The Impact of Technostress on Wok-Life Balance: Evidence from Managerial Level Employees in Apparel Industry, Sri Lanka

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Abstract

In today's world, technology significantly impacts employees, presenting various challenges, particularly in the form of technostress, which makes it more challenging for them to make a proper balance between their work and life. The purpose of this study is to identify the impact of the technostress on the work-life balance of managerial-level employees who worked in the apparel industry, in Sri Lanka. This study was conducted as a deductive, and a quantitative field study, focusing on managerial-level employees of three selected apparel sector companies. Data was collected by distributing a self-administered questionnaire using a simple random sampling technique, with a total of 190 participants comprising the sample size. The responses gathered were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), version 23.0, as the primary tool for data analysis. Descriptive and inferential statistics, including correlation, regression, and independent sample t-tests, were used to analyze the data. The results indicate a significant negative impact of technostress on the work-life balance of managerial-level employees in the apparel industry, in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, this study highlights the importance of addressing technostress in the workplace, particularly among managerial-level employees in the apparel industry. Based on the findings, it is recommended that organizations consider implementing flexible working schedules which also include core hours along with customizable work schedules, and conducting mental relaxation programs to effectively reduce technology-induced stress.

Keywords: Techno complexity, techno-insecurity, techno-invasion, techno-overload,techno-uncertainty

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01. Introduction

The world has become a technology-driven icon. In today's era, Information, and communication technology (ICT) significantly impacts most organizations and individuals in diverse ways. Embracing technological advancements is imperative for business organizations to ensure their sustainable survival. In every single second, the employees are dealing with ICT, with a new technological advancement by trying to figure out how to deal with it or with any kind of technological device. This was notably increased especially after the pandemic, as private and public entities are moved to virtual (online), and employees can stay connected through technology. Thus, that work arrangement back then was known to be 'telecommuting' which is also known very popularly as 'work from home.' However, nowadays, the term has interestingly changed to 'work from anywhere.' Organizations are increasingly adopting modern technologies to increase their productivity. When organizations embrace new technologies, they are faced with the challenges of familiarizing themselves not only with the new tools and systems but also with the new devices (Internationl Labour organization Annual Report, 2020). Sometimes, the workers might feel difficulties in adapting the complex technologies at work, which also requires a significant amount of time and effort to learn especially for example, the implementation of a new system, or they might feel insecure with their jobs as fail to learn the technology might lose their jobs. Sometimes, the employees feel that they are overloaded with technology because of the constant connectivity. All these aspects combined create an elevated level of work stress for workers, induced by technology.

Though information and communication technologies provide myriads of benefits to organizations, it is essential to identify that there is a potential downside also. Sometimes, ICT can also create an elevated level of work stress as well for the workers as mentioned above and this is known as "technostress," which is one of the negative aspects of technology. As such, technostress can be defined as any negative aspects that technology has, and it will influences on someone's attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and physically (Concha, Cusi, Grau, & Camacho, 2021). Saim and Rashid (2021) also stated that techno-stressors have significant impact on today's business, resulting job dissatisfaction, lower performance, high turnover rates, and work life imbalance (Saim & Rashid, 2021). Similarly, researcher Champion (1988) highlights that technostress causes serious health problems such as accompanied by panic, anxiety, struggle with innovations and supervisors' orders, technophobia, mental fatigue, and perfectionism (Champion, 1998). When stress comes to play in one's life, the struggle to carry out day-to-day activities and as well as performing one's duties as an employee is evident. It is also evident that the employees' struggle to make a proper balance between the work and life of the employees is also one of the key outcomes of 'technostress' as ICT makes the boundaries between work and life (Syahril, Ilmi, & Effendi, 2022).

As a result, the organizations that do not assist the workers to maintain a proper work-life balance of employees may experience high turnover and talent loss which will create a negative impact on the sustainable survival of the organization. A significant amount of research has already found that ICT might be a significant factor that elevates the level of stress among employees. Standing on that, the present study strives to deep dive even more into the nuanced effects of technostress on work-life balance, exploring the dimensions and context that have been underrepresented in previous research. By doing so, the present study seeks to provide novel insights and practical implications for managing technostress in the modern workplace with the view of making a positive impact on employee work-life balance. Additionally, the research will explore whether the variable of technostress and the work-life balance are significantly different in between males and female by providing another novel insight and practical implications as well.

