



# **‘The pressure to press send’**

Implications of organizational and self-imposed norms on workplace telepressure.

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## **Abstract**

In response to technological developments, asynchronous modes of communication have become ubiquitous for exchanging information and maintaining social relationships in contemporary work environments. While these developments benefit workers' job control and diminish work-home conflicts, they could simultaneously arouse workers' preoccupation with and urge to respond promptly to work-related ICT messages, which is labeled as 'workplace telepressure'. Workplace telepressure could lead to detrimental health and wellbeing effects, and could be induced by external norms to respond promptly, imposed by the organizational environment, or by self-imposed norms to respond promptly, imposed by workers' own predilection and urges. In pursuit of previous workplace telepressure research, this study was set out with the aim to examine how trait-like individual differences (e.g. agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and irrational need for control) affect workplace telepressure, as they could act as substantial self-imposed norms. Furthermore, this study aims to explore whether the presence of response expectation organizational norms could strengthen the effect of self-imposed norms on workplace telepressure. By means of cross-sectional research, data were collected among Dutch working adults (N = 136). Results suggest that both organizational factors as certain personal factors could contribute to explain workplace telepressure. However, these two factors seem not in any way to interact with each other. Suggestions for further research and practical implications are discussed.

*Keywords:* workplace telepressure, Big Five personality traits, irrational need for control, response expectation norms, self-imposed norms

## Introduction

As a consequence of rapid technological developments, the essence of how people exchange information and maintain relationships in their working environment has changed substantially in the last couple of decades. In 2020, 76 percent of the employees in Dutch organizations frequently used a computer with internet connection for their work, and 67 percent of all Dutch organizations provided their employees with portable equipment, which was suitable for work-related mobile internet usage (Centraal Bureau voor Statistiek [CBS], 2021). These technological developments have increased the flexibility that workers possess to decide when and where they conduct their work. Subsequently, contemporary workers rely heavily on information- and communication technologies (ICT's), such as email communications, rather than face-to-face interactions, even when they work at the office (Finn, 2006). Although these technology-mediated workplace interactions have proven to benefit productivity by increasing the perceived control over one's workplace and work timing, and by decreasing work-home conflicts (Kossek et al., 2006; Mazmanian et al., 2013), workers are also faced with so called 'ICT-demands', such as fast response expectations or expectations of constant connectivity, which could decrease employees' productivity and well-being (Bordi et al., 2018; Day et al., 2012).

In 2015, Barber and Santuzzi introduced the construct of *workplace telepressure*, which is defined as a *preoccupation with* and *urge to* respond promptly to any work-related ICT messages during personal or business hours. Workplace telepressure represents a psychological, state-like reaction or response that encourages continued connection to technology-mediated work activities, with the aim to maintain social relationships and impressions at work (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). In previous studies, workplace telepressure has been shown to explain significant additional variance in physical and cognitive burnout, psychological detachment, work-life balance satisfaction, absenteeism, sleep quality and email behaviour during workhours (Barber et al., 2019; Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Grawitch et al., 2018; Santuzzi & Barber, 2018).

The construct of workplace telepressure has been elaborated by Grawitch et al. (2018), stating that the term ‘pressure’ might only implicate an externally driven pressure imposed by the workers’ organizational environment, and might exclude workers’ internally driven pressure, or so called ‘self-imposed norms’, to stay connected. Comparable to Barber and Santuzzi (2015), they have found that workplace telepressure is influenced by organizational factors (i.e. perceptions of work demands), such as organizational norms to respond promptly to ICT-related messages. Therefore, it is argued in this study that when employees in organizations are exposed to those ‘response expectation organizational norms’, they are more prone to experience workplace telepressure.

Unlike Barber and Santuzzi (2015) and other workplace telepressure research, Grawitch et al. (2018) have also found evidence for the influence of self-imposed norms (i.e. trait-like individual differences) - which included neuroticism, workaholism and self-control - on workplace telepressure. However, it remains unclear what type of self-imposed norms mainly contribute to workers’ experience of workplace telepressure, in addition to the externally driven pressure of organizational norms. Furthermore, previous studies have not considered yet whether self-imposed norms could interact with the aforementioned response expectation organizational norms in predicting workplace telepressure.

On the one hand, this study examines four trait-like individual characteristics that could contribute to the tendency of workers to impose norms on themselves, which would in turn make them more susceptible to experience workplace telepressure. First, this study explores how the Big Five personality traits agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism affect workplace telepressure. Second, this study examines the relationship between the personal demand ‘irrational need for control’ and workplace telepressure. On the other hand, this study explores whether the presence of response expectation organizational norms could strengthen the effect of the four self-imposed norms on workplace telepressure. In other words, it is argued in this study that agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and irrational need for control could act as substantial self-imposed norms that make workers more

prone to experience workplace telepressure. It is also argued that workers who report higher levels of these self-imposed norms are more inclined to experience workplace telepressure when they perceive response expectation organizational norms. To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions will be answered:

- *What self-imposed norms are significant predictors of workplace telepressure?*
- *Do response expectation organizational norms moderate the relationship between self-imposed norms and workplace telepressure?*

This study aims to gain more comprehensive insights about how and why certain personality traits and personal demands are related to workplace telepressure, and how organizational circumstances might enforce this relationship. Additionally, this study aims to provide a deeper understanding among organizations and employees about the underlying circumstances that contribute to workplace telepressure, in order to create a happier and healthier work environment.

## **Theoretical background**

### **Workplace telepressure**

Workplace telepressure is conceptualized as a construct defined by thinking about ICT messages accompanied and an overwhelming urge to respond (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). This construct seems to be the consequence of the ‘autonomy paradox’, induced by the evermore increasing technology-mediated communication at work (Mazmanian et al., 2013). The dominant presence of asynchronous communication at work should provide workers with more flexibility and control to respond to others, but could readily be perceived as a mode of communication that is similar to synchronous modes of communication. Correspondingly, Barber and Santuzzi (2015) emphasize that if employees experience high levels of workplace telepressure, they compare incoming messages with synchronous modes of communication, which leads them to expect that an immediate response is required. This could enforce employees to let ICT communications dominate their workday and fail to detach from their work between performing tasks. Therefore, workplace telepressure could reinforce employees to perceive their work as ‘inescapable’ during

working times but also during nonworking times (Santuzzi & Barber, 2018), which has shown to negatively affect employee health and well-being (Barber et al., 2019; Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Grawitch et al., 2018; Santuzzi & Barber, 2018).

Although workplace telepressure seems to have common grounds with other theoretical concepts, Barber and Santuzzi (2015) have found evidence for workplace telepressure to be distinct from other constructs related to work-related ICT aspects, such as ICT demands, work and off-work frequency of ICT, off-work ICT boundary creation, workload and workaholism, and from the personality traits conscientiousness, extraversion and public self-consciousness. Additionally, a study that concerns telepressure outside of the workplace (i.e., general telepressure experienced by college students) has found that telepressure is also unique from the fear of missing out (FoMO), self-control, and social media engagement (Barber and Santuzzi 2017). Furthermore, unlike workaholism and work engagement, workplace telepressure is broadly focused on technology-induced social interactions at work instead of workers' actual interaction with work tasks (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). The unique construct of workplace telepressure could contribute to explain workers' predilection of ICT communications during business hours and their tendency to stay connected with coworkers via ICTs even during personal hours (e.g. Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, 2006; Park & Jex, 2011).

