

Article

Work-Related ICT Use and the Dissolution of Boundaries Between Work and Private Life

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Abstract

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) promote flexible forms of work. Based on analyses of data from the German BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey 2018, this article shows that ICT (computer/internet) use is associated with both overtime and better temporal alignment of work and private life. Additional analyses show that these associations differ by gender and parenthood. Especially if also working from home, men with and without children do more overtime when they use ICTs than women with and without children. Better temporal alignment is found only among men without children who use ICTs and work from home compared to women without children.

Keywords

gender; ICTs; overtime; parenthood; temporal alignment of work and private life; working from home (WFH)

Issue

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1. Introduction

The use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) promotes temporally and spatially flexible forms of work. Work-related tasks can consequently spill over into private life and private demands spill over into work. The effects are discussed ambivalently (e.g., Carstensen, 2015; Dén-Nagy, 2014). On the one hand, under the job demands-resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001), ICT use can represent a work demand (e.g., when it promotes overtime) and thus take up time resources that should actually be devoted to leisure or the family. On the other hand, the use of ICTs can be a work resource (e.g., by offering more flexibility for the organisation of work), which can facilitate the consideration of private demands. However, little is known about which groups of employees are more likely to benefit from these resources and take advantage of the opportunities promoted by ICT use for their own private interests or become subject to demands, such as overtime.

Gender norms and role expectations may have important implications here. Women—especially mothers—are expected to be more involved in private life while men—especially fathers—are more involved in their working life (Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Williams et al., 2013). As a result, there may be gender and parenthood-related differences in the use of ICT and the dissolution of boundaries between these spheres of life. For example, while men, fathers especially, may be more likely to use ICTs to extend work and comply with gender norms, this is not expected of women since they (have to) take on additional private tasks.

This article aims to examine the relation between work-related ICT use and the dissolution of the boundaries between work and private life, differentiated by gender and parenthood for German employees. It therefore examines the relations between work-related computer and internet use and overtime on the one hand, and the ability to temporally align work and private life (temporal alignment) on the other. With this concept,

we address the time dimension of work and private life alignment, that is the extent to which employees are able to take private and family interests into account when planning working hours (Mergener et al., 2023). Whether ICT use actually facilitates temporal alignment is relevant especially to the inclusion of women in the labour market, as a gender-specific division of labour is still found, especially among couples with children in Germany (Hobler et al., 2020).

Research has shown that mobile technologies, such as the internet, are more likely to be associated with the extension of work than stationary technologies, such as computers (Kirchner, 2015; Meyer & Hünefeld, 2021). Drawing on these findings, our study looks at both computer and internet use. In addition, working from home (WFH), which is closely linked to the development of ICTs, is included (Messenger & Gschwind, 2016). The reasons for implementing WFH in companies range from better work–life balance for employees and increased employer attractiveness to greater employee availability and productivity (Grunau et al., 2019). While previous studies mostly look at whether employees use ICTs or work outside the office, our analyses include the moderating effect of both.

The empirical analyses are based on data from the German 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020). Logistic regression models are estimated for the relation between work-related ICT use (computer/internet) and overtime and temporal alignment. Interactions are included in the models to test whether the relations between ICTs and overtime or temporal alignment differ by gender, parenthood, and WFH.

2. Theoretical Framing and State of Research

“Boundary dissolution” denotes a process by which the boundaries between work and private life become more flexible (Ashforth et al., 2000). This is caused by the flexibilisation of work structures, especially concerning time and space. As a result, previously separate life spheres become increasingly blurred. This process has bidirectional effects: Interactions can spill over from work into private life and from private life into work (Pongratz & Voß, 2004; Voß, 1998). The former is the case, for example, when employees check emails during the weekend, answer business calls on their way home, or extend their work at their employer’s premises because greater availability is expected. Here, occupational demands encroach upon the time that belongs to the private sphere—family time for instance. Interactions spilling from private life into work is the case when ICT tools make it possible to align private demands with everyday working life. For example, an employee may leave work to pick up a child from childcare but remain available to take work calls at the same time. According to boundary theory (Ashforth et al., 2000), individuals differ in the extent to which they segregate or integrate roles in different areas of life. The more segmented the roles are,

the easier it is to form and maintain boundaries and the more difficult it is to cross them. Integration strategies are often assessed as more helpful in reducing conflicts between work and private life. However, if areas of life overlap too much, as is made possible by ICT use, integration can also intensify conflicts (Kossek, 2016).