02. Research Problem

The present study aims at bridging empirical, contextual, and practice gaps as explained. When it comes to the empirical gap, notably, previous scholars have extensively studied the technostress and its association with variables such as employee performance, job engagement, turnover, retention &, etc. However, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the simultaneous examination of technostress and the work-life balance which shows a clear empirical gap. If the researchers have studied technostress and work-life balance together, there are limited studies that have been carried out in the Sri Lankan context's literature. Moreover, herein it is also imperative to explore the selected sector for the present study. When it comes to the significance of the selected sector, the current study explores the established research model in the context of the apparel sector. The Apparel industry in Sri Lanka has become the largest value-adding sector by contributing 52% to the total exports in 2021 and adds six percent to the country's GDP (De Mel, 2021). Sri Lankan apparel industry is experiencing a considerable turnover rate, due to the lack of proper work life balance (Rajapaksha, 2018). Many scholars carried out their studies related to the 'technostress' by focusing on the IT sector and there are no studies that have been carried out yet in the apparel sector especially in the Sri Lankan context with the present study, the researchers will strive to explore this contextual gap as well.

As revealed by McCain (2023), it was found that 72% of employees consider work-life balance a crucial factor when seeking a new job (McCain, 2023). In terms of WLB, 48% of American people consider themselves to be workaholics, but 72% of Americans consider work-life balance when they are searching for a new job (Apollo Technical Engineered Talent Solutions, 2023). According to that, it is important to identify that WLB is certainly a fundamental factor for employees when finding a job and deciding whether to stay in a job. On the other hand, employees are more willing to leave the organization when do not have a proper work-life balance environment and it may lead to increased recruitment and training costs for companies. Similarly, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2019) recently surveyed in the United Kingdom for five thousand employees which emphasized WLB is a specific problem with employees reporting that their job disrupted home, work stress, and hard to switch off (Charted Institute of Personnel and Development, 2019). As a cost-cutting measure, HR professionals have opted to freeze recruitment, leading to a heavier workload for existing employees (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020). When it comes to the Sri Lankan context, Dilanthi and Rasanjana (2020) revealed in their study that the Sri Lankan apparel sector is experiencing a significant employee turnover, and they further identified the failure to maintain a proper work-life balance as one of the main factors contributing to this issue (Dilanthi & Rasanjana , 2020). Whereas, if it considers the category of employees who struggle with the stated issue, managerial-level employees in the organization experience higher levels of technological stress compared to operational-level employees (Mellita, Achmad, & Puji, 2022). Thus, it is even more evident that there is a gap in the practice as well. By considering all these facts, the study will answer the following research problem.

"What is the impact of technostress on work life balance of managerial level employees in apparel industry, Sri Lanka?"

To investigate the mentioned research problem, the researcher established the three research objectives, and based on that the study aims to identify the research problem by finding out the answers to three research questions.

RQ1: What is the significant difference between gender and level of technostress?
RQ2: What is the significant difference between gender and employee work-life balance?
RQ3: What is the relationship between technostress and work-life balance?

