Deconnection strategies – a solution to decrease workplace telepressure and increase psychological detachment?

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Abstract

Psychological detachment after work is hard to achieve for employees because technology makes them remain connected to their work. Deconnection strategies refer to actions aimed at improving digital well-being and reducing distractions caused by technology. They are widely discussed in the popular press, but their effect was not investigated before. With a sample of 255 working participants, this study examines the relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment, suggesting answering work-related messages as a mediator of the relationship. Deconnection strategies are studied as a direct predictor of psychological detachment and as a moderator of the relationship between answering work-related messages and psychological detachment. Psychological detachment was found to be negatively associated with workplace telepressure. The mediation effect of answering work-related messages was not significant. Deconnection strategies were found to be positively associated with psychological detachment. The moderation model showed deconnection strategies influence the level of psychological detachment differently depending on answering work-related messages. The direction of the moderation effect is multidimensional, suggesting that there are other factors influencing the relationships between answering work-related messages and psychological detachment. A strong direct effect of answering work-related messages on psychological detachment was found suggesting a topic for future research. In general, deconnection strategies can be regarded as a tool to cope with the workplace's telepressure and answering work-related messages.

Keywords: *psychological detachment, workplace telepressure, work-related messages, work-home interference, deconnection strategies, digital detox*

Deconnection strategies – a solution to decrease workplace telepressure and increase psychological detachment?

With the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of companies have moved their employees to home offices. It seemed that being able to schedule time more freely and decide when to work should contribute to employees' job satisfaction, but it did not (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). On the contrary, remote work appears to increase stress, not reduce it (Jamal, et al., 2021). One reason for that is that working from home erases the boundaries between work and private lives and people continue to perform their work duties at home after working hours (Glavin & Schieman, 2012), such as reading and sending work-related messages. The number of employees engaged in sending work-related messages after-work hours increases steadily (Eichberger, et al., 2020). A concept of the "new night shift" describes people that log back to work when coming home from the office or never actually log off work (Butts, et al., 2015). This is to be attributed to a state of workplace telepressure that is defined as a feeling of the requirement to answer work messages as soon as possible (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015).

Psychological detachment is a sense of being away from work (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2007). It has been hard to achieve from the start of the era of emails, because of the expectation to respond fast to emails even after work hours (Brown, et al., 2014). With the increasing amount of work being done through instant messaging using a personal mobile phone, it became even more complicated to successfully detach from work. Answering work-related messages after-work hours was found to be related to lower psychological detachment (Cambier, et al., 2020). Yet, achieving high psychological detachment from work in the evening is important for employees as it is associated with lower fatigue at bedtime and higher life satisfaction in the morning (Park, et al., 2011). Furthermore, psychological

detachment seems to be important for employees' performance because it reduces technostress (Tarafdar & Ragu-Nathan, 2010).

Some authors suggest that deconnection strategies may help people to keep the work away from them during their after-work hours (e.g. Miksch & Schultz, 2018). These strategies can include creating barriers from technology, setting rules and structure to the routine, and others (Miksch & Schultz, 2018). The main aim of deconnecting strategies is to prevent work-related activity from interfering with private life. Deconnection strategies may be a tool to prevent the negative consequences of working from home on psychological detachment. Though, no research has been found so far that investigates the power of deconnection strategies in creating psychological detachment.

This paper aims at answering the research question: will deconnection strategies affect psychological detachment in the presence of workplace telepressure? Based on the Job Demand-Resource Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), deconnection strategies are investigated as a predictor of psychological detachment and a tool to decrease workplace telepressure's effect on psychological detachment. The paper aims to study how deconnection strategies may help people in increasing psychological detachment and decreasing workplace telepressure.

Workplace telepressure and smartphone use for work-related purposes have been widely discussed, but there is a lack of empirical research on the topic of deconnection from smartphones. Deconnection strategies are discussed in popular books and media (e.g. Coleman, 2018; Newport, 2019), though empirical research is poor, mostly descriptive (e.g. Miksch & Schultz, 2018). So this paper will contribute to the existent research on psychological detachment by estimating the power of deconnection strategies and exploring associations with workplace telepressure and work-related messaging. Investigating the correlates of workplace telepressure, psychological detachment and deconnection strategies is

important for developing theory on human adaptation to technological devices. Organizations and individuals may exploit the results of this study to better understand the value of deconnecting strategies and the role of answering work-related messages onto psychological detachment.

Job Demands-Resources model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model was firstly introduced by Bakker & Demerouti (2007) as a model to classify job factors in connection to organizational outcomes. All factors of a job can be classified into 2 groups - demands are resources and they influence organizational outcomes through strain and motivation respectfully (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). A demand is a psychological, physical, or mental effort required to fulfill a job (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). The JD-R model is often used in occupational health psychology research. New ways of working and remote work are usually studied using the concept of the JD-R model (Jamal, et al., 2021). For example, Barber & Santuzzi (2015) used the JD-R model to validate the construct of workplace telepressure.

With the rise of the popularity of remote work, researchers in the occupational psychology sphere often mention such job demands: work-home interference, workload pressure, task interdependence, isolation (e.g. Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Jamal, et al., 2021; Ragsdale & Hoover, 2016). A resource is something that functions to achieve goals, reduce job demands, or stimulate personal growth (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Some of the most often mentioned job resources are control and autonomy, flexible schedule, and technical competence (e. g. Glavin & Schieman, 2012; Jamal, et al., 2021). Smartphones give access to both job demands (e.g. work-related messages) and job resources (e.g. emotional support), and can be regarded as a job demand or a job outcome (Ragsdale & Hoover, 2016).