2.1. ICT as an Amplifier of the Dissolution of Boundaries Between Work and Private Life?

Work-related ICT use is discussed in connection with the intensification and extensification of work (Carstensen, 2015) because more multitasking is required, more interruptions occur, and work processes are accelerated (Chesley, 2014). In addition, ICTs enable employees to access work content at any time wherever they are, thereby reinforcing the expectation employees will constantly be available and respond to work-related demands (Chesley, 2014). As a result, previous research has shown that working time expands into private times and places when working with ICTs (Kirchner, 2015; Schieman & Young, 2013), thereby affecting private life. Employees perceive work–life conflicts more strongly when working time outside regular working hours increases due to ICTs (Wright et al., 2014). However, the effect of ICTs seems to vary in this respect. Kirchner (2015) finds that the occupational use of the internet (but not computers) is associated with working during leisure time. According to Meyer and Hünefeld (2021), tablet and smartphone use (but not laptop use) is associated with work intensity and overtime. Similarly, Chesley (2005) concludes that the use of mobile phones (but not computers) by employees is associated with increased negative work–life spillovers and lower family satisfaction. Thus, mobile technologies in particular seem to drive the boundary dissolution process.

In addition, work-related ICT use is also associated with a better temporal alignment. Derks et al. (2016) identify work-related smartphone use outside working hours as contributing to a decrease in work–life conflict and having a positive effect on family role perception. However, this correlation was only found for employees who preferred to integrate different spheres of life. Wajcman et al. (2010) find that the longer employees use the internet at home for work-related tasks, the less they suffer from work–family spillover, measured by missed family activities.

While ICTs can also be used exclusively on-site at the employer’s premises, WFH, which mostly alternates with working in the office, takes place directly in the private sphere. Spatial boundaries can dissolve here, in particular, something associated with both the risk of work being extended and the chance of better temporal alignment (Allen et al., 2015). On the one hand, employees save time and energy by eliminating commuting time and are able to organise their work more flexibly when working from home, which can support the integration of private demands during work (Gajendran & Harrison,

2007). On the other hand, employees often repay the flexibility employers grant them by extending their work (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010). Moreover, WFH is associated with the stigma that homeworking employees are less productive (Chung, 2018). Workers may extend their working hours to counteract this stigma. The time they would otherwise have spent commuting is often used to work longer hours instead of participating in leisure activities (Lott, 2019). WFH sees work–family conflicts increase mainly because more overtime is done (Abendroth & Reimann, 2018). This leads to the following hypotheses:

H1a. Work-related use of ICTs is positively associated with overtime.

H1b. This correlation is stronger for employees who work from home than employees who merely work from their employers' premises.

H1c. Work-related use of ICTs is positively associated with temporal alignment.

H1d. This correlation is stronger for employees who work from home than employees who merely work from their employers' premises.

As internet use is more strongly associated with the flexibility of working in time and space, we would expect stronger associations overall for the use of the internet than for working with computers.

However, research findings do not yet allow us to say which groups of employees are more likely to benefit from work-related ICT use (in terms of temporal alignment) and which groups are more likely to experience demands (in terms of overtime). The following section therefore explains how these associations may differ depending on gender and parenthood.

2.2. The Implications of Gender and Family Responsibilities

Boundary theory states that boundaries are shaped by role identity (Ashforth et al., 2000). More flexible boundaries are being formed around the role that contributes most to a person's identification. In view of the still strong gender-specific allocation of life domains (Hobler et al., 2020), it can be concluded that women form more flexible boundaries around their private sphere and men around their working sphere in order to confirm their gender identity. This division of life spheres is likely to be reinforced by parenthood. Women with children perform more care work than men, even if they are in full-time employment (Hobler et al., 2020).

Furthermore, cultural and social structures, which are themselves gendered, affect the formation of boundaries (Ashforth et al., 2000). These structures are expressed, for example, in the "ideal worker norm"

(Williams et al., 2013), which demands complete availability for gainful employment and the subordination of private demands to working demands. Men are better able than women to meet these expectations because they still have less responsibility for private demands alongside their gainful employment (Hobler et al., 2020). Fathers often extend their working hours in order to perform the "family breadwinner" role (Pollmann-Schult, 2015). ICTs can consequently promote this norm through the temporal and spatial flexibility they allow, encouraging fathers in particular to extend their work. Given their expected stronger identification with the family role, it can be explained that women separate their working sphere more strongly from their private sphere and allow occupational demands less access, especially when they have children. The "ideal mother norm" requires them to interrupt or reduce their gainful employment after the birth of a child to take on care work (Lott & Klenner, 2016). This suggests mothers are less likely than fathers to use ICTs to extend work. Even though women may have become more oriented towards the labour market and men towards care work (Kossek, 2016), a traditional gender-specific division of labour is still evident, especially in Germany (Hobler et al., 2020).

