Organizational strategies for employee well-being: Balancing work-life demands in the tech industry

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Abstract

Rapid growth and digital transformation in the tech industry have often come at the cost of employee well-being and work-life balance. This qualitative study using thematic analysis investigates how organizations support employee well-being and work-life balance in the tech sector, guided by the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model. Data from open-ended surveys of 26 tech employees in Germany reveal that workplace demands such as high workload, unclear expectations, long hours, and constant availability significantly challenge well-being. Cultural norms and management practices that blur work-life boundaries further hinder balance. At the same time, participants value organizational initiatives such as mental health support, flexible work arrangements, and professional development opportunities as meaningful job resources. However, employees also express a need for more visible, proactive, and personalized support from organizations, including improved communication, earlier mental health interventions, and customized approaches to individual needs. These findings highlight the importance of embedding well-being into daily practices and organizational culture, rather than relying on superficial or reactive measures. The study concludes that organizational strategic involvement is crucial to balance workplace pressures with effective support structures. By fostering open dialogue and a culture of care, organizations can contribute to more sustainable and psychologically healthy work environments in the tech industry.

Keywords

employee well-being, work-life balance, tech industry, JD-R

1. Introduction

Employee well-being and work-life balance have become top priorities and concerns in the tech industry, a sector known for its fast-paced environment, high expectations from upper management, and constant change. The rise of digitalization and remote work has disrupted the boundaries between professional and personal life, leading to increased levels of stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction among employees [1]. Hybrid work arrangements, once introduced with the aim of improving flexibility, have in some cases resulted in increased workloads and reduced clarity around working hours. The expectation of being always reachable from upper management, combined with performance-driven environments, further increases psychological strain for employees working in the tech industry. [2].

Well-being is a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellness, not merely the absence of illness [3]. In the workplace, this implies the ability to perform effectively without being overwhelmed by job demands or workplace stress [4]. Work-life balance, as defined by Greenhaus and Allen [5], is the successful management of one's professional responsibilities alongside personal commitments. Both well-being and balance are directly related to productivity, retention, and employee satisfaction [6]. Within companies in the tech sector, these challenges are intensified by intense project demand, blurry boundaries between work and personal life, and an always-on culture that often discourages downtime. The need for high adaptability, constant innovation, and global work often creates environments where stress is seen as a price to pay for success. Employees often feel compelled to exceed expectations, even when it compromises their well-being and personal time. This situation raises some important

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concerns around sustainable performance and the human cost of digital progress. As a sector that continuously pilots large-scale digital-transformation initiatives [7], tech-firms provide an ideal context for examining how such transformations shape employee well-being and work-life boundaries.

This study investigates the role of tech organizations in employee well-being and work-life balance through the framework of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model [8]. The JD-R model provides a useful framework to understand how stressors (e.g., workload, emotional demands) and supports (e.g., flexible working policies, mental health supports) influence employee outcomes. It reinforces the importance that while job demands can undermine energy and motivation, job resources can improve engagement and psychological resilience [9]. Against this background, the study investigates four research questions; In the tech industry, RQ1: What workplace demands challenge employee well-being, RQ2: What are the outcomes related to these demands for employees? RQ3: How do organizations contribute to employee well-being? and RQ4: What should organizations improve to better support employee well-being? To examine this, the study implements a qualitative method using open-ended survey questions directed at employees within the tech industry. Responses are analyzed using Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes relevant to the research focus [10]. Against this background, Section 2 reviews the current literature on employee well-being in the tech industry. Section 3 outlines the qualitative methodology. Section 4 presents the findings in response to the research questions. Section 5 explores the theoretical and practical implications, and Section 6 offers concluding remarks.

2. Literature review

2.1. Employee well-being and work-life balance

The World Health Organization describes well-being as a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease [3]. [1] further explain well-being as a balance between an individual's psychological, physical, and social resources and the challenges they face. In workplace contexts, employee well-being encompasses both hedonic well-being (characterized by positive affect and life satisfaction) and eudaimonic well-being (marked by meaning, purpose, and personal growth) [11].

