



Exploring Work–Life Integration Challenges for Women in the IT Sector during the Remote Work Transition

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Abstract

The abrupt transition to remote and hybrid work has fundamentally changed the boundaries of work-life in highly tech-based sectors such as Information Technology (IT). While remote work is marketed as a flexible and empowering solution for women, recent research indicates that there are complex and gendered impacts of remote work on women professionals. The review examines the latest literature (2023-2025) to understand the question of work-life integration of women in the IT sector in the transition to remote work. Based on the theoretical frameworks such as the Boundary Theory, the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model, the review identifies five emerging trends, including the flexibility-intensification paradox, the persistence of a gendered division of unpaid work, the blurring of boundaries and technostress, the well-being-performance paradox, and the failure of gender-neutral remote work policies. The findings suggest that remote work does not necessarily reduce work-life conflict; rather, in the absence of policies to reduce it at an institutional level in terms of workload management, right-to-disconnect norms, and gender-biased HR policies, remote work has the potential to reinforce structural inequalities. The review expands the argument that the work-life "mix" for women in IT is not an individual coping strategy but an organizational and a socio-cultural issue. This paper synthesizes disjointed empirical evidence to propose the need for structural rethinking of remote work design in sustainable, gender-sensitive integration practices in digital workplaces.

1. Introduction

The recent growth of remote and hybrid work across the globe, with the addition to the digital revolution and increase in the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted the standard of work arrangement, evaluation and performance. In the Information Technology (IT) sector where work is already digital, task-driven and connected, remote work has shifted not only to a temporary response, but also a change. While this has been celebrated as a method of bringing flexibility, freedom and reduced time spent travelling, the effects of the change on work-life integration, particularly among women employees has been controversial and under theorized. The traditional models considered the work-life balance as the separation of work and non-work activities. However, the digital mediation of work is resulting in the loss of space and time and balance is replaced by integration and negotiation. This shift has different meaning to women in the IT sector. While more women are entering the labor force and flexibility is encouraged in policies, women are over-worked in care and domestic work. With the blurring of boundaries of work and with unpaid work linking with paid work, the notion of a second shift or double presence is established, which is currently defined in the literature as a double burden.

In recent literature (2023-2025), it's stressed that the outcomes of remote work is not only empowering but also not equally damaging. But are shaped by structural, organizational and socio-cultural factors. Evidences from the technostress literature show that constant digital connectivity and blurring of boundaries are among the factors that result in burnout and cognitive overloads. Research grounded in the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory suggests that teleworking may save time resources (e.g., commuting) and at the same time deplete emotional and energy resources due to the extended availability expectation. Similarly, the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory also suggests that high job demands work intensification, performance monitoring and role ambiguity are negative for women's work-life balance until they are diminished by job resources such as supervisor support and clarity of work load.

Moreover, intersectional studies challenge the idea of fairness of flexibility policies. Gender-neutral remote working policies are embedded in the gender-unequal household system, which results in unequal benefit distributions. The time freed from commuting is often reallocated for caring work as opposed to leisure or even work. At the same time, the norms of visibility in the virtual worlds, measured in response rate, online presence, and online connectivity, create the anxieties of performance which disproportionately affect women on the career path to legitimacy. Specifically, this study seeks to:

1. Identify the patterns in work-life integration challenges of women in the IT sector during the remote work and hybrid transitions.
2. Use multiple theoretical perspectives (Boundary Theory, COR, JD-R and intersectionality) to explain these trends.
3. Evaluate the effectiveness of the existing Organisational practices, including flexibility and right-to-disconnect policies.
4. Propose a sustainable, gender responsive remote work design system.

Re-defining work-life integration as an organizational system-level, rather than an individual coping strategy.

2. Literature Review

The second phenomenon that remote and hybrid work has brought about is a shift in concept of work-life integration, particularly regarding women in Information Technology (IT) companies. The 2023 to 2025 exams continue to smash the myth of remote work. In both empirical, qualitative and review papers, there is a recurring theme about the effects of remote work being both empowering and disempowering but contingent on the structural, organizational and socio-cultural conditions which are highly gendered. Jain and Malviya (2025) argue that remote work not only does not resolve the issue of the double burden on the woman but also adds to it and that integration over time requires structural changes such as having gender sensitive HR policies and online wellness programs. Godara and Dua (2024) also call integration an ongoing negotiation process that is sustained by institutionalized cultural support rather than telework.