Research shows flexible working is used differently by women and men (Chung & Van der Lippe, 2018; Kim, 2020; Lott & Chung, 2016). It is more likely men will use flexibility to work overtime and women to integrate additional care work. In contrast, recent research has also found that mothers who work from home increase their working hours. However, the increases are mainly explained by their contractual working hours and not by overtime (Arntz et al., 2022). This may be related to the fact that women who work at home invest more time in housework and care work than men who work from home but also than men and women who work exclusively in the office (Powell & Craig, 2015; Samtleben et al., 2020).

Moreover, there may be fewer expectations from others (e.g., life partners) that men will deal with private demands when working from home. Men might also be less affected by stigmatisation than women, even when they ask for flexibility to cope with private demands. "Gender status beliefs" (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004) imply women will be less productive, regardless whether they are mothers, while men are described as "ideal workers," even when they have children (Acker, 1990; Williams et al., 2013). Fathers who request flexibility for family reasons can also face the so-called "flexibility stigma" (Rudman & Mescher, 2013) but women are affected by this stigma even if they do not have children, which could prevent them from demanding flexibility. Thus, it may be assumed men are more likely to benefit from ICT use in terms of temporal alignment, especially if they do not have children.

Limited empirical research has been done into the gendered effects of ICT use. Chesley (2005) finds mobile phone use at work is associated with negative

work–family spillovers for men and women. However, only women are affected by negative family–work spillovers in this study. Ghislieri et al. (2017) show an association between ICT use outside regular working hours and work–family conflict for both women and men. However, significant associations between working with ICTs outside regular working hours and work–family enrichment are only found for men (Ghislieri et al., 2017). Badaway and Schieman (2019) find a positive relation between the frequency of family contact during work and conflicts between family and work, which are stronger for women than for men.

Based on these findings, we add the following hypotheses:

H2a. The positive correlation between work-related use of ICTs and overtime is stronger for fathers (compared to men without children and women with and without children).

H2b. This correlation is the strongest for fathers who work from home.

H2c. The positive correlation between work-related use of ICTs and temporal alignment is stronger for men without children (compared to men with children and women with and without children).

H2d. This correlation is strongest for men without children working from home.

3. Data, Variables, Method

3.1. Data Set

The German BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey 2018 (Hall et al., 2020) was used to analyse how work-related ICT use relates to the dissolution of boundaries between work and private life. Around 20,000 employees aged 15 and over who work at least 10 hours per week were interviewed for this survey. The sample includes employees aged 18–65 who have no missing values for any of the variables included in the analyses. Self-employed persons are not included. The sample consists of 15,615 cases. This includes 2,715 women with and 5,280 women without children and 2,472 men with and 5,148 men without children.

3.2. Variables

Dissolution of the boundaries emerging from work to private life is captured by overtime. A variable was therefore created that indicates the difference between agreed and actual weekly working hours. Due to the non-ideal distribution of the variable for linear regression analysis (45% without overtime), this was dichotomised (0 = *no overtime*, 1 = *at least 1 hour of overtime*). Table 6 in the Supplementary File estimates linear quantile regres-

sion for computer work at various points in the overtime distribution.

Dissolution of boundaries starting from private to working life is operationalised with the question: How often do you manage to take your family and private interests into account when planning your working hours? (1 = *often*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *rarely*, 4 = *never*). This was dichotomised for the analysis (0 = *never, rarely, sometimes*; 1 = *often*).

ICTs are operationalised by questions about working with computers and using the internet or email. Only persons who had previously stated they worked with computers were asked about the internet/email. Both variables are dichotomised into the values 0 (*never/sometimes*) and 1 (*often*). In addition to computer and internet use, the range of task items available includes variables relating to 16 other job tasks. Based on a factor analysis, Kirchner et al. (2023) show these tasks can be assigned to three domains: manufacturing, services, and knowledge. Three other tasks (purchasing, advertising, and transporting) could not be assigned to a particular factor. We added these factors and individual tasks to the data set and included them in the models as control variables.

