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ABSTRACT

Constant connectivity is prevalent in modern workplaces, aided by smartphones and email. Supervisors may further pressure their subordinates to remain connected to work through their after-hours communications. We develop the concept of *supervisor off-work boundary infringements (SBI)* or supervisor intrusions during subordinates' nonwork hours, which are becoming widespread due to expectations of immediate accessibility. Through the conservation of resources theory lens, we explore whether these unnecessary intrusions by supervisors increase subordinate strain outcomes (i.e. job tension and depressed mood at work). We also examine the role of perspective-taking, a cognitive resource deployed as a coping strategy that allows individuals to understand the viewpoint of others, which in turn facilitates changes in one's attitudes and behaviours. Specifically, we propose that employee perspective-taking can lessen the adverse effects of SBI. Across a four-study constructive replication, we find evidence that SBI positively relates to job tension and a depressed mood at work. Heightened levels of perspective-taking attenuated this relationship. Our study presents evidence that individuals who engage in perspective-taking can protect themselves by buffering the adverse effects of SBI. Importantly, we advocate for corporate policies and laws that protect workers from SBI and encourage supervisors to cease such infringements on their employees.

The increased frequency, amount, and ease of communication between subordinates and supervisors can be both a blessing and a curse. Technology has created flexibility freeing

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employees from the tether of a physical office or desk, a trend which has only increased due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 5% of employees worked from home pre-pandemic, while 50% worked from home full-time during the pandemic (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). As experts predicted, employees continue to work from home, at least part-time (Ozimek, 2020). Constant connectivity with work encourages employees to use off-work time to self-manage job tasks. However, it also creates the assumption of continuous accessibility (Cañibano, 2019).

The "culture of immediacy" (Leclercq-Vandelannoitte, 2019) and the expectation of "24/7" availability can overwhelm employees (e.g. Cañibano, 2019). Although remote work has perceived benefits (e.g. increased career success and job flexibility; Chung & Van der Horst, 2017), workers recognise connectivity expectations as an intrusion of privacy (Mazmanian et al., 2013). By engaging with employees during off-work hours, supervisors bridge employee work-to-home boundaries creating the possibility for interruptions and amplifying or lessening work-home stress (Major & Morganson, 2011). We adopt Margulis' (2011, p. 11) view that "privacy involves a dynamic process of interpersonal boundary control," which involves inputs and outputs from others. Studies to date have considered response expectations (i.e. "what to do ") associated with supervisor prompts (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). However, less research has examined how supervisor privacy violations influence employee work-stress responses (i.e. "how does this affect me"), despite calls in the literature to investigate these relationships (e.g. Bourdeau et al., 2019; Derks et al., 2016).

Our goals are (1) to understand how supervisor off-work intrusions relate to strain outcomes at work, given their potentially harmful effects on employees, and (2) to explore a previously unexamined cognitive resource that employees may deploy as a form of coping to buffer these adverse effects. Because subordinates rely on information from supervisors to interpret cues and establish role expectations, off-work intrusions can become draining and have unintended consequences for employee moods and stress levels. We define **supervisor off-work boundary infringements** (**SBI**) as supervisor intrusions during subordinates' nonwork hours. Drawing from conservation of resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll, 1989) as an integrative framework, SBI are work-life boundary violations that increase job demands, thereby depleting psychological resources. Thus, we explore the effect of SBI on employee strain indicators (i.e. job tension and depressed mood at work).

Individuals tend to mobilise resources, including personal strengths and abilities, to defend against perceived privacy threats (Hobfoll, 2001). We consider one such resource deployed during coping with SBI: perspective-taking. Perspective-taking is an essential cognitive resource that protects employees by (a) placing observers in a position to understand the motives of those observed and (b) allowing for changes in thoughts and behaviours resulting from such heightened mindfulness and awareness (Davis, 1980; Van Doesum et al., 2018). Perspective-taking is ostensibly other-serving. However, as opposed to empathy, perspective-taking is a self-centric exercise that allows individuals to expand their thinking by attempting to consider another's viewpoint (Longmire & Harrison, 2018). Perspective-taking is a purposeful self-centric resource that employees use to protect against the loss of resources from SBI. Specifically, perspective-taking may help protect against strain outcomes by enabling employees to reframe SBI to something less harmful to their well-being. Reducing the potential

detrimental impact SBI may have on employees is becoming more critical as the work-force shifts to hybrid work arrangements.

We make two key contributions to practice and science. First, we address recent calls for work to assess supervisor response expectations across work-home domains (e.g. Bourdeau et al., 2019; Derks et al., 2016) and contribute to research and theory on how individuals cope with intrusions into work-home boundaries (e.g. Hunter et al., 2019). To do so, we developed a four-study constructive replication to assess the effects of violations of employees' nonwork time by supervisors (i.e. SBI) on employee job strain manifestations, which include felt job tension and a depressed mood at work. Second, employee responses to off-work intrusions are person-specific, leading scholars to explore individual differences as moderators of off-work infringement—outcome relationships (Gadeyne et al., 2018). We build on this work by exploring the role of perspective-taking, a cognitive resource, as a boundary condition of the positive relationship between SBI and subordinate strain. We propose that perspective-taking represents a unique resource that can buffer subordinate strain-related outcomes related to supervisor off-work boundary infringements.

Theoretical background and hypothesis development

Supervisor off-work boundary infringements (SBI) and resource depletion

Conservation of resources (COR) theory argues that individuals seek to protect and pre-serve their valued resources, such as their well-being, health, and autonomy (Hobfoll, 1989). When there is a threat, resources deteriorate, and individuals risk experiencing stress (Hobfoll, 2011). This study examines a unique work-life boundary violation that potentially consumes cognitive and emotional resources. We explore the effects of super-visor intrusions during subordinates' nonwork hours or **off-work boundary infringe-ments** (**SBI**) on employee strain indicators (i.e. job tension and depressed mood at work). Furthermore, COR theorists emphasise that individuals employ resources to regu-late their social interactions and behaviours to better fit within their organisations (e.g. Hobfoll et al., 2018).