Research consistently demonstrates that employee well-being is linked to both personal satisfaction and organizational performance outcomes [6]. Employees experiencing high levels of well-being demonstrate greater engagement, resilience, and productivity [11]. Meta-analytic evidence shows that job resources such as autonomy, learning opportunities, and task variety are essential predictors of employee well-being, with studies demonstrating that these resources predict increases in positive well-being indicators over time [12, 13]. The strategic importance of a well-being culture extends beyond individual outcomes, serving as a competitive advantage particularly in knowledge-intensive sectors such as technology [14].

The COVID-19 pandemic has intensified focus on workplace well-being, as remote work arrangements have introduced additional psychological pressures including increased isolation and reduced opportunities for informal social connection [15]. Contemporary research emphasizes that well-being encompasses more than stress reduction, incorporating elements of thriving at work, feeling valued and effective, and maintaining connection to meaningful purposes [14].

Work-life balance is conceptualized as the individual perception that work and nonwork activities are compatible and promote growth in accordance with an individual's current life priorities [16]. This definition extends beyond simple time allocation to encompass satisfaction and effective functioning across multiple life domains. In the technology sector, achieving work-life balance is particularly challenging due to extended working hours, remote work expectations, and constant digital connectivity [17]. Research indicates that work-life imbalance leads to significant organizational costs including burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and elevated turnover rates [5]. Contemporary studies highlight how digital technologies exacerbate boundary blurring between professional and personal life, resulting in increased mental fatigue and emotional exhaustion [18, 19]. The persistent connectivity enabled by

digital platforms creates challenges for psychological detachment from work, with employees reporting difficulty "switching off" outside of traditional working hours [20].

2.2. The JD-R model

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model [8] classifies aspects of work into "demands" (e.g., workload, emotional pressure) and "resources" (e.g., autonomy, feedback, support). Job demands refer to physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that require sustained effort and are associated with physiological and psychological costs, while job resources encompass aspects of work that are functional in achieving work goals, reduce job demands, or stimulate personal growth and development [21]. The model has been commonly used across occupational health studies and offers a comprehensive framework to understand how organizations can reduce stress and boost motivation. In the tech industry, high job demands are common; however, with suitable job resources, if they are provided by well-designed policies, these can be reduced to protect well-being. [22] show that affective outcomes are stronger when HR programs are adapted to match individual employee needs. [23] also highlight the JD-R model's flexibility in being adapted for coaching-based interventions within organizations. The JD-R model has been successfully applied in numerous diverse organizational settings such as hospitals, schools, and IT firms, showing its ease of adaptability and predictive validity [24]. A recent meta-analysis in [12] confirms the model's strength in connecting job resources with employee engagement and performance across various industries.

2.3. Challenges in the tech industry

The technology industry presents challenges for employee well-being and work-life balance management. In technology firms, where digital transformation is both strategy and day-to-day reality, fast-paced work cycles, competitive cultures and blurred boundaries between professional and work life make it difficult to recover from work-related stress [25]. Many technology companies prioritize key performance indicators over humanistic outcomes, limiting organizational investment in employee well-being initiatives [26]. These industry-wide challenges are particularly intensified by the pervasive role of digital technology in modern work environments. Empirical reviews of digital transformation show that the push to "deploy tech at scale" alters processes and culture [27, 28], magnifying psychosocial risks if human-centred safeguards lag behind technology roll-outs [29].

