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## Work-Family Frustration When You and Your Partner Both Work From Home: The Role of ICT Permeability, Planning, and Gender

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### Abstract

This paper presents a 10-day diary study of psychological and relational costs of working from home for individuals in live-in partnerships when both partners work from home (WFH). As employees rely on the permeability afforded by information and communication technologies (ICTs) to coordinate work, family responsibilities, and interactions with each other, they experience heightened after-work frustration due to the blurring of the boundary between work and family roles and strain on their cognitive and emotional resources. We integrate boundary theory and ego depletion theory (EDT), developing and testing a framework centered on after-work family role frustration in the WFH context. Our theoretical framework posits that the extent of work-to-family ICT permeability in WFH situations is positively associated with levels of after-work frustration. This frustration affects job productivity and can lead to potential conflict between partners. Given recent WFH-related findings showing that women bear a greater proportion of domestic responsibilities while also meeting job demands, we also examine the moderating effect of gender on the relationship between ICT permeability and after-work frustration. Additionally, we investigate the mitigating role of planning behavior in interrupting the cycle of ICT permeability and frustration. Our findings strongly support the proposed model, providing empirical evidence of the psychological costs of working from home and the effectiveness of planning as a mitigation strategy. Our study makes a significant theoretical contribution by illuminating the relationships among ICT permeability, after-work frustration, and work-family dynamics. This research extends the literature on the WFH phenomenon enabled by advanced ICTs such as email, text messaging, mobile phones, and remote meeting apps (e.g., Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet). It provides critical insights for research on the future of work surrounding the well-being aspects of WFH. Practically, our findings offer actionable insights for individuals and organizations, helping them recognize and mitigate the psychological costs of working from home while better managing work-family boundaries to improve overall well-being.

**Keywords:** Remote work, Hybrid work, Work From Home, WFH, Work-Life Balance, ICT Permeability, Planning Behavior, Job Productivity, Family Conflict, Partner conflict, After-Work Frustration

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## 1 Introduction

*Maya has just concluded her day working from home and is looking forward to a relaxed evening with her family. However, as she joins her husband, Michael (who also works from home), and their two young children, her smartphone continues to incessantly chime with work-related notifications. As Maya grapples with the delicate balance between professional responsibilities and family commitments, she feels as though her work life has encroached upon her personal life. Michael is in the same boat, and as they both juggle professional duties and family responsibilities, their frustration is mounting. Work-family conflict is straining their relationship during evening meals and family activities. Maya reflects on her frustration in fulfilling her roles as a loving spouse and mother in the face of relentless technology-enabled intrusions into her family life. Their predicament exemplifies the challenge faced by couples who both work from home in today's world of permeable ICT (information and communication technologies) use.*

The rise of working from home,<sup>1</sup> fueled by advancements in ICT, such as email, texts, mobile phones, and remote meeting apps, has profoundly reshaped the modern work environment. Working from home offers increased flexibility and autonomy over personal and professional responsibilities, offering a blend of benefits and challenges (Benlian, 2020; Sarker et al., 2021). While the integration of ICTs into daily life facilitates greater control over work activities, these technologies also allow work concerns to permeate the family domain. This encroachment blurs the previously distinct boundaries between work and family domains, resulting in newfound frustrations in managing work-family conflict—challenges that were largely absent in non-WFH settings.

These frustrations have become increasingly problematic, affecting not only work performance but also seeping into family dynamics (Butts et al., 2015; Tams et al., 2020). Recent surveys have highlighted the significance of this issue, with more than a third of couples reporting that working from home has strained their relationships (Zetlin, 2023). Additionally, a notable 45% of young Americans attribute the increase in divorce rates to the proliferation of WFH

arrangements (Zetlin, 2023), underscoring the urgency of addressing WFH-induced family frustrations. In light of this, this study focuses on the dynamics of work intrusion into family life.

Acknowledging that work-family dynamics are bidirectional (Aryee et al., 1999; Sarker et al., 2021; Tompson & Werner, 1997), we posit that focusing on family role frustrations provides critical insights into how work demands disrupt family well-being. In doing so, we extend the existing research on frustration in the WFH setting, which has predominantly focused on how work-related frustrations impact work outcomes (Harold et al., 2016; Mueller & Benlian, 2022).

The focus on family frustration is novel in the work-life literature. This perspective is important because the WFH phenomenon has prompted renewed concerns about emotional and psychological distress stemming from difficulties in fulfilling family roles due to work intrusion (Harold et al., 2016; Leroy et al., 2021). Such intrusion can deplete an individual's psychological availability and cognitive resources to engage fully with family, thus creating after-work family role frustration (hereafter after-work frustration). In this research, we seek to demonstrate how this frustration influences both work and personal outcomes (Aryee et al., 1999; Venkatesh et al., 2019).

More formally, the central tenet of this research is “work-to-family ICT-enabled permeability” (hereafter ICT permeability), which describes how ICTs pierce the once-impenetrable barrier between work and home, allowing psychological or behavioral aspects of work to intrude into home life (Ashforth et al., 2000; Bulger et al., 2007). This concept encapsulates the challenges individuals face as the pressures of working from home blur the lines between professional and personal responsibilities. Because ICT permeability facilitates work stress and allows emotions to spill over into family life (Clark, 2000), we utilize boundary theory to understand how permeability operates and affects after-work frustration, making it appropriate for examining work and family dynamics. We also integrate ego depletion theory (EDT) in our theorizing because permeability implies a continuous negotiation of resources between work and family demands (Ackerman et al., 2009), a hallmark of remote work.

Given the above, we respond to recent calls to deepen the understanding of the triggers and consequences of after-work frustration in the WFH context (Perry et al., 2023) and to develop effective mitigation strategies (Speights et al., 2020). Our primary aim is to examine the effects of ICT permeability on after-work frustration

<sup>1</sup> WFH refers specifically to work from one's home. It is a subset of the broader category of remote work, which encompasses both part-time and full-time remote workers who may work from various locations outside of a traditional

office setting. While all WFH arrangements are a form of remote work, not all remote work arrangements involve working from home.

among individuals in live-in partnerships where both partners work from home, capturing the unique dynamics of dual-remote households. This context allowed us to explore how overlapping role demands and ICT-enabled boundary intrusions may contribute to heightened work-family conflict and frustration compared to settings where only one partner works from home. When both partners work from home, frequent negotiation is required throughout the day to manage office space, call scheduling, household tasks, and personal time. Partners must not only manage their own ICT intrusions but also those of their partner. Without a non-working partner to provide a buffer, both experience mutual interruptions and competing role expectations, highlighting the distinct psychological and relational impacts of shared WFH environments. These complexities create a markedly different dynamic than when only one partner works from home; they have the potential to generate significant frustration and conflict.

Investigating the antecedents of after-work frustration due to ICTs is crucial for crafting interventions that enhance job performance and improve overall well-being and work-life balance for people working from home. Our first research question is: *How does ICT permeability influence after-work frustration of individuals in live-in partnerships when both partners work from home?*

Second, we investigate both the work and family consequences of after-work frustration. Although after-work frustration is a work-family interface phenomenon, much of the previous research has approached work and family outcomes in isolation, focusing predominantly on one domain without considering the other (with some exceptions, such as Magni et al., 2023). Examining the effects on both work and family outcomes in the same study adds realism to the WFH phenomenon, because individuals' experiences and overall well-being are profoundly influenced by the interplay between work life and family life (Fox & Spector, 1999; Hunter et al., 2019). Our study contributes by investigating exactly how these effects manifest.

The family outcome we focus on is partner conflict, an outcome that has implications for work-life balance and general family well-being (Vinokur et al., 1996). More specifically, we posit that after-work frustration, facilitated by ICT permeability, increases the likelihood of conflict for individuals in live-in partnerships<sup>2</sup> when both partners work from home. Research shows that individuals experiencing after-work frustration are less likely to act in a patient and civil manner toward their

partners (Bakker et al., 2008). When the other partner is also working from home, the issue is magnified: both partners are experiencing after-work frustration, and so both are less likely to act in a patient and civil manner.

The work outcome we examine is job productivity, as this is widely regarded as the ultimate criterion for evaluating work outcomes (Murphy, 2013). While extensive research into how work-related frustration affects work outcomes exists (Mueller & Benlian, 2022), there is a notable absence of studies examining how family-related frustration may influence work outcomes. Given the above, our second research question is: *How does after-work frustration affect work and family outcomes for individuals in live-in partnerships when both partners work from home?*

Third, we examine individual characteristics that may influence the effects of ICT permeability on after-work frustration. We focus on gender because previous studies have found that women are more likely to experience higher expectations for fulfilling family demands and typically engage in more invisible labor (e.g., Gupta et al., 2019; Sarker et al., 2018), making the effect of ICT permeability more salient for them. The gender<sup>3</sup> effect in work and family experiences is consistently a critical aspect of work-life balance studies (Lewis & Cooper, 1999). Despite advancements in gender egalitarianism over the years, the pace of change in gender role expectations has lagged. Women still tend to prioritize family, friendships, and romantic relationships more than men (Bleske-Rechek & Gunseor, 2022; Donner, 2020; Eagly & Wood, 2012; Lewis, 2020). Understanding the differential impact working from home has on women helps in addressing issues related to women's turnover and participation in the workforce. These issues are also key to maximizing workforce talent (Schultheiss, 2021). We expect these effects to exist even when both partners are working from home. Therefore, our third research question is: *How do gender differences impact the effect of ICT permeability on after-work frustration for individuals in live-in partnerships when both partners work from home?*

Finally, we wish to identify mitigating factors that might alleviate the effect of ICT permeability on after-work frustration. Planning has been recognized as a core element for individuals managing competing demands and limited resources (Claessens et al., 2007). Given the presence of constant competing demands in WFH settings, we aim to better understand the potential benefits of planning in relation to the work-family interface. Our

<sup>2</sup> This study primarily examines WFH dynamics within heteronormative family structures due to our specific research scope and objectives. Given that we examine partner dynamics that rely on gender-related social norms that are embedded in traditional partnerships, this type of family structure is most appropriate.