Given the decline in schedules with discernible "start and stop" times, employees feel compelled to work evenings, weekends, and vacations (e.g. Sonnentag et al., 2014). This continuous communication implies that employees will immediately consider and respond to supervisor requests, even when physically or psychologically separated from work (Kossek et al., 2018). Research indicates that employees with after-hours expectations experience emotional exhaustion (Belkin et al., 2020), impaired sleep (Lanaj et al., 2014), anger (Butts et al., 2015), work detachment, and increased work-life conflict (Belkin et al., 2020), decreased job satisfaction (Keller et al., 2019), and increased turnover intentions (Belkin et al., 2020). In addition, more cognitive energy is exerted when communicating electronically (Kock, 2005), making off-work communi-cations from supervisors increasingly taxing. Remote and hybrid working, and the intro-duction of modern technologies, will continue to blur existing work-home boundaries (Allen et al., 2021).

We make the case that SBI is a work-home boundary violation that exacerbates employees' feelings of intrusion during nonwork hours and, for that reason, can be

resource-depleting. Individuals will differentiate work and nonwork roles into separate domains through temporal, physical, or psychological components (e.g. Ashforth et al., 2000). A boundary violation is "an individual's perception that a behaviour, event, or episode either breaches or neglects an important facet of the desired work-home boundary" (Kreiner et al., 2009, p. 713). Defined as a belief that one controls time, space, and exchanges with others (Stone & Stone, 1990), privacy boundary violations impede balance by interrupting activities intended to enhance home life (Baer et al., 2016). Continuous boundary violations create the perception that work never ends (Mazmanian et al., 2013). This reality is consistent with COR theory. Specifically, privacy violations introduce additional tasks or increase job demands outside the workday that drain employees' psychological resources, leading to work-related stressors (Deng et al., 2018). Such infringements extract the resource-generating potential often experienced during off-work time (Hobfoll, 1989; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

However, privacy beliefs are ostensibly "tied to or defined by the experience of the given situation" (Laufer & Wolfe, 1977, p. 25) and depend highly on one's threshold for boundary infringement (Petronio & Durham, 2008). Indeed, employees may benefit from making themselves available outside of work hours. For example, Ragsdale and Hoover (2016) reported that after-work communications were associated with job control, and Diaz and colleagues (2012) found a positive association with job satisfaction. Communication exchange during off-work hours is compulsory for career success (Gilkerson et al., 2018), representing a strategic means to "get ahead" (Piszczek, 2017). Shi et al. (2021) found that work information and communication technologies outside work hours predicted employees' focus on potential opportunities. Others have gone as far as to say that " … the advantageous effects of being connected to work (high work pace, feeling related) outweigh disadvantageous, energy-consuming effects" (Brummelhuis et al., 2012, pp. 118–119). Although we acknowledge that there may be positive outcomes associated with continuous accessibility (e.g. Kelliher & Anderson, 2010), we believe off-work *supervisor* intrusions (and associated expectations) will elicit adverse reactions.

The fact that the individual infringing on the subordinate's work-life boundary is *the supervisor* makes SBI unique. Distinct from the "work interruptions" construct, defined as encounters that unexpectedly interrupt or halt workflow (Jett & George, 2003), SBI violations are supervisor initiated rather than introduced by co-workers. Interruptions from supervisors and peers elicit different responses in employees (Puranik et al., 2020). Employees assign more importance to interruptions from supervisors (Gupta et al., 2013) and are less likely to delay responses from those perceived as more powerful (Rennecker & Godwin, 2005). SBI are part of the supervisor-subordinate dynamic, underscoring the dyadic power imbalance from one party controlling another's work tasks and performance appraisals.

SBI are also distinct from other related constructs, such as supervisor support for recovery. Supervisor support for recovery, or "the degree to which supervisors' expressed attitudes and policies that were supportive of employee recovery during time outside work" (Bennett et al., 2016, p. 1653), emphasises the benevolent side of work-life boundary blurring. However, supervisor support for recovery emanates from the perspective of the supervisor rather than the subordinate. SBI take the employee's view of the privacy infringement, regardless of what the supervisor considers an intrusion.

SBI and strain outcomes

Thus, by virtue of the communication coming from the supervisor, we have argued that the benefits of constant accessibility are not as significant as the potential downsides (i.e. privacy infringements). Such prompts represent an obligation to connect rather than an option. According to COR theory (Hobfoll, 1989), the potential for losses is felt more strongly than gains if supervisor prompts go unattended. Supervisor expectations of constant connectivity are extraordinary job demands that strain employees' ability to respond and perform at capacity (e.g. Hobfoll & Freedy, 1993). Employees may lack the resources needed to address the constant accessibility, leading to psychological depletion (Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). For these reasons, we expect the demands on a subordinate associated with SBI to have a positive relationship with two employee strain indicators: job tension and depressed mood at work.

Job tension is the "psychological manifestation of felt stress" at work (Gallagher et al., 2008, p. 650). COR contends that there is an evaluative interpretation of the person-situation transaction (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), and this evaluation can impact psychological health (Neveu, 2007). Job tension and psychological stress manifest when there is a threat of resource loss or depletion (Hobfoll, 1989). The intrusion caused by SBI drains employee resources due to the continual effort (i.e. mental and physical) required to respond to one's supervisor. This depletion, in turn, impacts employees' psychological states (Weiss, 2002). As resources deplete, a downward spiral of loss drains the energy necessary to complete work tasks or recover (Hobfoll, 1989). SBI stressors should impact the level of job tension one experiences because employees are constantly struggling to balance the demands of the job and the resources necessary to address the constant SBI.

