to others immediately". The work-life balance was assessed with five items, with the reliability of $\alpha = .81$. Example items read, "How well your work life and your personal or family life fit together."

4. Findings

Respondents' profiles

The population of the present study are the employed people of Peninsular Malaysia. Of 472 usable questionnaires, the respondents' characteristics are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Respondent's profile

Description	Range	Frequency	Percentage
Age	35 and below	277	58.7%
	Above 35	195	41.3%
Gender	Male	206	43.6%
	Female	266	56.4%
Job tenure	5 years & below	258	54.7%
	More than 5 years	214	45.3%
Marital status	Unmarried	200	42.4%
	Married	272	57.6%
Employment sector	Public	271	57.4%
	Private	199	42.2%

Regression results

The present study tested hypotheses using PROCESS macro version 4.1 of regression analysis. Table 2 shows the results of the overall fitness of the model, the direct relationship between telepressure and work-life balance, and the moderating effect of job tenure on this relationship. Results indicate that the study model is significant ($R^2 = .0364$, $MSE = .9405$, $F = 5.8989$, $p = .0006$). This result indicates that the study model can proceed at $p < .001^{***}$.

The table shows that telepressure has no direct influence on work-life balance. This contrasts previous studies where telepressure affected employees' work-life balance (e.g. Barber et al., 2019). However, when job tenure was considered, the interaction between telepressure and job tenure significantly affected work-life balance experience ($\beta = -.0168$, $t = -2.9252$, $p = .0036$). This result indicates that the effect of telepressure on work-life balance differs between employees with short tenure and those with long tenure.

Figure 2 depicts these differing effects. At a low level of telepressure, employees with longer tenure reported slightly higher work-life balance experience than employees with shorter tenure. This finding suggests that longer-tenure employees who are generally older have better knowledge about the organization and its culture. Such mastery helps them to navigate better even to work-related ICT demand, that is, whether the urgency of response is required or when or not to detach from work. In addition, age improves self-management, resilience, and calmness in the face of high demands in life. Accordingly, they are better at controlling and adapting their behavioural and psychological reactions to ICT demands that potentially create adverse outcomes. Nevertheless, when telepressure is high, both groups of employees reported similar levels of work-life balance.

This study implies that the high level of telepressure affects employees similarly, regardless of their job tenure. Therefore, management should set clear expectations for when employees are expected to respond and when they are not. This can help employees manage their work-related ICT demands more effectively and reduce the perception of telepressure. Providing training and support to employees to help them manage their work-related ICT demands more effectively, such as training on time management, prioritization, and communication skills, may also help.

Table 2: Hypotheses testing through hierarchical regression

Model summary						
	R	R ²	MSE	F	df1	df2
	.1909	.0364	.9405	5.8989	3	468
Model						
	Coeff (β)	SE	t-value	p-value	LL_CI	UL_CI
Constant	4.3890	.0453	96.8613	.0000	4.2999	4.4780
Telepressure	.0640	.0477	1.3434	.1798	-.0296	.1577
Tenure	.0121	.0059	2.0286	.0431	.0004	.0237
Telepressure x Tenure	-.0168	.0058	-2.9252	.0036	-.0281	-.0055
R-square increases due to interaction (s).						
	R ² -change		F	df1	Df2	p
Tale-pressure x Tenure	.0176		8.5570	1	468	.0036

Note: $p < .05^*$, $p < .01^{**}$, $p < .001^{***}$.