### **Response expectation organizational norms and workplace telepressure**

Theories regarding Social Influence state that our social environment could act as a dominant drive to align our behavior with others' perceptions of the 'correct behavior' in a given situation (e.g. Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Comparably, when organizations create a social environment in which the 'correct behavior' is or seems to be to respond quickly to ICT-related messages, the urge and preoccupation to respond quickly among workers could readily increase. Prior studies, indeed, have found that organizational norms and expectations to respond promptly to ICT-related messages contribute to the externally driven pressure to experience workplace telepressure or comparable psychological pressures. As such, Barley et al. (2011) have discovered that social norms, among other factors, contribute to workers' experience

of e-mail as the greatest factor of work- and non-work overload. Moreover, Barber and Santuzzi (2015) have found a significant relationship between prescriptive norms – norms that are made explicit in organizational policies – and workplace telepressure.

Accordingly, it is hypothesized that when workers perceive organizational norms to respond promptly, they will be more prone to workplace telepressure. Differently stated, it is expected that response expectation organizational norms positively influence workplace telepressure.

**Hypothesis 1:** *response expectation organizational norms are positively associated with workplace telepressure.*

### **Self-imposed norms and workplace telepressure**

In 2015, Barber and Santuzzi concluded that workplace telepressure could be interpreted as a result of work-related demands rather than individual difference traits. By contrast, Grawitch et al. (2018) stated that the items of the workplace telepressure measure from Barber and Santuzzi (2015) suggest that the concept could indeed be related to stable individual differences. They argue that wording such as “I can’t stop thinking about a message...” and “It’s difficult for me to resist...” imply an impulsive and compulsive drive to keep up with ICT-related messages, irrespective of the work or organizational context. Respectively, Grawitch et al. (2018) have found proof for substantial additional variance of individual characteristics on workplace telepressure, which they identified as ‘self-imposed norms’: “one’s own predilections and internally driven urge to stay connected with the organization” (Grawitch et al., 2018, p. 317). In this study, the relationship between various trait-like individual differences and workplace telepressure is examined. Thus, more insight could be gained into what other individual characteristics trigger employees to impose norms on themselves for responding quickly to ICT-related messages.

*Agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and workplace telepressure*

Agreeableness represents the characteristic quality of interaction “along a continuum from compassion to antagonism” (Costa & McCrae, 1985, p. 2) and it is primarily applicable to interpersonal behavior. Two important identified facets of agreeable individuals are altruism and compliance (Costa et al., 1991). Altruism reflects selflessness and concern for others, which has also been defined as ‘social interest’ (Adler, 1964) or mundane courtesy and consideration in the interaction with others. Supportively, Oda et al. (2014) found that agreeableness contributes to altruistic behaviors, such as selflessness and concern for others, toward friends and acquaintances. Compliance is an interpersonal style that is seen when conflicts arise; compliant individuals defer to others instead of fighting; they are meek and mild and willing to cooperate (Costa et al., 1991). One could argue that workers with high levels of altruism and compliance might readily experience an internal pressure to stay connected, as they will be more concerned for other’s needs and will readily find ways to cooperate in social relationships when they engage in technology-mediated workplace interactions (i.e. respond quickly). Furthermore, those workers with high levels of altruism and compliance might readily experience external pressures to stay connected imposed by their organizational environment, as they might readily comply with, and might be more concerned about others’ perceptions of response expectation organizational norms.

Therefore, in this study, it is hypothesized that those workers with high levels of agreeableness are more inclined to impose norms on themselves regarding technology-mediated communication. In other words, it is expected that agreeableness positively influences workplace telepressure. Additionally, it is expected that workers with high levels of agreeableness will be more prone to experience workplace telepressure when they perceive response expectation organizational norms, which means that response expectation organizational norms moderate the relationship between agreeableness and workplace telepressure.

**Hypothesis 2a:** *agreeableness is positively associated with workplace telepressure.*

**Hypothesis 2b:** *response expectation organizational norms strengthen the positive association between agreeableness and workplace telepressure.*



Conscientious individuals are proactive in the sense that they have a high need for achievement and are highly committed to work; they tend to keep their environment tidy and well-organized, they strictly adhere to existing standards or procedures of conduct and their will to achieve leads them to strive for excellence (Costa et al., 1991). Previous research has shown a positive relationship between excessive and compulsive work behavior - in terms of workaholism - and workplace telepressure (Grawitch et al., 2018). Additionally, Rice et al., (2007) found that conscientious individuals are inclined to perfectionistic behavior, caused by their own motivation and standards and by their expected social prescriptions from others. Accordingly, one could argue that conscientious workers are more tended to order and strive for excellence or perfectionism in technology-mediated workplace interactions, and that they might readily adhere to existing response expectation organizational standards (i.e. norms).

Hence, in this study it is hypothesized that those workers who have high levels of conscientiousness will be more inclined to impose norms on themselves regarding technology-mediated communication, and in turn experience more workplace telepressure. Accordingly, it is expected that conscientiousness positively influences workplace telepressure. Additionally, it is expected that workers with high levels of conscientiousness will be more prone to experience workplace telepressure when they perceive response expectation organizational norms, which means that response expectation organizational norms moderate the relationship between conscientiousness and workplace telepressure.

**Hypthesis 3a:** *conscientiousness is positively associated with workplace telepressure.*

**Hypthesis 3b:** *response expectation organizational norms strengthen the positive association between conscientiousness and workplace telepressure.*

Neuroticism represents individual differences in the tendency to experience distress, and in the cognitive and behavioral styles that follow from this tendency. The recurrent nervous tension, depression, frustration, guilt, and self-consciousness that such individuals feel is often associated with irrational thinking, low self-esteem, poor control of impulses and cravings, somatic complaints, and ineffective coping (McCrae

& John, 1992). Supportively, previous research has found that neuroticism is associated with public self-consciousness, which reflects the concern of what other people think about one, and the concern of making a good impression toward others (Darvill et al., 1992). Moreover, Grawitch et al. (2018) have found a positive relationship between neuroticism and workplace telepressure. Accordingly, one might suppose that workers with high levels of neuroticism are more prone to feelings of anxiety and self-consciousness, and to tendencies to act impulsively and think irrationally when they engage in technology-mediated workplace interactions (e.g., answer emails inside and outside of business hours).

Subsequently, it is argued in this study that those workers with higher levels of neuroticism may be more susceptible to impose norms on themselves regarding technology-mediated communication, which will increase their experience of workplace telepressure. In other words, it is expected that neuroticism positively influences workplace telepressure. Additionally, it is expected that workers with high levels of neuroticism will be more prone to experience workplace telepressure when they perceive response expectation organizational norms, which means that response expectation organizational norms moderate the relationship between neuroticism and workplace telepressure.

**Hypthesis 4a:** *neuroticism is positively associated with workplace telepressure.*

**Hypthesis 4b:** *response expectation organizational norms strengthen the positive association between neuroticism and workplace telepressure.*

#### *Irrational need for control and workplace telepressure*

The need for control represents a desire for control opportunities in the job (De Rijk, et al., 1998). Those individuals with a high need for control are less able to deal with situations that are unpredictable (Bottos & Dewey, 2004), as they might believe in advance that they cannot handle the unforeseen and challenging aspects of a situation. The irrational need for control comprises the irrational beliefs people have about their need for control (Zeijen et al., 2021). In a working context, this concept for

example includes the irrational belief of workers that they cannot stand any ambiguity in their work. As technology-mediated workplace interactions are displayed in an asynchronous manner, employees can receive ICT-related messages at every moment of the day. Hence, technology-mediated workplace interactions can be highly unforeseen, and they can have great impact on how certain work tasks should be handled and completed. Employees with irrational beliefs about their strong desires to control their workplace environment may experience these unpredictable ICT-related messages as demanding, and may try to cope with these messages by urging themselves to respond promptly to them. Supportively, Zeijen, et al. (2021) have found that students with an irrational need for control readily tend to perceive study situations as demanding.