> *Hypothesis 1a*: Supervisor off-work boundary infringements are positively related to job tension.

Depressed mood at work represents a psychological strain (Evans & Fischer, 1992) and a general feeling of despair coupled with decreased work interest, low energy and irritability, and mild sadness (Gallagher, 2012). In response to threats or depleted resources due to work demands, individuals can experience emotional exhaustion and depression (Neveu, 2007). This reality currently exists, where information and communication technologies cross work-family boundaries and adversely affect employee well-being (Berg-Beckhoff et al., 2017).

Aligned with the reported adverse influence of work-home boundary violations on affective and emotional states (e.g. Belkin et al., 2020), we also expect SBI to impact employee well-being adversely. The constant "always-on" feeling can challenge employees' mental health, especially when those pressures are coming from their managers. Employees may experience negative moods as a form of coping due to psychological resource depletion (Hobfoll & Lilly, 1993). Continual stress and burnout from constant connectivity and connection to work create emotionally draining situations (Baranik & Eby, 2016). Therefore, we expect depressed mood at work to be positively related to SBI.

> *Hypothesis 1b*: Supervisor off-work boundary infringements are positively related to depressed mood at work.

The moderating role of perspective-taking

Perspective-taking involves understanding and predicting another person's thoughts, attitudes, or feelings about a particular situation (Epley et al., 2006) via perceiving their point of view (Ng et al., 2021). Perspective-taking often results in an affective response of empathy and concern for others (Gilin et al., 2013; Parker & Axtell, 2001). However, the constructs are fundamentally different. Perspective-taking entails purposeful cognitive effort (Longmire & Harrison, 2018), whereas empathy is an emotional response allowing individuals to understand others' distress (Davis, 1983). Accordingly, perspective-taking and empathy result in different outcomes. Empathy can harm one's outcomes in negotiation, where perspective-taking positively impacts one's ability to capture value (Longmire & Harrison, 2018).

A central theme of COR theory centres on how individuals protect themselves from resource losses. Individuals will invest in coping behaviours to protect or recover from loss (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003), including mobilising cognitive resources and physical energies to reframe thoughts and redirect harmful behaviours (Hobfoll et al., 2018). Perspective-taking is one such resource that can protect an individual's well-being, as "seeing their side" is a "useful tool" (Longmire & Harrison, 2018, p. 906) employees might use to cope with different work demands (Arnold & Walsh, 2015; Lamothe et al., 2014). Coping strategies are influenced by the availability of resources (Ito & Brotheridge, 2003), and perspective-taking may be a beneficial resource for subordinates to exercise during SBI. This reality occurs because although employees have limited control over the occurrence of SBI, they can use perspective-taking to exert control over the framing of the situation. For example, an employee who receives a phone call from their supervisor late at night with a last-minute request may initially feel anger. Through perspective-taking, they may infer that their boss is on a strict deadline, lessening experienced anger and anxiety.

Considering another person's viewpoint is taxing because it requires time, motivation, and the depletion of finite attentional resources (Eyal et al., 2018). However, perspective-taking can be an effective coping strategy despite the required cognitive resources. Prior work lends support to this assertion. Perspective-taking is a constructive approach to creating positive work experiences by fostering positive social interactions (e.g. Zhang et al., 2018), particularly helpful in stressful situations. Prior work has also found that re-directing psychological resources can help offset the downsides of intrusions (Grotto et al., 2022). Taken together, perspective-taking represents a self-protection mechanism with documented favourable effects across individuals.

Perspective-taking can improve supervisor-subordinate relationships by increasing employees' understanding of others' demands and motives. As such, we expect perspective-taking to be relevant to the supervisor-subordinate relationship in general, particularly in the case of SBI. SBI deplete employee psychological resources by impeding work-home boundaries and creating privacy infringements. Supervisors directly impact employee beliefs about what actions and expectations are necessary for high performance or to remain in "one's good graces" (Zapf, 2002). Supervisors' constant connectivity can damage employees' job attitudes and well-being by creating greater emotional exhaustion (Zapf, 2002) and erosion of reciprocal trust (Suazo et al., 2005). However, research suggests that these pressures may result in less harm if the perceived violation is lessened

(Raja et al., 2004) through coping or mental reframing. In this regard, employee perspective-taking may provide meaning to tasks completed during off-work hours. Employees may view SBI by a supervisor during off-work hours less negatively if they can discern meaning from such infringements, ascribe a reason for the off-work privacy violation, or otherwise make sense of the expectations. Engaging in perspective-taking may enable employees to ward off the consequences of SBI as a form of self-protection and self-preservation. We hypothesise that perspective-taking will weaken the positive relationship between SBI and strain outcomes:

> *Hypothesis 2a*: Employee perspective-taking moderates the relationship between supervisor off-work boundary infringements and job tension, such that the positive relationship is weaker when perspective-taking is higher than when it is lower.

> *Hypothesis 2b*: Employee perspective-taking moderates the relationship between supervisor off-work boundary infringements and depressed mood at work, such that the positive relationship is weaker when perspective-taking is higher than when it is lower.

Method

Programme of research

We developed a four-study investigation to examine our hypothesised direct and interactive relationships to establish replicability across samples and contexts. Moreover, our constructive replication approach employed different methodologies to capture constructs of interest. Study 1 was a cross-sectional survey with participants occupying multiple positions and hierarchical levels. Study 2 was a cross-sectional examination of employees in a large communication firm. Study 3 used a student-generated sampling methodology to capture a representatively diverse sample. Lastly, Study 4 included data collected directly via human resource (HR) personnel. To further highlight our findings' generalizability and address the single time-period limitations of Studies 1 and 2, antecedents and outcomes were time separated in Studies 3 and 4.