Bakker & Demerouti (2007) explained 2 main processes of the JD-R model. The first is called the stress process and implies that high job demands and low resources should lead

to negative strain outcomes through burnout (Schaufeli, 2017). Consistent with the stress process, Tarafdar & Ragu-Nathan (2010) found that technostress leads to decreased productivity, and Gaudioso, et al. (2017) found a relationship between techno-overload and job distress. In contrast, the second process of the JD-R model is called the motivational process and implies that high job resources lead to positive outcomes and also lower the effect of job demands on negative outcomes (Schaufeli, 2017). For example, Santuzzi & Barber (2018) explored the effect of workplace telepressure on negative well-being. Derks, et al. (2014) found that work engagement as a resource moderates the relationship between smartphone usage and work-home interference.

Workplace telepressure

Workplace telepressure is a relatively new psychological construct developed by Barber & Santuzzi (2015) as one of the outcomes of information communication technology usage. Workplace telepressure is defined as a psychological state of feeling the need to answer work-related messages instantly (Cambier, et al., 2020). Workplace telepressure can motivate employees to use their smartphones during after-work hours (van Laethem, et al., 2018). Therefore, workplace telepressure is regarded as a negative psychological state that may cause many undesirable outcomes. It was found to be associated with emotional exhaustion (Brown, et al., 2014) and health impairment problems (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). Workplace telepressure leads to an increase in smartphone usage as found in the study by Cambier, et al. (2020), meaning the higher feeling of pressure to answer messages leads to a more frequent email response. Brown, et al (2014) found that 50% of respondents believed that they should answer emails immediately. However, the real urgency of email response is often overestimated by employees (Stillman, 2021). In general, the excessive use of information communication technologies negatively affects work satisfaction (Diaz, et al., 2012).

Answering emails during after-work hours also prolongs the working day. Time spent on work during after-work hours is one of the main reasons for work-home interference – a process of negative interaction between work and home domain (Derks, et al., 2014). Job factors that take away resources can be regarded as job demands in the JD-R model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). For example, workload pressure and work-family interference are regarded as job demands by Jamal, et al. (2021). Following the previous research of Barber & Santuzzi (2015), workplace telepressure is regarded as a job demand in this paper.

Psychological detachment

The concept of psychological detachment was firstly introduced by Etzion, et al. (1998) as a feeling of being away from work during after-work hours. Psychological detachment was included in the list of recovery experiences by Sonnentag & Fritz (2007) and since then has been usually discussed in the framework of recovery (Chawla, et al., 2020). Recovery from work refers to the process of decreasing strain symptoms that have been caused by job demands, and psychological detachment is perceived to be the most powerful tool (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2014). Karabinski, et al. (2021) in their meta-analytic study tried to distinguish between the different conceptualizations of psychological detachment but found no significant differences between them. In this paper psychological detachment is discussed as the absence of thinking about work during after-work time as suggested by Sonnentag & Fritz (2014).

Recovery during after-work hours is crucial for reducing stress after completing work demands (van Laethem, et al., 2018). Psychological detachment as a feeling of being away from work is negatively associated with work-home interference (Derks & Bakker, 2012), and high work-home interference was found to reduce the emotional resources of employees (Harris, et al., 2015). Highly detached individuals were found to experience less stress and burnout (Etzion, et al., 1998). It was found that psychological detachment from work is

associated with increased well-being and improved performance (Karabinski, et al., 2021). So psychological detachment should be regarded as a positive outcome in the JD-R model contributing to the performance and job satisfaction of employees.

The process of detaching from work can be impaired by job stressors (Eichberger, et al., 2020). The negative relationship between job stressors and psychological detachment was found in many studies not only cross-sectional but also longitudinal (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2014). The JD-R model implies that excessive work demands such as workplace telepressure should intensify the work-home interference (Glavin & Schieman, 2012). So workplace telepressure should be negatively associated with psychological detachment. However, previous research on this topic has found conflicting results. Some authors found a significant negative relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). Moreover, van Laethem, et al., (2018) propose that employees who experience high workplace telepressure find it difficult to mentally detach from work when intensively using their smartphone after work. On the contrary, workplace telepressure predicted psychological detachment on between-subject measurement in a diary study, but there was no effect on the within-person level of analysis (Santuzzi & Barber, 2018). This is maybe because workplace telepressure is stable over time and cannot explain the variance in psychological detachment on a daily level. Cambier, et al. (2020) found that workplace telepressure during off-work hours did not have a significant relationship with psychological detachment. Grawitch, et al. (2017) tested the predictive power of psychological detachment on workplace telepressure and found no significant results after controlling for demographic variables and psychological traits. Their theoretical ground was that psychologically detached people should not experience workplace telepressure. Based on the JD-R model, I propose an opposite connection that workplace telepressure as a job demand would lead to a decrease in

psychological detachment as a job resource. I expect a negative relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment:

H_1: Workplace telepressure is negatively associated with psychological detachment

Work-related messaging

The number of people engaged in after-work smartphone usage for work purposes increased rapidly in the past years (Eichberger, et al., 2020). As a result, employees are unable to fully recover from work, as they often use their smartphones for work purposes within an hour before going to bed, and many keep their smartphones within their reach while sleeping (Miksch & Schultz, 2018). It makes it harder for employees to detach from work when they use their smartphones for work during off-job hours (Brown, et al., 2014; Derks, et al., 2014). Previous studies found that technology usage at home for non-work (Park, et al., 2011) and work purposes (Derks, et al., 2014; van Laethem, et al., 2018; Eichberger, et al., 2020; Cambier, et al., 2020) is negatively associated with psychological detachment. When employees are using their smartphones for work-related purposes during after-work hours they are less able to mentally detach from work (van Laethem, et al., 2018). Therefore, work-home interference was also found to be strongly positively related to smartphone use during after-work time (Derks, et al., 2014) or information communication technologies usage in general (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Gaudioso, et al., 2017). Also, technology overload was found to be associated with work-home conflict (Harris, et al., 2015).