Consequently, this study hypothesizes that those employees with high levels of irrational need for control will be more inclined to impose norms on themselves regarding technology-mediated communication, and will therefore be more susceptible to experience workplace telepressure. Accordingly, it is expected that irrational need for control positively influences workplace telepressure. Additionally, it is expected that workers with high levels of irrational need for control will be more prone to experience workplace telepressure when they perceive response expectation organizational norms, which means that response expectation organizational norms moderate the relationship between agreeableness and workplace telepressure.

**Hypothesis 5a:** *irrational need for control is positively associated with workplace telepressure.*

**Hypothesis 5b:** *response expectation organizational norms strengthen the positive association between irrational need for control and workplace telepressure.*

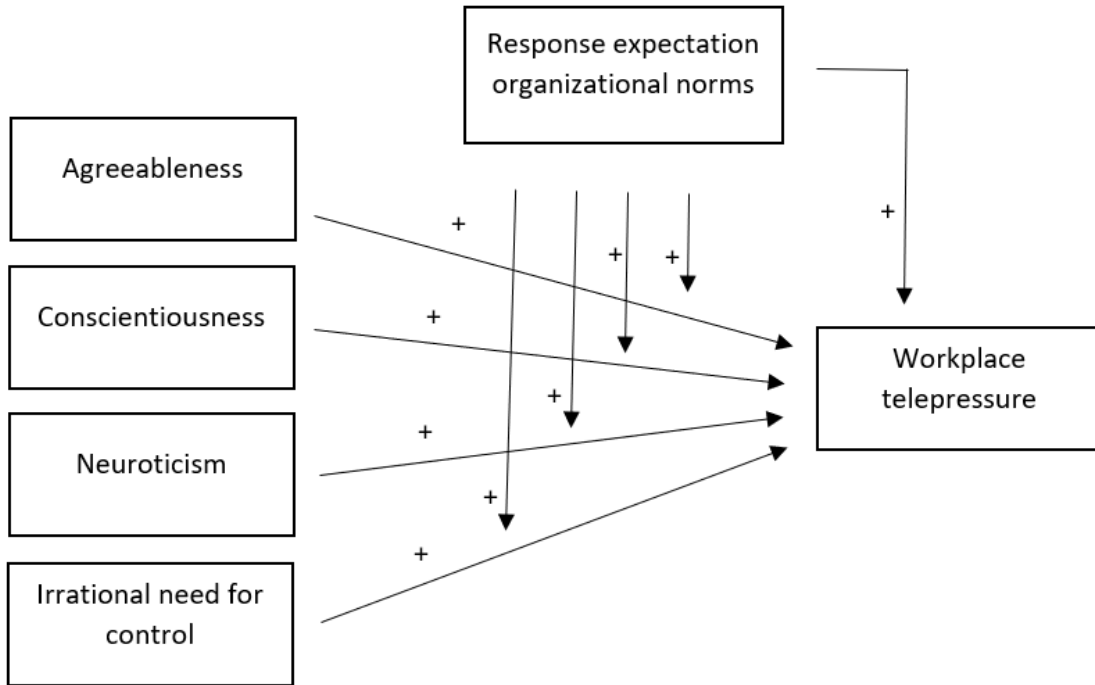


Figure 1. Conceptual model

### Contributions

Although an increasing number of studies have examined the outcomes of workplace telepressure in recent years (Barber et al., 2019; Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Grawitch et al., 2018; Santuzzi & Barber, 2018), little contributions have been made for its antecedents. This study provides new insights to the workplace telepressure literature, by examining which personal and organizational circumstances could affect employees' feelings, thoughts and experiences with responding promptly to work-related ICT messages. Previous studies concerning the antecedents of workplace telepressure have seemingly not provided comprehensive explanations for the influence of workers' self-imposed norms, such as personality traits and personal demands, on workplace telepressure. Furthermore, prior literature did not encapsulate whether response expectation organizational norms could interact with self-imposed norms in explaining workplace telepressure. Hence, this study aims to gain more comprehensive insights about how certain personality traits and personal demands are

related to workplace telepressure, and how organizational circumstances might enforce this relationship.

Moreover, this study could emphasize the combined importance of individual and organizational factors for the experience of workplace telepressure among employees. This study could provide employees and managers in organizations with relevant insights about how they might self-commit to the preoccupation and urge to respond quickly to ICT-related messages, as a consequence of their personality traits and personal demands, which could be strengthened by their organizational environment. As mentioned above, workplace telepressure could lead to detrimental health and well-being effects among workers (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Grawitch et al., 2018; Santuzzi & Barber, 2018). When managers and employees understand what personal and organizational factors might underlie this phenomenon, they will be better able to capitalize on the corresponding individual needs of each worker in their organization, in order to create a healthier and happier work environment.

## Method

### Participants, design and procedure

Before collecting data, a power analysis was conducted to determine the desired number of participants for this study. For studying four interaction effects (total number of variables 9, small-medium effect .06) G-power advised to use 204 participants (power .80, alpha .05). The only formal requirement for participants was that they were at least eighteen years old and that they worked for at least twelve hours per week. During data collection, participants were also selected on their core work tasks, which should primarily contain office duties, to ensure that all participants engaged in ICT-related work tasks. This study did not contain any maximum age requirements.

Data were collected at one point in time, using a quantitative cross-sectional design. Various organizations or individual participants were approached via email, LinkedIn or through the researcher's own social network via WhatsApp. Participants completed an online questionnaire in Dutch via the questionnaire website 'Qualtrics'. First, participants were given an information letter and a letter of consent, including a short description about the purpose of the study, confidentiality and anonymity, the possibility to withdraw at any time during the survey and contact information of the researcher. The letter of consent (see Appendix A) had to be accepted before starting the questionnaire. Next, participants were asked to answer some questions concerning demographical information. Subsequently, response expectation organizational norms and Big Five personality traits were measured. Finally, irrational need for control and scores of workplace telepressure were measured. Participants needed approximately 10-15 minutes to complete the survey.

In total, 172 Dutch working adults started the survey. Participants that filled in less than seventy-five percent of the total survey ( $n = 36$ ), were omitted from the data analysis. Eventually, the data of 134 participants were used for data analysis. This sample consisted of 61% female participants and 39% male participants. The average age of participants was 42.89 years ( $SD = 14.02$ ). On average, participants worked 34.51 hours per week according to their contract ( $SD = 7.59$ ), and 37.02 hours per

week in practice ( $SD = 8.62$ ). The largest group of participants (57,4%) reported 'Master's degree' as their highest level of education, being followed by Bachelor's degree (32,4%) and VWO and MBO (both 3,7%).

### **Ethical approval**

The Utrecht University adheres to the Code of Ethics for Psychologists (Nederlands Instituut van Psychologen [NIP], 2015). This research project was registered at the Utrecht University Student Ethics Review & Registration Site (UUSER), which has been approved by The Faculty Ethics Review Board and filed under number 22-0988.

### **Measures**

In total, eight variables were measured, using four different scales. The items of the 'response expectation organizational norms' scale and the Workplace Telepressure Measure Scale (originally in English) were translated to Dutch by the researcher. The Big Five Inventory from Denissen et al. (2008) is a Dutch translation of the Big Five Inventory from John et al. (1991), and the Work-related Irrational Beliefs-Questionnaire (WIB-Q) from Van Wijhe et al. (2013) is also composed in Dutch.