Participants and procedures – study 1

We asked individuals attending a career fair to participate in a survey investigating work and nonwork-related issues. Those agreeing to participate received a survey, a return envelope, and an opportunity to participate in a raffle for modest prizes (i.e. gift cards ranging from \$5 – \$50 in value). Quiet areas were available to complete the survey. Respondents also had access to an online survey and returned it to the researchers in a 24-hour window. We distributed 197 surveys at the fair and received 182 usable responses. We embedded attention checks to ensure adequate responding (i.e. "For technical purposes, please circle 'strongly disagree' for this item"). Also, we examined each survey to identify inappropriate participation (e.g. a line extending downward through responses, blocks of responses missing; DeSimone et al., 2015). A total of 40 surveys were subsequently eliminated ($n = 142$). Respondents averaged 34 years of age ($SD = 8.37$) and four years of tenure with one's current supervisor ($SD = 3.81$). Men comprised 46% of the sample. We identified a range of jobs, including administrative, technical, managerial, and service occupations.

Participants and procedures – study 2

After monthly staff meetings, HR representatives surveyed all 231 employees of a communication firm in the Northeast United States. Participants sealed all surveys and returned them to a secure box. After two weeks and one email prompt, we received 171 surveys (response rate of 74%). We retained 154 useable surveys after screening for non-compliance or incompletion (DeSimone et al., 2015). Respondents averaged 38 years of age (SD = 10.11) and had worked for their current supervisor for four years (SD = 3.07). Men represented 63% of the sample. Archival data provided by HR reported that 62% of the population identified as men, which was similar in proportion to our sample proportion.

Participants and procedures – study 3

Consistent with recent research (e.g. Op den Kamp et al., 2018), students forwarded the email addresses of individuals working more than 30 h per week. We then sent 484 surveys to identified participants through a secure database. We collected data twice, approximately four weeks apart (e.g. demographics, affectivity, and focal variables at Time 1; outcomes at Time 2). We included response checks in the survey (e.g. "For statistical reasons, please choose "7" in the response below") and screened the data as recommended (DeSimone et al., 2015). The first wave of surveys yielded 441 completed responses (response rate of 91%), of which we matched 403 after the second wave. The sample included both blue and white-collar occupations. However, administrative, professional, and management positions were predominant. Respondents averaged 47 years of age (SD = 12.19) and six years with their current supervisor (SD = 7.22). Men represented 63% of the sample, similar to the population when we collected the data (i.e. 57%).

Participants and Procedures – study 4

We distributed surveys to 238 non-medical professionals (e.g. record keeping, admissions, and financial/insurance) at a mid-size hospital following two staff meetings (approximately 60 days apart). We asked participants to submit completed surveys (in a sealed envelope) to a secured box in the location break room. The first wave of data collection yielded 201 completed surveys (response rate of 84%). We initiated the second wave four weeks after the first-wave deadline ended. We matched 173 after the second wave. As in Study 3, we collected demographics, affectivity, and focal variables at Time 1 and outcomes at Time 2. After eliminating unmatchable submissions and screening surveys for careless or incomplete responding, the final sample included 157 participants. Respondents averaged 39 years of age (SD = 9.19) and four years of supervisor tenure (SD = 5.04). The sample was 56% male, while 57% of the population was male.

Measures

We assessed all constructs using identical scales across the studies, with a seven-point response format ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7).

Supervisor boundary infringement (SBI)

We measured SBI with a five-item scale developed for this research. We validated the scale with a sample of 150 individuals sourced through a panel provider (Prolific), either part-time or full-time. In that sample, on average, respondents were 33 years of age ($SD = 7.41$), worked for their current supervisor for three years ($SD = 2.63$), worked at their current jobs for five years ($SD = 3.42$), had 12 years of work experience ($SD = 7.73$) and was 56% male. The validation procedures yielded a scale with a one-factor structure, with high factor loadings for each item (>.73) (detailed scale validation procedures and results are available from the corresponding author upon request). The five items of the scale are: "My boss respects my privacy during nonwork hours" (reverse-scored), "My boss leaves me alone when I am away from work" (reverse-scored), "My boss recognizes that I have a life away from work" (reverse-scored), "My boss fails to recognize the boundary between 'work' and 'home'" and "My boss doesn't bug me with work-related stuff when I'm off" (reverse scored).

Perspective-taking

We measured perspective-taking using a seven-item scale developed by Davis (1980, 1983). The items are from a subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index. "I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at both" represents a scale item.

Job tension

We measured job tension using a seven-item scale developed by House and Rizzo (1972). "I work under a great deal of tension" represents a scale item.

Depressed mood at work – Studies 2–4 only

Consistent with recent research (Baranik & Eby, 2016), we measured depressed mood at work using five items from Quinn and Shepard's (1974) scale. "I feel downhearted and blue at work" represents a scale item.

Controls

In all four studies, we controlled for demographic (e.g. age, gender, tenure with one's supervisor) factors previously shown to influence study variables of interest significantly (Cohen et al., 2014). For example, we included age and gender as constants given prior relationships with job tension (Hochwarter et al., 2005) and work depression (Kane-Frieder et al., 2014). Research also documents relationships between tenure with one's supervisor, reduced psychosomatic complaints (Velez & Neves, 2016), and organisational commitment (Jernigan & Beggs, 2005).

Because individuals high in dispositional negative (NA) and positive affectivity (PA) respond (favourably or unfavourably) to cues consistent with innate tendencies, self-reports may reflect these predispositions regardless of the prompt (Watson et al., 1988). Also, controlling for dispositional affectivity is particularly useful when stress and threat manifestations are the focus of research (Brannick et al., 2010) and when demands associated with managing work and off-work boundaries are present (McGrath et al., 2017). To help mitigate potential common method concerns, we controlled for NA and PA in Studies 2–4. We assessed affective disposition using the 20-item Positive and Negative Affect Scale (Watson et al., 1988). We asked participants to indicate how they felt "in general, that is on

the average" by responding to words such as "distressed" and "nervous" for NA and "interested" and "enthusiastic" for PA. The scale used a five-point response format ranging from *very slightly or not at all* (1) to *extremely* (5).