03. Literature Review

Information technology (IT) have both positive and negative outcomes not only for individuals, but also for organizations (Bosamia, 2013). Technostress is one negative consequence of using Information and Communication Technology (Fuglseth & Sorebo, 2014). Tarafdar et al. (2007) further explain that the phenomenon of technostress is a result of people having to constantly adjust to the shifting physical, social, and cognitive needs hampered by using ICTs in the workplace due to their ongoing growth (Tarafdar, Tu, Ragu-Nathan, & Nathan, 2007). Further, they emphasize that when technology is being used in the workplace increasingly, the effects of technostress are becoming more obvious. However, understanding the causes of technostress is crucial in the modern world, as workplace stress is known to affect employee productivity and increase medical expenses for businesses (Grover, Ayyagari, & Purvis, 2011). Technostress is the most critical of the drawbacks of using smart devices, software, hardware, and computer items (Bencsik, 2023). Niedhammer et al. (2021) emphasized that employee attitudes, beliefs, behavior, and even bodily changes will all suffer as a result of technostress (Niedhammer, et al., 2021). According to Tarafdar et al. (2007), five dimensions are included in the construct of technostress which are techno overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno insecurity, and techno-uncertainty (Tarafdar, Tu, Ragu-Nathan, & Nathan, 2007). Techno Overload occurs when the use of technology forces employees to work faster and longer (Ahmad & Amin, 2012). Tarafdar et al. (2007) studied the phrase "techno-invasion" as a scenario in which people are reachable at any time and from any place (Tarafdar, Tu, Ragu-Nathan, & Nathan, 2007). The results showed that employees felt they had less job autonomy and less control over their environment due to the stress they were experiencing at the time. Techno-complexity refers to an individual lacking the required skills and knowledge to manage technological complexity (Becker, Berger, Gimpel, Lanzl, & Regal, 2020). Employees who experience techno-insecurity fear that modern technology may replace them or change their standing, thus leading to a loss their job (Sharma, 2023). Abdullah et al. (2022) stated that techno-uncertainty is the constant change and uncertainty associated with technology updates and new systems, which can be stressful for employees (Hang, Amin, Hussain, & Abdullah, 2022).

A greater number of persons experiencing headaches, weariness, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping is correlated with higher levels of technostress (Becker, Berger, Gimpel, Lanzl, & Regal, 2020). This may lead to poor work-life balance and decreased productivity of workers (Andrea Bencsik, 2023). Moreover, Fenner and Renn (2010) found that when work-related technological demands result in an increase in stress, obligations, and workload, work-life balance may be negatively impacted, and family conflicts may arise (Fenner & Renn, 2010). In addition, when employees need to use technology to work longer hours and faster, it might negatively impact their work-life balance (Serenko, Turel, & Bontis, 2011). Similarly, Fenner and Renn (2010) also revealed that

WLB may be negatively impacted by stress and an excessive workload brought on by technology (Fenner & Renn, 2010). Moreover, Bensic (2023) found that three factors have the greatest impact on work-life balance (Andrea Bencsik, 2023). Loss of leisure time due to techno-overload and techno-invasion, and a feeling of techno-uncertainty due to lack of ICT competence cause a sense of threat. Ragu-Nathan et al. (2011) explored the mediating role of perceived usefulness of technology in the relationship between technostress and work-life balance (Ragu-Nathan, Tarafdar, & Tu, 2011). They found that when employees perceived technology as useful, the negative impact of technostress on work-life balance was reduced.

According to the research conducted as quantitative study on IT professionals found that technostress significantly reduces job satisfaction and increases work-life conflict (Grover, Ayyagari, & Purvis, 2011). Curcuruto et al. (2023) surveyed UK workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and identified technostress as a significant factor contributing to poor work-life balance (Curcuruto, Brondino, Williams, & Bazzoli, 2023). Their findings underscored that there is a significant negative relationship between technostress and work-life balance during remote work scenarios.

On the basis of the theoretical review, the researchers propose an analytical model to hypothesize the relationship between the technostress and work-life balance as follows.

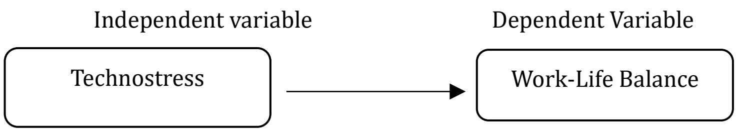

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed by Researchers

Based on the above conceptual framework the following hypotheses have been advanced.

H1: There is a significant negative impact of technostress on work-life balance.
H0: There is no significant negative impact of technostress on work-life balance.

