

Work–Life Balance in the Digital Age: Working with Needs and Boundaries from the Perspective of Pessoboyden Psychomotor Therapy

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Abstract: Digital transformation is fundamentally changing the nature of the work environment and placing greater demands on employees, particularly managers. The constant availability required and the gradual blurring of the boundaries between work and personal life are significantly increasing the risk of technostress and burnout. Theoretical frameworks such as the Job Demands–Resources model, Conservation of Resources theory and Boundary Theory describe the cognitive, emotional and behavioral mechanisms involved in achieving work–life balance. In this context, work–life balance is understood as the subjective perception of harmony between an individual's work and personal roles. This literature review integrates these approaches with principles derived from Pessoboyden Psychomotor Therapy, a somatically oriented method that focuses on boundaries, basic psychological needs and internalized behavioral patterns. The proposed theoretical model, which presents integration of Pessoboyden Psychomotor Therapy into the work–life balance in the digital age provides a conceptual framework for leadership development, coaching and mental well-being interventions. It emphasizes the importance of boundary control, developing body awareness, and restoring personal resources as key factors in preventing burnout and ensuring long-term sustainable work performance.

Keywords: work–life balance; Pessoboyden psychomotor therapy; boundary management; JD-R model; digital work; psychological needs

JEL Classification: I31; J28; M12

1. Introduction

Digital transformation and the associated development of remote work have fundamentally changed the relationship between work and personal life. For managers responsible for team performance, availability and coordination, digitization offers flexibility but also presents significant psychosocial risks (Kossek, 2016; Scholze & Hecker, 2024). Constant connectivity via smartphones, email and collaboration platforms disrupt traditional temporal and spatial work boundaries and can lead to long-term psychological stress (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

The concept of work–life balance (WLB) has therefore become a key topic in organizational psychology and management research (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The current concept of WLB considers it to be a complex psychological process involving three

intertwining levels: cognitive evaluation, emotional response and behavioral boundary management strategies (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998).

In this context, approaches that enable work with internal boundaries, emotions, and basic psychological needs are growing in importance. One such approach is Pessó-Boyden psychomotor therapy (PBSP), a body-oriented psychotherapeutic approach focused on corrective emotional experience and the restoration of the internal structure of behavior (Gray, 2018; Sirinek, 2025; Slaninova & Kucerova, 2017). Although PBSP is not primarily intended for organizational environments, its principles can offer an innovative approach to managing WLB in the digital age.

The aim of this article is to present the current theoretical foundations of the psychological aspects of work–life balance in digital work and to show how digitization is changing the role of boundaries, needs, and professional identity of managers. Based on a literature review, an integrative theoretical model is proposed that links PBSP with WLB theoretical frameworks. The research questions were formulated based on three levels of psychological mechanisms:

RQ1: Which cognitive processes influence managers' experience of work–life balance in digital work?

RQ2: How do emotional states mediate the relationship between work demands and work–life balance?

RQ3: What boundary management and recovery strategies do managers use in conditions of constant connectivity?

This article's theoretical contribution lies in integrating the Job Demands–Resources model (JD-R), Conservation of Resources (COR) and Boundary Theory models with the principles of Pessó-Boyden psychomotor therapy. In terms of practical contributions, the article proposes recommendations for leadership, coaching and organizational interventions aimed at preventing burnout and supporting sustainable performance.

2. Literature Review Methodology

The study uses a focused narrative literature review design. Rather than aiming to map all available studies, the review focuses on a conceptual analysis of the key theoretical approaches and psychological mechanisms relevant to work–life balance (WLB) in digital work environments. This approach was selected in line with the theoretical orientation of the article, which aims to integrate established work psychology frameworks with principles derived from Pessó-Boyden Systemic Psychomotor Therapy. The primary source of the search was the Web of Science Core Collection database. The search, which was conducted on December 10, 2025, was structured according to three thematic areas that corresponded to the article's focus. The following search terms were applied to the Title field:

- "Pessó-Boyden" OR "Pessó Boyden" OR "PBSP" (106 results)
- ("work–life balance" OR "work life balance" OR "boundary management") AND (digital OR "remote work" OR telework OR "online availability") (727 results)
- (somatic OR "body-oriented" OR psychomotor OR sensorimotor) AND (intervention OR therapy) AND (work OR workplace OR burnout) (3 214 results)