Building on these foundational challenges, digital connectivity creates significant psychological challenges for employees through "techno-strain," characterized by mental and emotional effort required to navigate constant connectivity and information overload [30]. Workplace technology intensity impairs both physical and mental health through cognitive overload and affective strain [31]. Digital communication channels create expectations of constant availability, with employees reporting difficulty psychologically detaching from work [32]. These technological pressures are further complicated by broader organizational and structural issues within tech companies

In addition to digital connectivity challenges, technology companies frequently operate across global time zones with diverse teams facing high-pressure deadlines, intensifying employee stress [33]. Employees report unclear role expectations and performance evaluation systems that create psychological pressure [34]. Mental health concerns are particularly pronounced in the tech industry [35], with practitioner reports citing high burnout rates among IT professionals [36]. Remote and hybrid work models introduce further risks including social isolation, collaboration fatigue, and digital presenteeism [32, 37]. Organizations often tackle these issues through employee well-being programs aimed at primary preventative measures, secondary focused measures and tertiary reintegration measures [38]. And as digitalization has increased, the need to adjust the content and format of offerings has also increased [39]. Whilst preventative measures such as flu vaccinations, blood pressure testing, and gym membership [40] are useful in building employee health resources, the mere provision of such resources does not equate to resource usage. That is, organizations need to demonstrate genuine leadership support and modeling behaviors of health [41]. This can be achieved through a culture of health that