One of the most common work-related tasks performed by employees after work hours is answering messages. With the development of information communication technologies, a lot of companies switched to instant messaging instead of emails so that workers can communicate faster (Herrman, 2019). However, the negative consequence of this is the increased workplace telepressure as the instant messaging tool requires “not just a

quick response, but an instant one" (Herrman, 2019). Butts, et al. (2015) studied the effect of receiving work-related messages during non-work hours and found that the emotional tone of the message and the time required to answer it leads to increased work-home interference.

The urge to answer work-related messages after work hours may result from the feeling of workplace telepressure. Van Laethem, et al. (2018) suggested that higher workplace telepressure can lead to increased work-related smartphone use during after-work hours. Therefore, I argue that the relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment may be explained by the fact of answering work-related messages after work hours. Taking into consideration the strong relationship between smartphone usage and psychological detachment I suppose that workplace telepressure may lead to lower psychological detachment because it makes people answer work-related messages during their after-work hours. This leads to the second hypothesis:

H_2: The relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment is mediated by answering work-related messages

Deconnection strategies

Being exposed to job stressors such as workplace telepressure employees find it more difficult to psychologically detach from work (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2014). So the need to develop a healthier relationship with the technology emerged (Newport, 2019). This led to a new movement called digital detox – a period when one consciously reduces the amount of time they spend with technology. The time absence of technology can last from less than an hour to infinity and is usually regarded as an opportunity to focus on offline activities (Miksch & Schultz, 2018). Digital minimalism refers to the concept of changing the quality of the time spent with technology, not focusing on reducing time, but on using the technology more effectively (Newport, 2019).

Scholars, journalists, and digital detox enthusiasts propose several strategies to improve digital well-being to reduce distractions and achieve professional and personal goals. The most popular strategy is creating barriers to technology such as turning the phone into airplane mode, switching off wi-fi or mobile network, or simply putting the phone away (Miksch & Schultz, 2018; Newport, 2019; Price, 2018; Karabinski, et al., 2021). Another strategy is named rules and structure (Miksch & Schultz, 2018) meaning a person is setting a specific time in the day to answer emails and/or social media and group chats (Coleman, 2018; Newport, 2019). Newport (2019) suggests stopping using social media at all, Price (2018) suggests deleting social media applications, and Coleman (2018) insists on blocking yourself from using certain websites. An important part of a digital detox or digital minimalism is to create awareness of how the technology is being used. Mindfulness practices such as meditations can be beneficial when aiming to deconnect (Karabinski, et al., 2021). It is important to understand how one uses their phone, establish usage goals and disconnect at the right times (Coleman, 2018). While decreasing the time with technology, digital minimalists agree it is important to do an offline activity instead. Miksch & Schultz (2018) suggest creating a routine that will replace using technology, Newport (2019) and Price (2018) both insist on finding a new hobby that will fill in the free time. Reading books and physical media sources can be a way of separating from technology (Miksch & Schultz, 2018; Coleman, 2018). Even participating in offline work meetings can be regarded as an opportunity to digitally detox, showing up with no device (Coleman, 2018).

Whatever the strategy is being used, deconnection should increase the feeling of control over one's life (Newport, 2019). Job control and setting one's limits are regarded as job resources in the JD-R model (Schaufeli, 2017). Flexibility in work arrangements and sufficient technical resources were regarded as job resources in the study of Jamal, et al. (2021). A meta-analytic study of detachment interventions showed that boundary

management among others was a successful intervention to increase the well-being and performance of employees (Karabinski, et al., 2021). Therefore, exploiting deconnection strategies should be regarded as a personal job resource that helps to achieve work-related positive outcomes. Therefore, deconnection strategies should lead to reduced work-home interference to an increased psychological detachment as proved by Karabinski, et al. (2021). Concerning the JD-R model, I propose a direct relationship between deconnection strategies and psychological detachment.

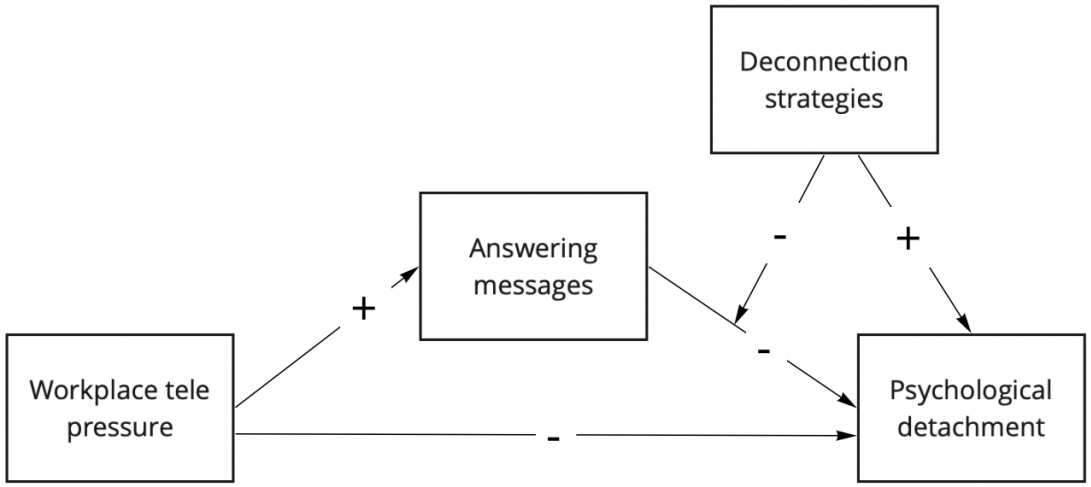
H_3: Deconnection strategies is positively associated with psychological detachment

