

The Influence of Technostress on Work-Life Balance: The Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of technostress on work-life balance (WLB) among civil servants, with self-efficacy considered as a mediating variable. It aims to determine whether technostress has a direct effect on WLB, whether it influences self-efficacy, and whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between technostress and WLB. A quantitative, causal research design was employed using census sampling of 63 employees at the Community and Village Empowerment Office in Indragiri Hilir Regency. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 3.2.9. The analysis revealed that technostress significantly and positively affects both work-life balance and self-efficacy. However, self-efficacy does not significantly influence work-life balance and does not serve as a mediating factor. These results suggest that in structured government environments, technostress may function more as a challenge than a hindrance, encouraging employees to engage with their work rather than detracting from personal balance. This research contributes to the limited literature on technostress in the public sector, especially in developing country settings, and introduces a broader, multidimensional view of technostress. From a practical standpoint, the findings encourage managers to reconsider technostress not only as a risk but also as an opportunity for employee development. To support this, organizations should promote digital literacy, psychological resilience, and adaptive leadership to help employees navigate technological change effectively and sustainably.

Keywords : Public Sector, Self-Efficacy, Techostress, Work-Life Balance, SEM-PLS

I. Introduction

The accelerated development of information and communication technology in the digital era has profoundly transformed the dynamics of modern workplaces. While these advancements have undoubtedly enhanced operational efficiency and connectivity, they have simultaneously introduced new psychological stressors. One of the most prominent among these is “technostress,” a term denoting the mental discomfort or strain resulting from the constant interaction with technology (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). With the proliferation of digital tools, applications, and communication platforms, employees today are expected to rapidly adapt to new systems, manage excessive digital information, and maintain availability beyond traditional working hours. These demands frequently blur the boundaries between professional and personal life, leading to a decline in individuals’ ability to achieve work-life balance (Tarafdar et al., 2019). This phenomenon has been further exacerbated by the shift towards hybrid and remote work models in the post-pandemic context.

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to an individual's capacity to allocate time and energy effectively between occupational obligations and personal life. Achieving WLB has become a central concern in human resource management literature due to growing work complexity and technological ubiquity (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Numerous studies have identified a range of organizational, individual, and psychological variables that influence WLB, such as workload, flexibility, gender, family responsibilities, and resilience (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010; Wayne et al., 2007). However, the role of technostress as a modern disruptor of WLB is a relatively recent topic of inquiry. Persistent exposure to technological stress has been associated with emotional exhaustion, sleep disruption, and increased work-family conflict (Derks et al., 2016). The pressing need to remain digitally connected, even outside working hours, often results in a diminished capacity for recovery and leisure, which are essential to sustaining well-being.

Although the adverse impact of technostress on work-life balance has been widely recognized in prior research, limited attention has been given to the underlying psychological mechanisms that might help mitigate this effect. One promising construct is self-efficacy defined by Bandura (1986) as the individual's belief in their ability to organize and carry out actions required to manage specific challenges. Existing empirical evidence indicates that individuals with a strong sense of self-efficacy are typically more resilient in facing work-related pressures, including those triggered by technological demands, and are therefore better equipped to preserve a healthy balance between their professional and personal lives (Salazar-Concha et al., 2021). While the direct relationship between technostress and work-life balance has been frequently studied, research exploring self-efficacy as an intermediary variable in this dynamic remains scarce. Furthermore, much of the available research has predominantly focused on private or urban sectors, often overlooking public institutions particularly those in remote or resource-limited regions where technological infrastructure and organizational support may be insufficient to buffer technostress effectively (Califf et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2022).

This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between technostress and work-life balance among civil servants in Indonesia. The novelty of this research lies in its contextual focus on government employees at the Community and Village Empowerment Office of Indragiri Hilir Regency, a population often overlooked in technostress-related studies. Unlike their counterparts in private or urban sectors, public servants in rural regions are frequently exposed to fragmented digital infrastructures, inadequate training, and inconsistent technological policies. By evaluating how self-efficacy influences the way technostress affects their work-life balance, this study contributes new empirical insights into the psychological dynamics of digital adaptation within public organizations.