A total of 4,047 records were identified. Due to the large volume of results, additional selection criteria were applied, and only open-access articles were retained, resulting in 2,129 records. This represents a pragmatic limitation and may have led to the exclusion of some influential publications. However, it was considered sufficient for capturing the main conceptual streams relevant to the study's theoretical aims. In the next phase of the search, the same search terms were applied to Author Keywords field, resulting in 163 articles. These articles were screened for relevance to the defined objectives and research questions. Included were publications addressing work–life balance in digitally mediated work, with a specific focus on boundary regulation, psychological resources, and somatically oriented approaches relevant to work and organizational contexts. Duplicate records, studies unrelated to work or organizational settings, and publications focused exclusively on clinical psychotherapy without implications for applied or organizational practice were excluded. The primary time frame covered the period from 2010 to 2025, however, older key theoretical works were also included due to their fundamental importance for the given concepts (Demerouti et al., 2001; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Hobfoll, 1989; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). A total of 29 key sources were selected for in-depth content analysis.

A thematic approach was used to analyze the literature and identify cognitive, emotional and behavioral mechanisms relevant to work-life balance. The Job Demands–Resources, Conservation of Resources and Boundary Theory models were used as a theoretical framework to interpret these mechanisms and answer the research questions. These theories led to the formulation of an integrative theoretical model, which is elaborated on further in the following chapters.

3. Theoretical Framework of Work–life Balance in the Digital Age

Greenhaus et al. (2003) defined work–life balance as a subjectively perceived state of equilibrium between work and personal roles, characterized by a low level of conflict and a high level of enrichment between the areas of work and private life. To understand this balance, it is useful to combine three complementary perspectives: the JD-R model, Conservation of Resources theory, and Boundary Theory.

3.1. *Job Demands–Resources Model*

As Demerouti and Bakker (2011, 2017) state in their articles, the current Job Demands–Resources model distinguishes between job requirements and job resources. Job demands include physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of work that require sustained physical or mental effort and are associated with certain physiological and psychological costs, such as high levels of responsibility, emotional strain, or constant connectivity. In contrast, job resources are the physical, psychological, social, and organizational aspects of work that support the achievement of work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal development. Examples include autonomy, status, social support and performance feedback (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti & Bakker, 2011).

Other authors distinguish between two parallel processes within the JD–R model: the health impairment process and the motivational process (Demerouti et al., 2001; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). The health impairment process manifests itself in the form of work-family conflict (WFC), where high work demands lead to exhaustion and the risk of burnout. In contrast, the motivational process, referred to as work–family enrichment (WFE), emphasizes the role of available resources in supporting work engagement and leading to positive work and personal outcomes.

As the Demerouti et al. (2001) point out, managerial positions are particularly sensitive to these processes because they combine high work demands with significant work resources. However, Powell and Greenhaus (2010) argue that achieving work–life balance is not just as a matter of reducing demands. Rather, it is primarily the result of the availability and effective use of work resources, particularly autonomy and supportive leadership.

3.2. Conservation of Resources Theory

In his article, Hobfoll (1989) presents the COR theory, which complements the JD-R model by providing an explanation of the dynamics of motivation and stress within the framework of human resource management. The author states that individuals strive to acquire, maintain and protect resources, including energy, time, self-esteem and social support. Stress arises when these resources are threatened or lost, or when they are not replenished quickly enough.

Hobfoll (2001) further emphasizes that managers, who often face high demands and emotional labor, are prone to spirals of resource loss, manifesting exhaustion and burnout. Conversely, spirals of resource gain promote positive development. For instance, successfully establishing boundaries between work and personal life can reduce cognitive overload and enhance sleep quality, thereby facilitating further resource accumulation (Hobfoll, 2001).

3.3. Boundary Theory

Kossek and Ozeki (1998) focus their articles on the behavioral management of work and home life through boundary control, i.e., the ability to regulate the permeability and flexibility between work and personal life (Kossek et al., 2006; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). As the authors state, the degree to which preferred and actual boundary styles align is a strong predictor of work–life balance satisfaction. As digital work becomes more prevalent, managing boundaries has become an important psychological task for managers, as the physical separation of work and home becomes increasingly unrealistic (Demerouti et al., 2001; Kossek, 2016).