Sonnentag & Fritz (2014) proposed that employees' personal and job resources may have a diminishing effect on the relationship between job stressors and psychological detachment. As deconnection strategies are primarily built to decrease the amount of use of technology it should also decrease the work-related use of technology so, for example, creating a barrier to your work email should increase the feeling of detachment from work. Allocating specific time to answer work-related messages or doing an offline activity in the evening should decrease the negative effect of answering work-related messages on psychological detachment. This leads to a hypothesis of moderation of deconnection strategies on the relationship between answering work-related messages and psychological detachment. The presence of deconnection strategies should reduce the impact of work messages being answered after work hours on psychological detachment. The hypothesis of moderated mediation is presented in Figure 1.

H_4: Deconnection strategies moderate the relationship between answering work-related messages during after-work hours and psychological detachment in such a way that the presence of deconnection strategies decreases the effect of answering work-related messages on psychological detachment.

Figure 1

Theoretical model



Methods

Design

To study the research question and the theoretical model a quantitative approach was used. This research was a part of a bigger study on deconnection strategies and the data for all studies was collected simultaneously. In total, four researchers participated in study designing and data collection but the analysis was done separately with respect to different research questions. Data collection was done in January 2022 through the online questionnaire using the Qualtrics tool. The questionnaire was available to fill in the English or Russian languages. Adaptation of the questionnaire to the Russian language was done using the back-translation method with the help of a researcher's friend who is a native Russian speaker and obtained a Master's degree in English linguistics. In total, the questionnaire took approximately 10 minutes to complete. It consisted of the questions on behavior and feelings towards technology and may raise participants' awareness of the deconnection issue. Though, it does not consist of any questions that may raise ethical concerns. The questionnaire contained one

control question “Please choose ‘somewhat disagree’ here” to check participants’ attention. Participants who failed to choose the correct answer were excluded from the sample.

The first stage of participants’ recruitment was done with the help of companies’ representatives that agreed on allowing their employees to participate in the study. Participants were recruited using direct contact with two companies - one in the Netherlands, one in Russia. The company in the Netherlands operates in the service sector, the company in Russia operates in the retail sector. In total 164 people from two companies agreed to participate. The second stage of recruitment was done via personal contacts of the researchers using social media groups and direct requests. To be included in the study participants have to be employed in a company. It was done both in the Netherlands and Russia. In the second stage, 147 people agreed to participate in the study but 12 of them reported being unemployed and were excluded from the analysis.

Sample

Overall sample consisted of participants of the first questionnaire and participants of the second questionnaire that reported being currently employed. In total it resulted in 299 participants, but 44 participants were excluded from the sample because of failing to answer the attention check question correctly. The final sample consisted of 255 participants, which is a sample size strong enough to test complex models (Kyriazos, 2018). 189 participants were from Russia (74.1%) and 66 were from the Netherlands (25.9%). All of them were employed in an organization from different economic sectors, the majority worked in retail. The majority of participants (65.1%) were female, 34.5% male and 1 participant didn’t specify their gender. The age range was between 18 and 60 years old, with $M = 33$ years, $SD = 8.4$. Demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic data

Question		N	%
Country	Russia	189	74.1
	Netherlands	66	25.9
Gender	Male	88	34.5
	Female	166	65.1
	Other	1	0.4
Format of working	On-site	109	42.7
	Hybrid	86	33.7
	Online	60	23.6
Contract type	Full-time	232	91
	Part-time	23	9
Highest level of education	Secondary school	13	5.1
	College	36	14.1
	University	179	70.2
	Post-graduate	27	10.6
Company's sector	Retail	152	59.6
	Information technology	24	9.4
	Service	21	8.2
	Health	11	4.3
	Education	7	2.7
	Research	7	2.7
	Finance	4	1.6
	Manufacturing	3	1.2
	Other	26	10.2

Measures

Workplace telepressure was measured by the scale suggested by Barber & Santuzzi (2015). It showed good construct validity with Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$ and was already used by

other researchers to measure workplace telepressure (van Laethem, et al., 2018). Though, the text of items was slightly changed to address specifically work-related communication. An example of the measure was “I have an overwhelming feeling to respond right at the moment when I receive a work request from someone”. The scale consisted of 6 items using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 - “Strongly disagree” to 5 - “Strongly agree”.

Psychological detachment was measured using the part of the recovery experience questionnaire by Sonnentag & Fritz (2007). This 4-item questionnaire was also used by other researchers to measure psychological detachment (e.g. Santuzzi & Barber, 2018) as it showed good reliability of Cronbach’s $\alpha = .84$. The text was slightly adapted to capture the feelings of respondents during after-work hours, as was also done by other researchers (Derks & Bakker, 2012). An example of the question was “Today after work, I don’t think about work at all”. All items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 - “Strongly disagree” to 5 - “Strongly agree”.