04. Methodology

The researcher used a quantitative method to examine the impact of technostress on WLB which involves the collection and analysis of numerical data. This study was carried out as a cross-sectional field study, applying the deductive approach, in which the researchers' interference with the study sample was minimal. The population of the current study comprises managerial-level employees in selected three apparel companies in Sri Lanka. The known population consisted of managerial-level employees from three (03) selected apparel companies located in the Gampaha District of Sri Lanka whose names have been omitted due to ethical considerations. Gampaha District was chosen due to its significant concentration of apparel manufacturing companies, encompassing major export processing zones such as Katunayake and Biyagama, known for their concentrated industrial activity in the apparel sector. Additionally, Gampaha's strategic location and its multiple industrial zones, including the Biyagama Export Processing Zone, further justified its selection. Simple random sampling was used to select participants from the population by giving equal opportunity for every item in the population to be selected as part of the sample. The unit of analysis in this study is individual-level employees within three apparel companies. Data collection utilized an online survey questionnaire administered through Google Forms and the questionnaire was scaled on a 05 Point Likert scale.

According to the Morgan table, for the population of 305 Apparel sector employees, the size of the population was obtained as 171. However, exceeding the required number of observations (171), 190 responses were received. The measurement instruments used in this study have been validated in previous research and are widely accepted in the field. A survey questionnaire was adopted using the twenty-three items measurement scale developed by Tarafdar et al., (2007) to measure the technostress. 'I am forced by this technology to work much faster;' 'I am forced by this technology to do more work than I can handle' and 'I feel my personal life is being invaded by this technology' were some of the questions included in the scale. The work-life balance was measured by adopting the measurement scale proposed by Fisher-McAuley (2003). 'My personal life suffers because of work;' 'My job makes my personal life difficult' and 'I neglect personal needs because of work' were some of the questions included in the scale.

05. Results and Discussion

Out of 230 questionnaires distributed, 190 respondents returned the filled questionnaires. The responses were entered into SPSS, and check for missing values and outliers. The effective rate of responses was 82.60%. Composition of the study sample is depicted in table 1.

Table 1: Composition of the Sample [N=190]

		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	84	44.2%
	Female	106	55.8%
Civil Status	Married	141	74.2%
	Unmarried	49	25.8%
Age Composition	Less than 25 years	65	34.2%
	25 - 35 years	68	35.8%
	35 - 45 years	44	23.2%
	45 years and above	13	6.8%
Educational Qualification	Advanced Level	8	4.2%
	Certificate/Diploma Level	42	22.1%
	Bachelor's Degree	107	56.3%
	Master	33	17.4%
Years of Experience	Less than 5 years	67	35.3%
	5 – 10 years	56	29.5%
	10 – 15 years	38	20%
	15 – 20 years	22	11.6%
	20 years and above	7	3.7%
Designation	Executive	61	32.1%
	Senior Executive	47	24.7%
	Assistant Manager	32	16.8%

	Manager	27	14.2%
	Senior Manager	17	8.9%
	Director	6	3.2%

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

5.1. Reliability Statistics

To ensure the reliability of standard measurement scales, internal consistency statistics were used. Sekaran (2023) stated that the most popular method to evaluate internal consistency of an item is Cronbach's coefficient alpha. As shown in table 02, Cronbach's Alpha values of all the variables are greater than 0.7 indicating that the multi-item scale is reliable.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Variable	Dimensions	No of Item	Cronbach's Alpha
Technostress (Cronbach's alpha = 0.939)	Techno-Overload	06	0.865
	Techno-Invasion	03	0.791
	Techno-Complexity	05	0.817
	Techno-Insecurity	05	0.843
	Techno – Uncertainty	04	0.836
Work-Life Balance	Work-Life Balance	06	0.775

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

5.2. Validity Analysis

To test the validity of the constructs, researcher used Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The AVE should be equal or higher than 0.5 to demonstrate an acceptable level of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The Fornell-Larcker Criterion is used to assess the discriminant validity in studies. In this context, CR values of 0.7 or higher are considered indicative of acceptable internal consistency reliability. As shown in table 03, AVE values of all the variables are greater than 0.5 indicating good convergent validity.