#### *Big five personality traits (independent variables)*

The Big Five personality traits were measured with the Dutch forty-four-item Big Five Inventory of Denissen et al. (2008), using a five-point response format ranging from 1 ('*Strongly disagree*') to 5 ('*Strongly agree*'). Sixteen items had to be reverse coded in order to correspond a higher value to higher levels of the Big Five personality traits. The neuroticism scale consisted of eight items (e.g. "*I am someone who can be tense*"), and was reliable ( $\alpha = .83$ ). The extraversion scale consisted of eight items (e.g. "*I am someone who is full of energy*"), and was reliable ( $\alpha = .82$ ). The openness to experience scale consisted of ten items (e.g. "*I am someone who is curious about many different things*"), and was reliable ( $\alpha = .80$ ). The conscientiousness scale consisted of nine items (e.g. "*I am someone who is a reliable worker*"), and was reliable ( $\alpha = .80$ ). The agreeableness scale consisted of nine items (e.g. "*I am someone who is helpful and unselfish with others*"), and was reliable ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

### *Irrational need for control (independent variable)*

Irrational need for control was measured with the subscale of irrational need for control of the Work-related Irrational Beliefs-Questionnaire (WIB-Q) (Van Wijhe et al., 2013). This subscale consists of five items that are rated on a five-point response format ranging from 1 (*'not at all applicable'*), 5 (*'totally applicable'*). Respondents were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with certain statements as: *"I cannot stand uncertainty in my job"*. One items had to be reverse coded in order to correspond a higher value to higher levels of irrational need for control. In this study, the scale was reliable ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

### *Response expectation organizational norms*

Response expectation organizational norms was measured using a composite scale of seven items. This scale consisted of two items from Barber and Santuzzi (2015); one descriptive norms item (*"Most people in my workgroup respond quickly"*), and one prescriptive norms item (*"I am expected to respond as soon as possible"*). This scale was supplemented with one item for 'response expectations' (e.g., *"I am expected to respond to digital messages immediately."*) and four items for 'availability' (e.g., *"I'm expected to check digital messages when I'm out of the office"*) subscales by Day et al. (2012), using a five-point response format ranging from 1 (*'strongly disagree'*) to 5 (*'strongly agree'*). The existing items that refer to specific ICT's (such as email or voicemail) were adapted using the term 'digital messages', to ensure that respondents considered all relevant ICT's in their work when they completed the questionnaire. Item one *"In my direct work environment, most people respond quickly to digital messages"* was deleted as it showed a low correlation with the other items, which negatively affected the reliability of the scale.

To develop a reduced set of component scores for this composite scale, a factor analysis was conducted according to principal component analysis (PCA) with a direct oblimin rotation, as correlation between factors was assumed. Prior to analysis, all variables were checked for normality and linearity assumptions. From the factor analysis, two factors (with an eigenvalue above 1.00) were identified as underlying the six items. The factor loadings are presented in Table 1 and are all approximately the



same as or above the recommended value of 0.500 (Field, 2018). In total, these factors accounted for 62% of the total variance.

The result of this factor analysis corresponds to the distinction of ‘descriptive norms’ and ‘prescriptive norms’ made in the study of Barber and Santuzzi (2015). However, the second factor only demonstrated substantial factor loadings for two items, which does not provide sufficient evidence for a substantial factor (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and those two items also showed moderately high factor loadings on factor 1. Furthermore, the two factors showed a positive correlation ( $r = .328$ ) and the scree plot shows that the eigenvalues start to abruptly level off after the first factor (see appendix C). Moreover, the scale of response expectation organizational norms, with all six items, was reliable ( $\alpha = .73$ ), and the purpose of this study was to test whether response expectation organizational norms in all guises strengthen the relationship between self-imposed norms and workplace telepressure. Therefore, the six items were used altogether as one variable in the further analysis, irrespective of the outcome of the factor analysis. This factor explained 44% of the variance and all loadings are  $>.44$ .

**Table 1**

*Oblimin Rotated Factor Structure of the Response Expectation Organizational Norms Scale*

| Item                                                                                                  | Factor loadings       |                       |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
|                                                                                                       | Factor 1 <sup>a</sup> | Factor 2 <sup>b</sup> |
| <i>In my direct work environment:</i>                                                                 |                       |                       |
| 1. <i>I'm contacted via digital messages about work-related issues outside of regular work hours.</i> | .599                  | <b>.820</b>           |
| 2. <i>communication via digital messages enables people I work with to contact me at any time.</i>    | .491                  | <b>.756</b>           |
| 3. <i>I am expected to respond to digital messages as soon as possible</i>                            | <b>.744</b>           |                       |
| 4. <i>I am expected to be accessible for digital messages at all times</i>                            | <b>.682</b>           |                       |
| 5. <i>I'm expected to check digital messages when I'm out of the office</i>                           | <b>.441</b>           | .514                  |

6. *I am expected to respond to digital messages immediately* **.896**

Percentage of variance: 44,19% 17,64%

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*Note.* <sup>a</sup> = “prescriptive response expectation organizational norms”; <sup>b</sup> = “descriptive response expectation organizational norms”.

### *Workplace telepressure*

Workplace telepressure was measured with the six-item Workplace Telepressure Measure Scale by Barber & Santuzzi (2015) using a five-point response format ranging from 1 (*‘strongly disagree’*) to 5 (*‘strongly agree’*). Respondents were asked to rate how much they agree or disagree with certain statements as: *“I feel a strong need to respond to others immediately”*. In this study, the scale was reliable ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

### **Statistical analyses**

To analyze the data of this study, the statistical program SPSS was used. As participants reported remarkably homogeneous education levels (89% of the participants was high-educated), the level of education was left out of the analysis. Eventually, gender, age and having a managerial position were included as demographics, as they were considered sufficiently relevant to control for, or because they explained significant variance in workplace telepressure. First, descriptive analyses were conducted and intercorrelations between the variables were examined. Second, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with only the control variables as predictors, to uncover the explained variance of these variables, and to identify any significant results produced by these variables. Third, the hypotheses were tested by using a multiple regression analysis to examine the main effects between response expectation organizational norms, big five personality traits and irrational need for control on workplace telepressure (H1, 2a, 3a, 4a, 5a), and by using Process (model 1) moderation analysis (Hayes, 2018) to examine hypotheses 2b, 3b, 4b, and 5b.

## Results

### Data preparation

Prior to the analyses, all variables were checked for outliers, normality using Shapiro-Wilk, linearity and homoscedasticity. The results of simple boxplots only showed mild outliers. The Shapiro-Wilk normality tests results indicated that the variables were not normally distributed ( $p < .01$ ). However, according to the central limit theorem, violation of the normality assumption is not problematic in fairly large samples (Field, 2018). Furthermore, the normal P-P plots and scatterplots showed that all predictor variables meet the linearity and heteroscedasticity assumption, as they showed a heteroscedastic relationship with workplace telepressure.

### Preliminary analyses

By means of bivariate Pearson correlation analyses, all variables were explored for possible relationships and checked for multicollinearity, to identify any ‘confounding effects’ of predictors, which can blur possible significant effects on the outcome variable (MacKinnon et al., 2000). The results showed that the multicollinearity assumption was met, since all correlations were below .85.