Answering work-related messages was measured using a self-constructed 1-item measure “How often do you answer work-related messages during your after-work hours?”. The item was measured on a 5-point Likers scale with 1 - “Never”, and 5 - “Always". For technical reasons, this measure had many missing variables.

The use of deconnection strategies was measured using a self-constructed scale based on the classification of deconnection strategies provided by Miksch & Schultz (2018). The scale consisted of 4 questions on the use of different strategies: distancing from technology, creating rules for technology use, replacing technology with offline activities, and offline time. An example of the question was “How often do you engage in the following behaviors while at home: creating rules or structure regarding the use of digital technology (e.g., plan moments without technology)?”. The measure was assessed with a 5-point Likert scale with 1 - ”Never” and 5 - “All the time”. All of the measures were significantly and moderately

correlated with correlation coefficients ranging from .24 to .52. The correlation matrix between the items is presented in Table 2. Factor analysis for the deconnection strategies using the principal axis extraction method returned the *KMO* test of sampling adequacy of .676 and Barlett's test significant with $p < .001$ which means that the sample was acceptable for the factor analysis. 1-factor structure explains 52.7% of the variance. Descriptive statistics and factor loadings are presented in Table 3. Taking into account moderate correlations between items, the use of deconnection strategies was treated as a formative scale as people were not responding equally to different measures. McDonald's ω for a single factor was .705 which is considered strong enough to use the factor for research purposes (Nájera Catalán, 2018).

The questionnaire's text of all measures is presented in Appendix.

Table 2

Deconnection strategies items correlation

Measure	Distancing	Rules	Replace	Offline
Distancing	1	.52*	.23*	.40*
Rules		1	.24*	.34*
Replace			1	.45*
Offline				1

*Coefficients significant at the .001 level

Table 3

Deconnection strategies factor analysis

Measure	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Loading
Distancing	255	1	5	2.68	1.09	.76
Rules	255	1	5	2.41	1.21	.78
Replace	255	1	5	3.07	1.01	.47
Offline	255	1	5	3.42	.94	.57

Results

The first step of the analysis involved investigating the direct effects of workplace telepressure and deconnection strategies on psychological detachment. The second step involved an investigation of the model of moderated mediation of the relationship. In the model, answering work-related messages after work hours was tested as a mediator of the relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment, and deconnection strategies were tested as a moderator of the mediation. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 4 and correlations between variables are presented in Table 5.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics

Measure	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std.Deviation
Workplace telepressure	240	1	5	3.3	1.0
Psychological detachment	239	1	5	3.0	1.1
Deconnection strategies	255	1	5	2.9	.8
Answering work-related messages	106	1	5	3.3	1.0

Table 5

Correlations between the constructs

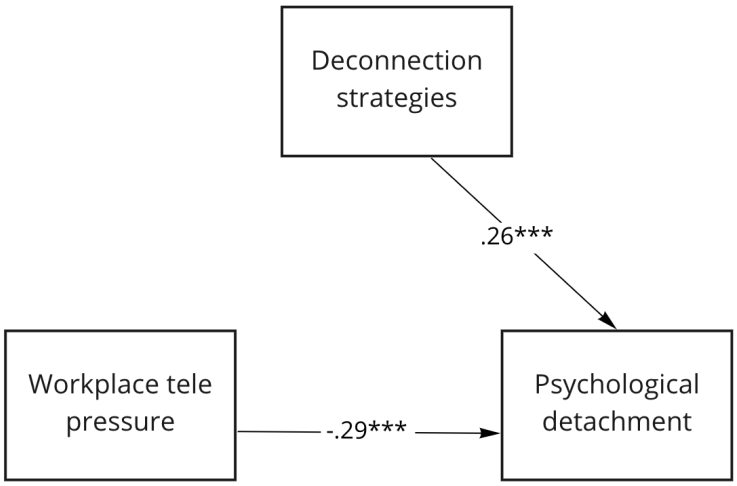
Measure	Workplace telepressure1[1]	Psychological detachment[1]	Deconnection strategies[1]	Answering work-related messages[2]
Workplace telepressure	1	-.35*	-.23*	.14
Psychological detachment		1	.32*	-.44*
Deconnection strategies			1	.03
Answering work-related messages				1

* Correlation is significant at the .001 level
[1] Listwise exclusion of missing variables, N=238
[2] Listwise exclusion of missing variables, N=104

To test the predictors of psychological detachment a multiple hierarchical regression was run. The psychological detachment was regressed on workplace telepressure and deconnection strategies. The model showed moderate fit with $R^2 = .18$ ($F = 26.4$, $p < .001$). Workplace telepressure had a significant negative effect on psychological detachment with a standardized β coefficient of -.290 ($t = -4.79$, $p < .001$), therefore Hypothesis 1 was supported. Deconnection strategies had a significant positive effect on psychological detachment with a standardized β coefficient of .255 ($t = 4.21$, $p < .001$), therefore Hypothesis 3 was also supported. Results of the first stage of the analysis are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Predictors of psychological detachment