4. Results: Psychological Mechanisms of Work–life Balance Management

Based on the above theoretical frameworks, the psychological mechanisms that shape work–life balance can be divided into three interconnected levels: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. Analyzing professional literature according to these levels provides answers to three defined research questions.

4.1. Cognitive Mechanisms

The cognitive level includes processes of evaluation, interpretation, and decision-making that play a key role in shaping how managerial job translate into work–life balance outcomes (Greenhaus et al., 2003). In this context, the following research question was formulated: RQ1: Which cognitive processes influence managers' experience of work–life balance in digital work?

Lazarus and Folkman emphasize that the way managers evaluate job demands is crucial and influences whether the workload is perceived as a challenge or a threat. Managers who perceive high workload as an opportunity for development show greater engagement and positive work–life enrichment. Conversely, those who perceive the demands as a threat experience stress and are more prone to work-family conflict and burnout. This process is not static but depends on the available resources and the manager's previous experiences. Subjective appraisal of demands turns out to be a stronger predictor of stress than objective job demands, such as long working hours or high workload (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Querstret and Cropley (2012) define work rumination as constantly thinking about work-related matters during one's free time. Amstad et al. (2011), along with Querstret and Cropley (2012) describe it as a major obstacle to psychological detachment, while Sonnentag (2018) emphasizes that rumination interferes with effective psychological rest. According to Kossek et al. (2006) managers may be prone to ruminative thinking due to a strong professional identity and internalized high-performance expectations. Querstret and Cropley (2012) further distinguish two types of work rumination: emotional and cognitive. Emotional rumination is characterized by repetitive negative thoughts, while cognitive rumination involves attempting to solve work-related problems. It has been shown that emotional rumination is more strongly associated with negative outcomes relating to work–life balance. The constant connectivity provided by digital technologies makes it even more difficult to achieve cognitive disconnection (Amstad et al., 2011; Querstret & Cropley, 2012).

Kossek and Lautsch (2012) emphasize that managers often have a strong managerial identity and internalize high-performance norms, such as perfectionism and excessive commitment. This can result in self-imposed demands, such as believing that they must always be available or that delegation is a sign of weakness (Kossek & Lautsch, 2012). As Vahle-Hinz et al. (2017) state, these internal demands often represent a stronger source of WFC than external organizational pressures, creating a conflict between the identities of the 'ideal worker' and the 'ideal family member'. This conflict is a major source of psychological strain and guilt (Vahle-Hinz et al., 2017).

4.2. Emotional Processes

As Greenhaus et al. (2003) state, the emotional level refers to the regulation of emotions and motivational states. It influences the cognitive appraisal of job demands and well-being outcomes. The following research question was defined: RQ2: How do emotional states mediate the relationship between job demands and work–life balance?

According to Demerouti et al. (2001), emotional exhaustion is the most reported emotional consequence of chronic WFC and is a fundamental component of burnout

syndrome. Bakker and Demerouti (2017), using the JD-R model, explain that emotional exhaustion is the result of a health impairment process, where high demands deplete a manager's emotional resources faster than they can be replenished. The authors state that chronic WFC is therefore strongly associated with emotional exhaustion, which impairs a manager's ability to function effectively in both work and family contexts (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Greenhaus et al., 2003).

According to Hobfoll (1989), guilt is a specific emotional intermediate stage arising from the conflict between internalized roles and actual behavior. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) state that this mechanism is particularly common among managers and stems from the perception that expectations associated with the roles of the 'ideal employee' and 'ideal family member' have not been met. The emotional tension associated with guilt often manifests as negative affective transfer, further worsening the quality of interactions within the family and deepening work conflicts.

Affective transfer refers to the transfer of mood or emotions from one area of life to another. Edwards and Rothbard (2000) emphasize that negative affective transfer, such as transferring stress or frustration from work to family life, is a direct emotional mechanism that reduces the quality of family interactions and increases conflict between work and family life. This process demonstrates how managers' internal emotional states can influence their daily roles and impact their work–life balance (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000).