As it is expected that ICT use at home in particular is associated with a blurring of boundaries between private and working life, WFH is recorded with the question: Do you work for your company from home, even if only occasionally? (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*). WFH is also included as a moderator. To examine group-specific differences in the relationship between ICT use and the dissolution of boundaries, group variables for gender and children are included as moderators (women with children, men with children, women without children, and men without children). The reference categories change between the models for overtime (men with children) and temporal alignment (men without children), depending on the assumption made in the hypotheses.

Further variables are included for control purposes. Besides age and a combined variable for gender and children (under 16) living in the household, human capital is controlled for with the ISCED education variable (0 = *up to middle school*; 1 = *Abitur/vocational qualification*; 2 = *from university, university of applied sciences, including doctorate*) and how long the employee has worked for their employer (tenure in years). Occupational characteristics in particular are decisive for a blurring of boundaries between spheres (e.g., Kirchner, 2015). In addition to job tasks, occupational position (0 = *blue-collar worker*, 1 = *white-collar worker*, 2 = *civil servant*), full-time/part-time, and leadership position (0 = *no*, 1 = *yes*) are included to cover these characteristics. Region (0 = *West Germany including Berlin*, 1 = *East Germany*), is taken into account in view of possible differences in working conditions. Furthermore, variables that capture organisational characteristics, such as company size (0 = *1–9 persons*, 1 = *10–249 persons*, 2 = *250 persons and more*) or whether the organisation has a work council (0 = *no*,

1 = yes) are included. We also control for career ambition (0 = not at all/rather not, 1 = strong/very strong), as research has shown that higher ambition and job involvement can have an impact on whether technologies are used, for example, to extend work outside regular working hours (Boswell & Olson-Buchanan, 2007). Living with a (spouse) partner (0 = no, 1 = yes) is included to control for family responsibilities.

3.3. Methods

The models for the relations between work-related ICT use and the dissolution of boundaries between work and private life are estimated using logistic regressions. The choice of logistic regression as a method results from the 0/1 coded dependent variables. The interpretation of odds ratios is not intuitive and can lead to incorrect conclusions (Wolf & Best, 2010). Moreover, coefficients cannot be compared between different models. Average marginal effects are therefore presented for the logistic regression models. These indicate the average influence an independent variable has on the probability of an event occurring (Wolf & Best, 2010). To examine the implications of gender and parenthood for the relationship between work and private life and the dissolution of boundaries, interaction terms are included as moderators. These combine the technology used by the employee with gender, children, and WFH. In order to compare groups beyond the comparison with a single reference group, contrasting group differences are shown, which also makes it easier to interpret three-way interactions (Mitchell, 2012, pp. 487–492).

We pursue a hierarchical approach in which variables for job tasks are added to model M2 and the variable for career ambition to model M3. We control for job tasks (but not career ambition) in models M4, M5, and M6, the interaction of ICT use with gender/children (M4) and WFH (M5), and the three-way interaction with gen-

der/children and WFH (M6). The control variables mentioned above are included in all models (see Tables 1, 2, 4, and 5).

4. Findings

4.1. Descriptive Findings

Nearly 54% of employees in this sample work overtime. The non-overlapping confidence intervals in Figure 1 show that men with and without children (60% and 57%) are significantly more likely to report overtime than women with and without children (48% each). While women and men with children differ significantly from each other, there are no significant differences between the groups of women and men if they do not have children. On average, 62% of employees are often able to temporal align work and private life (Figure 2). Women with children state this significantly more often (69%) than men with and without children and women without children (61% each). However, these differences are not significant (Figure 1). Around 71% of the employees work with computers and 57% use the internet often. Men without children work significantly less with computers (65%) and the internet (52%) compared to men with children (72%/59%), women with children (76%/61%) and women without children (73%/59%). Descriptions of all the variables can be found in the Supplementary File.

4.2. Multivariate Findings

Tables 1 and 2 show the correlation between work-related computer and internet use and overtime, taking account of the control variables. The full models with all control variables are set out in the Supplementary File. Working with computers and using the internet often (M1) are associated with a significantly higher probability of overtime. When job tasks (M2) and career