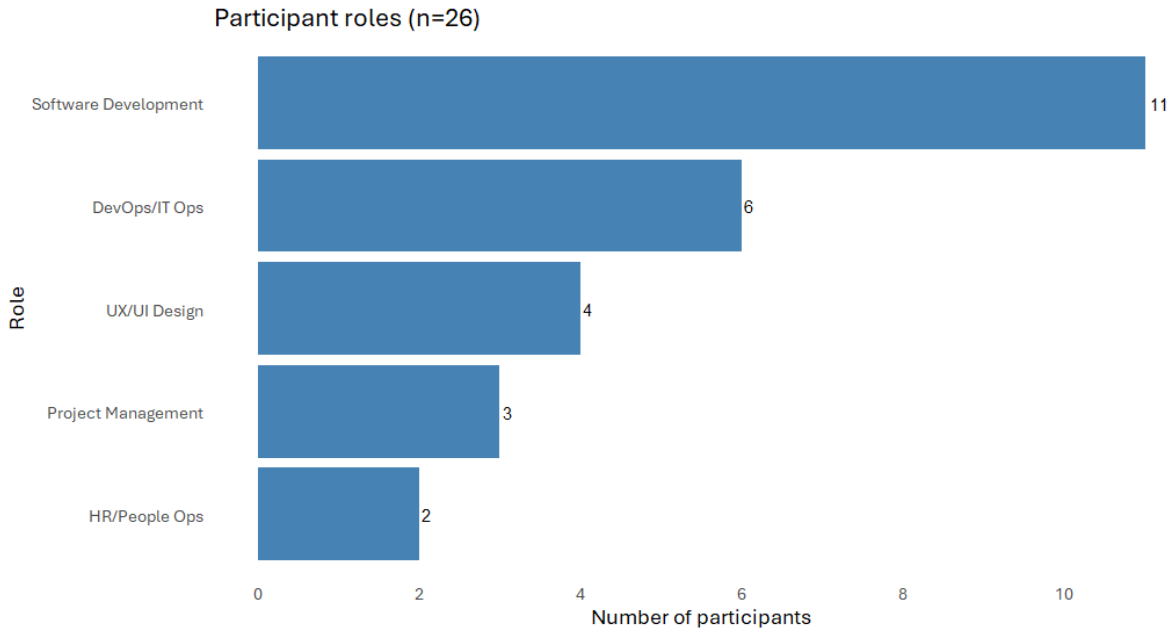

Figure 1: Participant roles

values, supports and promotes employee health and safety. Given the breadth of literature portraying the technology industry as a highly stressful working environment, it is unlikely that a culture of health is present in many companies. As such, one could question the authenticity and utility of workplace well-being initiatives. To give a Macbeth analogy, can workplace well-being programs clear such companies of their overwork deeds?. Empirical evidence suggests not. For instance, [39] found that mental health was the most frequently discussed topic in digital workplace wellness programs, with anxiety, depression, and stress-related conditions being the most common mental health issues reported. As described in the JD-R model, stress and strain can result from a resource demand imbalance [42]. In such instances, it seems perverse to offer stress well-being resources rather than fixing the root of the issue. The second most frequently discussed health domain in [39] is physical activity. Yet, fast-paced work cycles, competitive cultures, constant connectivity and expectations of constant availability, as described above, blur boundaries between professional and personal life. Indeed, organizations may offer physical resources such as those discussed in [40] , but the crux of the matter is whether employees truly have time to use them. Critically, this could expose companies to allegations of "well-being washing", a new term defined as "organizational actions that appear to support employee well-being but provide little tangible benefit, leaving employees with no meaningful improvement" [43]. With that being said, it is important to explore how technology organizations contribute, if at all, to employee well-being and what can be improved.

3. Methodology

A qualitative approach was applied to understand what shapes employees' well-being and work-life balance in the tech industry. For this, an open-ended survey was designed, which consisted of 11 questions that invited participants to share their experiences, opinions, and suggestions regarding workplace demands, organizational practices, and work-life balance. After a quality check, the survey was disseminated through professional networks and social media platforms. To be included in this study, participants had to be employed in the tech industry.

A total of 26 participants completed the qualitative survey. Participants represented a range of roles and specializations within the tech industry, primarily located in Germany. Within the 26 respondents of the survey, 11 worked in software development, including roles such as backend developers and

Table 1
Thematic Structure of Study: Research Questions, Codes, and Themes

Research Question	Codes	Theme
What workplace demands challenge employee well-being?	Constant deadlines, KPI stress, Multi-tasking overload, Unrealistic timelines, Feeling unable to disconnect	High workload and performance pressure
	Unclear tasks, Shifting priorities, Processes	Lack of prioritization
What are the outcomes related to these demands for employees?	Messages after hours, Weekend work, Always available	Work-life imbalance and blurred boundaries
How do organizations contribute to employee well-being?	Home office policy, Remote work, Flexible hours, Hybrid setup	Flexible and Remote Work
	Gym memberships, Health days, Mental health support, Stress management, Events with colleagues	Health and Well-being Initiatives
What should organizations improve to better support employee well-being?	Regular check-ins, Personalized support, Anonymous feedback	Proactive and Personalized Organizational Support
	No work after hours, Respect boundaries, Clear performance criteria	Boundary Enforcement and Autonomy
	Overtime pay, Compliance with labor laws, Transparent overtime tracking, Extra vacation days	Compensation, Security, and Legal Fairness
	Lead by example, Value humans, Trust-based management, Open communication, Listen to people	Human-Centric Leadership and Organizational Culture

full-stack engineers. Four participants were from UX/UI design, mostly working as product designers in different tech companies. Three participants worked in project management, including positions such as agile coaches and scrum masters. Six participants specialized in DevOps or IT operations, with job titles such as cloud engineering or business intelligence. Two participants came from HR or People Operations, including roles like HR business partners and talent acquisition managers. Figure 1 shows the participant roles in our sample.

To strengthen the rigor of the qualitative analysis, we implemented a collaborative, multi-stage coding and review procedure across all three authors. The initial round of coding was conducted by the third author, who systematically applied Braun and Clarke's six-step thematic analysis framework to the dataset[10]. The first coding cycle involved the creation of initial codes after multiple close readings of the responses. Subsequently, the first and second authors independently reviewed the coded data and assessed the emerging categories for consistency, thematic coherence, and alignment with the original material. Coding was performed at both the semantic (surface-level meaning) and latent (underlying ideas or emotions) levels, for example, coding a statement such as "I'm expected to be online all the time" as both "24/7 responsiveness" (semantic) and "no work-life balance" (latent).

Codes were then organized into broader thematic categories, making use of visual tools such as code maps and tables to facilitate categorization (e.g., codes such as "pressure from deadlines", "back-to-back meetings", and "unrealistic expectations" were grouped under "workload pressure"). In the final analytical phase, the full author team discussed the emergent themes, codes, and supporting statements, using the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model[8] as a guiding framework to distinguish between job demands and job resources. Any discrepancies or disagreements in coding or thematic interpretation were resolved through iterative discussion until consensus was achieved.

