

LCBB6014: INDEPENDENT PROJECT - PROPOSAL
COMPONENT1: CW: WRITTEN RESEARCH
PROPOSAL

STUDENT NAME: CODRIN IOAN CHIRCIU
STUDENT ID: 2027548

RESEARCH PROPOSAL

1. Title / Topic of the Proposed Research

Digital Wellbeing and Remote Work: Evaluating Notification-Management Strategies to Reduce Stress and Improve Productivity among UK Knowledge Workers

2. Research Aim and Research Objectives

Aim

To investigate whether structured notification-management strategies can reduce perceived stress and improve self-reported productivity among UK remote knowledge workers.

Objectives

1. To measure baseline levels of notification exposure and perceived stress.
2. To evaluate the effectiveness of scheduled batching and do-not-disturb (DND) windows.
3. To explore employee experiences, perceived benefits, and barriers to adopting these strategies.
4. To provide evidence-based recommendations for employers and HR practitioners.

3. Research Questions or Hypotheses

Research Questions

- **RQ1:** Do notification-management strategies significantly reduce perceived stress compared with a control group?
- **RQ2:** Which strategy produces the greatest improvement in self-reported productivity?
- **RQ3:** What barriers influence employees' willingness to adopt these strategies?

Hypotheses

- **H1:** Participants using notification-management strategies will report lower perceived stress post-intervention.
- **H2:** Scheduled batching will yield greater productivity improvements than do-not-disturb windows.

4. Justification of the Research

Remote work has increased reliance on digital communication tools, resulting in higher levels of interruptions and technostress. Frequent notifications have been shown to elevate stress and reduce concentration (Mark, Gudith & Klocke, 2008). Similarly, limiting email checking has been found to significantly reduce stress levels (Kushlev & Dunn, 2015).

Despite these findings, organisations lack practical, evidence-based strategies to manage digital interruptions. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model suggests that excessive notifications act as job demands that drain psychological resources (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

This research is justified because it provides empirical evidence on simple, scalable interventions that can improve wellbeing and productivity in remote work environments.

5. Review of Literature

Digital interruptions have been widely studied in relation to cognitive load and workplace stress. Mark et al. (2008) found that frequent task switching increases stress and reduces efficiency. Tarafdar et al. (2007) introduced the concept of technostress, highlighting how digital overload negatively affects productivity.

The JD-R model positions notification overload as a job demand that contributes to strain and burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Cognitive load theory further explains how interruptions impair attention and increase mental fatigue (Kaye, Wall & Malone, 2018).

However, most existing studies are correlational. Few have tested practical interventions such as scheduled batching or DND windows in real-world remote-work settings. Qualitative studies suggest that employees' willingness to adopt such strategies depends on organisational norms and perceived expectations of responsiveness (Sonnentag & Fritz, 2015).

This study addresses these gaps by combining quantitative intervention testing with qualitative exploration of user experiences.

6. Methodology

Research Design

Mixed-methods design combining a quasi-experimental online intervention with qualitative interviews.

Population & Sampling

- **Population:** UK-based knowledge workers working remotely at least 50% of the time.
- **Sample size:** Target $n = 300$ (100 per group).
- **Sampling method:** Convenience sampling via Prolific and professional networks.
- **Qualitative sample:** 15 purposely selected participants.

Data Collection

- **Quantitative:**
 - Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) (Cohen et al., 1983).
 - Self-reported productivity scale.
 - Notification exposure (self-report + optional device logs).
- **Interventions:**
 - Scheduled batching.
 - Do-not-disturb windows.
- **Qualitative:**
 - Semi-structured interviews exploring experiences and barriers.

Data Analysis

- **Quantitative:** Descriptive statistics, ANCOVA/regression, effect sizes, confidence intervals.
- **Qualitative:** Reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).
- **Integration:** Convergent mixed-methods interpretation.

Ethical Considerations

- Informed consent.
- Right to withdraw.
- Anonymisation of transcripts.
- Secure encrypted data storage.
- Minimal risk; wellbeing resources provided.
- Full ethics approval will be obtained before recruitment.

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