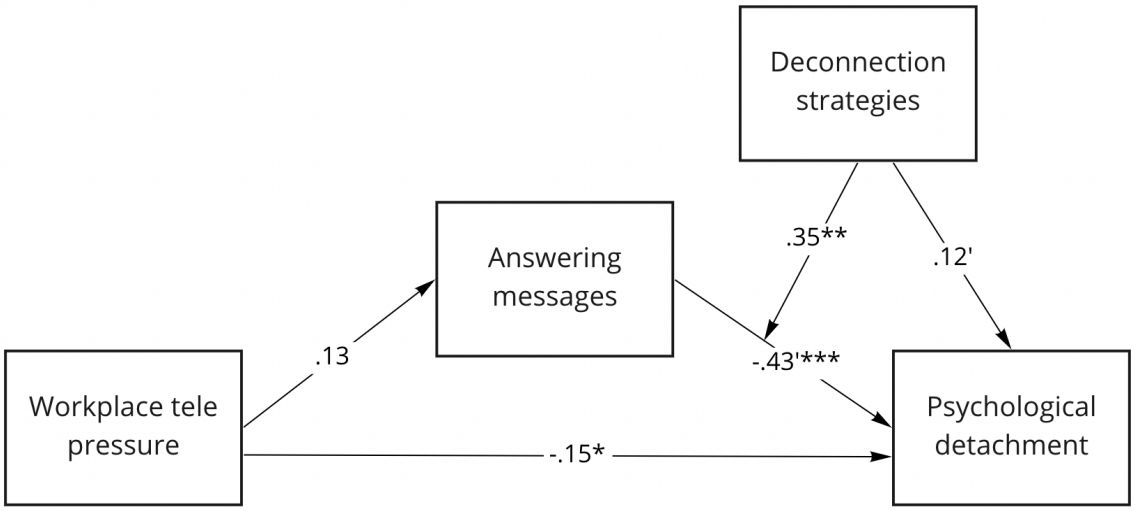


To test the moderated mediation model of the relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment Process Macro was used. Model 14 was used with bootstrapping technique (number of bootstraps = 5000) to capture answering work-related messages as mediator and deconnection strategies as a moderator. The predictive power of the psychological detachment' model showed a moderate effect ($R^2 = .315$, $p < .001$), though the moderated mediation index was weak (.05) and not significant, CI [-.0145, .1467].

Therefore the proposed model of moderated mediation could not be proved significant in this sample. All coefficients obtained in the model are presented in Figure 3. All direct effects were insignificant except for the effect of answering work-related messages on psychological detachment (β = -.43, p < .001) and the direct effect of workplace telepressure on psychological detachment (β = -.15, p < .05). Therefore, hypothesis 2 of mediation was rejected.

Figure 3

Coefficients of moderated mediation

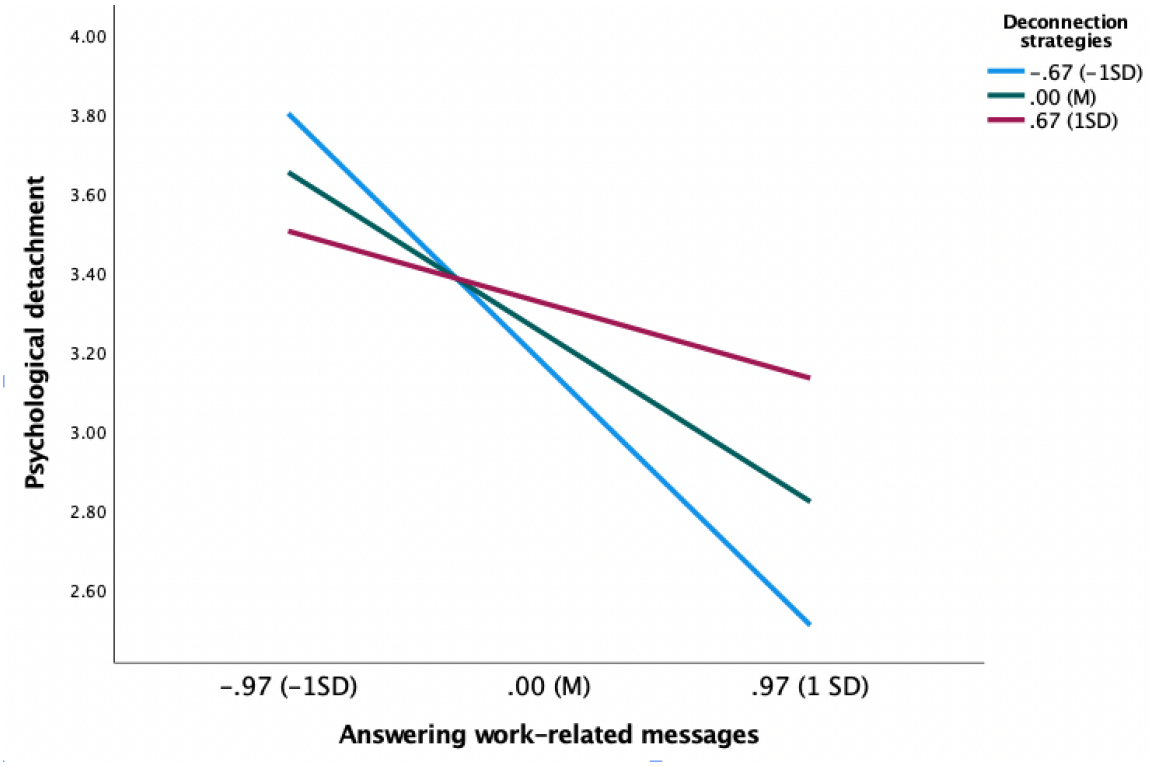


The conditional effect of deconnection strategies on psychological detachment was positive with coefficient β = .12 but insignificant (t = 1.07, p = .29). The conditional effect of answering work-related messages on psychological detachment was negative and significant with slope coefficient β = -.43 (t = -5.48, p < .001). The interaction effect of answering work-related messages and deconnection strategies was positive and significant with coefficient β = .35 (t = 3.22, p < .01). It means that the effect of answering work-related messages on psychological detachment is different depending on the level of deconnection strategies. The interaction effect was modeled for *M*, 1 *SD*, and -1 *SD* values of psychological detachment and answering work-related messages, results are presented in Figure 4. In the