Data analysis

We evaluated appropriate model-data fit using confirmatory factor analysis (StataCorp, 2017). Across all four studies, the proposed six-factor theoretical model (including NA, PA, SBI, perspective-taking, job tension, and depressed mood at work) showed acceptable model-data fit (Study 1: $X^2_{(887)} = 1600.41$, $p < .01$, CFI = .90, SRMR = .08, and RMSEA = .06; Study 2: $X^2_{(887)} = 1560.91$, $p < .01$, CFI = .91, SRMR = .09, and RMSEA = .05; Study 3: $X^2_{(887)} = 2256.17$, $p < .01$, CFI = .91, SRMR = .07, and RMSEA = .06: Study 4: $X^2_{(887)} = 1714.35$, $p < .01$, CFI = .90, SRMR = .08, and RMSEA = .07). Furthermore, each six-factor model fit the data significantly better than any alternative models.

Following Cohen et al. (2014), we used hierarchical moderated regression to evaluate study hypotheses. In Step 1, we entered all demographic control variables (i.e. age, gender, and supervisor tenure), followed by dispositional controls (i.e. NA and PA) in Step 2. We then entered the main effect terms (i.e. SBI and perspective-taking) in Step 3 and the SBI by perspective-taking interaction in Step 4. In the case of significant moderating effects, we conducted tests of simple slopes to determine the interaction form (Aiken & West, 1991).

Results

Table 1 reports descriptive statistics, correlations, and internal consistency reliability estimates (Cronbach's α) for variables across the four studies. The relationships shown are consistent with those reported in prior research. Across the four studies, SBI was positively and moderately to strongly correlated with the outcomes (Bosco et al., 2015); the correlations ranged from .18 to .37 with job tension and .21 to .30 with depressed mood, lending initial support to Hypothesis 1.

Main effects

Table 2 contains all hierarchical regression results. Tables without control variables are available from the corresponding author upon request. We note that the pattern of results without the control variables remains similar. Hypothesis 1a received support, as the relationship between SBI and job tension was significant and in the expected direction across studies (Study 1: $\beta = .17$, $p < .05$ [$\beta = .18$, $p < .01$, without controls]); (Study 2: $\beta = .24$, $p < .01$ [$\beta = .23$, $p < .01$, without controls]); (Study 3: $\beta = .16$, $p < .05$ [$\beta = .14$, $p < .05$, without controls]); (Study 4: $\beta = .09$, $p < .05$ [$\beta = .11$, $p < .01$, without controls]). Hypothesis 1b received partial support, as the relationship between SBI and depressed mood at work was significant in two out of three studies (Study 2: $\beta = .13$, $p < .05$ [$\beta = .14$, $p < .01$, without controls]); (Study 3: $\beta = .07$, *ns* [$\beta = .09$, $p < .10$, without controls]); (Study 4: $\beta = .14$, $p < .05$ [$\beta = .16$, $p < .05$, without controls]). The effect was also in the expected direction in the study when it was non-significant.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations Among Variables (Studies 1 - 4).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	34.51	8.37	–								
	38.50	10.11	–								
	47.30	12.19	–								
	39.32	9.19	–								
2. Gender[1]	.46	0.50	.15*	–							
	.63	0.50	.04	–							
	.63	0.50	−.06	-							
	.56	0.50	−.18*	-							
3. Supervisor Tenure	4.23	3.81	.07	.01	-						
	4.17	3.07	.26*	.05	-						
	5.52	7.22	.22*	.02	-						
	4.41	5.04	.25*	−.07	-						
4. Negative Affectivity	-	-	-	-	-	-					
	1.59	0.61	−.21*	−.07	−.19*	(.86)					
	1.41	0.49	−.24*	−.09*	−.14*	(.89)					
	1.81	0.96	−.01	−.02	.06	(.90)					
5. Positive Affectivity	-	-	-	-	-	-	-				
	3.89	0.68	.03	−.04	.16*	−.30*	(.90)				
	3.79	0.71	−.01	.07	.05	−.25*	(.85)				
	3.91	0.61	.01	.06	−.02	−.26*	(.91)				
6. Supervisor Off Work Boundary Infringements	2.89	1.58	−.01	−.13	.04	-	-	(.88)			
	3.39	1.41	.04	−.01	−.03	.14	−.12	(.89)			
	3.09	1.39	.01	−.10*	.05	.13*	−.14*	(.91)			
	2.99	1.41	.04	.02	.09	.20*	−.34*	(.93)			
7. Perspective-taking	5.74	1.16	.29*	.26*	.09	-	-	−.10	(.86)		
	5.33	1.16	.22*	−.01	.10	−.36*	.32*	−.17*	(.84)		
	5.21	1.31	.12*	.05	.04	−.27*	.27*	−.14*	(.88)		
	4.84	1.02	.15*	.01	−.07	−.30*	.37*	−.31*	(.84)		
8. Job Tension	3.79	1.15	−.01	−.01	−.10	-	-	.37*	.01	(.91)	
	5.81	0.95	−.08*	.01	−.12	.24*	−.15*	.18*	−.21*	(.91)	
	5.90	0.91	.02	−.10*	−.02	.18*	−.07	.20*	−.28*	(.90)	
	5.45	1.04	−.05	.03	.11	.31*	−.19*	.26*	−.34*	(.92)	
9. Depressed Mood at Work	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	2.64	0.98	−.19*	−.08	.12	.39*	−.32*	.25*	−.35*	.31*	(.80)
	2.52	1.19	−.25*	−.07	−.08	.41*	−.30*	.21*	−.31*	.50*	(.88)
	2.79	1.28	−.02	−.06	.11	.42*	−.22*	.30*	−.49*	.44*	(.91)

Note. Cronbach's α for each study are shown on the diagonal in parentheses. [1]Gender was coded 0 for female and 1 for male. *$p < .05$.