The theoretical contribution of this study is grounded in Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which posits that behavior is the result of a dynamic interplay between environmental factors, cognitive processes, and individual actions. In this framework, technostress represents an environmental stressor, while self-efficacy operates as a cognitive filter that shapes how individuals interpret and respond to technological demands. Thus, by empirically testing a mediation model, this study not only validates the SCT framework in a digital work context but also extends it to the domain of public administration and work-life integration. Furthermore, this research offers practical contributions by providing policy recommendations to public sector institutions seeking to foster employee resilience and digital competence. Should self-efficacy prove to be a significant mediator, interventions such as digital literacy training, stress management workshops, and organizational support systems can be designed to enhance employee confidence and reduce technostress-related burnout.

The main objectives of this study are fourfold: (1) to determine whether technostress significantly affects work-life balance among public servants; (2) to examine the influence of technostress on self-efficacy; (3) to assess the relationship between self-efficacy and work-life balance; and (4) to investigate whether self-efficacy mediates the relationship between technostress and work-life balance. These objectives are addressed through the following research questions: (a) Does technostress affect work-life balance? (b) Does technostress influence self-efficacy? (c) Does self-efficacy impact work-life balance? (d) Does self-efficacy mediate the effect of technostress on work-life balance?

To address these questions, a quantitative causal research design was employed. The study targeted all employees at the Community and Village Empowerment Office of Indragiri Hilir Regency, comprising 63 respondents, including both civil servants and honorary staff. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire based on validated scales for technostress, self-efficacy, and work-life balance. The analytical method employed was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using SmartPLS 3.2.9, which allows for testing complex mediation relationships between latent variables. This methodological approach ensures robust statistical analysis and contributes to the validity and reliability of the findings.

This article is organized into five sections. Following this introduction, the literature review section discusses relevant theoretical frameworks, including Social Cognitive Theory, and summarizes empirical studies on technostress, self-efficacy, and work-life balance. The methodology section outlines the research design, sampling strategy, measurement instruments, and data analysis procedures. The results and discussion section presents empirical findings and interprets them in relation to existing literature and theoretical assumptions. Finally, the conclusion offers a synthesis of key findings, theoretical and practical implications, and suggestions for future research. By situating technostress and self-efficacy within the broader discourse on work-life balance, particularly in the context of Indonesian public administration, this study not only expands the current literature but also informs practical strategies for fostering well-being in digitally evolving workplaces.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

The accelerating adoption of digital technologies in today's workplaces has led to profound shifts in how employee productivity and psychological well-being are shaped. One significant byproduct of this transformation is *technostress*, a term initially coined by Brod (1984), which refers to the psychological strain arising from individuals' difficulties in adapting to constant technological change. Initially described as a modern pathology, technostress has evolved into a widely researched construct, particularly in relation to its adverse implications for work-life integration (Tarafdar et al., 2011; Molino et al., 2022). As employees face increasing digital demands, such as perpetual connectivity, real-time responsiveness, and rapid system updates, the ability to separate work from personal life is frequently compromised leading to what many scholars consider a deterioration in work-life balance (WLB) (Bartsch et al., 2023; Yin et al., 2022).

Work-life balance itself has been redefined under the pressures of digital transformation. While traditionally conceptualized as the effective allocation of time and energy between work and non-work roles (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011), in today's hyper-connected settings, maintaining this balance increasingly depends on how individuals respond to digital intrusions. Studies have shown that aspects of technostress, particularly *techno-invasion* and *techno-overload*, erode boundaries and foster a sense of role conflict, often escalating emotional exhaustion and work-family tensions (Tarafdar et al., 2019; Srivastava et al., 2020).

While the detrimental impact of technostress on WLB is well-documented, emerging perspectives argue that individual-level psychological traits may play a significant role in mitigating these effects. One such trait is *self-efficacy*, defined by Bandura (1986) as a person's belief in their ability to organize and execute actions required to manage prospective situations. Increasing evidence suggests that self-efficacy not only enhances performance in demanding contexts but also serves as a psychological buffer that helps employees adapt constructively to digital work demands (La Torre et al., 2020). Within Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, self-efficacy is positioned as a central cognitive mechanism that regulates motivation, stress response, and behavioral outcomes under external pressures such as those posed by advanced technology.