This literature is grounded in three theorizations that are Boundary Theory (in relation to the blurring of work-home boundaries), Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (in terms of gain and loss of emotional and temporal resources arising from telework) and the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (supervisory support and clarity of workload are critical moderators of strain) (Shah, Raval, and Bhatia, 2025). But one of the most common findings of the reviewed literature is the paradox of flexibility-intensification where flexibility (on paper) leads to hidden work intensification. Cycles of deadlines, time zone interaction, and digital performance monitoring in IT create cycles of "endless availability" in which time is stretched but not shortened. The authors, Kumari and Pahal (2023), found that IT hybrid work extends hours is lack of gender-sensitive policy of boundaries. Tan, Lim-Soh and Tan (2024) has documented longitudinal data which demonstrates that telework is only superior, when workload is managed and boundaries are kept; otherwise, flexibility will be hidden by long hours. Similarly, Patil and Janani (2024) showed that the productivity gains of telework require a framework of leadership and none are evident without it. This paradox is rooted in structural policy-practice dilemma: On the one hand, formal flexibility is institutionalized, on the other hand its protection is undermined by informal availability cultures. Without organization's effort, Choudhary and Agarwal (2025) warn that responsibility for balance unactually falls on individual women. Rebelo, Delaunay, Diamantino, and Almeida (2024) suggested the stringent corrective measures to institutionalize the right-to-disconnect policy. Moving the workplace to the home does not lead to a balance of caring roles; it adds to women's burden. According to Nagler, Rincke, and Winkler (2024), the greater participation of women in telework due to caring roles does not reduce the structural inequality and might create career inequality due to promotion of visibility.

The commuting time is filled with the unpaid work by women, which downplays the gender-neutral policies as inequitable by Castro-Trancón and García-Izquierdo (2024). Mari, Profeta, and Rossi (2024) found that the COVID-19 associated telework increased invisible domestic work and long working hours in the evenings for women across most of Europe. Digital fatigue and pressure of double presence as exacerbated by the lack of structural support and disconnect norms were also found by Munyeka and Maharaj (2023) and Nagesh and Premanand (2024) in the Indian IT environment. The intersectional flexibility model theorised by Kossek et al. (2023) postulates that the outcome of the situation is contingent on gender, care-giving and socio-economic status - and gender-neutral policies are thus ineffective. Sobral et al. (2025) also demonstrate that women working in the long-term teleworking environment are more adversely affected by life-to-work interference and boundary governance is the most significant predictor of sustainability.

Technostress, Boundary Erosion and Burnout

Technology workplaces systematically and structurally decrease psychological boundaries to create technostress, which affects women in tech. Qualitative-quantitative studies by Banerjee and Gupta (2024) have found that continuous connectivity and boundary erosion are the sources of burnout and work-family conflict. It is inferred by Pensar and Rousi (2023) in terms of the COR theory that when the level of resource depletion is higher than the level of resource recovery (chronic in unregulated remote workplaces in IT), then burnout is systemic. For Diskiene (2025), the hybrid work was associated with high emotional burnout and work-family conflict as the structural responsibility of organisations should support the individual efforts. The research by Naz, Nadeem and Kausar (2025) reports the chronic identity conflict, guilt and stress of women who have to navigate socio-cultural norms and digital work demands, and that the individual coping cannot compensate institutional change. The studies are unanimous in the norms of rights to disconnect and workload rationalization as the structural term of protection (Rebelo et al., 2024; Nagesh and Premanand, 2024). The moderating factors for the equity outcomes through remote work are leadership and organizational culture. Remote work is able to sustain the engagement with the condition that the social and relational factors are nurtured by the managers (Fatima et al., 2024). Deepa and Sivakumar (2024) have found that flexible arrangements increase interaction among women IT workers in the absence of the inclusion of leadership and culture.

Roy et al. (2024) show that ethical cultures reduce malpractices and promote trust, which are essential to a fair digital environment. Galsanjigmed and Sekiguchi (2023) confirm in an integrative review that stereotypes and promotion inequalities persist in telework settings, confirming that telework was not the answer to gender discrimination in promotion. Melady (2024) adds to this that individual boundary strategies can only work. The literature has always identified the right-to-disconnect policy, gender-sensitive HR policy, workload sharing and inclusive leadership as the cornerstones of integration.

3. Research Design and Review approach

This study is a qualitative secondary research design that includes a narrative review approach to synthesize existing research on challenges related to work-life integration for women in the domain of Information Technology (IT) during the transformation to remote working. The narrative review methodology has been selected as the aim of the study was to understand and explore. The subject of the study - a remote and hybrid work transformation - is a multi-dimensional, interdisciplinary and contextual phenomenon.