situation of frequent answering of work-related messages during after-work hours, the presence of deconnection strategies has increased psychological detachment. In the situation of rare answering of work-related messages, deconnection strategies had an opposite effect on psychological detachment. Therefore, there was a moderation effect of deconnection strategies on the relationship between answering work-related messages and psychological detachment. Though, the mediation hypothesis was rejected, so hypothesis 4 could only partially be supported.

Figure 4

Moderation effect of psychological detachment



Discussion

The research question of thшы paper was to determine the effect of deconnection strategies on psychological detachment in presence of workplace telepressure. The analysis was done on a relatively big and diverse sample of working adults, in which I found that workplace telepressure was strongly and negatively associated with psychological

detachment. This finding sheds light on previously contradictory results on the relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment. Indeed, feeling pressure to answer work-related messages after work hours had a negative correlation with the feeling of being away from work.

This work tried to explain the contradictions in the previous studies and inspected an assumption that answering work-related messages was an explanation of the relationship between workplace telepressure and psychological detachment.. I supposed that workplace telepressure would lead to a decrease in psychological detachment by making people answer work-related messages. This hypothesis of mediation was rejected. Moreover, the correlation between workplace telepressure and work-related messages was weak and insignificant. It seemed that feeling the need to immediately answer work-related messages is not associated with the fact of answering them. This is in line with a previous study by Grawitch, et al. (2017) who also found no relationship between workplace telepressure and answering work-related messages. Van Laethem, et al. (2018) investigated the relationship between the same variables but with different theoretical grounding. They predicted that workplace telepressure would moderate the relationship between answering work-related messages and psychological detachment. They also found no significant effect. So, this study complements the previous findings of no association between workplace telepressure and answering work-related messages.

Failing to prove the proposed mediation, this study revealed another important association between variables. Workplace telepressure was negatively associated with psychological detachment, as well as answering work-related messages was strongly and negatively associated with psychological detachment. While there was found no association between workplace telepressure and answering work-related messages, it appeared that both variables could be predictors of psychological detachment. Work-related messaging via

information communication technologies may lower psychological detachment in two ways: by increasing the feeling of workplace telepressure and the fact of messaging during after-work hours. It is not necessary that an individual would be high on both variables but each of them may have a negative effect on psychological detachment.

The key question of this research was to test the relationship between the use of deconnection strategies and psychological detachment. It was found to be positive and strong, meaning that making technology less available or replacing it with offline activities should help increase the sense of being away from work. The strong positive association between deconnection strategies and psychological detachment is in line with propositions on their effectiveness made by Coleman (2018) and Price (2018). The results of this study add to the previous research by Karabinski, et al. (2021) who supposed that setting boundaries with technology would increase psychological detachment. Though deconnection strategies have been discussed in popular psychology literature for at least five years, it is the first scientific research to my knowledge that estimated the effect of deconnection strategies on psychological detachment. The results of this research add to our understanding of the well-being of the working population in the modern world of 24/7 connectivity.

Concerning the JD-R model, I hypothesized that deconnection strategies not only have a direct effect on psychological detachment but also decrease the negative effect of answering work-related messages on it. As the model of moderated mediation was not significant, it is impossible to draw a final conclusion. However, the interaction effect between answering work-related messages and deconnection strategies on psychological detachment was strong so some implications may be discussed. There was a difference in the effect of answering work-related messages on psychological detachment depending on the level of use of deconnection strategies. Among people who answered many work-related messages after work, those who also used disconnection strategies has psychological detachment level

almost one standard deviation higher than those who did not use disconnection strategies. In other words, when a person has to answer work-related messages after-work hours but is making efforts to deconnect from work, their feeling of psychological detachment increases.

Among people who said to answer messages after work less often, the use of deconnection strategies did not result in a big difference in detachment levels. Moreover, the effect was the opposite, showing that higher usage of disconnection strategies is associated with lower psychological detachment. It is somehow contradictory to the theoretical expectations. One possible explanation may be that people who have clear rules of working after-work hours do that in response to high pressure from work. The necessity to implement deconnection strategies may itself be perceived as job pressure and lower the sense of psychological detachment. When a person pushes himself hard away from the laptop because they know there are a lot of incoming messages waiting for them he is using the deconnection strategy of distancing, but still may feel hard to detach from the demands of work. Another explanation may be that people who answer work-related messages rarely, in general, are higher on psychological detachment. For them implementing deconnection strategies may not result in an extra rise in psychological detachment.

Limitations and future research

A considerable limitation of this paper is a big amount of missing data on the measure of answering work-related messages. It resulted in a small sample for a moderated mediation hypothesis, which made the analysis underpowered, limiting the ability to observe effects. In the situation of a low amount of messages answered after work, the use of deconnection strategies did not result in much difference in detachment levels but the results cannot be claimed to be significant. So the ambiguous effect of deconnection strategies on psychological detachment on the lower levels of answering work-related messages should be further explored in a bigger sample. A direction for future research can be in studying not

only the amount of answered messages but also the number of messages received and acknowledged by people. People who do not receive a lot of messages after-work hours may not need deconnection strategies to feel psychologically detached. Examining the connection between the messages received and psychological detachment may help to explain the nature of the relationship between answering work-related messages and psychological detachment.