Moderation effects

Hypothesis 2a proposed that the relationship between SBI and job tension should become less positive as perspective-taking increases. The interaction terms explained incremental variance in job tension across all four studies (Study 1: β = −.12, $\Delta Adjusted\ R^2$ = .02, $p < .05$; Study 2: β = −.17, $\Delta Adjusted\ R^2$ = .02, $p < .05$; Study 3: β = −.16, $\Delta Adjusted\ R^2$ = .03, $p < .01$; Study 4: β = −.20, $\Delta Adjusted\ R^2$ = .02, $p < .01$). We present plots of all interactions on job tension in Figure 1. For Studies 1–4, the slope for high perspective-taking employees was non-significant (b = .04, .10, −.04, −.09, ns, respectively), whereas the slope for low perspective-taking employees was positive and significant (b = .33, .49, .33, .38, $p < .05$, respectively). These results provide support for Hypothesis 2a.

Hypothesis 2b suggested that higher levels of perspective-taking would weaken the relationship between SBI and depressed mood at work. The interaction terms explained incremental variance in depressed mood across two of the three studies (Study 2: β = −.18, $\Delta Adjusted\ R^2$ = .03, $p < .01$; Study 3: β = −.04, ns; Study 4: β = −.13, $\Delta Adjusted\ R^2$ = .02, $p < .05$). We present plots of all significant interactions on depressed mood in

**Table 2.** Hierarchical Regression Results (Studies 1 - 4).

	Job Tension				Depressed Mood at Work		
	S1	S2	S3	S4	S2	S3	S4
	β	β	β	β	β	β	β
Step 1:							
Age	−.01	.19*	−.04	−.10	−.24*	−.29**	−.13
Gender[1]	−.09	−.08	−.05	.08	.03	−.07	−.01
Tenure	.01	−.11	.04	.08	−.11	−.05	−.07
ΔR^2	.00	.03	.00	.01	.07	.09	.01
Step 2:							
Negative Affectivity	-	.42**	.22*	.17*	.47**	.35**	.20**
Positive Affectivity	-	−.05	−.09	−.13*	−.22**	−.22**	−.33**
ΔR^2	-	.14**	.04*	.03*	.26**	.21**	.19**
Step 3:							
SBI	.17*	.24**	.16*	.09*	.13*	.07	.14*
Perspective-taking	−.05	−.16*	−.04	−.01	−.39**	−.24**	−.27**
ΔR^2	.03*	.06**	.02*	.02*	.12**	.06**	.09**
Step 4:							
SBI x PT	−.12*	−.17*	−.16**	−.20**	−.18**	−.04	−.13*
ΔR^2	.02*	.02*	.03**	.02**	.03**	.00	.02*
Total R^2	.05	.25	.09	.08	.44	.36	.31

Note. [1]Gender was coded 0 for female and 1 for male. S1 = Study 1; S2 = Study 2; S3 = Study 3, S4 = Study 4. SBI = supervisor off-work boundary infringement, PT = perspective-taking. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Figure 2. For Study 2, the slope for high perspective-taking employees was negative and significant ($b = −.40$, $p < .05$), whereas the slope for low perspective-taking employees was non-significant ($b = .03$, ns). For Study 4, the slope for high perspective-taking
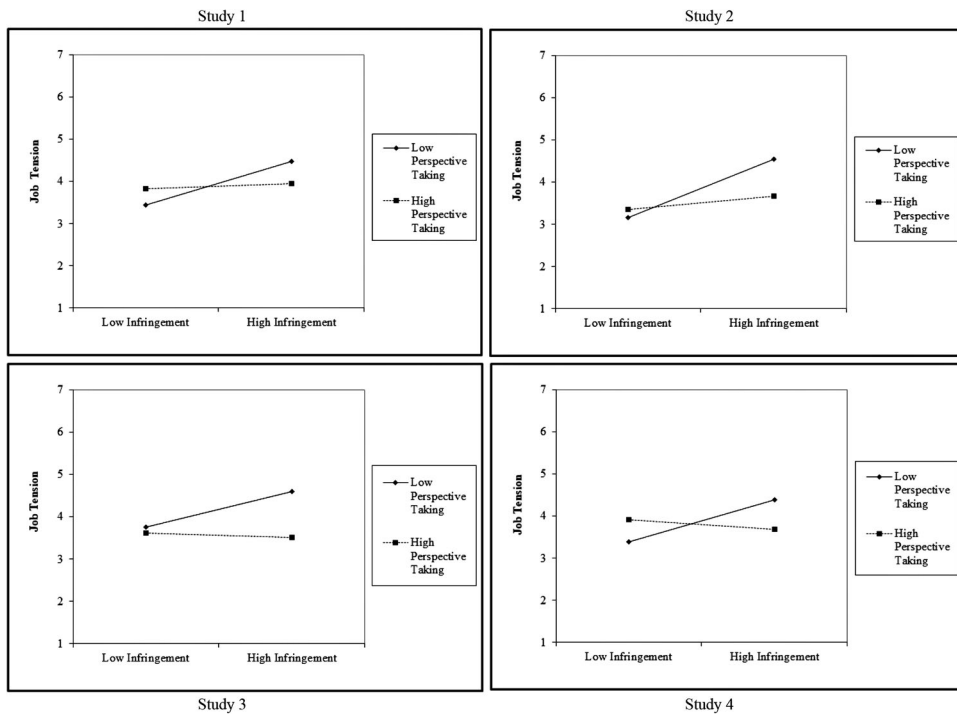
Figure 1. The interactive effects of SBI and subordinate perspective-taking on subordinate job tension.
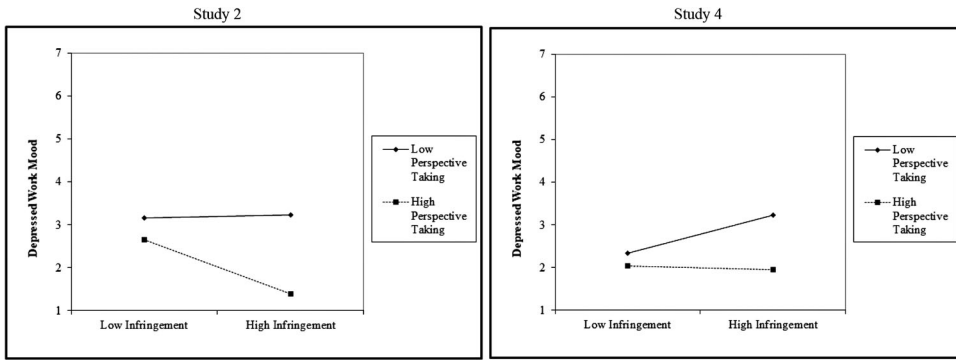
Figure 2. The interactive effects of SBI and subordinate perspective-taking on subordinate depressed mood at work.