<sup>3</sup> We acknowledge that there are opinions about whether gender is binary or bimodal. We do not intend to take a position on the arguments. Rather, we focus on the sex binary as the basis of the gender binary that is observed in Western cultures, where much of the research referenced in this article was conducted.

last research question is: *How can planning mitigate the negative effects of ICT permeability on after-work frustration for individuals in live-in partnerships when both partners work from home?*

The study design included a 10-day diary study from the perspective of individuals in live-in heterosexual partnerships, where both partners work from home. This specific focus forms the research context as a boundary condition, allowing us to explore the unique family dynamics it creates for couples working from home. Here, both partners must navigate work and family responsibilities while coordinating with each other (Feng & Savani, 2020). Social norms and expectations related to gender play a role in this dynamic (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999). The study design involved an experience sampling methodology (ESM) approach, where participants respond to surveys multiple times a day, during both working and non-working periods, for several consecutive days. By observing individuals' daily experiences across time in the natural environment, ESM allowed us to obtain a nuanced temporal perspective of the consequences of ICT permeability on family and work outcomes through after-work frustration. The methodological value of adopting ESM is substantial because it permits data collection at multiple time points, reducing retrospective bias and addressing the causality issues often found in cross-sectional studies (Gabriel et al., 2019; Koopman et al., 2016).

This research contributes to the understanding of work-life balance in several important ways. First, our study develops a deeper understanding of after-work frustration of individuals in live-in partnerships where both members are working from home, extending the research on the WFH phenomenon (Benlian, 2020). Second, we extend the work-life balance research by simultaneously examining work and family outcomes in the same model, in contrast to past studies that have often considered either work or family outcomes in isolation. Our research design and theorizing incorporate the complexity and interdependencies inherent in the challenges of working from home (Crawford et al., 2019), allowing us to achieve a more comprehensive picture of the work-life dynamic. Third, we bring a novel theoretical framework into the WFH literature in IS by integrating boundary theory and EDT to explain the role of ICT-enabled permeability in creating after-work frustration and its downstream effects on work and family outcomes. This integration provides a more comprehensive explanation of the interplay between boundary and resource management and highlights the importance of effectively managing family role frustrations. Fourth, we theorize and provide empirical evidence for gender effects in the scholarly literature on working from home. Finally, we theoretically develop and empirically test how a mitigating factor, daily planning, can reduce the deleterious effects of blurred work and home boundaries.

From a managerial perspective, our research responds to the call by Choudhury et al. (2020) by providing evidence for organizations to consider strategies to mitigate the psychological costs for employees who might not have sufficient time and resources to manage their work and family roles when working from home.

## 2 Theoretical Background

In this paper, we integrate boundary theory and EDT to examine the influence of ICT permeability on after-work frustration through the interplay of work-family boundaries and resource allocations, along with the subsequent impacts on work and family outcomes. In the paragraphs below, we discuss these theories in the context of our research. We lay the conceptual foundation of how boundary theory explains the creation and management of work-family boundaries, the impact of ICT permeability on these boundaries, and the role of personal characteristics and mitigation strategies. Additionally, we articulate how EDT provides insight into the psychological processes of resource depletion caused by ICT intrusions and their impact on well-being and interpersonal relations.

### 2.1 Boundary Theory

This work is grounded in boundary theory. Ashforth et al. (2000) formulated boundary theory to conceptualize how individuals create, maintain, or change boundaries between work and family roles and the extent to which individuals view work and family as separate or as integrated domains. Boundaries "delimit the perimeter and scope of a given domain (a role, a country, a home, a workplace)" (Kreiner et al., 2009, p. 705). Boundaries structure and demarcate the various roles an individual maintains in different domains. Individuals play their roles in the domains of work, family, and other social occasions. These roles are often defined by specific times and locations, which create clear boundaries between them (Park et al., 2020). Highly permeable boundaries allow individuals to "be physically located in the role's domain but psychologically and/or behaviorally involved in another role" (Ashforth et al., 2000, p. 474).

#### 2.1.1 ICT Permeability of Work-family Boundaries

The ubiquitous attributes of ICTs facilitate the permeability of role boundaries and allow role intrusions between work and family life. Previous literature on ICTs has raised concerns about their negative impact on employees because they promote the blurring of work-family roles and create difficulties in preventing role intrusions. This has been described as "the experience of confusion or difficulty in distinguishing one's work from family roles in a given setting" (Desrochers et al., 2005, p. 449).

ICT use provides flexibility, allowing individuals to engage in work-related activities after regular working hours. Although physically located at home with family and friends, ICT use significantly increases the permeability from work to family, blurring the work-family boundaries (Ahuja et al., 2007). The ongoing roles in the family domain are intruded upon by work roles. Consequently, frequent ICT use for work-related activities during non-working hours may disrupt individuals' enactment of family roles, leading to frustration about fulfilling family responsibilities (Li & Yuan, 2018; Park et al., 2020). This challenge is exacerbated when employees work from home because the physical boundary between work and family is lost.

In remote work settings, such permeability is even more salient because ICTs lead to a more flexible workday, and individuals' personal time is not strictly tied to pre- or post-work hours but can emerge at various points throughout the day (Walker et al., 2023). For instance, prior research shows that remote workers often check emails or respond to work-related calls during breaks or even before the formal start of their workday (e.g., while having breakfast or taking children to school) (Bloom et al., 2015; Newbold et al., 2022).

Further, while working remotely, individuals tend to structure their daily routines differently than they might if they were going to a physical workplace. They may handle personal tasks during work hours and plan to compensate for this time later in the evening. Personal time is dispersed throughout the day rather than confined to typical pre- or post-work hours.

Most pertinent to the context of this research, ICT intrusions pose even greater challenges for live-in partners who work from home. As they share a home—and, in some cases, an office—they must coordinate video and audio calls due to space and sound considerations. They must also manage household responsibilities and other work demands. For example, they must coordinate on meal preparation, breaks (e.g., whether they will eat together or separately), and school and activity pick-ups. ICT intrusions into personal time (such as meals and work breaks) are likely to lead to preoccupation, emotional stress, and frustration.

### **2.1.2 Personal Characteristics and Mitigation Strategies in Boundary Management**

Boundary theory posits that personal characteristics and mitigating strategies can assist in managing the permeability of boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000; Capitano & Greenhaus, 2018). The impact of using ICTs for work during non-working periods may be affected by personal attributes, such as work identity and personality (Kreiner et al., 2009). For example, this blurring of boundaries may have a greater impact on women, as they tend to prioritize family roles and often carry a disproportionately high burden of household and childcare responsibilities (Sarker et al., 2021).

The work-life balance literature suggests that mitigating strategies for boundary management can be categorized either from an individual perspective—such as the strategies individuals adopt to manage work and family roles and tasks—or from an organizational perspective, which includes regulations and policies implemented by organizations to help employees navigate work and family roles (Allen et al., 2014; Kreiner et al., 2009). More attention has been paid to organizational-level policies for managing work-family boundaries than to individual-level strategies (Kreiner et al., 2009). Thus, there is a dearth of research focusing on mitigating strategies that individuals—particularly those working from home—can use to manage blurred work and family boundaries.

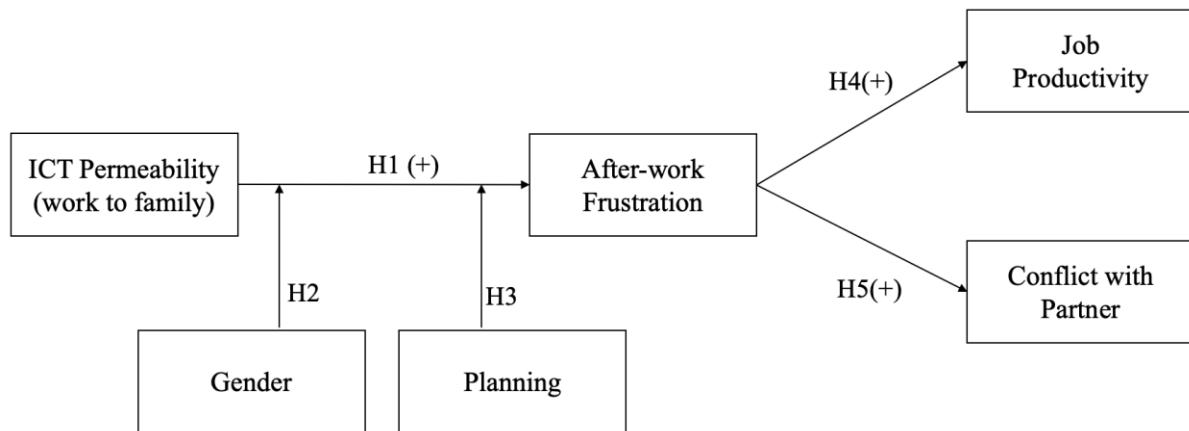
Existing literature has offered mitigating factors to manage boundaries and reduce work-family conflict, including family chore outsourcing (Hoser, 2012), daily planning (Parke et al., 2018), job switching (Kelly et al., 2011), meditation (Atkinson, 2013), and family therapy (Dattilio & Epstein, 2015). Of these, planning behavior, reflected by goal setting and task prioritizing (Macan, 1994, p. 391), is considered the most prominent in the WFH context because it is most effective at disrupting the patterns of permeability.

Most planning literature focuses on how planning helps employees manage tasks at work (e.g., Bakker, 2008; Britton & Tesser, 1991; Macan, 1994; Schmidt et al., 2013). Daily work planning, such as creating task schedules and setting work priorities, is widely recognized as a way to enhance employee effectiveness both in the short term and over time (Claessens et al., 2007). However, only a few studies have explored the potential benefits of planning in relation to the work-family interface (e.g., Adams & Jex, 1999; Lapierre & Allen, 2012). Planning is exceedingly meaningful for live-in couples who both work from home, as it shapes not only individual coping strategies but also interactions between partners. Nevertheless, the role of daily planning has not been systematically investigated, particularly within the work-family research and ICT use literature.