In Table 2, the means, standard deviations and intercorrelations between all variables are shown. As expected, positive significant correlations were found between workplace telepressure and response expectation organizational norms ( $r = .24, p < .01$ ), neuroticism ( $r = .21, p < .05$ ) and irrational need for control ( $r = .17, p < .05$ ). Surprisingly, agreeableness and conscientiousness were negatively correlated to workplace telepressure, although these correlations were not significant ( $r = -.08, p = .331$ ) and ( $r = -.14, p = .100$ ). Further remarkable results are the significant negative correlations between workplace telepressure and age ( $r = -.31, p < .001$ ), and having a managerial position ( $r = -.19, p < .05$ )

**Table 2***Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations of All Variables*

| Variable                        | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1     | 2      | 3      | 4    | 5      | 6     | 7     | 8    | 9     | 10   |
|---------------------------------|----------|-----------|-------|--------|--------|------|--------|-------|-------|------|-------|------|
| 1. Gender <sup>a</sup>          | 1.39     | 0.49      | -     |        |        |      |        |       |       |      |       |      |
| 2. Age                          | 42.89    | 14.02     | .29** | -      |        |      |        |       |       |      |       |      |
| 3. Manager <sup>b</sup>         | 0.29     | 0.46      | .15   | .27**  | -      |      |        |       |       |      |       |      |
| 4. org. Norm <sup>c</sup>       | 2.67     | 0.66      | .06   | -.04   | .12    | -    |        |       |       |      |       |      |
| 5. Neuroticism                  | 2.42     | 0.61      | -.20* | -.21*  | -.33** | -.06 | -      |       |       |      |       |      |
| 6. Extraversion                 | 3.72     | 0.59      | -.10  | -.04   | .20*   | .08  | -.40** | -     |       |      |       |      |
| 7. Agreeableness                | 3.99     | 0.47      | -.27* | -.12   | -.04   | -.01 | -.24*  | .12   | -     |      |       |      |
| 8. Conscientiousness            | 3.83     | 0.54      | -.10  | .08    | .12    | .04  | -.33** | .04   | .29** | -    |       |      |
| 9. Openness to experience       | 3.59     | 0.57      | .02   | -.06   | .06    | .11  | -.02   | .22*  | .16   | -.06 | -     |      |
| 10. Irrational need for control | 2.74     | 0.57      | -.11  | -.20*  | -.38** | .07  | .47**  | -.47* | .01   | -.02 | -.18* | -    |
| 11. Workplace telepressure      | 3.00     | 0.88      | -.07  | -.31** | -.19*  | .24* | .21*   | .02   | -.08  | .14  | .06   | .17* |

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the  $p < .01$  level (two-tailed).

\*. Correlation is significant at the  $p < .05$  level (two-tailed).

<sup>a</sup> 1 = woman; 2 = man.

<sup>b</sup> 0 = no managerial position; 1 = managerial position

<sup>c</sup> = "Response expectation organizational norms"

## Hypotheses testing

(H1) response expectation organizational norms are positively associated with workplace telepressure.

In this study, a positive relation between response expectation organizational norms and workplace telepressure was hypothesized. A Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine whether response expectation organizational norms accounted for significant explained variance in workplace telepressure. Results are presented in Table 3. Response expectation organizational norms added significant variance beyond control variables, as they accounted for an additional 6% of the variance in workplace telepressure,  $\Delta F(1, 134) = 6.62, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .06$ . Moreover, the main effect between response expectation organizational norms and workplace telepressure was significant,  $\beta = .25, t(134) = 3.06, p < .01$ . Therefore, hypothesis 1 was confirmed, which implies that workers who perceive organizational norms to respond promptly are more prone to experience workplace telepressure. Furthermore, age was negatively associated with workplace telepressure in all models, which suggests that older workers experience significantly less workplace telepressure.

**Table 3**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Displaying the Relationships Between Response Expectation Organizational Norms and Workplace Telepressure.*

|                        | Workplace Telepressure     |     |       |      |                            |     |       |      |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------|------|----------------------------|-----|-------|------|
|                        | Model 1: Control Variables |     |       |      | Model 2: REON <sup>a</sup> |     |       |      |
|                        | $\beta$                    | SE  | t     | p    | $\beta$                    | SE  | t     | p    |
| Gender                 | .04                        | .16 | .44   | .664 | .02                        | .15 | .24   | .811 |
| Age                    | -.29**                     | .01 | -3.22 | .002 | -.26**                     | .01 | -3.01 | .003 |
| Manager                | -.12                       | .17 | -1.37 | .175 | -.15                       | .16 | -1.81 | .072 |
| org. Norm <sup>a</sup> |                            |     |       |      | .25**                      | .11 | 3.06  | .003 |
| F                      | 5.35                       |     |       |      | 6.62                       |     |       |      |
| $\Delta F$             |                            |     |       |      | 9.38**                     |     |       |      |
| R <sup>2</sup>         | .11**                      |     |       |      | .17                        |     |       |      |
| $\Delta R^2$           |                            |     |       |      | .06**                      |     |       |      |
| p                      | .002                       |     |       |      | .000                       |     |       |      |

Note. <sup>a</sup> = "Response expectation organizational norms"

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$

(H2a, H3a, H4a) agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism are positively associated with workplace telepressure.

In this study, a positive relation between agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism and workplace telepressure was hypothesized. A Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine whether the Big Five personality traits accounted for significant explained variance in workplace telepressure. Results are presented in Table 4. The Big Five personality traits added significant variance beyond control variables, as they accounted for an additional 4% of the variance in workplace telepressure,  $\Delta F(1, 135) = 1.08, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .04$ . However, the main effects of agreeableness ( $\beta = -.09, t(134) = -.92, p = .362$ ), conscientiousness ( $\beta = -.04, t(135) = -.41, p = .685$ ), neuroticism ( $\beta = .14, t(134) = 1.31, p = .193$ ), extraversion ( $\beta = .09, t(135) = .93, p = .352$ ) and openness to experience ( $\beta = .05, t(135) = .53, p = .598$ ) on workplace telepressure were not significant. Therefore, hypotheses 2a, 3a and 4a were not confirmed.

**Table 4**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Displaying the Relationships Between The Big Five Personality Traits and Workplace Telepressure.*

| Workplace Telepressure |                            |     |       |      |                          |     |       |      |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------|------|--------------------------|-----|-------|------|
|                        | Model 1: Control Variables |     |       |      | Model 2: Big Five traits |     |       |      |
|                        | $\beta$                    | SE  | t     | p    | $\beta$                  | SE  | t     | p    |
| Gender                 | .04                        | .16 | .44   | .664 | .04                      | .17 | .40   | .689 |
| Age                    | -.29**                     | .01 | -3.22 | .002 | -.27**                   | .01 | -2.94 | .004 |
| Manager                | -.12                       | .17 | -1.37 | .175 | -.10                     | .18 | -1.05 | .296 |
| Neuroticism            |                            |     |       |      | .14                      | .15 | 1.31  | .193 |
| Agreeableness          |                            |     |       |      | -.09                     | .18 | -.92  | .362 |
| Conscientiousness      |                            |     |       |      | -.04                     | .15 | -.41  | .685 |
| Extraversion           |                            |     |       |      | .09                      | .14 | .93   | .352 |
| Openness to experience |                            |     |       |      | .05                      | .13 | .53   | .598 |
| F                      | 5.35                       |     |       |      | 2.69                     |     |       |      |
| $\Delta F$             |                            |     |       |      | 1.08                     |     |       |      |
| R <sup>2</sup>         | .11**                      |     |       |      | .15                      |     |       |      |
| $\Delta R^2$           |                            |     |       |      | .04**                    |     |       |      |
| p                      | .002                       |     |       |      | .009                     |     |       |      |

Note. \*\*,  $p < .01$ ; \*,  $p < .05$

*(H5a) Irrational need for control is positively associated with workplace telepressure.*

In this study, a positive relation between irrational need for control and workplace telepressure was hypothesized. A Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine whether irrational need for control accounted for significant explained variance in workplace telepressure. Results are presented in Table 5. Irrational need for control added significant variance beyond control variables, as it accounted for an additional 1% of the variance in workplace telepressure,  $\Delta F(1, 134) = 1.04, p < .01, \Delta R^2 = .01$ . However, the main effect between irrational need for control and workplace telepressure was not significant,  $\beta = .09, t(134) = 1.02, p = .309$ . Therefore, hypothesis 5a could not be confirmed.