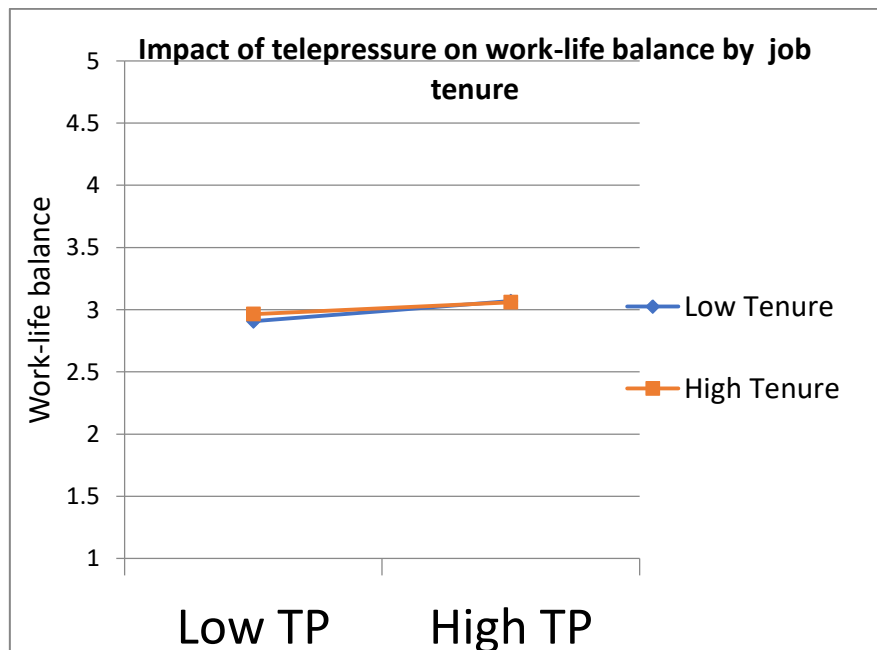


Figure 2: Moderation effect of job tenure

5. Conclusion

This research shows job tenure's advantages in dealing with ICT demands, enhancing understanding of the intersection between tenure and technology use at work. When telepressure and job tenure interact, the impact on one's work-family balance varies between

shorter and longer tenure groups when telepressure is low. In contrast, both groups report the same degree of balance when telepressure is high.

6. Implication of the Study

This study underlines the necessity of acknowledging telepressure as a key element that impacts work-life balance, particularly in the context of fast changing technology use in the workplace. Employers must recognise the harmful consequences of telepressure on workers' capacity to maintain a good work-life balance and establish measures to reduce its influence. Recognising how work duration influences the impact of interventions is crucial for designing customised strategies that cater to employees at different career phases, especially focusing on assisting new employees who can be more susceptible to the adverse consequences of telepressure.

This study enhances the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model by emphasising the intricate impact of telepressure in Malaysia, broadening the model's relevance and offering directions for further research. This study enhances our comprehension of how individual traits influence the relationship between technology-related stress and work-life balance by examining the interplay of telepressure and job tenure. It provides a basis for future research on contextual factors that impact this relationship.

This study is limited by its use of a convenience sample, self-reported data, and a cross-sectional methodology, potentially impacting the generalizability and accuracy of the findings. The emphasis on the Malaysian setting restricts wider relevance. Subsequent studies might investigate other moderating factors and use qualitative methodologies. Further, this study used regression analysis through SPSS which can be replaced with smart-PLS which can present more clarity of the results. Recommendations include exploring more issues affecting telepressure and work-life balance and establishing organisational rules to assist workers in regulating technology use and attaining a work-life balance.