### **2.2 Ego Depletion Theory (EDT)**

EDT posits that individuals possess a finite reservoir of energy dedicated to self-control, which is essential for regulating behaviors in line with goals and societal norms (Baumeister et al., 2007; Muraven & Baumeister, 2000). Continuously engaging in self-regulatory mechanisms, such as emotional regulation, gradually depletes these resources and leads to a decline in the capacity for further self-control (Beal et al., 2005). Without opportunities for recovery, this depletion can persist or even intensify over time (Baumeister et al., 2007), reducing the ability to deal with frustration.

### A Model of Impact of ICT Permeability on WFH Outcomes for Individuals in Live-In Partnerships When Both Partners Work From Home



**Figure 1. Research Model**

#### 2.2.1 ICT Permeability and Frustration Through Ego Depletion

While boundary theory highlights how the blurring of work and family boundaries can exacerbate work-family conflict, EDT provides a nuanced understanding of the psychological mechanisms through which ICT permeability leads to frustration. Specifically, EDT explains how sustained self-regulation in WFH settings contributes to emotional exhaustion and interpersonal strain.

In dual-WFH households, professional and personal boundaries become highly porous. As a result, ego depletion can become a prolonged state, as individuals face persistent ICT intrusions with limited opportunities for recovery (Baumeister et al., 2018; Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006). This chronic resource depletion heightens frustration, exacerbates interpersonal tensions, and intensifies conflicts in personal relationships, underscoring the psychological toll of blurred work-life boundaries.

Moreover, frustration can impair an individual's ability to effectively manage interpersonal interactions (Goroun & Payne, 2006). EDT suggests that this resource depletion increases the likelihood of lapses in self-control, further exacerbating interpersonal tensions (Baumeister et al., 2007). When a difficult situation arises in the household, the already-frustrated individual struggles to remain calm, leading to escalated frictions. This escalation is particularly pronounced when both partners experience depletion simultaneously, as neither can effectively de-escalate the conflict. These incidents, symptomatic of a broader pattern of resource depletion, compound the exhaustion of cognitive and emotional reserves (Baumeister et al., 1998; Lin et al., 2020) and heighten the risk of sustained conflict between partners.

Thus, informed by the principles of EDT, ICT permeability impairs resource recovery, further intensifying partner conflicts and straining family relations. The theory also underscores the need for strategies to manage ICT integration in a way that supports resource conservation and promotes relational well-being.

### 3 Research Model and Hypotheses Development

By integrating boundary theory and EDT, we develop a conceptual model suggesting that ICT permeability affects after-work frustration, which in turn impacts an individual's job productivity and conflict with their partner. Further, we propose that gender and planning moderate the relationship between ICT permeability and after-work frustration. Our research model is shown in Figure 1.

#### 3.1 The Effect of ICT Permeability on After-Work Frustration

After-work frustration reflects the negative emotions and irritating distress individuals experience when they are unable to fulfill family activities or personal responsibilities due to work-related interruptions (Jeronimus & Laceulle, 2017). A traditional working day consists of distinct domains: working time and non-working time (Zijlstra et al., 2014). However, in WFH settings, this separation gets blurred, as personal and family time is interspersed throughout the day. Work may occur during breaks for meals, a couple's time together, family care, exercise, and relaxation, as well as in the evenings (Voicu et al., 2023; Walker et al., 2023).

This blurring of boundaries makes it more difficult for individuals to engage in family responsibilities or personal needs during non-work periods, as it hinders full disengagement from work and prevents them from focusing entirely on family or personal time (Ashforth et al., 2000). Each interruption forces individuals to decide whether to focus, divide, or switch attention, all of which require mental resources (Turner & O'Leary, 2012). Moreover, interruptions during personal time disrupt resource replenishment. Consequently, attempting to complete family tasks while facing work-related activities is likely to induce frustration (Voydanoff, 2005). The flip side of the flexibility enabled by ICTs is that “anytime, anywhere” can quickly become “all the time, everywhere” (Sarker et al., 2021).

In dual-WFH households, WFH introduced an additional complication as each partner must manage intrusions from their own workplace while maintaining boundaries for their partner's work. Each partner must negotiate scheduling audio meetings, managing office space, completing household and family tasks, and finding personal time with their partner throughout the day. ICT intrusions disrupt agreed-upon arrangements, which can create frustration. By contrast, in single-WFH or partly remote households, partners often buffer each other by providing support and opportunities for recovery. However, when both partners work from home, neither can fully fulfill this buffering role, limiting recovery opportunities and increasing role strain. Sustained fatigue and lack of recovery can lead to periods of ego depletion (Hagger et al., 2010), which diminishes self-control and emotional regulation, further heightening frustration (Baumeister et al., 2007; Xia et al., 2020).

Thus, spending additional time on work-related activities during non-work hours, while also managing the complexities of both partners working from home, depletes resources and impairs individuals' psychological recovery (Sonnenstag, 2003). The primary mechanism driving frustration in constant digital connectivity is the cognitive burden of repeatedly managing professional interruptions, which fragments attention, drains mental resources, and heightens stress. When work constantly intrudes into personal life, individuals expend substantial self-control resources to protect boundaries (Ragsdale & Hoover, 2016; Sarker et al., 2010). The greater the extent of these intrusions — whether during breaks or before the formal workday begins—the greater the depletion of psychological and emotional reserves, further deepening the state of ego depletion (Burke & Greenglass, 2001; Sonnenstag & Zijlstra, 2006), which in turn leads to a sense of frustration. The above discussion leads to our first hypothesis:

**H1:** ICT permeability is positively associated with higher levels of after-work frustration.

### 3.2 The Moderating Role of Gender

Despite increased participation in the workforce and evolving gender roles, women are still more likely to invest more time and effort in managing domestic chores, performing childcare, and maintaining relationships (connections with family, friends, and a romantic partner). Literature suggests that women continue to prioritize these roles more than men (Armstrong et al., 2018; Eagly & Wood, 2012; Sarker et al., 2021). Specifically, scholars argue that women experience more work-family conflict because they typically bear greater home responsibilities, consistent with social expectations (Kossek & Ozeki, 1999; Sarker et al., 2018; Webster, 2002).

Work-family conflict is intensified by negative sanctions for noncompliance with role expectations (Dahm et al., 2015). Traditionally, men have faced stronger sanctions for failing to meet work demands, while women have faced stronger sanctions for not fulfilling family demands (Kossek et al., 2017). For example, Eddleston et al. (2006) demonstrated that masculine self-schemas emphasize the career role more, whereas feminine self-schemas prioritize the family role (Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). This is true even if the higher-earning partner is a woman (Bittman et al., 2003). Recent studies confirm that women spend more time on household responsibilities and report lower satisfaction with work-life balance (Starmer et al., 2019). Given these dynamics, it is no surprise that work-life balance research consistently shows that gender significantly influences how individuals experience the interplay between work and family life (Kossek et al., 2017; Lewis & Cooper, 1999).

Research indicates that women experience more guilt and negative emotions when they overlook family responsibilities due to work obligations (Borelli et al., 2017). In addition to high expectations regarding family roles, women are likely to experience higher levels of psychological frustration from work intrusions that prevent them from fulfilling family responsibilities. The heightened psychological burden can deplete women's self-control more quickly, leading to increased frustration. Studies of negative feelings, such as incompetence and guilt over family responsibilities, typically draw from an exclusively female sample (Borelli et al., 2017; Guendouzi, 2006). We contribute by providing a comparison between genders in couples where both partners work from home.

Women are often responsible for invisible labor—unnoticed and undervalued work at home that includes household chores, childcare, and emotional support for family members (Daniels, 1987; Hochschild & Machung, 2012). This essential labor, though uncompensated, increases women's overall family workload (Ciciolla & Luthar, 2019; Daminger, 2019). Consequently, the burden of these additional family

responsibilities intensifies after-work frustration for women. This effect is exacerbated when ICT permeability allows work to intrude into family life, further increasing women's frustration as they strive to fulfill their family roles and manage invisible labor.

Reports show that the COVID-19 pandemic adversely affected women's work situations more significantly than men's (e.g., Fazackerley, 2020; Kitchener, 2020). It is therefore not surprising that women experienced lower productivity and dropped out of the workforce at a higher rate than can be explained by labor-market dynamics alone (Barrero et al., 2021; Sarker et al., 2021). Those who remained employed were more likely to juggle dual roles simultaneously (Feng & Savani, 2020). Due to the multiplicity of demands on their time and attention, women face more psychological frustration from managing multiple roles, particularly when they believe they are not adequately fulfilling family roles, whereas men may feel less concerned about neglecting these obligations. Therefore, the effect of ICT permeability on after-work frustration is likely to be magnified for women. The above discussion indicates that women tend to bear a greater psychological burden and are typically responsible for invisible labor to a higher degree in the household. Consequently, engaging in work activities through ICT during non-working hours is likely to cause more after-work frustration for women than for men. Hence, we hypothesize:

**H2:** Gender moderates the relationship between ICT permeability and after-work frustration such that the relationship is stronger among women compared to men.

### 3.3 The Moderating Role of Planning Behavior

One important factor suggested in the literature to manage tasks and boundaries is the concept of daily planning, which refers to activities that involve the "setting of goals concerning what the person wants or needs to accomplish and the prioritizing of tasks necessary to achieve these goals" (Macan, 1994, p. 391). Planning facilitates effective time use by setting goals, prioritizing tasks, making to-do lists, and grouping tasks (e.g., Britton & Tesser, 1991; Macan, 1994). It implies self-management in the performance of multiple tasks within a certain time period (Claessens et al., 2007) and helps individuals schedule and prioritize their tasks to manage boundaries between work and family activities (Parke et al., 2018; Sitzmann & Johnson, 2012).