Table 3: AVE Calculation

Construct	Factor Loading	Error Variances	AVE	CR
Techno- Overload	4.23	3.00	0.50	0.85
Techno-Invasion	2.11	1.51	0.50	0.74
Techno-Complexity	3.43	2.63	0.51	0.81
Techno-Insecurity	3.56	2.45	0.50	0.83
Techno - Uncertainty	2.92	1.84	0.53	0.82
Work-Life Balance	-2.70	3.53	0.51	0.70

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

5.3. Descriptive Statistics

In social science's research essential two elements are used in descriptive statistics. Those are mean and standard deviation, if the value of the standard deviation falls between +2 and -2 considers construct validity is acceptable for further inferential statistical analyzes (Lu et al., 2007). Statistically, skewness measures the relative size of the two tails of the distribution, whereas kurtosis measures the combined size of two tails. Brown (2006) revealed that when using SEM, acceptable ranges for Skewness and Kurtosis are -3 to +3 (as cited from Kallner, 2018).

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics	Techno-Overload	Techno-Invasion	Techno-Complexity	Techno-Insecurity	Techno Uncertainty	WLB
Mean	3.32	3.31	3.32	3.35	3.41	2.93
Standard Deviation	0.717	0.812	0.727	0.718	0.766	0.678
Skewness	0.3636	0.6988	-0.3522	-0.3068	0.3295	0.9090
Kurtosis	-2.0313	-1.2279	-1.4188	-1.1111	-1.6780	-3.2478

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

To test the advanced hypotheses, parametric tests include correlation and simple linear regression. Further to test control variable (Gender), independent T-tests were used.

5.4. Correlation Analysis

The correlation coefficient is a measure of the strength of the relationship between variables. The values of the correlation coefficient are always between -1 and +1. A correlation coefficient of +1 indicates that two variables are perfectly related in a positive linear sense; a correlation coefficient of -1 indicates that two variables are perfectly related in a negative linear sense (Cohen, 1998).

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

	Techno Overload	Techno Invasion	Techno Complexity	Techno Insecurity	Techno Uncertainty	WLB
Techno Overload	1	.770**	.778**	.771**	.759**	-.606**
Techno Invasion	.770**	1	.748**	.682**	.673**	-.556**
Techno Complexity	.778**	.748**	1	.794**	.767**	-.599**
Techno Insecurity	.771**	.682**	.794**	1	.846**	-.610**
Techno Uncertainty	.759**	.673**	.767**	.846**	1	-.596**
WLB	-.606**	-.556**	-.599**	-.610**	-.596**	1

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

According to the results, all five dimensions of technostress negatively impact work-life balance, with techno-insecurity having the strongest negative correlation.

5.5. Simple Linear Regression Analysis

In the current study, Simple linear regression analysis is used to predict which independent variable is related to the dependent variable.

Table 6: Regression Statistics

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.661[a]	.437	.434	.510	1.537

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

According to the table, R Square is greater than or equal to 0.1 it is acceptable (Baidoun, 2016). Therefore, the results depicted in table 4.12, 43.7% (R Square = 0.437) of the variation of work-life balance could be significantly explained by the independent construct in the research model, the technostress.

Table 7: Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.176	.189		27.339	.000
	Technostress	-.671	.056	-.661	-12.077	.000

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

The coefficient table shows the strength of the relationship. Thus, according to the regression results, the marginal contribution of technostress (-0.671) in determining work-life balance is considered statistically significant (.000) in the regression equation. The results show that a significant direct effect of technostress on WLB. (β= -0.661, t = -12.077, Sig. =.000).

Further, ANOVA test was conducted to test whether the respondent identification factors [demographics] are correlated with their engagement in e-learning. F values and the respective Sig. values of the One-way ANOVA are given in table 8.

Table 8: ANOVA Results

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	37.959	1	37.959	145.864	.000[b]

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

By using an ANOVA table, can be tested the significance value of variables that the researcher was considering. Five percent level of the significant level is chosen for the study. Thus, the Sig value should be less than 0.05. According to the result of the analysis, the sig value is .000, which is less than 0.05. Therefore, the result is significant.Further F-ratio represents an improvement in the variable's prediction by fitting the model after considering its inaccuracy. According to the Jain and Chetty (2019), if F value is greater than one it is efficient model.

