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Editorial: Employee well-being and health in a boundaryless workplace

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Editorial on the Research Topic
Employee well-being and health in a boundaryless workplace

The "boundaryless workplace" characterized by the removal of physical and geographical constraints, has shifted from an experimental model to a standard organizational settings (Poethke et al., 2023). While this evolution offers significant benefits (e.g., increased autonomy, and flexibility), the blurring of boundaries between work and non-work domains, constant digital connectivity, and the potential for social isolation necessitate a deeper understanding of how organizations and individuals can protect and promote wellbeing in this new era (Gajendran et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2022).

This Research Topic was launched to address emerging challenges of boundaryless work by integrating interdisciplinary perspectives on its impact on employee wellbeing, and health. In this editorial, we present the six contributing articles examining key mechanisms that shape wellbeing in modern work environments. Using diverse methodologies across sectors, these studies draw on established frameworks primarily the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory to identify novel digital job demands and the enabling factors that foster resilience in boundaryless contexts.

The collection begins by defining emerging digital stressors that extend beyond traditional conceptualizations of job demands. *Marsh et al.* introduce the concept of Digital Workplace Technology Intensity. Using qualitative approach, the authors identify five overarching themes: hyperconnectivity, techno-overwhelm, digital workplace hassles, Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), and techno-strain. Their work extends the JD-R model by demonstrating how technology intensity acts as a pervasive job demand. Complementing the above perspective, Ebner et al. further explore digital stress through FoMO at Work in times of career insecurity. Their study reveals that career insecurity triggers fears of informational, and relational exclusion. The fear of relational exclusion in turn leads to increased stress and irritation. Importantly, they identify affiliation at work as a critical resource that buffers the detrimental effects of career insecurity on the fear of informational FoMO.

The next two articles concentrate on the structure and implications of remote work arrangements while further clarifying how boundaryless work can function as either a resource or a demand depending on its configuration. Mergener et al. distinguish between recognized telework and informal overtime at home, revealing that unrecognized overtime work is strongly associated with mental health complaints, whereas formally acknowledged telework is generally beneficial. However, these benefits diminish when remote work becomes excessive, underscoring the importance of organizational recognition and clear boundary-setting. In contrast, Ciccone et al. demonstrate that working from home can enhance both mood and performance. Crucially, their findings emphasize that these benefits depend on personal resources, such as emotional stability, physical activity, and structured daily routines. Together, these two studies highlight that boundaryless work arrangements are not inherently detrimental; rather, their impact hinges on the balance between demands and enabling resources at both organizational and individual levels.

The remaining contributions shift the attention toward proactive strategies for strengthening employee resources and mitigating emerging demands. Eilert et al. demonstrate the effectiveness of brief online ego-state coaching in reducing communication apprehension, offering a scalable intervention to help employees manage the emotional demands of digital communication. Similarly, Sawyer et al. show that psychoeducational group programs provide critical relational resources for healthcare leaders, helping them cope with high job demands and prevent burnout. These intervention-focused studies extend the Research Topic beyond problem identification by demonstrating how targeted resource-building initiatives whether individual or collective, can enhance resilience in boundaryless work contexts.

Contributions

Taken together, the six articles offer a coherent and evidence-based blueprint for understanding and managing employee wellbeing in the boundaryless workplace. Collectively, they refine existing theory by identifying contemporary job demands such as digital technology intensity, informal overtime, and FoMO at work thereby moving beyond generic conceptualizations of workplace stress (Reimann et al., 2025). At the same time, they consistently highlight the central role of social and relational resources, including affiliation, social inclusion, and group-based support, as critical resources buffering against these emerging demands (Pichler et al., 2023). Importantly, the contributions extend beyond diagnosis by demonstrating the value of proactive, multi-level interventions, ranging from organizational policies that structure and legitimize remote work to individual and collective strategies that strengthen psychological and relational resources.

These insights align closely with emerging evidence, such as the recent longitudinal work by Zeng et al. (2026), which provides robust support for resource gain and loss spirals within the JD-R and COR frameworks. Specifically, their findings show that job resources particularly work-related social support accelerate positive emotional upward trajectories over time, whereas job demands such as workload exert compounding negative effects that suppress recovery and intensify strain. This dynamic perspective reinforces a core implication of the present Research Topic: in boundaryless work contexts, wellbeing is not static but evolves through self-reinforcing resource processes. By identifying concrete digital demands and corresponding buffering mechanisms, the articles in this collection provide important contextualized evidence that complements and extends this broader theoretical advancement.

A key insight emerging from this integrated body of work is that the benefits of flexible and remote work are not inherent, but contingent upon how work is designed and managed. Employee wellbeing depends on the intensity and regulation of technology use, the recognition and formalization of work practices, and the availability of supportive social and psychological resources (Allen et al., 2021). In this sense, boundaryless work environments can function either as sources of strain or as enablers of wellbeing, depending on how demands and resources are balanced over time.

Future research

Building on these insights, several important directions for future research emerge. First, there is a need for longitudinal and high-frequency designs that capture the dynamic "wear and tear" effects of sustained digital intensity, as well as the momentum of resource gain and loss processes. As recent evidence suggests, understanding wellbeing trajectories requires moving beyond static models to examine how demands and resources interact with time to shape emotional outcomes (Zeng et al., 2026). Second, future research should expand its scope to include diverse occupational groups, particularly self-employed workers like digital nomads (Miguel et al., 2025) to better understand how boundaryless dynamics manifest outside typical work population. Third, more rigorous evaluation of organizational policies such as "right to disconnect" initiatives is needed to determine which interventions most effectively mitigate techno-strain and support sustainable employee wellbeing.

By addressing both the "dark side" stressors and the enabling resources of boundaryless work, this Research Topic provides a foundation for reimagining employee wellbeing in an increasingly fluid, technology-mediated workplace. Overseeing this collection has reinforced our conviction that workplace wellbeing is not only a scientific pursuit, but a human imperative. It is our collective hope that these works will serve as a catalyst for healthier, more sustainable modern workplaces.

Author contributions

SM: Conceptualization, Writing – original draft. NR: Writing – review & editing. OA: Writing – review & editing. GW: Writing – review & editing.

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