4. Results

4.1. Workplace demands challenging employee well-being

The aim of the first research question is to identify the specific job demands that negatively influence employee well-being in the tech industry. Based on the analysis of the responses we identified two main themes as detailed in the following.

The first theme was *high workload and performance pressure*, mentioned by many participants. Particularly, "high volumes of urgent tasks" (P3), "high workload" (P24), "having more work than [one] can fit in a workday" (P12) with tight deadlines (P4, P5, P17), "increasing client requests" (P3) and lack of "workforce" (P24) were highlighted. Employees felt that "unrealistic expectations from top management" (P22) and "expectations from supervisors" (P12) undermined their sense of well-being, which is related to "company culture based on pushing non stop work" (P6). Also, one respondent quoted the stress of "not hitting the targets" (P1). These demands were a consistent source of pressure across various tech roles.

A further demand mentioned in the responses was *lack of prioritization*. Tied to this,"multiple different requests from different person [sic] in a short time frame" (P24), "context switching" (P3), last minute change of requirements (P6) and "spontaneous events, and unannounced visits" (P16) were addressed as further issues. According to P13, such demands arise due to "not well-designed company processes". These themes highlight that job demands in the tech industry are not limited to workload alone—they also include cultural expectations, leadership, organizational design, and unclear structures. Each of these undermines employees' well-being when left ignored.

4.2. Outcomes of workplace demands in the tech industry

This section explores the outcomes of the demands that tech employees face. One very important theme, *work-life imbalance and blurred boundaries* seems to be the central outcome in the technology industry. Quite many respondents mentioned that availability expectations violate the boundaries, leading to problems with their work-life balance. Strikingly, P9 mentions that the availability for customers is a given, P19 and P21 point toward tech employees spending more time working due to too many projects with unrealistic deadlines. P23 states "its expected to work 24/7 constant monitoring and the feeling to lose the job quickly". As a result the "overtime get[s] in the way with [private] family life and responsibility [leading] to stress and anger within the family" (P24). Coping with this is not so easy, as P12 says that it is difficult to fight the "urge to work overtime to prioritize [their] work life balance", and that one is scared "to ask for a homeoffice day or something to not be noticed as "difficult, but you are trying to fit in private appointments, doctors appointments, don't want to miss out on family stuff". In some cases, availability expectations are even extended to the weekends with the "company culture based on pushing non stop to work" (P6), where employees "still think work on the weekends" (P5).

4.3. Organizations' contributions to employee well-being

This section of the study identifies how employees view their organization's role in supporting well-being, particularly regarding current programs in their tech companies, resources, and practices. Two main themes emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data.

The first theme, *flexible and remote work*, was highlighted by many participants as an important resource. Several respondents described the positive impact of home office policies and the "ability to work from home almost anytime" (P18), with some noting that these arrangements allow them to better manage personal commitments and reduce stress (P12) or "travel to [their] home country, take one week off, and work remotely for the remaining three weeks" (P21).

The second theme, *health & well-being initiatives*, was also emphasized, with participants mentioning access to gym memberships (P4), sports club subscriptions (P4, P13, P22, P24), JobRad (P22) and mental health support (P25). Other initiatives mentioned in this context were " career planning, education programmes" (P8), "after-work events, team events" (P22) and "healthy day(s)" (P15). Participants

reported that these initiatives contributed to their motivation, sense of growth, and overall well-being (P8, P24). However, a recurring issue across all three themes was low awareness and limited accessibility: many employees were unaware of available programs or felt that certain initiatives were not accessible to them. Accessibility is often related to working hours (e.g., P4, P14, P19, P23). For example, P4's company provided FitX & Urban Sport membership but simultaneously failed to respect after hours disconnection and boundaries between work and personal time. P19 highlights the level of overtime work with their statement "pay for dinner after 8 pm". Essentially, the provision of a wellbeing tool is only useful if one has free time to use it. Therefore, it is important for organizations not only to offer well-being resources but also to ensure they are visible, communicated, and accessible to all employees.