The currently examined sources are quite diverse in terms of the research design (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-method, systematic review, conceptual), theoretical perspectives and geographical contexts. Therefore, a meta-analysis or statistical pooling was not an option. Instead, a narrative synthesis allows us to conceptually and thematically interpret. The review is not only a review of literature but also a critical interpretation of patterns, identification of areas of theoretical overlap and the creation of an analytical narrative about gendered work-life integration in digital work worlds. The data were analyzed using a narrative synthesis. Concepts were identified, coded and grouped into superordinate themes through comparison between studies.

The overall patterns included:

- Flexibility–intensification paradox
- Gendered unpaid work
- Boundary erosion and technostress
- User well-being versus performance
- Structural ineptitude of gender-neutral policies

The thematic synthesis was interpretatively anchored in well-known theoretical approaches that are often used in research, such as:

- Boundary Theory (role segregation and integration)
- Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory (resource loss and gain)
- Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model (demands-resource imbalance)
- Intersectionality Framework (gendered structural inequalities)

As a secondary research study, which made use of publicly available academic work, we did not conduct primary data collection to involve human participants. As a result, there was no requirement for ethical clearance.

The paper is a narrative review that does not involve the statistical meta-analysis and quantitative synthesis of effect sizes. While some efforts were made to facilitate a systematic selection, but coverage might be influenced by publication bias and a database search. Furthermore, the focus of the current research is on the contemporary aspects and could overlook some original studies. However, this time orientation is improving the review's relevance to the contemporary digital work changes and new gendered effects.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. *The Flexibility-Intensification Paradox*

Flexibility-intensification paradox is formally flexible arrangements produce an invisible work intensification is one of the most commonly reported results in the selected articles. While distributed work and hybrid work is being strongly promoted as a means to enhance flexibility and reduce travel burden. Kumari and Pahal (2023) found role overload is greater in hybrid IT jobs without gender sensitive boundary policies, and Tan, Lim-Soh, and Tan (2024) found that flexibility is hidden in the long run without workload regulation and boundary control, and telework only leads to higher life satisfaction. Choudhary and Agarwal (2025) also caution that in hybrid IT workplaces the responsibility to establish balance has been shifted unilaterally to individual women unless it is a structural change.

4.2. *The Continuation of Gendered Domestic Division of Labor*

The second observation of structural concern is that there is not an equal distribution of household work in the telework setting. Work going home does not balance the care giving burden, rather the care-giving and work burdens are more complex to separate in space and time, so the double burden is aggravated. Nagler, Rincke, and Winkler (2024) demonstrate that despite the greater proportion of women teleworking due to caregiving restrictions, the structure of inequality does not reduce and also promotes career inequality with its visibility-focused promotion system. Both Munyeka and Maharaj (2023) and Nagesh and Premanand (2024) show digital fatigue and double presence as aggravated by lack of structural support in the Indian IT sector, and Kossek et al. (2023) explain their intersectional flexibility model by postulating the result of flexible work is structural.

4.3. *Blurring: Technostress and Information Overload*

The continued experience of online communication instruments, online performance dashboards, and digital surveillance technologies cultivates cognitive overload and emotional exhaustion, which aggregate over time. Banerjee and Gupta (2024) discovered that constant digital connectedness and violation of boundaries were the main contributors to burnout and work-family conflict, and digital self-efficacy was identified as a pivotal mediating medium. With reference to the theory of Conservation of Resources (COR), Pensar and Rousi (2023) prove that remote work not only preserves time spent commute but also expends on emotional resources and attentional capacity and, at the same time, once the rate of depletion is higher than the rate of recovery, burnout is chronic. This is supported by Diskiene (2025), who also identified that hybrid work was related to high emotional burnout and work-family conflict.

4.4. *Well-Being and Performance are not correlated*

Work flexibility is consistent in improving the perceived work-life balance and psychological well-being but does not necessarily translate to performance gains. This was the case with Fatyandri, Wijaya and Muchsinati (2024) when they found that balance is perceived to be improved by hybrid work, but not performance, and psychological well-being is enhanced through balance but not performance. Overall, the literature suggests that work-life integration is more a sustainability rather than productivity goal, which contradicts managerial voice that equality flexibility with productivity maximization.

4.5. *The Organizational Resources and Leadership as the Core*

The examined literature is in line with the mediation effect of the remote work consequences between the strategic and the individual level, which is corroborated in the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. The digital monitoring, the workload, and the role ambiguity as job demands have a high work-life conflict but Shah, Raval, and Bhatia (2025) prove that the above-mentioned effect is substantially alleviated by supervisor support and resources. Deepa and Sivakumar (2024) also demonstrate that flexibility policies for women in IT are not effective without inclusive leadership as a prerequisite but as an addition.