Thus, in the above table, the F value is 145.864, which is good.

Table 9: Independent Sample T-Test (Gender and Technostress)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
Techno stress	Equal variances assumed	.005	.946	.084	-.16850	.09703

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

Herein, the Independent Sample Test was performed to see whether the variable of technostress is significantly different in between male and female. Herein, the two-tailed significance value of 0.084 indicates that the mean difference is statistically insignificant which means, the gender is not a predictor of technostress. As per the results obtained, it indicates that the variance in technostress levels in between the groups are equal as the p-value is 0.946 which is greater than 0.05 whereas the t-test for Equality of Means shows a two-tailed p-value of 0.084 as mentioned which is above the rule of thumb of 0.05, suggesting that there is statistically significant difference in between the technostress level between the groups. Moreover, the mean difference of -0.16850 indicates that, on average, one group has slightly lower technostress score compared to the other, but which is also not statistically significant.

Table 10: Independent Sample T-Test (Gender and Work-Life Balance)

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference
WLB	Equal variances assumed	1.803	.181	.215	.123	.099

Source: Analyzed Data, 2023

As per the results shown in the above table, the F value is 1.803 with a significance (p-value) of 0.181 which indicates that the assumption of equal variances holds since the p-value is greater than 0.05. Also, when it comes to the t-test for Equality of Means, the two tailed significance value is 0.215. Herein, this p-value is greater than the conventional alpha level of 0.05 which indicates that there is no statistically significant difference in work life balance score between the groups. The mean difference of 0.123 with a standard error difference of 0.099 further indicates that any observed difference in WLB is statistically insignificant.

06. Conclusion

Building on the findings of the current study, it could be concluded that balancing work and life will be one of the future trends among organizations. The researcher conducted a study to explore how the technostress impacts employee work-life balance. The researcher executed the study as a cross-sectional study under the quantitative method. The data was collected through sharing a structured questionnaire which was prepared on to 5-point Likert Scale. The gathered data was analyzed by using the computer-based statistical data analysis package, SPSS. Once the Reliability and validity analysis were ensured researcher tested the advanced hypotheses using parametric tests such as correlation and simple linear regression. Further to test the control variable (Gender), independent T-tests were used. The correlation analysis revealed a strong negative relationship between technostress and work-life balance, with a correlation coefficient of -0.661 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a significant impact ($p < 0.05$). According to the regression analysis results, the R Square value of 0.437 suggests that 43.7% of the variation in work-life balance can be significantly explained by technostress. Thus, Hypothesis 1 (H1) is accepted, confirming that technostress significantly impacts employee work-life balance. The findings indicate a significant negative relationship between technostress and work-life balance, as evidenced by a correlation coefficient of -0.671. Moreover, the Independent Sample T-test revealed that there is no statistically significant difference between the technostress between male and female participants ($p = 0.084$, two-tailed), indicating that gender is not a predictor of technostress whereas there was also no statistically significant difference in work-life scores between the groups.

The current researcher suggests several recommendations for avoiding technostress in the workplace. Employees can regularly disconnect from technological devices to reduce dependency and stress. Taking frequent breaks while working is also crucial to refresh and alleviate constant connectivity strain. Organizations can minimize technological stress by offering employees the freedom to choose their technology devices and providing access to various communication technologies. By adopting these implications properly, technostress can be significantly reduced, improving work-life balance. The researcher identified different limitations in the current study. The sample was limited to managerial-level employees in three apparel companies in the Gampaha district, then the results were only given for the specific area. Furthermore, operational-level employees, who also face technostress and work-life balance issues, were not included in the current study. The use of online surveys via Google Forms resulted in lower response rates and delayed feedback. Further, there were also challenges in obtaining honest responses from participants. The researcher showed directions for future research, it is suggested to expand the study to include operational-level employees and other sectors such as IT, healthcare, textiles, production, and manufacturing. Further exploration of technostress in different contexts within Sri Lanka would provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact on work-life balance in various industries and employee levels.

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