Investigating family task and work task planning simultaneously is essential because both types of tasks are tightly coupled while working from home. Ubiquitous ICT use while working from home exacerbates this situation by allowing individuals to work whenever and wherever they please, making it

easier to work during family time. By creating detailed plans, individuals can strive for optimal strategies to allocate their limited resources, thus largely reducing the frustrations from resource depletion (Baumeister et al., 2016). Those who do not engage in planning behavior may experience work and family tasks becoming entangled, making them more likely to experience blurred boundaries and competition for resources between these domains. However, planning helps separate work life and family life by allocating prescribed time for each domain, facilitating a more effective distribution of attention and energy (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000), and alleviating feelings of being frazzled and frustrated.

ICT use can be addictive (Wang & Lee, 2020; Xu et al., 2022). The addiction may disrupt task completion, compromise a user's social life, and negatively affect others in a user's work and family circle (e.g., Magni et al., 2023; Turel et al., 2011). Planning can effectively reduce the level of ICT addiction. During planning, users shift from having intentions (Ajzen, 1985) to creating a course of action for accomplishing those intentions, which helps reduce mindless engagement in excessive ICT use by providing clear goals and direction. Planning can also encourage users to monitor progress, which can help them stay focused on tasks and can help them resist the temptation to constantly be on ICT during family time.

Moreover, setting priorities and making plans daily clarifies expectations, thereby reducing disappointment and anxiety caused by miscommunication. Say, for example, that one partner is expecting an important email or call at a certain time after regular working hours. Informing family members about the call creates an understanding environment and helps reduce personal frustration. Advance notice allows individuals to prepare physically and psychologically and to allocate resources effectively, thus likely reducing frustration levels. Hence, we hypothesize:

**H3:** Planning moderates the relationship between ICT permeability and after-work frustration such that the relationship is stronger among those who use less rather than more planning behavior.

### 3.4 Effect of After-Work Frustration on Work and Family Outcomes

After-work frustration is not merely a byproduct of the independent existence of family and work obligations but rather a manifestation of the ongoing conflict between these responsibilities. This distinction is critical, as the frustration stems from the challenge of fulfilling roles within designated times, such as family responsibilities during after-work hours. This conflict leads to a unique form of psychological strain (French & Allen, 2020).

A significant source of the conflict lies in the limitations of human capacity. Previous research has underscored that individuals need sufficient cognitive and emotional resources to manage both work and family activities (Huang et al., 2014; Shoss et al., 2012). Building upon EDT, which posits that individuals have finite cognitive and emotional resources (Baumeister et al., 1998), our research argues that frustration from unmet family obligations further erodes these limited resources.

EDT also provides a framework for understanding the cascading effects of resource depletion on interpersonal relations. As discussed above, the exhaustion of psychological energy and resources is a precursor to diminished self-control (Baumeister et al., 1998). This energy is expended not just on work tasks, but also on regulating behavior and emotions amid work-life integration challenges. In settings where both partners work from home, both individuals face extremely porous boundaries between professional and personal life. Ego depletion can become a sustained state due to the lack of recovery opportunities, leading to increased frustration (Baumeister et al., 2018; Sonnentag & Zijlstra, 2006).

According to EDT, the depletion of cognitive and emotional resources increases the likelihood of being unable to manage interactions and interpersonal conflict (Govorun & Payne, 2006). When both individuals in a household work from home and experience similar frustrations, neither individual has the comfort of a partner who can provide validation and bring perspective to the situation.

Further, when individuals find themselves in a state of after-work frustration, they are likely to make choices that restore balance in domains where they perceive a higher likelihood of success. Engaging in work allows individuals to redirect resources towards tasks where they perceive a higher likelihood of success and recognition, serving as a retreat from family responsibilities and a proactive effort to regain control and self-efficacy (Direnzo et al., 2015). This strategic reallocation of resources manifests as an attempt to efficiently manage limited self-control reserves. Invariably, work serves as a constructive outlet for individuals seeking fulfillment beyond their personal life (Direnzo et al., 2015). When family responsibilities conflict with work tasks, many people perceive the work domain to be non-negotiable and more urgent. Thus, rather than depleting resources uniformly, frustration triggers a strategic reallocation towards domains where success feels more attainable, emotional struggles are less salient, and any potential failure is less devastating (Courtright et al., 2016). This reallocation alleviates frustration by providing a psychological buffer that reinforces professional identity and conserves self-control. This dynamic explains why individuals invest in work-related activities to counterbalance the depletion experienced in the family domain.

Moreover, frustration builds incrementally, and individuals usually presume understanding at home because it is perceived as a safer and more secure environment compared to the work domain (Bolino et al., 2023). Because individuals presume understanding from their families, they have a higher tolerance for problematic issues at home. In the workplace, inferior behavior can lead to significant consequences such as job loss or demotion (Leana & Feldman, 1988). This prompts individuals to prioritize work and not jeopardize their professional life (e.g., Dumas & Sanchez-Burks, 2015), often doing so “for the sake of the family.”

This contrast creates a dynamic where individuals are more inclined to address work-related issues promptly to avoid negative repercussions and more apt to believe that family issues can wait. They are likely to favor work rewards that are often immediate and tangible, such as financial compensation and career advancement (e.g., Gerhart & Fang, 2014; Ng et al., 2005), over family rewards, which are typically delayed and intangible (e.g., Diener & Biswas-Diener, 2002; Parke, 2004; Seligman, 2002). Therefore, when family-related frustrations accumulate, individuals might engage even more with work tasks to protect their professional role and offset the stress associated with family obligations. This strategic, if somewhat subconscious, reallocation of focus, time, and energy towards work is predicted to lead to increased job productivity. While the frustration may not completely vanish, the sense of accomplishment gained from work can serve as a temporary reprieve and a source of renewed energy, potentially leading to more productive work outcomes. Hence, we hypothesize:

**H4:** After-work frustration is positively associated with job productivity.

Building upon the premise that frustration significantly taxes an individual's resources, we contend that after-work frustration heightens the potential for interpersonal conflict, particularly with one's partner. Research shows that resource depletion encourages aggressive behaviors in the family domain and between partners (Westman et al., 2001). When individuals are free from the grips of frustration, they typically maintain a reservoir of cognitive and emotional resources sufficient to navigate family responsibilities and even engage positively in additional family activities, fostering a nurturing domestic atmosphere.

However, the situation is markedly different for those grappling with after-work frustration. Such individuals face a resource deficit, making the replenishment of cognitive and emotional reserves more challenging. EDT explains that this depletion of resources impairs self-control, leading to defensive and often hostile behaviors (Osgood & Muraven, 2016; Stucke & Baumeister, 2006). When cognitive and emotional resources are depleted, it becomes difficult for people to regulate behavior in alignment with personal and societal expectations. In

these circumstances, individuals might default to a defensive stance (Hobfoll, 2001). This posture represents a strategic effort to conserve depleted resources, which may manifest as a reluctance to engage in family interactions or as a negative, even hostile, response to family demands, with the intent of forestalling additional resource depletion.

The repercussions of frustration extend to the realm of self-control and interpersonal conduct. As self-control capacities diminish under the strain of frustration (Barber et al., 2017; Baumeister et al., 2007), the individual's ability to engage in patient, civil, and courteous behavior becomes compromised. This often results in heightened expressions of impatience and annoyance (Lin et al., 2020) and a propensity to initiate incivility when provoked, or even when unprovoked. Simultaneously, the diminished resources impair the individual's empathy, reducing their capacity to see a situation from their partner's perspective, to afford a partner the benefit of the doubt, or to formulate a measured response to provocation (Nicholson & Griffin, 2015; Taylor et al., 2017). Such an impaired response mechanism can escalate tensions, potentially spiraling into a feedback loop of conflict and resource drainage. Hence, we hypothesize:

**H5:** After-work frustration is positively associated with conflict with one's partner.

## 4 Method, Analyses, and Results

### 4.1 Experience Sampling Methodology (ESM)

Recent research indicates that most attitudes, affective states, and behaviors are subject to daily fluctuation and should not be treated as static phenomena. For instance, we do not always experience the same mood, exert the same effort in our activities, or behave consistently when we return home each day (e.g., Gabriel et al., 2019). Following this logic, ESM allows the study of relationships among the dynamic fluctuations in individuals' experiences, psychological states, and outcomes at the intra-individual level (Koopman et al., 2016). Despite the pivotal role played by intra-individual phenomena, most existing research in the IS domain that studies individual behaviors relies on cross-sectional research designs. These designs cannot capture daily fluctuations and dynamic relationships among these concepts in a way that reflects the temporal processes linking these constructs.

Given that our research focuses on phenomena expected to exhibit daily fluctuations, we relied on ESM (e.g., Benlian, 2020, 2022; Ilies et al., 2017). ESM involves individuals providing responses to surveys over a specified period, such as an hour, a day, or a week. ESM offers several advantages compared to commonly used cross-sectional research designs. First, repeated responses from each participant allow for a more accurate

understanding of the investigated phenomena (Fisher & To, 2012) by capturing the concepts under investigation within the context in which they occur. This approach alleviates the retrospective bias inherent in cross-sectional studies. For example, most studies in IS research focusing on individual behaviors adopt a cross-sectional design, requiring participants to recall events or states that occurred before data collection, potentially compromising measurement validity (with notable exceptions, for example, Benlian, 2020, 2022). Second, collecting data over time, with multiple daily surveys ensuring the temporal precedence of exogenous variables, alleviates common method and causality concerns when testing hypotheses (Ilies et al., 2017). By employing ESM, we provide a nuanced temporal perspective on the consequences of ICT permeability on family and work outcomes through after-work frustration, capturing the dynamic interplay between these domains in real time.