4.6. *Ineffectiveness of Gender-Neutral Flexibility Policies*

Among the most significant results is the incompetency of gender-neutral flexibility policies of remote work that were proven. The outcomes of flexibility cannot be equitably managed by the policies where employees are not differentiated as they are inherently impacted by the intersection of gender, caregiving and socio-economic background as per Kossek et al. (2023). By not including gender-sensitive work allocation, caregiver recognition and even explicit boundary in policies of remote work, they inadvertently continue to reinforce structural injustice and place the responsibility of integration on women. Jain and Malviya (2025) state that remote work not only does not solve the role conflict of women but further expands it and that the structural HR redesign needs a solution.

4.7. *Personalization's and Institutional Change*

The final synthesized insight is about the limitations of individual coping strategies to substitute institutional design. Women in hybrid IT work use various short-term relief measures, such as time and boundary management, peer support, and resilience-building, which are effective in the short term. Melady (2024) found that individual boundary strategies can only be successful when permitted by the organisations culture and social support, which demonstrates that the individual agency is permitted by the enabling structural conditions. However, Naz, Nadeem, and Kausar (2025) found that the reason behind the majority of chronic stress and identity issues in women is their individual coping without institutional support.

5. Conclusion

Increasing institutionalization of remote and hybrid work in the Information Technology (IT) sector is a sign of one of the major transformations in the modern working world. In the review of 30 peer-reviewed articles (2023-2025), the concept synthesis was applied to critically examine the impact of this change on female employees' work-life interface in the digital-intensive working environment. Technostress and digital boundary erosion is claimed to be a predictive source of burnout and cognitive load. According to the COR theory, the time saved in commuting is compensated by the emotional and cognitive resources, that are used and depleted by continuous connectivity and digital surveillance. Thus, to create sustainable work-life integration of female IT workers, the digital work systems, such as the right-to-disconnect, workload sharing, gender-sensitive human resource management, and cultural level changes in availability norms would need to be re-designed as it integrated the Boundary Theory, COR Theory, and the JD-R model. It means that instead of flexible as panacea, the articles included in this special edition reveal the quality of remote work depends on the form, control and cultural form of digital work organisations. Remote work is not necessarily liberator and exploitative but depends on its institutional structures. so, we can say that in the context of the shift to remote/hybrid work in the IT sector, it is not just a question of work place but also a question of the change of the work environment in terms of the labor relation, visibility and time management.

To the women professionals, the challenge is how to sustain the work-life balance by moving from symbolic to structural responsibility. The digital mediation of the work environment has made the future of work uncertain and conditional not because of the availability of the technology but design of gender-responsive systems that accept both well-being and career advancement. Only collective and not individual adaptation can render remote work a sustainable and inclusive work system in a technologically enhanced work environment.

6. Future Research Scope and Directions

The above research limitations are the productive trends for further research. Such meta-analysis techniques which can be used to compute effect sizes would provide a solid empirical foundation for other research such as by Banerjee and Gupta (2024) and Diskiene (2025). The longitudinal and experimental designs are particularly essential for the purpose of studying the effects of hybrid work arrangements, right-to-disconnect policies and gender sensitive HRD - the results of which are derived by cross-sectional studies such as Kumari and Pahal (2023) and Choudhary and Agarwal (2025) but cannot be causally determined. The IT sector specificity needs to be further narrowed down by the distinction between sub-sectors and work roles, while the IT work and digital nomadism, which is slowly becoming the trend (Chen, 2025), should be emphasised in future research.

7. Limitations of the Study

While this review is a synthesis of recent research on gendered work-life integration in IT remote working transitions that are grounded theoretically, there are a few limitations. Contextually, while the review is focused on women in IT, some of the studies included, such as Sobral et al. (2025) on teachers and Tahir (2024) on female entrepreneurs are not IT-specific, reducing the homogeneity of the field in subtopics such as agile project management, algorithmic monitoring of work productivity and multi-time zone collaboration. Theoretically, the review draws on the existing theories such as Boundary Theory, COR Theory, JD-R and intersectionality, without extending and developing new theories that can be used in the context of digital labor. Applying well-being as a predictor of performance and vice versa, the well-being performance disconnection that was identified in the literature, such as Fatyandri, Wijaya, and Muchsinati (2024), is not empirically tested, but expressed through the mediating mechanisms.

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