4.4. Areas to improve for employee well-being

Participants provided specific suggestions for how organizations can better support employee well-being, where we identified four main themes.

Several tech employees emphasized the importance of *proactive and personalized support*. For example, P3 recommended "more proactive enforcement of disconnecting after hours and regular well-being check-ins would be valuable", while P4 suggested "stress management coaching" as a way to better support employees. P5 hoped for "different types of events every now and then, so that the work wouldn't become mundane", and urged HR to "be more in contact with the employees, maybe doing regular check-ins". P9 also echoed this, stating, "Well-being is very subjective but can be monitored with regular check-ups and an ability to talk freely during them (similar to therapy)".

Participants also called for *improved boundary enforcement and autonomy*. P4 advised "disconnect after working hours (...) and respect boundaries between work and personal time". P6 suggested "respecting that employees are no longer working after 7pm" and "enforcing extra hour pay/on call policy if management calls employees outside of working hours". P11 emphasized the role of autonomy, stating "Quality of work is much better if people can choose if and when they come to the office." Similarly, P12 wanted "more flexibility in working hours if the position is good for it," and added, "See the person, not the employee. See that they also have family at home, trying to get an appointment at the Bürgeramt or the doctors". P16 suggested "letting people work from home if they want to—they are not kids", while P21 noted, "Don't pressure employees to return to the office—focus instead on creating clear performance appraisal criteria. This helps build trust and allows people to work in the way that suits them best, while still being accountable for results".

Compensation, security, and legal fairness were also frequently mentioned as areas for improvement. P19 proposed "pay for dinner after 8 pm" and P24 advocated for "extra days in relation of age and time in the company and for people who are married and have kids". P23 suggested "making sure that working time and overtime is recorded and people can have time off for overtime".

Finally, participants underscored the value of *human-centric leadership and organizational culture*. P4 encouraged leadership to "lead by example: leadership should visibly model healthy boundaries to normalize taking time to recharge". P22 recommended "more support to cover family needs", and P24 urged organizations to "give people who are working for your company all the security you can afford (...) see the humans behind the numbers you are staring at the whole day and if you can't do that, hire robots". P20 simply stated, "Listen to people".

5. Discussion

5.1. Job demands and resources in the tech industry

Based on the findings presented in Section 4, a number of job demands in the German tech industry emerged as shown in Table 2. These demands can be clustered into three types of demands using the classification framework in [44]. Whilst this framework was designed for academic job demands, the tech industry and academia both can be described as having an always on culture. From a JDR

Table 2
Job Demands and Resources in the Tech Industry

Demand category	Types of demands	Application in this study
Quantitative	Workload, time demands, and pressure	Heavy workloads, expectations and tight timelines create a hindrance.
Qualitative	Organizational politics, a lack of mental health support	The company culture of pushing non-stop working erodes WLB.
Organizational	Facilitation of overwork through technology	A lack of strategy and policies creates fertile soil for an overwork climate, techno-strain and techno-overload.

perspective, these demands constitute hindrance demands as they thwart goal achievement [45]. Hence, their presence has real productivity implications.

Companies in the tech industry should pay close attention to psychosocial safety in their workplaces and the implications this has on staff well-being. The workplace is a known setting where health can be created or impacted, with [46] stating "health is created and lived by people within the settings of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play, and love". The concept of Psychosocial Safety Climate (PSC) is a useful tool for tech companies to protect health through primary strategies designed to assess job demands and resources. To foster PSC, tech companies need to tackle the five aspects within the framework. Namely, management needs to support and be committed to psychosocial safety, they need to prioritize psychosocial safety, the entire organization needs to participate in psychosocial safety, and the organization needs to communicate psychosocial safety [47]. In this study, several participants cast doubt on the presence of PSC in the tech industry. Specifically, the quantitative, qualitative, and organizational demands in Table 2, through a PSC lens impair health when job resources such as supervisor support, change consultation, and decision authority are absent. The data in this study shed light on pressure from managers to work long hours, having to switch tasks, and unplanned work. That is, in the tech industry, these resources are absent, creating excessive demands impacting health. These findings speak directly to digital-transformation roadmaps: without parallel investments in psychosocial safety, initiatives aimed at agility and speed risk undermining the very human capacities they intend to amplify [48].