### 4.2 Sample and Procedure

This study targeted participants who switched to working from home during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific focus on heterosexual couples living together. We studied heterosexual couples because of our focus on gender dynamics embedded in heteronormative family structures, enabling us to gain depth and specificity in understanding relational and work-family interactions within this prevalent family model. We specifically selected participants who live with a partner and work from home to explore the distinctive dynamics of dual-WFH households. This context, characterized by simultaneous work demands from both partners, allowed us to examine the heightened boundary management challenges and potential compounding effects on after-work frustration. It further enabled us to explore how competing role demands on partners—necessitating negotiation and management of ICT-enabled boundary intrusions, not just from oneself but also from the partner's work—may lead to heightened frustration and work-family conflict, compared to settings where only one partner works from home. Further, when only one partner works from home, the other partner can typically provide a buffer and pick up the slack during personal time. Thus, this context allowed us to offer insights into the distinct psychological and relational impacts of shared remote work environments when both partners experience work from home.

Participants were recruited by using CloudResearch, a participant-sourcing platform for online research and surveys. We pre-screened participants to include those who were over 18 years old, living in the United States, living with a spouse or partner, and currently working from home full-time on a regular work schedule (i.e., starting between 8-9 am and ending between 4-5 pm) as of August 2020. Based on an a priori power analysis, we recruited 223 participants to ensure sufficient power for testing the hypotheses.

Before implementing the diary study, participants completed a survey to collect demographic information. For 10 consecutive workdays, participants responded to three daily online surveys: midday ( $T_1$ ), afternoon after work ( $T_2$ ), and before going to bed ( $T_3$ ). We chose a 10-day period for the diary study administration based on the recommendation of Reis and Wheeler (1991, p. 287), who argued that “the 2-week record-keeping period is assumed to represent a stable and generalizable estimate of social life.” A 10-day observation period is widely used in research relying on ESM because it is long enough to capture the consistency of individuals’ behaviors over time, allowing researchers to identify behavioral patterns that would be missed with a shorter time frame (e.g.,

Bolger et al., 2003; Koopman et al., 2016). Furthermore, a 10-day period balances the length of observation with the required commitment from participants, ensuring reliable data collection (Hektner et al., 2007).

As expected, not all participants completed every daily survey over the 10-day period. In our analysis, we considered only those who answered at least 70% of the proposed daily surveys. Our final sample contained 117 participants, consistent with prominent previous research using the same methodological approach (e.g., Pluut et al., 2018; Ilies et al., 2006). We obtained 3,274 data points<sup>4</sup> over a 10-day period. Participant demographics are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Participants Demographics**

Variable	Value	Frequency	% Respondents
Age	18-24	4	3%
	25-29	25	21%
	30-39	57	49%
	40-49	21	18%
	50-59	9	8%
	60 and above	1	1%
Gender	Women	33	28%
	Men	84	72%
Education level	Some college, no degree	4	3%
	Associate degree	5	4%
	Bachelor’s degree	65	56%
	Master’s degree	41	35%
	Professional/Doctoral degree	2	2%
Work tenure	0-2 years	14	12%
	3-5 years	43	37%
	6-10 years	39	33%
	11-20 years	14	12%
	21 years and above	7	6%
Race	White/Caucasian	76	65%
	African American	27	23%
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	6	5%
	Asian	5	4%
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	1	1%
	Multi-racial	1	1%
	Other	1	1%
Household income	Less than \$10,000	2	2%
	\$10,001-\$29,999	12	10%
	\$30,001-\$49,999	20	17%
	\$50,000-\$69,999	36	31%
	\$70,000-\$89,999	22	19%
	\$90,000-\$109,999	13	11%
	\$110,000-\$149,999	8	7%
	More than \$150,000	3	3%
<b>Total participants</b>		117	

<sup>4</sup> We collected data over a period of 10 days, at three intervals per day, yielding a total of 3,510 data points (117 participants  $\times$  10 days  $\times$  3 times/day). However, due to 236

missing data points during the collection period, we ultimately recorded 3,274 data points.

**Table 2. Descriptives and Correlations**

	Variables	Time	Variable type	Mean	SD	Cronbach Alpha	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	<b>Age</b>	General survey	Between person	3.07	.95	NA								
2	<b>Gender</b>	General survey	Between person	.28	.45	NA	-.11							
3	<b>Negative affectivity</b>	T1	Within person	2.41	1.25	.94	-.02	-.11						
4	<b>Work demands</b>	T1	Within person	5.17	1.12	.89	.20*	.06	.05					
5	<b>ICT permeability</b>	T1	Within person	4.64	1.59	.92	.14	.08	.06	.25**				
6	<b>Planning</b>	T1	Within person	5.18	1.16	.86	.17	.04	.00	.22**	.25**			
7	<b>After-work frustration</b>	T2	Within person	4.03	1.89	.93	-.02	.10	.08*	.08**	.11**	.03		
8	<b>Job productivity</b>	T3	Within person	5.51	1.04	.75	.10	-.01	-.04	.06*	.09**	.10**	.15**	
9	<b>Conflict with partner</b>	T3	Within person	3.88	1.91	.95	.01	.09	.05	.02	.07*	-.00	.11**	.08**

*Note:* In order to calculate the correlations among Between-person and Within-person variables, all the Within-person variables have been aggregated across the 10 days. \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$

### 4.3 Measures

All survey measures were adapted from previously validated scales. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics, reliabilities, bivariate correlations, and measurement characteristics of the variables. Appendix A presents the constructs for which scales already exist, their items, and the sources. All daily measures were collected as within-person constructs; these capture variations within the same individual over time. Gender and age were collected as between-person constructs, as they represent stable characteristics that vary across individuals but not within the same person.

**ICT permeability:** In the Time 1 survey, we assessed ICT permeability using a five-item scale developed by Boswell et al. (2016). This scale measures the extent to which ICT use for work penetrates family boundaries during the day, in line with the goals of ESM and consistent with previous research adopting a similar research design (Koopman et al., 2016). This approach effectively captures the intrusion of the workday into personal time within WFH environments. This aligns with prior research showing that remote workers often check emails or respond to work-related calls during breaks or before the formal start of their workday (Bloom et al., 2015; Newbold et al., 2022).

**Planning:** We measured planning in the Time 1 survey using the six-item scale developed by Parke et al. (2018). Participants were asked to evaluate the extent to which they scheduled and prioritized their activities for the day.

**After-work frustration:** After-work frustration captures the extent to which individuals experienced frustration after regular working time because they were unable to complete activities pertaining to the family domain. We

assessed after-work frustration in the Time 2 survey using three items from Harold et al. (2016).

**Job productivity:** Job productivity reflects an individual's ability to fulfill the demands pertaining to the work domain. We measured job productivity in the Time 3 survey using three items from Pearce and Sims (2002).

**Conflict with partner:** We measured conflict with partner in the Time 3 survey by adapting five items from Hinds and Mortensen (2005) to the family domain. Participants assessed the extent to which they experienced friction and conflict with their partner throughout the day.

In our analyses, we controlled for variables that could potentially affect our results on job productivity and conflict with the partner. Specifically, we controlled for age, as prior research suggests it could influence how individuals perceive and interpret the permeability between work and personal boundaries (Spieler et al., 2018). Additionally, we controlled for work demands during the day, as they could deplete the pool of available resources after the workday. Finally, we controlled for negative affectivity to rule out its potential confounding role in studying the effects of individuals' negative emotional states after work (Mueller & Benlian, 2022).

### 4.4 Preliminary Analyses

Prior to testing our research model, we conducted several preliminary analyses to examine the robustness of our measurement model in terms of convergent and discriminant validity. We performed a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) based on all the daily observations obtained. A five-factor model specifying ICT permeability, planning, after-work

frustration, conflict with partner, and job productivity as distinct factors provided an adequate fit to the data ( $\chi^2(199) = 955.08$ ; RMSEA = 0.06; SRMR = 0.052) compared to other models. Specifically, we ran a model in which items collected at the same time wave loaded on a single factor, resulting in a three-factor model: ICT permeability and planning on one factor (collected at Time 1), frustration on the second factor (collected at Time 2), and job productivity and conflict with partner loaded on another factor (collected at Time 3) ( $\chi^2(206) = 3379.23$ ; RMSEA = 0.12; SRMR = 0.14). Additionally, we ran a one-factor model in which all the items pertaining to the five constructs were combined into a single factor ( $\chi^2(209) = 7158.33$ ; RMSEA = 0.18; SRMR = 0.18). As general guidelines, values of 0.08 or less for RMSEA and SRMR indicate a good fit, corroborating the robustness of our five-factor model (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Moreover, a chi-square difference test confirmed that the five-factor model is significantly different from the three-factor model ( $\chi^2$  diff. (7) = 2423.39,  $p < 0.01$ ) and the one-factor model ( $\chi^2$  diff. (10) = 6202.99,  $p < 0.01$ ).