Indeed, researchers have begun to examine self-efficacy not only as a protective factor but also as a possible explanatory link between technostress and work-life outcomes. Ma et al. (2021), for example, found that self-efficacy could attenuate the effects of digital overload by reducing emotional depletion, thereby supporting better work-life integration. However, much of the current research treats self-efficacy as a moderator, rather than exploring its potential mediating function. This presents a critical gap in theory and empirical evidence, particularly in understanding the psychological pathways through which technostress influences work-life dynamics.

Additionally, the directionality between technostress and self-efficacy remains contested. While Jena (2015) proposed that technological complexity can undermine self-efficacy by diminishing individuals' perceived control, others argue the opposite suggesting that successfully navigating technological challenges can enhance confidence and perceived competence (Ma et al., 2021). This divergence highlights the need for context-sensitive investigations, especially in sectors like public service, where digital infrastructure may be inconsistent and training opportunities limited.

To conceptualize these interactions, this study adopts the Social Cognitive Theory framework, where technostress functions as an external environmental stressor, self-efficacy represents the cognitive filter, and WLB emerges as a behavioral outcome. This approach allows for a causal model that accommodates both direct

and indirect influences, offering a nuanced understanding of how personal agency interacts with external digital demands.

A distinctive contribution of this study lies in its contextual focus. Unlike most research that centers on private sector professionals or urban settings, this study investigates civil servants in a regional government agency in Indonesia specifically at the Community and Village Empowerment Office in Indragiri Hilir. This population is often overlooked in technostress literature, despite being particularly vulnerable to digital disruptions due to underdeveloped infrastructure, inconsistent policy implementation, and limited access to training (Purwanto et al., 2021; OECD, 2022).

Moreover, this study employs a more comprehensive measure of technostress that includes five dimensions: techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, techno-invasion, techno-uncertainty, and techno-overload as proposed by Setyadi & Taruk (2019). This multidimensional assessment surpasses previous research that narrowly focused on a subset of stressors, allowing for richer interpretation of technostress manifestations.

Finally, while existing models have explored mediating constructs such as job satisfaction (Al-Ansari & Alshare, 2019) or burnout (Sharma & Tiwari, 2023), this study specifically investigates self-efficacy as a mediator—a novel approach with practical relevance. Unlike more static traits, self-efficacy is a malleable construct that can be enhanced through targeted interventions, making it a valuable focal point for organizational strategies. Based on the preceding discussion, the following hypotheses were developed: (1) Technostress has a negative and significant effect on work-life balance; (2) Technostress negatively affects self-efficacy; (3) Self-efficacy positively influences work-life balance; and (4) Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between technostress and work-life balance.

By critically integrating prior findings, highlighting inconsistencies, and positioning the study within an under-researched context, this literature review lays the foundation for a theoretically grounded and practically relevant investigation into the psychological mechanisms linking digital stress and employee well-being.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a causal design, aiming to explore the cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Causal design was deemed suitable as it allows for the identification of how one variable influences another, particularly how technostress affects work-life balance, both directly and indirectly through the mediating role of self-efficacy. The research was conducted at the Office of Community and Village Empowerment in Indragiri Hilir Regency. Data collection and analysis spanned approximately four months, beginning with proposal preparation, continuing through data gathering and processing, and concluding with the statistical analysis phase.

The population targeted in this research consisted of all employees working at the aforementioned office, comprising 26 civil servants (ASN) and 37 non-permanent staff (honorary employees), totaling 63 individuals. Given the manageable size of the population, a census technique was used, involving the entire population as the sample. This method, also known as total sampling, was appropriate for ensuring that every relevant perspective was included in the study. To collect primary data, a structured questionnaire was distributed to all respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections: the first section collected demographic information, while the second captured responses related to the research variables: technostress, self-efficacy, and work-life balance. Respondents rated their agreement with various statements using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The variables were operationalized based on theoretical constructs supported by prior literature. *Technostress* (X1) was conceptualized as the psychological strain caused by the rapid and demanding nature of information technology. Its dimensions included techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, techno-invasion, techno-uncertainty, and techno-overload. Example items included feelings of anxiety when using unfamiliar systems or being overwhelmed by constant notifications from digital tools. *Self-efficacy* (X2), defined as an individual's belief in their ability to effectively manage tasks and overcome challenges, was measured through three dimensions: magnitude (belief in managing difficult tasks), strength (confidence in one's consistent ability), and generality (applicability of self-confidence across different situations).