Building on this, the data suggests that overwork climates are common in the tech industry. Based on the Overwork Climate Scale (OWCS), an overwork climate exists when performing overtime is expected, when management encourages overtime working, most employees work beyond official work hours, taking time off is difficult, and no policy restricting overtime work exists [49]. The data unpacks cultures that push "non-stop work", where health is not prioritized over perceived productivity. The ability to overwork is facilitated through technological tools. The tools enable tech workers to log in at any time and enable constant contact. This exposes workers to techno-overload, defined as the extent to which employees perceive technology-related task performance demands to be excessive[50], characterized by feeling overwhelmed by the constant stream of information through emails, notifications, and digital communications [51]. Techno-overload forces employees to work faster and handle larger volumes of information than they can effectively process, leading to exhaustion [52], memory difficulties [32], and overall well-being [18]. Collectively, such negative responses are termed as techno-strain, including anxiety, fatigue, scepticism and inefficacy beliefs related to the use of technologies [53].

Furthermore, when all of these factors are combined, i.e., hindrance demands, lack of PSC, overwork climates, techno-strain, and techno overload, it is possible that the tech industry exposes employees to technology facilitated workaholism. For example, by applying the Multidimensional Workaholism Scale (MWS) [54], the inability to meet goals, creates a pressure to reach goals through other means e.g., working more. This demonstrates how the emotional aspect of workaholism drives a behavior to address it. Specifically, the emotional component of the MWS involves negative emotions when not

working. It may be that employees find it particularly difficult to detach when management pushes an overwork climate and this could create negative feelings when not working. In this study, the sheer volume of incomplete tasks places a cognitive demand on employees, whereby they are unable to stop thinking about work (cognitive MWS element). Next, they engage in excessive working, the behavioral component. And when this is combined with an internal motivation to work, which represents an inner pressure to work, then all aspects of workaholism are present. Critically, the company plays a role in this through the demands and resources they provide [55]. Workaholism is not an optimal outcome given the plethora of negative outcomes explored in the literature [56].

5.2. Practical implications

Based on the issues described above we recommend five actions to address well-being threats in the tech industry. Firstly, no actions should be taken without comprehensive data collection on all of the issues raised. Namely, tech organizations should conduct quantitative and qualitative research to establish levels of PSC, overwork, job demands, techno-strain, and techno-overload (recommendation 1).

Once the specific areas of concern have been identified they should proceed to the second step, designing workplace well-being interventions. These interventions should tackle primary, secondary and tertiary aspects of well-being programs [57]. Designing a PSC is an excellent foundation for primary interventions (recommendation 2). This involves tackling the five aspects within the framework, as described earlier, and addressing problems within the areas of management practices that influence and array of issues including work processes, performance, inadequate staffing, work overload, role ambiguity, lack of job training, lack of control, lack of benefits, unsupportive interpersonal relationships, work-life balance, technology overload, and inadequate or unclear policies [58]. Many of these issues were raised in this study and further quantitative work could establish the prevalence of these problems in the industry or in a case company. We understand that resources are limited, and organizations cannot implement all changes in one swoop. Instead, we recommend a statistical based approach that focuses on impact. Simply put, statistical analyses can identify the strength of association in correlation analysis and cohort or case studies can be designed to test for risk or odds. In doing so organizations can invest resources into the most impactful areas. This could include manager and supervisor training on emotional intelligence to bolster empathy for employees and positively address the relationship concerns raised by tech workers. This should also include developing policies to restrict working hours. This is not only a health and organizational culture concern, but also a legal problem in countries such as Germany where recording work hours is a legal requirement under Section 3 (2) No. 1 of the German Occupational Health and Safety Act (Arbeitsschutzgesetz – ArbSchG). If excessively long hours are recorded and enough data can be associated with a staff member's illness and working hours, then organizations could face legal issues due to health and safety laws and the requirement to protect employees form risks.