4.3. Behavioral Level

The behavioral level reflects the specific strategies and actions through which managers actively influence work–life balance (Greenhaus et al., 2003). The research question was formulated as follows: RQ3: What boundary management and recovery strategies do managers use in conditions of constant connectivity?

The authors agree that key factors include the degree of boundary control and the alignment of preferred and actual boundary management styles (Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Kossek et al., 2006; Perrigino & Raveendhran, 2025). The results of French et al.'s (2018) study suggest that managers who can align their boundary preferences with their actual behavior are more satisfied with their work–life balance (French et al., 2018).

According to Greenhaus and Powell (2006), the key behavioral mechanisms for replenishing work resources are psychological detachment and recovery-focused activities. (Greenhaus & Powell, 2006) These include physical exercise, activities that provide a sense of control over the situation and relaxation techniques that replenish depleted resources and reduce the effects of emotional exhaustion and rumination. Sonnentag (2018) emphasizes that recovery is an active process, not merely the absence of work (Sonnentag, 2018).

Research by Lazarus and Folkman (1984) suggests that managers who perceive control over stressors predominantly use problem-focused coping styles, such as delegating tasks or time management. This approach is usually associated with a better work–life balance. However, when faced with uncontrollable demands, they often resort to less effective emotion-focused coping strategies, such as avoidance, which can further increase tension (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

5. Pessó-Boyden Psychomotor Therapy as an Integrative Element

Several authors describe Pessó-Boyden psychomotor therapy as a body-oriented therapeutic approach that focuses on satisfying five basic developmental needs: place, support, nurture, protection, and limits (Gray, 2018; Sirinek, 2025; Slaninova & Kucerova, 2017). Failure to fulfil these needs may result in internalized behavioral patterns that manifest in adulthood as difficulties in setting boundaries and coping with stress. Key PBSP principles relevant to WLB include:

- *Micro-tracking*: developing bodily awareness and the ability to recognize stress signals in a timely manner.
- *Self-determination theory (SDT)*: the ability to act in accordance with one's own needs and to establish healthy limits.
- *Corrective emotional experience*: creating supportive conditions to restore psychological resources.

Compared to cognitive or behavioral approaches to work–life balance, PBSP emphasizes embodied experiences, implicit emotional patterns, and early internalized needs that often shape managerial behavior beyond conscious control. PBSP thus extends existing models by addressing not only conscious stress and boundary regulation strategies, but also deeper somatic and emotional mechanisms that influence the long-term sustainability of work performance.

In organizational practice, PBSP principles can be transferred primarily into leadership development, executive coaching, and workplace well-being programs, where they support bodily awareness, early recognition of overload signals, and the development of functional boundaries between work and non-work roles. Empirical studies support the effectiveness of body-centered, psychomotor, and digitally mediated interventions in reducing stress, anxiety, and burnout-related symptoms, particularly in healthcare settings (Veiga et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2024). Rosendahl et al. (2021) confirmed in their study that body-focused psychotherapy had a modest effect on psychopathology and psychological distress in people with mental health problems. Similarly, a pilot-controlled study by Veiga et al. (2019) showed that an eight-week psychomotor relaxation program significantly reduced emotional exhaustion, depressive symptoms, and indicators of physiological stress in nurses. The results of another study (Zhang et al., 2024) confirmed that mental health interventions had a significant impact on stress and anxiety, as well as a modest effect on depression and emotional exhaustion in healthcare workers.

5.1. Integrating PBSP into the WLB Model in the Digital Age

The digital work environment is characterized by high work demands, constant availability, and fragmented attention, which, according to the JD–R model, are key stressors that increase the risk of burnout and disrupt work–life balance (Demerouti et al., 2001; Hobfoll, 1989). These demands create a need for targeted intervention that would not only reduce stress but, above all, strengthen managers' personal resources and support their ability to regenerate.

An integration model, shown in Figure 1, was proposed based on an analysis of professional literature. This model illustrates a cyclical process in which PBSP functions as an intervention that strengthens personal resources within the JD-R model. At the same time, it supports their renewal through the principles of COR theory. PBSP acts here as an integrating element that links the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms described in the previous chapters and provides a comprehensive framework for supporting work–life balance in digital work.