employees was non-significant ($b = -.03$, *ns*). In contrast, the slope for low perspective-taking employees was positive and significant ($b = .32$, $p < .05$). These results provide partial support for Hypothesis 2b.

Discussion

Information and communication technology has changed most aspects of society, and the exchange relationship between supervisors and subordinates exemplifies one such transformation. Our study examines a particular case of boundary violations prompted by supervisors (i.e. SBI), reinforcing the well-documented downsides of off-work flexibility (Perrigino et al., 2018). Our results indicated that SBI positively relates to job tension and depressed work mood. These results confirm the adverse reactions to unwanted intrusions into employees' time away from work documented in recent research (Kerman et al., 2021). This study also examines the moderating role of employee perspective-taking. Across studies, employee perspective-taking interacted with perceived SBI to produce less harmful (i.e. self-protecting) effects at elevated levels. These findings suggest that perspective-taking is a coping resource and defensive mechanism for employees experiencing SBI. Although perspective-taking represents an initiative-taking resource management approach (Westman et al., 2005), this link has received little to no empirical inquiry until the present investigation. Our results have substantive theoretical and practical implications, which we discuss in detail in the following sections.

Theoretical contributions

Our four-study investigation makes two valuable contributions to work on stress, boundary management, and perspective-taking. We find evidence that SBI positively relates to strain outcomes: job tension and depressed mood at work. This research answers calls to investigate how supervisor privacy violations influence employee work-stress responses (Bourdeau et al., 2019; Derks et al., 2016), finding that work-to-home intrusions impact employees' well-being in the workplace. Through our focus on supervisor-

initiated communication, we extend the boundary management literature to a source not typically accounted for in privacy violation studies (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Subordinates rely on supervisor information, which has become increasingly electronic, to form affective responses and cognitions about work (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). This work is timely because the permeability of work has continued to grow (Kao et al., 2020), offering more avenues for the potential of stress from work intrusions into the home domain. Importantly, our research shows that the negative consequences of SBI extend to the work domain, making SBI a clear cause for concern for subordinates and the businesses they work.

Using perspective-taking principles and COR theory, we also present perspective-taking as a coping strategy that subordinates can use to interpret sender intent during SBI, providing a buffer for supervisor boundary intrusions. The wellness of subordinates is not considered fully or accurately by supervisors in all instances of after-hour communications, and perspective-taking can serve as a coping strategy by subordinates in these instances. This line of inquiry is essential because our research illustrates how subordinates might protect themselves from SBI and similar unnecessary privacy violations. This contribution is unique as primary research documents differentiated responses across individuals and settings rather than focusing on collective favourable or unfavourable reactions (Butts et al., 2015).

Implications for practice

Importantly, although it may be possible to reduce the negative impacts of SBI by encouraging perspective-taking within the workplace, this should be used as something other than justification to shift the burden of reducing SBI from governments and organisations to employees. Because SBI are both unnecessary and harmful, the onus is on governments and organisations to reduce SBI, not on employees to cope with them. Organisations have taken drastic steps to reduce SBI. Volkswagen has banned emailing off-shift employees (BBC News, 2012). A healthcare consulting firm, Vynamic, banned emails after hours and found that employees appreciated opportunities to disengage entirely (Ebben, 2018). Countries such as France, Portugal (BBC News, 2021), and Belgium (Treisman, 2022) have also acted to recognise employees' right to disconnect formally. Governments and organisations should be more proactive in protecting employees from these infringements.

In addition, we also advocate for supervisors to avoid engaging in boundary infringement behaviours with subordinates. Given the harmful impact SBI have on employees, both in our study and in prior research (Keller et al., 2019; Lanaj et al., 2014), in cases where employees must connect during personal time (e.g. physicians, judicial clerks, information technology workers), we advise supervisors to ask their subordinates how they wish to interact with others while away from the job, and call for organisations to provide training for supervisors. Rather than promoting a "one-size fits all" approach, determining each worker's preference (Methot & LePine, 2016) allows employees substantial control over response expectations and the potential for more favourable employee outcomes. Although this may border on the obvious, it rarely occurs in practice. Workers remain inundated with "reply to all" prompts that often have little personal significance (Pansu, 2018) or practical importance (Hemp, 2009). However, in general,

we advocate for corporate and country level-policies and resources to ensure that these boundaries between work and nonwork time are respected.