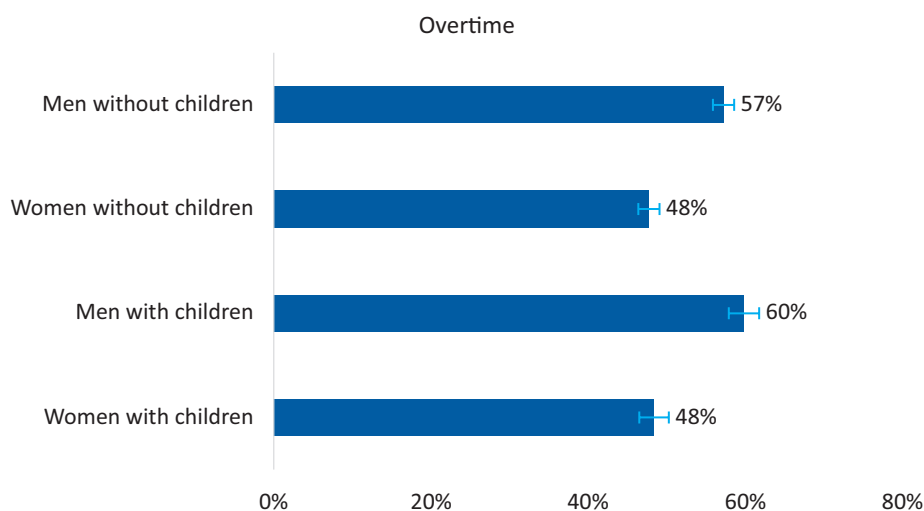


Figure 1. Descriptive statistics for overtime by gender/children ($N = 15,615$). Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author’s calculations; weighted).

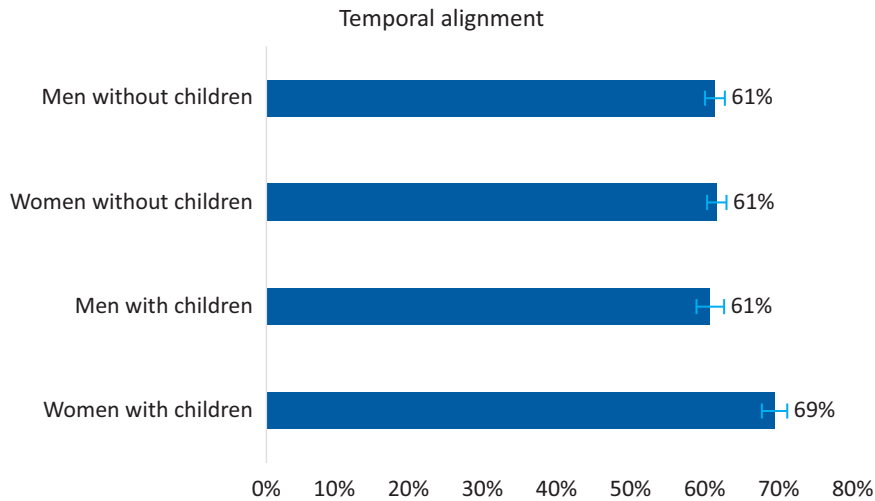


Figure 2. Descriptive statistics for temporal alignment by gender/children ($N = 15,615$). Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author’s calculations; weighted).

ambition (M3) are factored in, the probability of overtime is slightly reduced but remains significantly positive. H1a, which assumes working with ICTs is positively associated with overtime, can be accepted. The probability of overtime is, as expected, higher when using the internet than when working only with a computer.

The analysis of the differences between groups shows that employees who work from home and use ICTs often are significantly more likely to work overtime than employees who use ICTs often and do not work from home (Table 3). Thus, H1b, which states that the association between ICT use and overtime is stronger for employees working from home, can be accepted. There is hardly any difference between groups that only work

with computers and those that also use the internet when working from home, which is obvious since both technologies are used especially for WFH.

Additionally, ICT use’s relation to the dissolution of boundaries from private to work was investigated. For this purpose, the relationship between work-related computer and internet use and temporal alignment was tested (Tables 4 and 5). Both working with a computer and using the internet (M1) often increase the probability of temporal alignment. H1c can be accepted: Work-related ICT use is positively associated with temporal alignment and these associations also remain stable when job tasks and career ambition are factored in (M2, M3). Using the internet increases the likelihood of

Table 1. Associations (average marginal effects) of overtime and working with computer.

Overtime	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)
Working with computer (Ref.: <i>never, sometimes</i>)	0.071*** (0.010)	0.038*** (0.011)	0.037*** (0.011)	0.038*** (0.011)	0.050*** (0.012)	0.056*** (0.013)
Gender and children (Ref.: <i>men with children</i>)						
Women with children	-0.091*** (0.015)	-0.091*** (0.015)	-0.087*** (0.015)	-0.090*** (0.015)	-0.083*** (0.015)	-0.079*** (0.015)
Men without children	-0.020 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.012)	-0.018 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.012)	-0.014 (0.012)	-0.011 (0.012)
Women without children	-0.081*** (0.013)	-0.081*** (0.013)	-0.080*** (0.013)	-0.081*** (0.013)	-0.068*** (0.013)	-0.064*** (0.013)
Working from home (Ref.: <i>no</i>)					0.106*** (0.010)	0.103*** (0.010)
Observations	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author’s calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level; margins based on logit regression; standard errors appear under coefficients in parentheses; the dependent variable is overtime.