References

- Abdalqader, M. A., Baobaid, M. F., Ghazi, H. F., Hasan, T. N., Mohammed, M. F., Abdalrazak, H. A., Jun, H. C. W. (2020). The Malaysian Movement Control Order (MCO) impact and its relationship with practices towards coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) among a private university students in Selangor. *Malaysian Journal of Public Health Medicine*, 20(2), 49-55.
- Aman-Ullah, A., Aziz, A., Ariza-Montes, A., & Han, H. (2023). Workplace tele pressure and innovative work performance. A moderation mediation study through work-family conflicts and job burnout. *European Journal of Innovation Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJIM-07-2023-0539>
- Aziz, A., & Aman-Ullah, A. (2023). Work-life Balance: Telepressure and marital status interaction. *International Journal of Business and Technopreneurship*, 13(1), 81-92.
- Barber, L. K., Conlin, A. L., & Santuzzi, A. M. (2019). Workplace telepressure and work-life balance outcomes: The role of work recovery experiences. *Stress and Health*, 35(3), 350-362.
- Cambier, R., & Vlerick, P. (2020). You've got mail: Does workplace telepressure relate to email communication? *Cognition, Technology & Work*, 22(3), 633-640.
- Chen, X., Liu, F., Chen, X., & Zeng, J. (2024). Work-life balance experiences of business process outsourcing employees in a remote work-set up. *Journal of Business and Management Studies*, 6(1), 55-96.
- Gerich, J., & Weber, C. (2020). The ambivalent appraisal of job demands and the moderating role of job control and social support for burnout and job satisfaction. *Social Indicators Research*, 148, 251-280.

- Haist, J., & Novotný, L. (2023). Moving across borders: The work life experiences of Czech cross-border workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *JCMS: Journal of Common Market Studies*, 61(1), 124-142.
- Hu, X., Santuzzi, A. M., & Barber, L. K. (2019). Disconnecting to detach: The role of impaired recovery in negative consequences of workplace telepressure. *Revista de Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones*, 35(1), 9-15.
- Ithnain, N., Kassim, R., Musa, K. A., Amirudin, N., Suhaimi, S. A., Kaundan, M. K., & Panting, A. J. (2023). Lifestyle and preventive behaviors among adults during the early phase of the COVID-19 movement control order (MCO) in Malaysia. *Journal of Education and Health Promotion*, 12(1), 174.
- Jämsen, R., Sivunen, A., & Blomqvist, K. (2022). Employees' perceptions of relational communication in full-time remote work in the public sector. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 132, 107240.
- Lesener, T., Gusy, B., & Wolter, C. (2019). The job demands-resources model: A meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies. *Work & Stress*, 33(1), 76-103.
- Perreault, M., & Power, N. (2023). Work-life balance as a personal responsibility: The impact on strategies for coping with interrole conflict. *Journal of Occupational Science*, 30(2), 160-174.
- Rashmi, K., & Kataria, A. (2023). The mediating role of work-life balance on the relationship between job resources and job satisfaction: Perspectives from Indian nursing professionals. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, 31(5), 1316-1342.
- Reverberi, E., Manzi, C., Van Laar, C., & Meeussen, L. (2022). The impact of poor work-life balance and unshared home responsibilities on work-gender identity integration. *Self and Identity*, 21(5), 588-607.
- Ridzuan, A., Luthfia, A., Mohideen, R., Allam, S., Zamri, N., Zulkarnain, A., . . . Puspokusumo, R. (2021). *The effectiveness of television in creating awareness towards movement control order (MCO) during Covid-19*. Paper presented at the AIP Conference Proceedings.
- Soekarno, M., Abd Jalil, M. I., Lada, S., Samsu, S. H., Mokthar, M. Z., & Shariff Abd Kadir, S. U. (2023). Are Malaysian undergraduates prepared to study online if another MCO exists? *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*.
- Vincent-Höper, S., Lengen, J. C., Kersten, M., & Gregersen, S. (2020). Analysis of job-related demands and resources in ambulatory youth welfare services: A qualitative and quantitative approach. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(8), 2941.
- Ware-Gilmore, F., Novelo, M., Sgrò, C. M., Hall, M. D., & McGraw, E. A. (2023). Assessing the role of family level variation and heat shock gene expression in the thermal stress response of the mosquito *Aedes aegypti*. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B*, 378(1873), 20220011.
- Žiedelis, A., Urbanavičiūtė, I., & Lazauskaitė-Zabielskė, J. (2023). Family boundary permeability, difficulties detaching from work, and work-home conflict: What comes first during the lockdown? *Current Psychology*, 42(28), 24163-24174.