Nonetheless, in the current study, perspective-taking functioned as an individual difference that provided a defensive barrier against supervisor infringements during off-work time. However, practical and scientific discussions consistently point to a deterioration of perspective-taking across society and work in recent years (e.g. Konrath et al., 2011). The interpersonal problems resulting from perspective-taking deficiencies (Cooper & Anderson, 2019), including arrogance and hostility (Richardson et al., 1994), suggest that perspective-taking interventions may be capable of addressing a variety of social ills. For instance, beyond the positive mitigating influence shown in this study, research finds that perspective-taking improves salesperson performance (Pryor et al., 2013), prosocial motivation (Grant & Berry, 2011), conflict management effectiveness (van Erp et al., 2018), and decreases implicit race bias (Pashak et al., 2018).

To address the deterioration of perspective-taking in society, research indicates that it can be learned and developed (Chandler, 1973) in work contexts (Madera, 2018; Sherf & Morrison, 2020). Organisations would benefit from explicitly incorporating developmental perspective-taking opportunities in the workplace, mainly because a modest change in perspective-taking level can have profound implications on social relations (e.g. Gutenbrunner & Wagner, 2016). Our research provides a compelling reason for organisations and human resource professionals to offer perspective-taking training and interventions to employees (i.e. to reduce the negative influence of stressors on employee well-being).

Strengths and limitations

One of the significant advantages of this paper is its multi-sample, constructive replication design that documents comparable interactive effects. Establishing a pattern of results, or documenting inconsistencies, is more impactful when scholars replicate findings across contexts (Freese & Peterson, 2017; Hochwarter et al., 2011). Long held as the standard in social (Earp & Trafimow, 2015) and clinical psychology domains (Zwaan et al., 2018), only recently have replication strategies received broader acceptance in the organisational sciences, albeit at a modest pace (Wright & Sweeney, 2016).

Relative to literal or operational replications—which seek exact duplication (Aronson et al., 1990)—this study represents a series of constructive replications by testing similar hypotheses employing different measures and sampling methods (Köhler & Cortina, 2021). Whereas we collected data in Studies 1 and 2 at a single point in time (i.e. cross-sectional), we assessed time-separated antecedents and outcomes in Studies 3 and 4. Additionally, although for Studies 2 and 4, we collected data within single organisations (i.e. a communication firm and a hospital), for Studies 1 and 3, we collected data from participants with different skill sets (i.e. blue and white collar) and different industries. Our constructive replication approach provides certain benefits, including establishing greater generalizability over alternative replication methods (Lykken, 1968), and represents a much stronger test than other replications (Finkel et al., 2017). Second, a strength of our study is the inclusion of control variables recommended in prior studies (e.g. Ayyagari et al., 2011). Third, we used similar focal variable measures across samples, as Ernst Kossek and Ozeki (1998) recommended. Fourthly, we gathered

temporally separated data in two out of four samples to control method variance (i.e. consistency bias; Spector, 2019).

At the same time, our study has limitations that warrant mentioning. Our analysis required self-reported data because only the employee could accurately convey their generalised job perceptions, the degree to which they experienced job tension, and a depressed mood at work. We followed steps to reduce the risk of CMV (CMV mitigation procedures are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request). We only collected cross-sectional data for Studies 1 and 2. Moreover, we relied on self-report measures across samples, excluding potential tests of within-sample convergence. The consistent pattern of results, however, offers evidence of cross-sample convergence. Lastly, we do not have data on participants' parental or marital status. Based on the parental or marital situation, intrusions may have a different impact on how participants react and are worth exploring for future research.

Avenues for additional research

This research examines "how things are" regarding supervisor-subordinate communication dynamics. A logical next step involves examining "how things got there" by charting the evolution of these dyadic relationships. Behaviours after relationship formation become more homogeneous, particularly in terms of preferred communication patterns (Martocchio & Judge, 1995). Research showing that supervisor support augments the work-home balance relationship (Fan, 2018) calls for research assessing how similarity in dyads affects boundary permeability. Researchers must consider both dyad partners' power, given its complicated effect on sustained perspective-taking (Galinsky et al., 2016).

Also, a consequence of technological development is transforming the physical dimension of the workplace. In the future, it would be interesting to examine how employees differentiate work from off-work to create mental boundaries regarding physical and technological space. Of interest are the interpretations of "off-work" in the infringement context and the link to work-life balance (Park et al., 2011). Future studies also should more closely examine how the supervisor-subordinate relationship affects responses to work intrusions (e.g. Dulac et al., 2008).

Researchers could also examine the potential shortcomings of perspective-taking. For example, recent research recognises that perspective-taking that captures others' viewpoints needs to be more accurate (Klein, 2019). Concerning the current study, it would be helpful to see how perspective-taking differs under specific conditions, for instance, via videoconferencing versus in the physical office. A logical extension of this research would be to see how anger (Yip & Schweitzer, 2019) influences subordinates' perspective-taking abilities.

Finally, research could examine strategies for how supervisors might reduce their SBI. While companies and localities have attempted to eliminate the harmful impacts of SBI by curtailing the use of *all* after-hours communications, this may be too drastic a step for organisations where work flexibility is necessary or desirable (Perry et al., 2020). One potential strategy that supervisors can enact to reduce their SBI is to set clear boundaries about when after-hours communications are expected as a part of the job. In clear

boundaries, after-hours communications are less likely to be interpreted as privacy violations by subordinates.

Conclusion

Borderless workplaces granting 24/7 connection may be hazardous for employee stress levels as constant connectivity with supervisors becomes expected. With the COVID-19 pandemic resulting in more significant numbers of employees engaging in virtual work, understanding how employees can cope with the intrusion of work into their home domains is even more critical. Our study contributes to the stress literature by examining the interaction between supervisor off-work boundary infringement and employee perspective-taking. Through a multi-sample, constructive replication design, we found that SBI was positively related to work tension and depressed mood at work. However, these relationships were attenuated when employees had higher perspective-taking. We hope this work will encourage others to provide the insights needed to advance science and practice.

Disclosure statement

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