Table 2. Associations (average marginal effects) of overtime and using the internet.

Overtime	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)
Using the internet (Ref.: <i>never, sometimes</i>)	0.090*** (0.009)	0.064*** (0.010)	0.063*** (0.010)	0.067*** (0.011)	0.062*** (0.012)	0.066*** (0.012)
Gender and children (Ref.: <i>men with children</i>)						
Women with children	-0.089*** (0.015)	-0.090*** (0.015)	-0.087*** (0.015)	-0.087*** (0.015)	-0.082*** (0.015)	-0.077*** (0.015)
Men without children	-0.020 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.012)	-0.017 (0.012)	-0.016 (0.012)	-0.013 (0.012)	-0.010 (0.012)
Women without children	-0.079*** (0.013)	-0.080*** (0.013)	-0.079*** (0.013)	-0.078*** (0.013)	-0.068*** (0.013)	-0.063*** (0.013)
Working from home (Ref.: <i>no</i>)					0.098*** (0.010)	0.095*** (0.011)
Observations	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level; margins based on logit regression; standard errors appear under coefficients in parentheses; the dependent variable is overtime.

Table 3. Pairwise comparisons: working with computer/using the internet and working from home for overtime.

Working with computer (<i>often</i>)						Contrast
Working from home	vs.		Not working from home			0.556***
Using the internet (<i>often</i>)						Contrast
Working from home	vs.		Not working from home			0.533***

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level.

Table 4. Associations (margins) of temporal alignment and working with computer.

Temporal alignment	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)
Working with computer (Ref.: <i>never, sometimes</i>)	0.054*** (0.010)	0.036*** (0.011)	0.037*** (0.011)	0.037*** (0.011)	0.030** (0.012)	0.028** (0.012)
Gender and children (Ref.: <i>men without children</i>)						
Women without children	-0.043*** (0.010)	-0.027** (0.010)	-0.028** (0.010)	-0.026** (0.010)	-0.029*** (0.010)	-0.029*** (0.010)
Men with children	-0.005 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.012)	-0.006 (0.012)	-0.004 (0.012)	-0.007 (0.012)
Women with children	-0.014 (0.013)	0.001 (0.013)	-0.001 (0.013)	0.002 (0.013)	-0.000 (0.013)	0.002 (0.013)
Working from home (Ref.: <i>no</i>)					-0.019* (0.010)	-0.019+ (0.010)
Observations	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level; margins based on logit regression; standard errors appear under coefficients in parentheses; the dependent variable is temporal alignment.

Table 5. Associations (margins) of temporal alignment and using the internet.

Temporal alignment	(M1)	(M2)	(M3)	(M4)	(M5)	(M6)
Using the internet (Ref.: <i>never, sometimes</i>)	0.072*** (0.009)	0.051*** (0.010)	0.052*** (0.010)	0.052*** (0.011)	0.050*** (0.011)	0.051*** (0.012)
Gender and children (Ref.: men without children)						
Women without children	-0.042*** (0.010)	-0.026** (0.010)	-0.027** (0.010)	-0.026** (0.010)	-0.029*** (0.010)	-0.030*** (0.010)
Men with children	-0.006 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.012)	-0.005 (0.012)	-0.004 (0.012)	-0.006 (0.012)
Women with children	-0.014 (0.013)	0.001 (0.013)	-0.000 (0.013)	0.002 (0.013)	0.000 (0.013)	0.002 (0.013)
Working from home (Ref.: <i>no</i>)					-0.023* (0.010)	-0.024** (0.010)
Observations	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615	15,615

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level; margins based on logit regression; standard errors appear under coefficients in parentheses; the dependent variable is temporal alignment.

good temporal alignment more than just working with a computer. The greater temporal and spatial flexibility associated with internet use thus seems to support the integration of private and occupational demands more effectively.

In contrast, employees who work from home and use ICTs are less likely to align work and private life than employees who do not work from home but work with ICTs (Table 6). Thus, H1d, which assumes that the positive association between ICT use and temporal alignment is stronger for employees who also work from home, cannot be accepted. One explanation for this could be that where employees experience greater spatial dissolution, as is associated with WFH, paid work not only extends more into private life but there are also stronger expectations they will take on additional private tasks than when working in the office, which may hinder good temporal alignment.