Work-life balance (Y), the dependent variable, was conceptualized as the ability to manage work responsibilities while maintaining a fulfilling personal life. It encompassed four dimensions: work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), personal life enhancement of work (PLEW), and work enhancement of personal life (WEPL). Statements measured, for instance, the degree to which work obligations disrupted personal or family time, or how job experiences positively influenced home life. Both primary and secondary data were utilized in this study. The primary data came directly from questionnaire responses, while secondary data included supporting documentation such as previous studies, academic journals, books, and relevant institutional reports. Additionally, non-intrusive observation by the researcher at the office site helped contextualize and validate the questionnaire results.

To analyze the data, the study employed descriptive statistics to summarize respondent characteristics and variable distributions. For hypothesis testing and model evaluation, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using the SmartPLS 3.2.9 software was conducted. The SEM-PLS approach was chosen due to its robustness in analyzing complex models, particularly when involving mediation relationships and smaller sample sizes. The analysis process involved assessing both the outer model (convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability) and the inner model (path coefficients, t-values, and significance levels). The methodological rigor and detailed measurement approach ensured the reliability and validity of the results. By capturing both direct and indirect effects among the variables, the analysis aimed to offer comprehensive insights into the dynamics of technostress, self-efficacy, and work-life balance among government employees in a digitally transforming workplace.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Influence of Technostress on Work-Life Balance

The findings of this study reveal that technostress has a significant and positive impact on work-life balance (WLB). This result is statistically supported by a path coefficient value of 0.812, with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a highly significant relationship between the two variables. This implies that as employees experience higher levels of technostress manifested in the form of constant connectivity, information overload, and pressure to quickly adapt to technological changes their ability to balance work and personal life increases.

This finding may initially appear counterintuitive, given that many prior studies associate technostress with negative outcomes such as burnout, emotional exhaustion, and work-family conflict. For instance, Ma et al. (2021) found that technostress negatively affects work-life balance, primarily due to the mental fatigue and disruption it causes in daily routines. However, the current study suggests a more nuanced reality: in the context of civil servants at the Community and Village Empowerment Office in Indragiri Hilir Regency, technostress may be accompanied by increased digital competence and institutional support, allowing employees to manage work more flexibly and efficiently, thereby enhancing their work-life balance.

Similarly, Suhardiman and Susanti (2022) observed a positive association between technostress and work-life balance in certain bureaucratic environments. They concluded that the structured nature of digital government systems and pre-established workflows might reduce ambiguity and increase predictability in daily tasks, thus enhancing perceived control over work schedules. This finding aligns with the present study, suggesting that the effects of technostress are context-dependent and may differ across organizational cultures and technological readiness levels.

4.2 Influence of Technostress on Self-Efficacy

Another significant result from this study is the positive relationship between technostress and self-efficacy. The analysis shows a path coefficient of 0.587 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating strong statistical significance. This suggests that technostress, when appropriately managed, can act as a challenge stressor that stimulates cognitive engagement and confidence among employees.

This result resonates with the job demands-resources (JD-R) theory, which differentiates between hindrance stressors (which are detrimental) and challenge stressors (which can be motivating). As per this framework, certain types of technostress may foster learning and adaptation, pushing employees to acquire new skills and enhance their self-efficacy (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). When faced with technological demands, civil servants might develop new competencies and coping strategies that boost their belief in their ability to perform effectively in digital work environments.

Supporting this viewpoint, Yin et al. (2022) demonstrated that technostress, under some conditions, can promote workplace flourishing if employees perceive sufficient organizational support and opportunities for skill development. This is consistent with Bandura's (1997) theory of self-efficacy, which emphasizes mastery experiences as a major source of efficacy beliefs. The exposure to digital tools and platforms, accompanied by successful adaptation, likely contributes to increased confidence in technological and task-related capabilities among the study's participants.

4.3 Influence of Self-Efficacy on Work-Life Balance

Contrary to expectations and to much of the existing literature, this study finds no significant direct effect of self-efficacy on work-life balance. The path coefficient is 0.075 with a p-value of 0.685, which is far above the standard significance threshold. This result indicates that, within this research context, higher self-efficacy does not necessarily translate into better balance between work and personal life.