## 4.5 Analyses and Results

To test our hypotheses, we used Stata GSEM, a covariance-based structural equation modeling technique that uses the maximum likelihood (ML) and relies on the same assumption as other covariance-based approaches, such as Lisrel, AMOS, or Mplus. It also allows for the consideration of the non-independence of data by calculating clustered standard errors and is particularly suitable for individuals with repeated observations or nested within groups (Bartus, 2017). Given the nested nature of our data (i.e., daily observations nested within individuals), we relied on standard errors clustered within individuals. Since ESM relies on data collected multiple times from the same subject, observations were not independent, thus requiring techniques that adequately

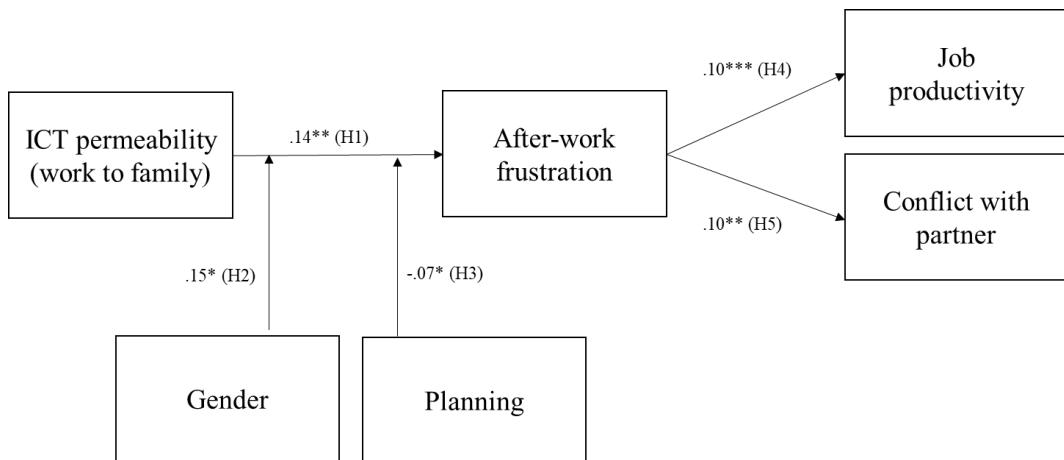
account for the variance of non-independent observations.

In our analyses, we centered the daily predictors around each participant's mean, subtracting the participant's mean from each of their observations. For instance, a positive person-centered score in frustration indicates that the individual felt more frustrated than usual at that specific moment in time. This approach is widely used in ESM research because it removes between-person variance and produces estimates that reflect purely within-person processes (Dimotakis et al., 2013). In general, in ESM methodology, coefficients are smaller than in traditional between-person studies because they indicate the association among variables that reflect within-person phenomena. Our within-person coefficients are in line with previous research using our study design, indicating that the statistical outcomes reflect the phenomenon under investigation (e.g., Uy et al., 2017).

To proceed with testing our hypotheses, we conducted the analysis in two steps: First, we tested the hypotheses concerning the main effects; then, we added the interaction terms to test the moderation hypotheses. H1 predicted that ICT permeability would be positively related to after-work frustration. Indeed, the relationship between ICT permeability and after-work frustration was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting this hypothesis.

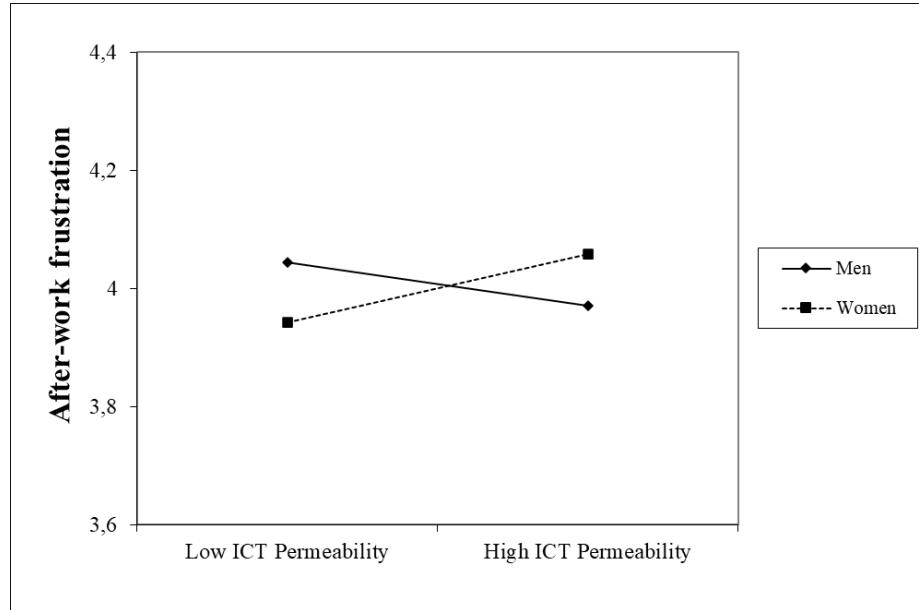
H2 and H3 hypothesized the moderating roles of gender and planning in the relationship between ICT permeability and after-work frustration. H2 was supported, as the interactive effect of ICT permeability and gender was significant ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). H3 was also supported, as the interactive effect of ICT permeability and planning was significant ( $\beta = -0.07$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Figure 2 presents our results.

**A Model of Impact of ICT Permeability on WFH Outcomes for Individuals in Live-In Partnerships When Both Partners Work from Home**

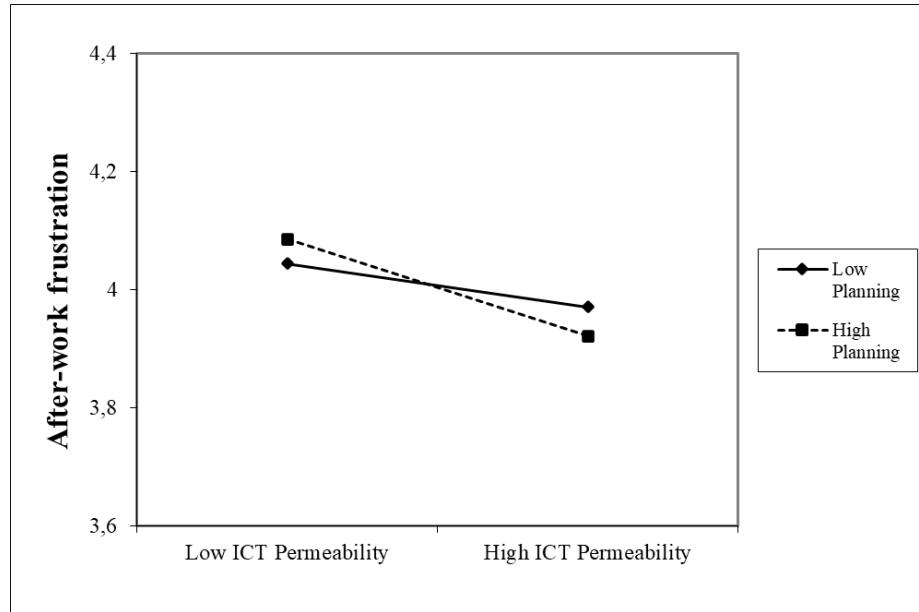


Note: \*\*\* $p < 0.001$  \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \* $p < 0.05$ . One-tailed test based on the directionality of the hypotheses. Control variables have been modeled but not reported here for parsimony.

**Figure 2. Model Results**



**Figure 3. Interaction Effect of ICT Permeability and Gender on After-Work Frustration**



**Figure 4. Interaction Effect of ICT Permeability and Planning on After-Work Frustration**

To understand the nature of these moderation effects, we followed Aiken et al. (1991) in plotting the interactions. Figure 3 shows that the effect of ICT permeability on after-work frustration is stronger for women, while Figure 4 illustrates that the effect of ICT permeability on frustration is weaker when individuals engage in planning behaviors.

Finally, H4 and H5 posited the consequences of after-work frustration on both work and family outcomes. The effect of after-work frustration on job productivity was significant ( $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.001$ ), supporting H4. H5

was also supported, as the relationship between after-work frustration and conflict with partner was positive and significant ( $\beta = 0.10, p < 0.01$ ).

## 5 Discussion

Drawing on boundary theory and EDT, this study investigates the role of ICT permeability on after-work family role frustration and its downstream effects on family and work outcomes for individuals in live-in partnerships when both partners work from home.

Overall, our findings from a 10-day diary study show that, in this context, high levels of ICT permeability are likely to result in higher after-work frustration, which in turn heightens family conflicts while also presenting a positive effect on job productivity. The mechanism for these effects is that ICT use for work during non-work time blurs the boundary between family and work, depletes individuals' limited resources, and leads to frustration over family role fulfillment, which impacts both work and family outcomes for individuals in live-in partnerships when both partners work from home.

In addition, we examined how gender affects the influence of ICT permeability on the after-work frustration level. Our findings suggest that women are more vulnerable to the negative effects of ICT permeability due to conventional gender role assignments, expectations, and frequent work role intrusions. Furthermore, we focused on planning as a mitigating factor for reducing frustration arising from ICT permeability. Our results indicate that daily planning plays a crucial role in alleviating the negative consequences of ICT permeability.

Further, following Magni et al. (2023), we highlight the differential impacts on both work and family outcomes. Thus, our study extends prior research by focusing on family and work outcomes in dual-WFH households, an important context that has received limited attention in the literature. Most studies (e.g., Benlian, 2020; Park et al., 2020) examine either work or family outcomes in isolation. By examining both family and work outcomes, our findings provide a more nuanced understanding of WFH and work-family dynamics. Future research on work-life balance could adopt this model to provide a more comprehensive view of employees' experiences. Together, these findings have important theoretical and practical implications.

## 5.1 Theoretical Implications and Future Research Directions

Our research makes several important theoretical and empirical contributions (Ågerfalk & Karlsson, 2020) to research on work-life balance and the future of work.

Our study enriches the IS work-family literature by *integrating boundary theory and EDT*, providing a robust theoretical foundation for understanding work-life balance in WFH contexts. Boundary theory provides insights into how people navigate the boundaries between work and personal life, while EDT explains how self-control resources are depleted and replenished. Integrating these two theories highlights the interplay between boundary management and self-control, which helps create a comprehensive understanding of the cognitive burden created by porous boundaries and their effect on self-regulation. This approach creates a more holistic view of how individuals manage their mental resources across different life domains.

Integrating these theories presents a promising avenue for developing more effective interventions aimed at improving work-life balance and reducing frustration. Specifically, understanding how boundary management conserves self-regulatory resources can inform the design of mitigation strategies (such as planning) to prevent ego depletion. Furthermore, integrating these and other related theories can improve the predictive power of models related to behavior and performance.

By highlighting the interdependencies among ICT permeability, boundaries, and cognitive resources, our findings show that managing work-life balance in remote work requires addressing not only personal strategies, such as planning, but also structural and contextual factors, such as gendered role expectations and household dynamics. Future research could extend this work by exploring additional dimensions of boundaries and resources, including temporal and spatial factors and their effects on family dynamics and overall well-being in dual-career households.