Based on gender approaches, it is assumed the dissolution of boundaries differs according to gender and parenthood. All groups (women and men with and without children) were compared in terms of overtime and tem-

poral alignment when working with a computer or additionally using the internet. As assumed in H2a, men with children, who use ICTs (computer/internet) often have a higher probability of overtime than all other groups who use ICTs often. However, the difference between men with and without children is not significant for both computer work and internet use (Table 7). Thus, H2a can only be partially accepted, since the probability of fathers working overtime when they use ICTs differs only significantly from that of women with and without children.

It was also assumed the probability of overtime would be particularly high for fathers compared to all other groups if they not only use ICTs but also work from home (H2b). The group comparisons show that fathers are more likely than women with and without children and men without children to work overtime when they use ICTs and work from home. Once again, the difference between men with and without children is not significant for either computer work or internet (Table 8). With this exception, H2b can be accepted. The interaction plots are shown in the Supplementary File (Figures 1 and 2). Generally greater contrasts are seen in the model for

Table 6. Pairwise comparisons: working with computer/using the internet and working from home for temporal alignment.

Working with computer (<i>often</i>)			Contrast
Working from home	vs.	Not working from home	-0.129***
Using the internet (<i>often</i>)			Contrast
Working from home	vs.	Not working from home	-0.160***

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level; margins based on logit regression; standard errors appear under coefficients in parentheses; the dependent variable is temporal alignment.

Table 7. Pairwise comparisons: working with computer/using the internet and gender/children for overtime.

Working with computer (<i>often</i>)			Contrast
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	0.390***
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	0.068
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.336***
Women without children	vs.	Men with Children	-0.322***
Men without children	vs.	Men with Children	-0.054
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.268***
Using the internet (<i>often</i>)			Contrast
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	0.494***
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	0.115
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.380***
Women without children	vs.	Men with Children	-0.379***
Men without children	vs.	Men with Children	-0.114
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.265***

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level.

employees who use ICTs and work from home (Table 8) than in the overall sample (Table 7; with the exception of the contrast between women without children vs. men with children in the model for internet use), confirming the assumption that WFH increases the contrasts between these groups in particular.

The empirical results only confirm the expected differences in the relations between ICT use and temporal alignment by gender and parenthood to a limited extent (Table 9). Although group comparisons show men without children experience better temporal alignment than men with children and women with and without children,

only the differences between men and women without children are significant at a 10 percent level. In addition, the contrasts are very small which additionally suggests that the groups do not differ. Thus, H2c that men without children are better able to align work and private life compared to all other groups cannot be accepted.

A similar picture emerges concerning the differences between men and women with and without children who use ICTs and work from home. Men without children who work with ICTs and work from home are significantly more likely to align their work and private lives than women without children (Table 10). Again, there

Table 8. Pairwise comparisons working with computer/internet, working from home, gender/children for overtime.

Working with computer (<i>often</i>) and working from home			Contrast
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	0.602***
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	0.243
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.432***
Women without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.359**
Men without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.170
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.189
Using the internet (<i>often</i>) and working from home			Contrast
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	0.624***
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	0.276
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.447***
Women without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.348*
Men without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.178
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.170

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level.

Table 9. Pairwise comparisons: working with computer/using the internet and gender/children for temporal alignment.

Working with computer (<i>often</i>)			Contrast
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	0.011
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	-0.130
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.027
Women without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.141
Men without children	vs.	Men with children	0.016
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.157+
Using the internet (<i>often</i>)			
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	-0.031
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	-0.131
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.028
Women without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.100
Men without children	vs.	Men with children	0.058
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.159+

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level.

are no significant differences between men without children and women with children, and contrasts are quite small. H2d, which posits a stronger association between ICT use and temporal alignment for men without children who work from home, can therefore only be partially accepted. Figures 3 and 4 in the Supplementary File show the interaction plots. When it comes to temporal alignment, as with overtime, there are larger difference in the models for employees who use ICTs and work from home (Table 10) than in the models for all employees (Table 9).

5. Limitations

First of all, the cross-sectional design of the data set does not allow any causal conclusions to be drawn. For example, employees who frequently work overtime might also frequently work with ICTs or work from home. The use of panel data is therefore recommended for future analyses. Panel data would also make it possible to control more effectively for individual differences, such as preferences for the integration or segregation of different areas of life. Furthermore, more differentiated items relating to ICT use (use of laptops, smartphones, etc.)