This finding contrasts with previous studies, such as those by Ma et al. (2021), who argued that self-efficacy acts as a protective factor by reducing emotional exhaustion, thereby indirectly supporting better work-life balance. Similarly, Chandra Putra et al. (2020) found that flexible work arrangements combined with high self-efficacy enhance job satisfaction and work-life harmony.

One possible explanation for the divergent result in this study may lie in contextual factors. The bureaucratic and hierarchical nature of government work may limit the degree to which employees can exercise discretion over their schedules or task execution, regardless of their confidence levels. In such settings, institutional norms and rigid procedures may override individual capabilities, diminishing the practical influence of self-efficacy on balancing work and non-work responsibilities.

4.4 Mediating Role of Self-Efficacy between Technostress and Work-Life Balance

This research further investigates the potential mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship between technostress and work-life balance. However, the analysis indicates that the indirect effect is statistically insignificant, as reflected by a path coefficient of 0.044 and a p-value of 0.699. These findings imply that self-efficacy does not act as a mediating variable within the tested model. This outcome holds particular significance, as it questions a widely held assumption in organizational and psychological literature that self-efficacy consistently serves as a central mechanism linking stressors to individual outcomes. Although previous research (e.g., Molino et al., 2022; Ma et al., 2021) has frequently highlighted self-efficacy's role in buffering or mediating the effects of stress, the current study reveals that, in specific institutional contexts, the direct influence of technostress on work-life balance may outweigh the cognitive-emotional pathways involving self-efficacy. It is also plausible that other psychological or contextual variables not captured in this study such as organizational support, digital literacy, or job autonomy could better explain the mechanism through which technostress affects work-life balance. In the absence of such moderators or mediators, self-efficacy alone may not suffice to bridge the relationship between these variables.

4.5 Implications for Practice and Theory

From a practical standpoint, the study underscores the importance of recognizing the dual nature of technostress. While often viewed as a source of harm, technostress can also serve as a catalyst for growth when supported by adequate training, peer support, and adaptive work environments. Institutions should therefore invest in digital literacy programs and design work systems that frame technological change as an opportunity rather than a threat. Theoretically, the findings challenge the generalizability of established models regarding the mediating role of self-efficacy in stress research. It becomes clear that the relationship between technostress and work-life balance is not always straightforward and may bypass traditional cognitive-emotional pathways. Future research could explore additional mediators such as resilience, mindfulness, or emotional regulation, particularly in the public sector where bureaucratic constraints may limit personal agency.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate the influence of technostress on work-life balance among civil servants at the Community and Village Empowerment Office of Indragiri Hilir Regency, with self-efficacy examined as a mediating variable. The findings reveal that technostress exerts a direct and significant positive impact on work-life balance, as well as on self-efficacy. However, contrary to expectations, self-efficacy did not significantly influence work-life balance, and therefore did not mediate the relationship between technostress and work-life balance. These outcomes suggest a unique dynamic within public service environments, where adaptation to technology, despite being stressful, may coincide with enhanced balance in work and life domains potentially due to rigid bureaucratic structures or limited work flexibility. From a practical standpoint, these findings hold valuable implications for managers, policymakers, and organizational leaders in the public sector. Efforts to address technostress should not only focus on reducing technology-induced strain but also on cultivating environments that sustain employees' psychological resilience and confidence. Investment in digital literacy training, adaptive leadership development, and employee wellbeing programs such as digital detox policies or mental health support could help enhance self-efficacy even if it does not directly translate to improved work-life balance. Moreover, refining work structures to support healthy boundaries between professional and personal life remains essential.

This study, however, is not without limitations. The sample was restricted to a single government institution with a relatively small respondent pool ($n = 63$), which may constrain the generalizability of results across different sectors or geographic regions. Furthermore, the use of self-reported measures may have introduced biases related to social desirability or misperception. Future research should consider expanding the sample size and incorporating comparative studies across public and private sectors to examine sectoral differences in technostress dynamics. Additionally, exploring other psychological or organizational mediator such as resilience, organizational support, or digital competency may offer deeper insights into the mechanisms linking technostress with employee outcomes. Longitudinal studies could also provide more robust evidence regarding causality and changes over time in response to digital transformation efforts.

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