**Table 5**

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis Displaying the Relationships Between Irrational Need For Control and Workplace Telepressure.*

|                             | Workplace Telepressure     |     |       |      |                                      |     |       |      |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----|-------|------|--------------------------------------|-----|-------|------|
|                             | Model 1: Control Variables |     |       |      | Model 2: Irrational need for control |     |       |      |
|                             | $\beta$                    | SE  | t     | p    | $\beta$                              | SE  | t     | p    |
| Gender                      | .04                        | .16 | .44   | .664 | .04                                  | .16 | .48   | .635 |
| Age                         | -.29**                     | .01 | -3.22 | .002 | -.28**                               | .01 | -3.11 | .002 |
| Manager                     | -.12                       | .17 | -1.37 | .175 | -.09                                 | .18 | -.94  | .351 |
| Irrational need for control |                            |     |       |      | .09                                  | .14 | 1.02  | .309 |
| F                           | 5.35                       |     |       |      | 4.28                                 |     |       |      |
| $\Delta F$                  |                            |     |       |      | 1.04                                 |     |       |      |
| R <sup>2</sup>              | .11**                      |     |       |      | .12                                  |     |       |      |
| $\Delta R^2$                |                            |     |       |      | .01**                                |     |       |      |
| p                           | .002                       |     |       |      | .003                                 |     |       |      |

Note. \*\*.  $p < .01$ ; \*.  $p < .05$

*(H2b, H3b, H4b, H5b) response expectation organizational norms strengthen the positive associations of agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, irrational need for control and workplace telepressure.*

In this study, it was hypothesized that response expectation organizational norms strengthen the positive association between agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, irrational need for control and workplace telepressure. Process moderation analysis (Hayes, 2018) was conducted to determine whether an interaction effect would occur. The results are presented in Table 6, 7, 8 and 9. The interaction effects did not add significant explained variance to the models ( $F(1, 135) = 2.44, p < .121, \Delta R^2 = .02$ ;  $F(1, 135) = .43, p < .514, \Delta R^2 = .00$ ;  $F(1, 135) = .15, p < .704, \Delta R^2 = .00$ ;  $F(1, 135) = .03, p < .858, \Delta R^2 = .00$ ). Furthermore, the individual moderating effects of agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and irrational need for control were not significant. Thus, hypotheses 2b, 3b, 4b and 5b were not confirmed.

**Table 6**

*Moderation Analysis Displaying the Relationships Between Response Expectation Organizational Norms, Agreeableness and Workplace Telepressure, and the F,  $\Delta R^2$  and p of the Interaction Term.*

|                                           | Workplace Telepressure |      |       |      |
|-------------------------------------------|------------------------|------|-------|------|
|                                           | $\beta$                | SE   | t     | p    |
| Gender                                    | -.05                   | .16  | -.35  | .725 |
| Age                                       | -.02**                 | .01  | -3.17 | .005 |
| Manager                                   | -.29                   | .16  | -1.83 | .070 |
| Agreeableness                             | -1.35                  | .73  | -1.85 | .067 |
| org. Norm <sup>a</sup>                    | -1.30                  | 1.04 | -1.24 | .217 |
| Agreeableness<br>x org. Norm <sup>a</sup> | .40                    | .26  | 1.56  | .121 |
| F                                         | 2.44                   |      |       |      |
| $\Delta R^2$                              | .02                    |      |       |      |
| p                                         | .121                   |      |       |      |

Note. <sup>a</sup> = Response expectation organizational norms

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$



**Table 7**

*Moderation Analysis Displaying the Relationships Between Response Expectation Organizational Norms, Conscientiousness and Workplace Telepressure, and the F,  $\Delta R^2$  and p of the Interaction Term.*

|                                            | Workplace Telepressure |     |       |      |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----|-------|------|
|                                            | $\beta$                | SE  | t     | p    |
| Gender                                     | .01                    | .15 | .07   | .947 |
| Age                                        | -.02**                 | .01 | -2.78 | .006 |
| Manager                                    | -.27                   | .16 | -1.68 | .096 |
| Conscientiousness                          | .16                    | .55 | .30   | .766 |
| org. Norm <sup>a</sup>                     | .85                    | .79 | 1.07  | .287 |
| Conscientiousness x org. Norm <sup>a</sup> | -.13                   | .20 | -.66  | .514 |
| F                                          | .43                    |     |       |      |
| $\Delta R^2$                               | .00                    |     |       |      |
| p                                          | .514                   |     |       |      |

Note. <sup>a</sup> = Response expectation organizational norms

\*\* .  $p < .01$ ; \* .  $p < .05$

**Table 8**

*Moderation Analysis Displaying the Relationships Between Response Expectation Organizational Norms, Neuroticism and Workplace Telepressure, and the F,  $\Delta R^2$  and p of the Interaction Term.*

|                                      | Workplace Telepressure |     |       |      |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|-----|-------|------|
|                                      | $\beta$                | SE  | t     | p    |
| Gender                               | .01                    | .15 | .07   | .947 |
| Age                                  | -.02**                 | .01 | -2.78 | .006 |
| Manager                              | -.27                   | .17 | -1.68 | .096 |
| Neuroticism                          | .16                    | .42 | .30   | .766 |
| org. Norm <sup>a</sup>               | .85                    | .39 | 1.07  | .287 |
| Neuroticism x org. Norm <sup>a</sup> | -.13                   | .15 | -.66  | .514 |
| F                                    | .15                    |     |       |      |
| $\Delta R^2$                         | .00                    |     |       |      |
| p                                    | .704                   |     |       |      |

Note. <sup>a</sup> = Response expectation organizational norms

\*\* .  $p < .01$ ; \* .  $p < .05$

**Table 9**

*Moderation Analysis Displaying the Relationships Between Response Expectation Organizational Norms, Irrational Need For Control and Workplace Telepressure, and the F,  $\Delta R^2$  and p of the Interaction Term.*

|                                                      | Workplace Telepressure |     |       |      |
|------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|-----|-------|------|
|                                                      | $\beta$                | SE  | t     | p    |
| Gender                                               | .04                    | .15 | .26   | .797 |
| Age                                                  | -.02**                 | .01 | -2.93 | .004 |
| Manager                                              | -.25                   | .17 | -1.44 | .152 |
| Irrational need for control                          | .19                    | .54 | .34   | .732 |
| org. Norm <sup>a</sup>                               | .41                    | .54 | .77   | .444 |
| Irrational need for control x org. Norm <sup>a</sup> | -.03                   | .19 | -.18  | .858 |
| F                                                    | .03                    |     |       |      |
| $\Delta R^2$                                         | .00                    |     |       |      |
| p                                                    | .858                   |     |       |      |

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> = Response expectation organizational norms

\*\* .  $p < .01$ ; \* .  $p < .05$

## **Discussion**

As contemporary workers rely evermore on information- and communication technologies (ICT's), workers are dealing with increasingly internal and external demands to respond quickly and to be constantly connected, which could readily lead to experiences of workplace telepressure. This cross-sectional study was conducted among Dutch working adults with the aim to examine what self-imposed norms are significant predictors of workplace telepressure, and, subsequently, whether response expectation organizational norms influence the effect of self-imposed norms on workplace telepressure.

### **Response expectation organizational norms and workplace telepressure**

Consistent with expectations, response expectation organizational norms predicted more workplace telepressure. In other words, workers who experienced norms in their organizational environment to respond promptly, reported higher levels of workplace telepressure. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was confirmed. This finding corresponds to previous studies (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015; Barley et al., 2011), which emphasized the importance of social norms to experience ICT-related messages as demanding. Workers' social environment encourages them to perceive quick responses to ICT-related messages as a 'desired' or 'correct' behavioral response. This result is supported by social influence theories (e.g. Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004). The significant effect of response expectation organizational norms contributes to the explanation of the perceived external pressure to respond quickly to ICT-related messages, imposed by the organizational environment. Subsequently, these organizational norms could lead to more 'ICT-demands', which could on their turn evoke a decrease of workers' productivity and well-being (Bordi et al., 2018; Day et al., 2012).