Tackling this issue will address the long working hours component of overwork climates but not the association between working hours and promotion. If this is indeed prevalent in the tech industry, then changes to performance and reward management policies need to be made to reduce the likelihood of workaholism (recommendation 3). Additionally, as many tech workers referred to staff shortages, the obvious solution is the recruitment and selection of new staff. However, we understand that this is timely and costly. Instead, we recommend strategic talent management grounded in the principles of employee value proposition to retain staff and reduce the shortages caused by losing staff. Moreover, arguably, no other industry is more versed on the potential benefits of AI usage in reducing bottlenecks [59]. We therefore encourage organizations to identify aspects within job design that can be automated, hence freeing time for employees to focus on the main aspects of their jobs (recommendation 4).

Finally, as many participants mentioned, flexible location working is very popular and arbitrary enforcement of office attendance is deemed unnecessary and counterproductive. Allowing flexible working is not costly, rather it can save money on day to day running costs. Forcing office-based work does not necessarily mean that a culture is absorbed and it does not mean that staff will feel a belongingness. Instead, it can force employees to be in environments that do not align with their working

styles, and it can risk exclusion for some employees with care-giving responsibilities or neurodivergence [60]. Our data supports this with married employees and those with families feeling misunderstood by their organizations and facing a struggle between trying to balance their life and work tasks. Moreover, performance is not predicted by location, ample evidence demonstrates that managers play a critical role. Hence, the training suggestion mentioned earlier should also tackle this problem.

5.3. Limitations

A key limitation of this study is that all participants were employed in the German tech industry. As a result, our findings may not be readily generalizable to other national or cultural contexts. Future research should include samples from additional regions to assess potential variations in employee well-being and technostress across different labor markets and cultural settings. Another limitation of this study is the qualitative design: The absence of systematic quantification limits statistical validation of the themes' prevalence and relative importance. Mixed-methods approaches, such as including validated well-being scales or applying quantitative content analysis, would make it possible to empirically substantiate patterns identified in the qualitative data. Additionally, as with many survey-based studies, there is a risk of self-selection bias: Participants who are particularly interested in well-being topics or those with strong experiences may have been more likely to respond. Finally, the cross-sectional nature of our data precludes assessment of how organizational strategies and employee well-being may change or develop over time. Future research would benefit from longitudinal designs to evaluate the lasting efficacy of organizational interventions and to track changes in employee well-being and work-life balance across different phases of digital transformation.

6. Conclusion

The technology industry's rapid growth and digital transformation initiatives have created unprecedented challenges for employee well-being and work-life balance. This study demonstrates that while organizations recognize the importance of supporting employee well-being through various initiatives, significant gaps remain between current practices and employee needs. High workloads, blurred temporal boundaries, and technology-driven expectations elevate techno-strain and overwork climates, especially when psychosocial safety is weak. The findings also reveal that flexible work policies, accessible mental-health resources, and growth opportunities can counterbalance these pressures. Nevertheless, such resources should be visible, supported by leadership, and tailored to individual needs.

As the tech industry continues to evolve, organizations must recognize that employee well-being is not merely a human resources concern but a strategic priority and moral responsibility. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this study, particularly focusing on boundary enforcement, personalized support, and human-centric leadership, technology organizations can create healthy work environments that support both individual well-being and organizational performance. The study concludes that sustainable organizational success in the tech sector requires moving beyond superficial well-being gestures toward embedded, strategic approaches that prioritize psychosocial safety and human-centered digital transformation.

Declaration on Generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Grammarly to check spelling and grammar. After using this tool, the authors reviewed and edited the content as needed and take full responsibility for the publication's content.

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A. Online Resources

The data set for this study can be downloaded here.