Our findings also extend each of these theories individually. We *extend boundary theory* by illustrating that ICT permeability reshapes traditional boundaries. While prior work has often characterized boundaries as either rigid or flexible (Ashforth et al., 2000; Wang et al., 2021), our results show that individuals frequently adjust their boundaries dynamically in response to cognitive and emotional resource demands. For example, women's heightened experience of after-work frustration due to role expectations highlights how boundaries are shaped not only by individual preferences but also by external pressures and societal norms (Shockley et al., 2017). This dynamic perspective suggests that boundary theory should incorporate a more fluid conceptualization of boundaries, particularly in ICT-intensive settings.

Our findings *refine EDT* by showing that resource depletion caused by ICT permeability can be mitigated through planning as a resource reallocation strategy. This observation adds depth to EDT by emphasizing that resource depletion is not merely a static or inevitable consequence of ICT use; rather, it can be actively managed (Baumeister et al., 1998). The finding that planning mitigates after-work frustration offers an actionable insight into how individuals preserve their cognitive and emotional resources in WFH contexts, suggesting that EDT could more explicitly incorporate resource recovery strategies.

We *contribute to the ICT use literature* by examining the unique, boundary-eroding effect of ICT permeability on work and family outcomes, particularly family frustration. This perspective, which examines both domains within the same model, offers a more nuanced understanding of the work-family interface in the WFH setting, which remains underexplored in the work-life balance literature (Gopalan & Pattusamy, 2020). Our findings also shed light on the toll that continuous connectivity can impose on family well-being.

Our research highlights the *critical role of after-work family role frustration* when working from home. Previous research on ICT use has predominantly emphasized work-related frustrations (Mueller & Benlian, 2022; Rahiem, 2020; Wang et al., 2021); our study extends this literature by investigating family role frustrations exacerbated by ICT permeability. Our findings demonstrate the effect of family role frustrations on partner conflict, highlighting the need to explore ways to reduce these frustrations. Researchers should investigate approaches to alleviating family role frustrations, which could inform better support systems and strategies for remote workers—ultimately enhancing their performance and reducing conflicts both at work and at home (Benlian, 2020). Doing so is crucial because family role frustrations significantly influence employees' overall well-being, work-life balance, and job satisfaction (Hunter et al., 2019). By incorporating this important factor, researchers can gain a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by employees in WFH environments.

Our research contributes to the job performance literature by examining the effects of after-work family role frustration on job productivity. Existing studies have primarily examined how working from home affects work arrangements (Fazackerley, 2020; Kitchener, 2020), particularly focusing on the negative impact of work frustration on productivity (e.g., Feng & Savani, 2020). However, our findings indicate that after-work frustration stemming from family responsibilities can sometimes positively influence job productivity. This counterintuitive result suggests that individuals may reallocate resources to work as a coping mechanism for family-related frustrations. In light of our findings, future research should consider including or controlling for after-work frustration when examining job performance. Additionally, although job productivity is widely regarded as the ultimate criterion for evaluating job performance (Murphy, 2013; Tarafdar et al., 2007), we encourage scholars to explore other work-related outcomes—such as job engagement, helping behaviors, and commitment—to develop a more comprehensive understanding of how after-work frustration affects overall work outcomes.

We emphasize that although after-work frustration may boost job productivity in the short term, the sustainability of this increase is questionable. The long-term effects of after-work frustration on job performance require further investigation because prolonged frustration could ultimately lower productivity (Piao & Managi, 2022). We urge future researchers to adopt a longitudinal approach to compare the effects of working onsite versus working from home on job performance, thereby providing a deeper understanding of how these dynamics evolve over time.

Our research provides scholarly and *empirical evidence for gender effects in the WFH context*, corroborating reports in the popular press (Gaskell, 2023). Consistent

with recent studies, our findings indicate that women's work productivity significantly declined following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic (Feng & Savani, 2020). Our results suggest that women were more affected and more frustrated by the permeability between work and family roles when working from home. These findings contradict previous research, which has suggested that flexible work settings help women balance work and family by allowing them to work on their own schedules and with more autonomy (e.g., Chung & Van der Lippe, 2020; Windeler et al., 2017). One plausible explanation for this discrepancy could be the loss of external support for childcare, education, and family chores due to the pandemic (Lewis, 2020). However, and more importantly, our research indicates that women are more likely to be psychologically frustrated by their inability to fulfill family roles amid increased ICT permeability.

Our findings also highlight the need to refine our understanding of how gender roles influence work-family conflict. Women may be more affected by ICT permeability because of their stronger identification with family roles compared to men. By incorporating insights from boundary management research, we offer a nuanced perspective on how work interruptions disrupt family life and intertwine work and family roles. These findings have significant implications for gender equity at work, as the increased burden on women could lead to career stalls and career derailments in the long term (Cui et al., 2022). We urge gender researchers and organizational decision makers to assess the effectiveness of existing policies supporting women in balancing work and life, particularly in flexible work settings.

Our research makes significant contributions to the WFH literature by addressing ongoing calls from Choudhury et al. (2020) for *strategies to mitigate the psychological costs associated with the struggle between work roles and family roles*. Extending the work of Lapierre and Allen (2012), we theoretically develop and empirically examine the mitigating effects of planning on reducing the deleterious effects of blurred work and family boundaries. Our findings indicate that planning behavior is particularly salient in the context of working from home. By interrupting the pattern of permeability-induced frustration, planning serves as a key strategy for managing work-life balance.

Building on our findings, researchers should continue to explore the dynamics of planning to develop more robust time and role management strategies for enhancing work-life balance. A promising avenue would be to investigate specific planning behaviors: how do individuals plan and prioritize their work and family activities? How do they execute their planned actions? What techniques and tools do they use to implement their plans? It is essential to understand how planning changes behavior, impacts family and work outcomes, and influences perceived control of time and effectiveness in task completion.

Moreover, gaining deeper insights into the role planning plays requires examining its broader consequences. For instance, how does timely task completion, as planned, influence key outcomes such as job performance, increased leisure time, or reduced overtime? Future research should explore these associated factors to understand whether structured planning improves both professional efficiency and personal well-being (e.g., Aeon et al., 2021; Rau & Triemer, 2004).

## 5.2 Practical and Managerial Implications

Our research presents important implications for individuals, supervisors, and organizations.

### 5.2.1 Implications for Individuals

Our findings suggest that ICT permeability can lead to after-work frustration due to the inability to fulfill family roles, which, in turn, may increase family conflict. To reduce family conflict, individuals might consider scheduling technology-free times and zones while engaging in non-technology-driven activities, potentially reducing familial discord and enhancing family intimacy. Mechanisms such as digital curfews, scheduled breaks, and mindfulness practices could help individuals manage boundaries and alleviate after-work frustration. For instance, families could establish a daily 7-8 pm “no-tech” hour during dinner and family activities. Software applications, such as RescueTime or Trello, could assist in delineating the boundary between work and family time by providing reminders or visual scheduling tools to minimize work-related intrusions.

Our study also highlights how planning mitigates the adverse effects of ICT permeability. For example, partners who share their schedules with each other can better coordinate their plans, prepare both physically and psychologically, and adjust their activities to avoid miscommunications. Identifying ways to share to-do lists, digital calendars, or structured plans can be instrumental in managing the interface between professional and personal domains. While technology offers valuable solutions, barriers such as unfamiliarity with scheduling tools or unequal participation in planning activities between partners may undermine these efforts. Providing user-friendly digital solutions and encouraging shared responsibility can help individuals overcome these challenges and establish healthier work-family boundaries.

### 5.2.2 Implications for Supervisors

Our study provides practical guidance on how supervisors can effectively manage employees working from home via ICT. While many companies are transitioning employees back to the office, a significant number intend to retain or expand WFH arrangements post-pandemic (Coldewey, 2022; Latifi, 2022; Quarles, 2024). Supervisors must recognize that ICT

permeability can lead to after-work frustration for employees, necessitating the need for mindful and proactive mitigation strategies. One effective approach would be training employees in planning techniques, as these strategies can enhance time management skills and reduce family conflict (Claessens et al., 2007; Green & Skinner, 2005). By helping employees develop structured planning habits, supervisors can support a healthier work-life balance and promote the long-term sustainability of WFH arrangements.

Moreover, supervisors can cultivate a workplace culture that empowers employees to communicate their availability within teams. For example, employees might block out personal time on shared calendars (e.g., “unavailable from noon to 1 pm”) to reduce interruptions during family or leisure activities. However, implementing these strategies may be challenging in teams accustomed to real-time availability and a culture of constant responsiveness. Supervisors can address this by fostering trust, clarifying expectations around availability, and reinforcing that boundary setting is both acceptable and encouraged.

Training managers and co-workers on after-hours communication norms would be another critical step. For instance, supervisors could establish clear policies limiting after-hours emails or define what constitutes an “urgent” matter to reduce unnecessary interruptions and preserve employees’ cognitive control resources (Boswell et al., 2016; Kossek & Perrigino, 2016). Minimizing unnecessary work-related intrusions can help employees maintain the attentional resource capacity needed to manage occasional interruptions while smoothly transitioning back to their personal lives. While such policies may face resistance in high-pressure work environments, supervisors can address these concerns by emphasizing the long-term benefits for employee well-being, productivity, and work-life balance.

### 5.2.3 Implications for Organizations

Organizations are encouraged to develop WFH policies that grant employees control over flexible work arrangements while establishing clear boundaries between work and family life. For example, policies should ensure that non-urgent work meetings are not scheduled after 6 pm or during weekends, thereby protecting family time. While the formalization of such policies may vary depending on organizational resources, all organizations—regardless of size—can adopt practical, scalable strategies. These may include leveraging shared calendars, implementing informal guidelines, encouraging employees to plan long-term schedules, and communicating emergency needs judiciously. Such approaches help create a predictable and supportive environment, reducing disruptions and fostering a healthier work-family balance.