### **Self-imposed norms and workplace telepressure**

#### *Agreeableness, conscientiousness and neuroticism*

Opposed to what was hypothesized, agreeableness did not show a positive significant association with workplace telepressure. As such, agreeableness could not

be considered as a predictor of workplace telepressure. This means that workers with higher levels of agreeableness are not inclined to a higher self-imposed pressure regarding computer-mediated communication, and in turn to report higher levels of workplace telepressure. Hence, hypothesis 2a was not confirmed. Although agreeableness contributes to altruistic behaviors toward friends and acquaintances in general (Oda, 2014), these behaviors do not seem to arise among ‘agreeable’ workers when they engage in technology-mediated interactions. An explanation could be that the expected positive relationship between agreeableness and workplace telepressure in this study is theoretically substantiated on the two facets of altruism and compliance, which would make workers more inclined to impose norms on themselves. However, the Big Five Inventory also takes the facets of trust, straightforwardness, modesty and tender-mindedness into account (John et al., 1991). Therefore, the items of this scale might not comprise sufficient construct validity to adequately test hypothesis 2a (Chronbach & Meehl, 1955). Future research should focus solely on the relevant facets of agreeableness that could contribute to workers’ tendencies to impose norms on themselves. Nevertheless, the non-significant result in this study might imply that traits concerning agreeableness are primarily at play in face-to-face interactions, rather than technology-mediated interactions.

Contrary to what was expected, conscientiousness did not predict workplace telepressure. In other words, workers with higher levels of conscientiousness are not more susceptible to experience workplace telepressure. Therefore, hypothesis 3a was not confirmed. This result is in line with Grawitch et al. (2018), which, too, did not find a significant relationship between conscientiousness and workplace telepressure. Although conscientious workers tend to be well-organized and strive for excellence (Costa et al. 1991), and tend to show more compulsive work behaviors (Grawitch et al., 2018), these workers seem not to impose more norms on themselves in order to respond promptly to ICT-related messages. An explanation for this result could be that the items of the Big Five Inventory Scale for conscientiousness (John et al., 1991) once again did not comprise sufficient construct validity to test hypothesis 3a (Chronbach & Meehl, 1955), as these items also measure other facets of the construct conscientiousness. For example, one item said: “I am someone who is easily

distracted”, which was reverse coded. It seems straightforward that when conscientious individuals are not easily distracted, they would rather report less, instead of more workplace telepressure. Therefore, Future research should focus solely on the relevant facets of agreeableness that could contribute to workers’ tendencies to impose norms on themselves. Nevertheless, the non-significant result in this study might imply that conscientiousness is primarily relevant to core work tasks, rather than responding to ICT-related messages.

Neuroticism did not predict workplace telepressure when controlled for gender, age and having a managerial position. Therefore, hypothesis 4a was not confirmed. The non-significant result of neuroticism in the model with control variables could be attributed to the significant negative effect of age, which makes the effect of neuroticism disappear. However, when neuroticism was taken separately or with all other big five traits in the regression model, and control variables were excluded, neuroticism did predict workplace telepressure,  $\beta = .23$ ,  $t(134) = 2.33$ ,  $p < .05$ . Furthermore, a significant positive correlation was found between neuroticism and workplace telepressure. The latter results are in line with the study of Grawitch et al. (2018), which imply that workers with higher levels of neuroticism can be more inclined to impose norms on themselves regarding computer-mediated interactions, and subsequently report higher levels of workplace telepressure. This might be a consequence of their relatively strong feelings of anxiety and self-consciousness that resulted from previous studies on neuroticism (Darvill et al., 1992; McCrae & John, 1992).

#### *Irrational need for control*

As for neuroticism, irrational need for control did not predict workplace telepressure when controlled for gender, age and having a managerial position. Therefore, hypothesis 5a was not confirmed. The non-significant result of irrational need for control in the model with control variables could be attributed to the significant negative effect of age, which makes the effect of neuroticism disappear. However, when control variables were excluded, irrational need for control did predict workplace telepressure,  $\beta = .17$ ,  $t(134) = 2.04$ ,  $p < .05$ . Furthermore, a significant

positive correlation was found between irrational need for control and workplace telepressure. The latter results imply that workers with irrational beliefs about their strong desire to control their workplace environment could be more prone to a self-imposed pressure regarding computer-mediated interactions, and subsequently report higher levels of workplace telepressure. The unpredictability of ICT-related messages could contribute to a more ambiguous work environment, which might readily lead to an urge or preoccupation to respond quickly among these workers. This corresponds to the study of Zeijen et al. (2021).

The conditional significant effects of neuroticism and irrational need for control contribute to the explanation of the perceived internal pressure to respond promptly to ICT-related messages, imposed by workers' own predilections and urges. Subsequently, these self-imposed norms could lead to a decrease of workers' productivity and well-being (Bordi et al., 2018; Day et al., 2012).

### **The moderating role of response expectation organizational norms**

As mentioned above, response expectation organizational norms are positively related to workplace telepressure. The second aim of this study was to examine whether response expectation organizational norms strengthened the relationship between self-imposed norms and workplace telepressure. Contrary to expectations, response expectations organizational norms did not moderate the relationship between any self-imposed norm included in this study and workplace telepressure. This means that workers who experience more response expectation organizational norms are not more inclined to a self-imposed pressure to respond promptly to ICT-related messages than workers who experience less response expectation organizational norms. Hence, hypothesis 2b, 3b, 4b and 5b were not confirmed. Accordingly, this study did not uncover implications beyond the combined explanation of self-imposed norms and organizational factors on workplace telepressure, as the study of Grawich et al. (2018) demonstrated. This result implies that organizational norms (or 'work demands', as mentioned by Grawitch et al. (2018)) and, under certain conditions, self-imposed norms, are two factors that could contribute comparably to the experience of workplace telepressure, but which seem not in any way to interact with each other.

## **Additional results**

### *Age*

Remarkably, age appeared to be negatively related to workplace telepressure in all regression models, demonstrating a relatively strong effect ( $\beta =$  between  $-.26$  and  $-.29$ ), which makes the effects of certain personal factors in this study disappear. Apparently, younger employees are more susceptible to feel an urge or preoccupation to respond quickly to ICT-related messages, which has not been found before in prior workplace telepressure research. This result might be attributed to the lack of control that younger workers experience over how they use work-related ICT messages, and over which modes of communication they devote to this. Supportively, the study of Day et al. (2012), found a significant negative correlation between age and lack of control over ICT, which implies that younger workers might experience more difficulties to control ICT's in their job. This lack of control could readily lead younger workers to experience an urge or preoccupation (which is externally driven) to respond quickly to ICT-related messages. Furthermore, Fridchay and Reizer (2022) found a negative correlation between age and FoMo among employees. Younger workers might be more inclined to experience workplace telepressure as they experience more anxiety to miss out on information and social relationships. Considering the above mentioned, future workplace telepressure research should further address the effect of age on workplace telepressure.

### **Limitations and suggestions for further research**

A first important limitation of this study is that it consists of cross-sectional data. This means that both independent variables as the dependent variable are measured at the same time. Accordingly, it is uncertain whether response expectation organizational norms and self-imposed norms occur before workplace telepressure (i.e. temporality), and whether the effects of these relationships are not due to a third variable (i.e. non-spuriousness). Consequently, causal effects of response expectation organizational norms, neuroticism and irrational need for control are less plausible (Kenny, 1975).

Second, the results of this study are limited as a consequence of the relatively small sample size ( $N = 136$ ), compared to what G-power would advise for studying four interaction effects ( $N = 204$ ). Therefore, larger effect sizes are required to uncover significant results in the data (Cohen, 1992). The amount of participants in this study was partly hampered due to technical failures in the survey program of the Utrecht University during data collection, and because a substantial amount of participants dropped out of the survey when they were asked about their personality traits.