For the same reason of the small sample size, the mediation hypothesis cannot be claimed to be significant. However, workplace telepressure and answering work-related messages were not correlated. It makes me assume that the theoretical assumption of mediation was probably not grounded and we can suppose that the mediation would not be significant in a bigger sample as well. It appeared that both workplace telepressure and answering work-related messages had an effect on psychological detachment and future research may investigate them simultaneously. It also may be reasonable to check if personal or job characteristics would explain which of the variables would have a stronger effect on psychological detachment. For example, Derks, et al, (2014) found out that social norms and work engagement moderate the relationship between smartphone use and work-home interference. Gender differences should be taken into consideration, as the sample in this research consisted of 75% of women. This study also did not check for the difference between people working in different settings. It may be that psychological detachment is lower for the people who work from home and have high segmentation preferences than for people who work on-site or in a hybrid setting.

Taking into account the limitation of the sample size, it is still necessary to point out that the model of moderation showed no significant direct effect of deconnection strategies on psychological detachment. At the same time, there was a strong positive correlation between deconnection strategies and psychological detachment in a regression analysis. It means that deconnection strategies may indeed increase psychological detachment but the

underlying mechanism is only to be studied. Work-home segmentation preferences as a degree to which individuals prefer to separate different domains of their lives also influence psychological detachment (Park, et al., 2011). It may be that the idea of deconnection from work is only valuable for people with high segmentation preferences but may have no or even negative effect on people with low segmentation preferences (Butts, et al., 2015). Diaz, et al. (2012) found that people with flexible use of communication technologies are usually more satisfied with their work. This is something that should be studied in the future, because work-home segmentation preferences may also be the reason for the contradictory effect of deconnection strategies on the relationship between answering work-related messages and psychological detachment.

The methodological limitation of the study design of this paper lies in the construct validity of the measure of answering work-related messages and deconnection strategies. Answering work-related messages was estimated using a 1-item scale which is a questionable practice in psychological research. A better way to do that is by asking participants to estimate the exact amount of messages answered during the evening. Measuring answering work-related messages on a daily level as done by other authors (Cambier, et al., 2020) should also produce more reliable results. The psychological detachment was shown to fluctuate daily (Chawla, et al., 2020) and can also be studied on a daily level. Therefore, future research may study the relationship between answering work-related messages during after-work hours and psychological detachment on a daily level, taking into consideration the within-person differences in the number of messages received. However, a limitation of that approach would be that the daily study would require people to fill in the questionnaires at night time right before going to bed and it will make them interact with technology.

The scale to measure deconnection strategies was a self-made scale studied for the first time. It consisted of 4 different deconnection strategies, that may not be employed by

different people in the same way. Although deconnection strategies were proved as a single-factor construct in this paper, they capture different deconnection behaviors. It is necessary to further validate the scale, estimating the face validity first, and then continuing with exploratory factor analysis. Future research may also investigate different deconnection strategies separately and how they influence psychological detachment.

Conclusion

Nowadays people can perform a lot of work duties from any place at any time. While being a positive outcome of technological development, constant connectivity also leads to some drawbacks. It is hard to achieve a sense of being away from work when answering work-related messages after work or feeling the pressure to answer them. This research demonstrates that workplace telepressure and answering work-related messages may decrease the sense of psychological detachment. The deconnection strategies emerged as a concept of initiatives an individual may take to distance himself from information communication technologies. It was supposed that they may also help to fight the adverse consequences of technological use. This paper showed that indeed deconnection strategies use is positively related to psychological detachment. Deconnection strategies may help those who work after hours to recover during their after-work time. Practicing organizational psychologists may use this scientific grounding to develop interventions aimed at decreasing the negative effect of answering work-related messages after work hours and improving the overall well-being of employees.

Appendix

Workplace Telepressure:

1) It's hard for me to focus on other things when I receive a work-related message from someone.
2) I can concentrate better on other tasks once I've responded to my work-related messages.
3) I can't stop thinking about a work-related message until I've responded.
4) I feel a strong need to respond to others at work immediately.
5) I have an overwhelming feeling to respond right at that moment when I receive a work request from someone.
6) It's difficult for me to resist responding to a work-related message right away.

Psychological Detachment:

1) After work hours I forget about work.
2) After work hours I don't think about work at all.
3) After work hours I distance myself from my work.
4) I get a break from the demands of work.

Answering Work-Related Messages:

1) How often have do you answer work-related messages during your after-work hours?

Deconnection strategies:

How often do you engage in the following behaviors while at home?

1) Making digital technology physically, visually, or functionally not available or present (e.g., switching off your laptop, phone or email, switching off the internet, not

bringing your laptop or phone to work, deactivating certain websites or apps on your phone or laptop).

2) Creating rules or structures regarding the use of digital technology (e.g., only access email at a certain point in the day, plan moments with and without digital technology).
3) Engaging in/with offline activities/mediums that replace your use of digital technology (e.g., using a notebook to write instead of typing, printing out documents to read, going into someone's office instead of emailing them).
4) Taking a break without using any technology (e.g. having coffee or lunch with colleagues, going for a walk outside, playing foosball/table tennis).

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