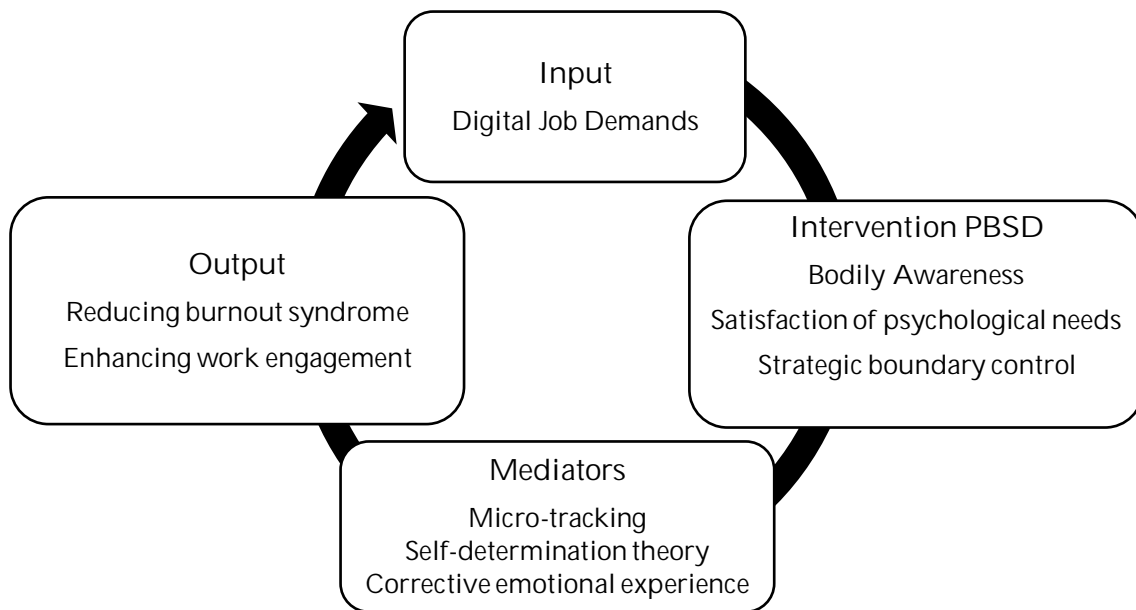


Figure 1. Integration of PBSP into the Work–Life Balance model in the digital age

The model (Fig. 1) captures four interconnected components. Input conditions include high job demands, continuous availability, and fragmentation of attention, which, in line with the JD-R model, are understood as key stressors requiring targeted intervention. These factors put pressure on managers' cognitive, emotional, and behavioral regulation and increase the risk of chronic exhaustion.

The intervention component involves incorporating PBSP, which promotes the development of bodily awareness, the satisfaction of basic psychological needs, and strategic control of the boundaries between work and private life. PBSP functions here as a mechanism for strengthening and restoring personal resources, thereby contributing to a reduction in emotional exhaustion and an increase in work motivation and engagement.

The effect of the intervention is mediated through mediators. The micro-tracking process develops body awareness and the ability to recognize signs of overload in a timely manner. Self-determination theory explains the satisfaction of the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are key to sustainable motivation. Corrective emotional experience creates supportive conditions for restoring personal resources.

The output effects of this cyclical process include desirable psychological impacts, in particular a reduction in mental exhaustion and the risk of burnout, an increase in work engagement and motivation, a strengthening of regenerative capacity, and long-term sustainable work performance. The model depicts PBSP as part of a dynamic system in which

interventions influence managers' ability to cope with digital work demands and maintain a work–life balance retroactively.

6. Recommendations

Practical recommendations can be formulated for individual intervention and organizational practice based on the identified cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms affecting the work–life balance of managers in a digital work environment. The key starting point is shifting the focus from time management to the management of energy, attention, and psychological resources.

6.1. Recommendations for Managers and Executive Coaching

Interventions aimed at managers should focus on developing their ability to regulate their cognitive assessment of work demands, their emotional responses and their recovery-related behaviors.