Clearly, some of these strategies—such as restricting after-hours communication—are more feasible in large corporations where resources allow for greater flexibility. In contrast, start-ups, where employees often juggle multiple roles, may find it challenging to enforce rigid work-life boundaries. For smaller companies, fostering a culture of mutual consideration and shared responsibility may be the key to maintaining balance.

IT support is also critical to employees' well-being and work-life balance. While technology facilitates communication, excessive IT use can lead to constant interruptions and increased workload (Ahuja et al., 2007; Chen & Karahanna, 2018). Organizations might consider limiting synchronous meetings, particularly for employees with significant family responsibilities, or designating "quiet work hours" to facilitate uninterrupted focus. For example, employees with caregiving obligations could block off time for family needs while ensuring clear communication with their teams. Resistance to such policies can be mitigated through leadership training on work-life balance priorities, ensuring consistent implementation across teams.

Despite the positive correlation between frustration and job productivity noted in our findings, prolonged frustration can negatively impact employee well-being (Kahn, 2019; Little & Masterson, 2023). To address this, organizations should develop holistic IT policies that minimize intrusive monitoring practices while prioritizing employee well-being. For instance, rather than relying on constant productivity tracking, organizations could implement well-being tools such as mindfulness apps or virtual wellness programs, which may help reduce frustration while improving job satisfaction and employee loyalty (Parker et al., 2020).

We recommend that organizations develop ongoing support programs, particularly for female employees, to address work-related frustration. Research during and after the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a notable decline in academic submissions from women, underscoring persistent challenges in balancing professional and family responsibilities (Cui et al., 2022; Feng & Savani, 2020). Given that women often shoulder a disproportionate share of family responsibilities, affecting both productivity and career progression (Kitchener, 2020), it is critical to ensure equitable career opportunities. Targeted programs should be designed to support female employees facing WFH challenges, such as juggling childcare or managing household duties. Such initiatives can help sustain job productivity and promote equitable career advancement for all employees.

### **5.3 Limitations and Future Research**

Our contributions to theory and practice should be considered in light of the limitations of our study. First, our focus on non-work time ICT use led us to investigate work-to-family ICT permeability exclusively. Future

research could explore how family-to-work ICT permeability influences work-life conflict, particularly by examining how family demands encroach on work responsibilities and affect professional outcomes.

Second, although we used experience sampling to capture ICT permeability in real time, measuring work-to-family ICT permeability at midday reflects the increasingly fluid nature of work and personal time in remote work settings. For example, lunch breaks, caregiving duties, or rest periods during the day can constitute "personal time." However, how individuals perceive these moments may differ (Hunter et al., 2019)—for instance, responding to personal messages during lunch might feel like a refreshing break to one employee but a stressful reminder of family obligations to another. This variation highlights broader complexities in the literature around how work and non-work time are experienced in flexible arrangements and opens new avenues for refining boundary-related constructs (e.g., Allen et al., 2014; Hunter et al., 2019). Future studies could build on this work by adopting more frequent or adaptive sampling strategies to better capture the full range of ICT intrusions and the subjective meanings people assign to them throughout the day. Such approaches could further advance theoretical distinctions between work and non-work time in today's dynamic digital work environments.

Third, our data collection relied solely on one partner's perspective within live-in partnerships where both partners work from home. This approach may not fully capture the range of dynamics and interactions within these relationships, as partners can have different perceptions and experiences. Future studies should consider matched-pair designs, collecting data from both partners to provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. For instance, researchers could examine how shared versus conflicting boundary management strategies between partners influence family satisfaction and work productivity.

Fourth, our participants were exclusively from heterosexual families, which may limit the generalizability of our findings to other family structures, such as single parents and same-gender couples. While both heterosexual and same-gender couples are likely to experience challenges associated with both partners working from home, the dynamics of heterosexual partnerships are more likely to be embedded in traditional social norms. We acknowledge that family structures, including same-gender and non-binary families, may exhibit distinct role-sharing dynamics that influence work-life integration. Similarly, single parents may experience heightened family-to-work ICT permeability due to sole caregiving responsibilities. Considerable work is still needed in this area to better understand how diverse family structures navigate work-life configurations. We invite future research to include a broader range of family structures to provide a more inclusive perspective on

work-family dynamics and to develop tailored interventions that address the unique challenges of different household structures.

Another limitation of this study is the gender imbalance in the sample. Our decision to examine gender as a moderator was based on theoretical foundations highlighting significant gender differences in family role frustration (e.g., Borelli et al., 2017; Kossek et al., 2017; Powell & Greenhaus, 2010). Despite the smaller proportion of women in our sample, our study still offers valuable insights into how gender affects the impact of ICT permeability on frustration. While numerous studies have demonstrated that meaningful insights can still be drawn from imbalanced samples (e.g., Grubbs et al., 2015; Kang & Deren, 2009), this imbalance may affect the generalizability of our findings. Researchers interested in gender differences might consider including a more balanced sample in future studies to validate the moderating effect of gender more robustly.

Additionally, we relied on participants' self-reported job productivity. While self-report data can be subject to social desirability bias (Chung & Monroe, 2003), prior research suggests that the impact of such bias is limited (Ones et al., 1996; Spector, 2006). Moreover, we prioritized subjective over objective measures for two key reasons: (1) objective job performance is difficult to assess in a WFH context, as supervisors lack direct observation, and (2) research indicates that managerial ratings of individual performance can be as biased as self-report ratings (Levy & Williams, 2004). In light of this argument, future research adopting ESM could rely on outcome variables that are less subject to social desirability bias, are linked to fluctuations in individual psychological resources, and can be assessed by the focal individual. For instance, future research could take into consideration the individual's ability to sustain focused attention on tasks. Indeed, task concentration is a fundamental component of individuals functioning in the workplace and is linked to long-term work effectiveness (Gaillard, 2008). It could represent a short-term behavioral signal that can help individuals adjust their daily behaviors to reach positive long-term results.

Finally, an extended longitudinal design could provide deeper insights into the evolution of work-family dynamics over time. While our 10-day diary study captured daily fluctuations, longer observation periods might reveal how individuals adjust their boundary management strategies over weeks or months. For instance, future research could examine how ICT permeability and after-work frustration fluctuate over extended periods as individuals refine their work-life boundaries. In addition, while our research design mitigated common method bias by assessing constructs at different points in time, it may not have captured all possible intrusions throughout the day. Future studies could also explore work-related ICT intrusions during late-night hours and weekends to gain a broader perspective on how technology shapes work-life boundaries.

## 6 Conclusion

This 10-day diary study, conducted from the perspective of individuals in live-in partnerships where both partners work from home, explored the psychological and relational costs associated with ICT permeability in this context and its effect on after-work frustration and downstream outcomes. The research enhances our understanding of how boundary management in dual-WFH households differs from other work-family settings, thus enabling a more holistic view of employees' well-being and family role fulfillment. Our study also provides empirical evidence related to the role of gender in these households and supports planning as a mitigating strategy to offset the costs associated with ICT permeability for WFH employees. By highlighting the importance of understanding after-work frustration and its impact on work and family life, our findings offer valuable insights for individuals and organizations navigating the complexities of the ICT work environment. These insights are particularly pertinent to shaping the future of work in an increasingly digital landscape.

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## Appendix

**Table A1. Construct Items**

Construct	Item description (7-point Likert scale ranging from <i>strongly disagree</i> to <i>strongly agree</i> )	Informing source
ICT permeability (work-to-family)	1. I am extensively using ICTs for work purposes while involved in family or personal tasks.	Bowell et al., 2016
	2. I am extensively responding to work-related communications (e.g., emails, texts, and phone calls) during my personal time.	
	3. I am extensively using ICTs for work-related purposes during my free time.	
	4. I am extensively allowing work-related communications (e.g., emails, texts, and phone calls) to interrupt me in my personal time.	
	5. I am bringing my ICTs with me when I attend personal or family activities.	
Planning	1. I made a list of all the things I have to do for the day.	Parke et al., 2018
	2. I determined the tasks I want to accomplish for the day.	
	3. I set priorities for my tasks for the day.	
	4. I prioritized the tasks I want to accomplish for the day.	
	5. I made a schedule of the activities I have to do for the day.	
	6. I decided how much time to spend on each of my tasks for the day.	
After-work frustration	1. Trying to get my family duties done after work has been a very frustrating experience.	Harold et al., 2016
	2. I am feeling frustrated with my family role fulfillment after work.	
	3. Overall, I have been experiencing frustration with my family-related activities outside my regular working time.	
Conflict with partner	1. Since after work, there was a lot of friction between my partner/spouse and me.	Hinds & Mortensen, 2005
	2. Since after work, there was evident conflict between my partner/spouse and me.	
	3. Since after work, there was tension between my partner/spouse and me.	
	4. My partner/spouse and I took the arguments personally since after work.	
	5. There was contention between my partner/spouse and me since after work.	
Job productivity	1. I performed work tasks that were expected of me.	Pearce & Sims, 2002
	2. I completed my job in a time-efficient way.	
	3. I performed my duties accurately and consistently.	
Negative affectivity	This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Indicate to what extent you CURRENTLY feel: 1- very slightly or not at all ... 7- extremely	Scott et al., 2014
	1. Distressed	
	2. Upset	
	3. Irritable	
	4. Nervous	
	5. Afraid	
Work demands	Think about today's work, I am experiencing...	LePine et al., 2016
	1. Having to complete a lot of work.	
	2. Having to work very hard.	
	3. Time pressure.	
	4. Having to work at a rapid pace to complete all of my tasks.	
	5. Performing complex tasks.	
	6. Having to use a broad set of skills and abilities.	
	7. Having to balance several projects at once.	
	8. Having to multitask your assigned projects.	

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