Table 10. Pairwise comparisons working with computer/using the internet, working from home, gender/children for temporal alignment.

Working with computer (<i>often</i>) and working from home			Contrast
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	0.078
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	-0.219
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.065
Women without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.297+
Men without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.014
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.284**
Using the internet (<i>often</i>) and working from home			
Men with children	vs.	Women with children	0.073
Women without children	vs.	Women with children	-0.239
Men without children	vs.	Women with children	0.077
Women without children	vs.	Men with children	-0.312+
Men without children	vs.	Men with children	0.004
Men without children	vs.	Women without children	0.366***

Source: Based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey (Hall et al., 2020; author's calculations). Notes: + statistically significant at the .10 level, * at the .05 level, ** at the .01 level, *** at the .001 level.

will be important if the differences between stationary and mobile technologies are to be grasped. This also reflects the fact that the available data can only indicate whether employees use ICTs but not the extent to which they are used and where (at the employer's premises and/or at home). This means our results may be affected by the misconception that employees use the internet, for example, at both workplaces even though they may only do so from home. This shortcoming could be addressed in future studies by the use of data from time-use surveys. Moreover, the present study focuses only on parenthood and does not take other life phases into account. Flexibility needs are not merely likely to differ depending on family responsibilities; rather, differences between earlier and later employment phases, are also to be expected (Schmidt et al., 2020).

6. Conclusions

This study aimed to obtain representative results based on the 2018 BIBB/BAuA Employment Survey concerning the relation between work-related ICT use (computer/internet) and the dissolution of the boundaries between German employees' working and private lives. For this purpose, both a dissolution of boundaries from work to private life due to overtime and from private life to work due to temporal alignment of work and private lives were investigated. WFH, gender, and parenthood (children under 16 years in the household) were factored in as moderators.

The results show there is a greater probability of employees who use ICTs at work and doing overtime compared to employees who do not use ICTs. As also shown in previous studies (e.g., Kirchner, 2015), this is more evident for the use of the internet than for computer work. Furthermore, employees working from home and using ICTs often are significantly more likely to work overtime than employees who use ICTs often and do not work from home. WFH seems to be a stronger accelerator of overtime than using ICTs alone and indicates the relevance of the locations where ICTs are used. WFH primarily increases the spatial dissolution of boundaries and transports more occupational demands into the private sphere. The finding that WFH encourages overtime is consistent with previous research (e.g., Abendroth & Reimann, 2018).

As expected, working with ICTs is associated with a significantly higher probability of overtime among men with children compared to women with and without children. These associations also become apparent when WFH is taken into account. The differences between men with children and women with and without children are even stronger here than when only ICT use is considered. Both ICTs and, to an even greater extent, spatial flexibility, which is more strongly associated with WFH, can be seen here in relation to role demands that encourage the expectation fathers will perform their role as "family breadwinners" by expanding their working time. ICTs

facilitate the fulfilment of this norm, thereby reinforcing the dissolution of boundaries from work to private life, especially for men with children.

While employees who use ICTs report better temporal alignment than employees who do not use ICTs, it is worse among employees who additionally work from home. WFH may not only increase the flexibility that allows occupational demands to spill over into private life but also increase the weight of private demands. Life partners or children may expect an individual to take on even more housework and care work when they work from home compared to when they work in the office. Contrary to our assumption, it turns out that men without children only achieve a better alignment of work and private life compared to women without children and not compared to men and women with children as well, especially when using ICT and working from home. One explanation for this may be that women and men with children have already adapted their working conditions in ways that enable them to integrate private demands effectively. Even if they have to integrate more private demands than men without children, they therefore do not rate their temporal alignment any worse.

Overall, the following superordinate results of our study may be noted. Firstly, ICT use reinforces a traditional gender-typical pattern of gainful employment in which men, in contrast to women, use these technologies to extend their work. Secondly, even if men's temporal alignment is not strengthened to the extent expected, at least no disadvantages for them are evident despite the greater expansion of their work. ICT use and especially WFH thus tend to reinforce rather than reduce gender inequalities in paid work. Consequently, based on our findings, it cannot be assumed that ICT-supported WFH particularly benefits women with family responsibilities and so contributes to better inclusion of this group in the labour market. Kümmerling and Postels (2020) assume the effects of family-friendly measures, such as flexible working arrangements, are affected by country-specific gender role perceptions. Thus, WFH may only become a facilitator in the integration of private and work demands when the domestic and care work is no longer allocated specifically by gender.

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Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors (unedited).

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