Managers should be systematically trained in cognitive techniques that enable them to perceive high job demands as challenges rather than threats. According to the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, this approach activates motivation, thereby reducing the risk of emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Executive coaching should emphasize the importance of active recovery as a prerequisite for long-term performance. It is crucial to establish clear digital boundaries, including designated times without work technology, and to encourage activities outside of work that facilitate psychological detachment. Research indicates that recovery processes are paradoxically most disrupted during periods of high stress, further exacerbating exhaustion (Sonnentag, 2018).

PBSP speaks of a 'messianic gene' that, under specific circumstances, can lead an individual to behave in an omnipotent and unlimited way (Sirinek, 2025). This is also related to feelings of guilt arising from the conflict between internalized norms of the 'ideal worker' and the needs of personal life. These feelings should be given special attention so that they can be recognized, processed, and connected with core vital forces (Sirinek, 2025).

6.2. Recommendations for Organisations and Personnel Policy

At an organizational level, it is necessary to go beyond formal flexibility and systematically establish a culture that supports healthy boundary management and resource renewal.

Organizational policies should increase managers' perceived boundary control. This can be achieved by introducing a 'right to disconnect', setting clear expectations regarding availability and providing support for effective delegation. These steps reduce pressure to be constantly connected and promote psychological detachment.

Organizations should regularly analyze job roles to ensure that high demands are balanced with adequate job resources. Emphasis should be placed on autonomy, social support and quality feedback, as these are key to activating the motivational process in the JD-R model.

Leadership development programs should educate leaders on the psychological costs of long-term work–life imbalance. Leaders play a key role in shaping implicit behavioral norms and should lead by example in managing boundaries, recovering and practicing self-care.

7. Discussion, Limits and Implications

The aim of this literature review was to examine research on the psychological mechanisms shaping managers' experiences of work–life balance in the digital work environment. The article proposes a conceptual framework that emphasizes the internal and subjective dimensions of work–life balance by integrating established theoretical approaches in work psychology, including the JD-R model, COR theory, the Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, with contemporary concepts, including Boundary theory and work rumination.

Integrating cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms provides valuable theoretical and practical insights. In particular, the incorporation of concepts from PBSP extends existing work–life balance models by addressing embodied and implicit processes that influence stress regulation, resource restoration, and boundary management beyond conscious cognitive strategies. The integrative model (Figure 1) describes WLB as a dynamic process and highlights the potential of PBSP-based interventions to strengthen personal resources and self-regulatory capacities of managers in digital environments.

This work has several limitations. Firstly, the review is based on a targeted selection of literature defined by specific thematic criteria and a limited time frame, which may have led to the exclusion of relevant but less frequently cited empirical studies. Secondly, the proposed model is conceptual in nature and requires further empirical validation of the assumed relationships between cognitive, emotional, and behavioral mechanisms. To date, no empirical studies have directly examined the effects of PBSP on managers' work–life balance in digital work contexts. Existing empirical evidence originates primarily from healthcare settings (Veiga et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2024) and should therefore be interpreted cautiously due to differences in job demands and organizational conditions.

Despite these limitations, the proposed integrative model contributes to theory development by offering a coherent framework for understanding work–life balance in the digital age and provides a foundation for leadership development, executive coaching, and workplace well-being initiatives. By incorporating somatically oriented principles, the model supports the design of interventions aimed at enhancing boundary awareness, early detection of overload, and sustainable work performance among managers.

8. Conclusions

In the digital age, work–life balance is fundamentally influenced by managers' ability to manage the boundaries between work and non-work roles, and to satisfy basic psychological needs. This literature review demonstrates that work–life balance is a dynamic process influenced by cognitive evaluation, emotional regulation and behavioral boundary control.

The proposed integrative framework links established psychological models with the principles of Pessó-Boyden psychomotor therapy to provide a theoretically grounded

approach to preventing burnout and promoting sustainable work performance among managers. It emphasizes the importance of psychological distance, reducing rumination, and active recovery as key mechanisms for achieving long-term balance.

The framework also provides a basis for future empirical research, particularly in the form of studies examining the processes of resource depletion and restoration in digital work environments. From a practical perspective, the findings suggest a shift in organizational interventions from formal policies to developing managers' psychological competencies, which are essential for achieving a sustainable work–life balance.

Conflict of interest: none

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