Third, the selection requirements for respondents to participate in this study might have resulted in a less representative sample. Respondents were selected only when their core work tasks considered office duties. This selection might have contributed to a sample size that consisted for almost 90% of high-educated employees. Therefore, education level was left out of the analysis as control variable, and the results of this study primarily apply to high-educated employees, which affects the external validity of this study. Moreover, this study relies on convenience sampling. A part of the respondents were easily accessible to the researcher, as they were retrieved from the researcher's personal network by means of snowball sampling. Therefore, the sample is less representative of the population (Etikan et al., 2016).

A final limitation of this study is that the concept of response expectation organizational norms only represents an aspect of all work demands and organizational factors that explain the external urge and preoccupation to respond promptly to ICT-related messages. Therefore, important work and organizational predictors could have been left out of this study, which might limit the external validity of the relationship between the external, organizational pressure and workplace telepressure. Further research should focus on how the entire set of work and organizational factors that enhance an external pressure to respond quickly, could influence the internal pressure to respond quickly that workers impose on themselves.

Further research should also elaborate on what commonalities could be found for trait-like individual differences that comprise self-imposed norms. For example, it could be interesting to examine how the entire Work-related Irrational Beliefs-Questionnaire (WIB-Q) of Van Wijhe et al. (2013) would arouse self-imposed norms



that explain workplace telepressure, in order to describe whether employees with an ‘irrational beliefs personality’ are more prone to impose norms on themselves to respond promptly to ICT-related messages. Thus, more insights can be gained in the role and meaning of trait-like individual differences for generating an internal pressure among employees to experience workplace telepressure.

### **Practical implications**

Since exchanging information and maintaining social relationships via asynchronous computer-mediated interactions have become evermore ubiquitous in contemporary work environments, organizations should be mindful of the possible detrimental health effects that these developments entail. This study highlights the organizational and personal factors that could enhance a preoccupation and urge to respond promptly to ICT-related messages. Organizations should be aware of their organizational climate regarding both prescriptive and descriptive response expectation organizational norms, and should encourage employees to set response norms and standards that will not infringe on their health and well-being.

Furthermore, this study implicates that individual differences between employees can, under certain conditions, play a significant role for whether they are self-committed to impose norms on themselves in responding promptly to ICT-related messages. Employers should mind the consequences of personality tests for one’s susceptibility to experience workplace telepressure, and subsequently capitalize on the corresponding individual needs of employees, in order to avoid an undesirable pressure towards themselves and the organization. As such, organizations will be better able to improve mental health of employees, which is an essential need for organizational effectiveness.

### **Conclusion**

This study was conducted to further examine how certain personality traits, which can be classified as self-imposed norms, are related to workplace telepressure, and how organizational circumstances could enforce this relationship. The results suggest that organizational norms to respond promptly to ICT-related messages

contribute to the externally generated pressure of workplace telepressure, whereas certain personality traits (e.g. neuroticism and irrational need for control) could contribute to, or at least correlate with the internally driven pressure of workplace telepressure. The results also suggest that although organizational factors, and, under certain conditions, personal factors, could contribute comparably to explain workplace telepressure, they seem not in any way to interact with each other. These findings could help organizations when designing interventions to counteract high levels of workplace telepressure among employees. Since workers seem to increasingly draw upon asynchronous modes of communication to exchange information and maintain social relationships, workplace telepressure is a phenomenon that organizations should beware of in contemporary work environments.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Information letter and letter of consent**

Beste deelnemer,

Graag nodig ik u uit om deel te nemen aan mijn afstudeerproject. Ik voer mijn afstudeerproject uit voor de masteropleiding Social, Health and Organizational Psychology aan de Universiteit Utrecht. Dr. Veerle Brenninkmeijer, werkzaam op de afdeling Sociale, Gezondheids- en Organisationspsychologie, begeleidt dit afstudeerproject.

#### **Achtergrond en doel onderzoek**

Dit is een onderzoek naar de ervaring van werknemers en werkgevers om digitaal bereikbaar te zijn voor de werkomgeving - bijvoorbeeld via e-mail, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams en Intranet - en hoe persoonlijke en organisatiefactoren hierop van invloed kunnen zijn. Het doel van dit onderzoek is om organisaties handvaten te bieden voor hoe zij de digitale werkomgeving van medewerkers optimaal kunnen inrichten, gebaseerd op de persoonlijke behoeften van elke medewerker.

#### **Wat wordt er van u verwacht als participant**

Voor dit onderzoek zoek ik deelnemers die minimaal 18 jaar oud zijn en gemiddeld minimaal 12 uur per week werken. Deelname aan dit onderzoek is geheel vrijwillig. Om deel te nemen is uw schriftelijke toestemming nodig (zie hieronder). Als u besluit deel te nemen aan het onderzoek, worden aan het begin van de vragenlijst een aantal achtergrondgegevens gevraagd. Daarna volgen er vragen over digitale bereikbaarheid in uw organisatie, en over uw persoonlijkheid en enkele persoonlijke kenmerken, in relatie tot uw werk. Tot slot vragen wij u enkele stellingen te beantwoorden over uw ervaring om digitaal bereikbaar te zijn voor uw werkomgeving. Het invullen van de vragenlijst zal ongeveer 10 tot 15 minuten duren. We willen u uitnodigen om de vragen eerlijk en intuïtief te beantwoorden, het gaat om uw eerste ingeving. Bovendien bestaan er geen goede of foute antwoorden.



### **Zijn er nadelen of risico's verbonden aan dit onderzoek?**

Dit onderzoek is goedgekeurd door de Ethische Toetsingscommissie van de Faculteit der Sociale Wetenschappen, Universiteit Utrecht. Er zijn geen nadelen of persoonlijke risico's verbonden aan dit onderzoek. Mocht u n.a.v. het invullen van de vragenlijst behoefte hebben aan een gesprek over uw werksituatie, dan kunt u contact opnemen met mij of met mijn begeleider, dr. Veerle Brenninkmeijer, via [v.brenninkmeijer@uu.nl](mailto:v.brenninkmeijer@uu.nl). Wanneer u wilt stoppen met het invullen van de vragenlijst dan kan dat op elk moment, zonder verdere uitleg en zonder verdere consequenties. Als u uw deelname beëindigt, zullen uw onderzoeksgegevens nog gebruikt worden tot vier weken na invullen, tenzij u expliciet om verwijdering vraagt.

### **Vertrouwelijkheid van dataverzameling**

Voor dit onderzoek verzamel ik de volgende (algemene) persoonsgegevens: leeftijd, geslacht, hoogst genoten opleiding en type aanstelling. Daarnaast vraag ik bij welke organisatie u werkzaam bent, om de organisaties die dit willen van feedback te voorzien op organisatieniveau. Aan deze wens wordt uitsluitend voldaan wanneer een deelnemende organisatie 75% van het personeel laat deelnemen, zodat antwoorden niet tot individuele medewerkers te herleiden zijn. Verder zullen alle verzamelde data compleet worden geanonimiseerd, waardoor antwoorden niet tot personen te herleiden zullen zijn. Indien u geïnteresseerd bent in de resultaten van dit onderzoek, zal ik ook uw emailadres (tijdelijk) registreren. Het databestand met de persoonsgegevens zal bewaard worden in een met een wachtwoord beveiligde online omgeving. De onderzoekers zullen alleen toegang hebben tot de compleet geanonimiseerde versies van de data voor de rest van het onderzoek. De onderzoeksdata zullen minimaal 10 jaar na publicatie van het onderzoek bewaard worden. Dit is in overeenstemming met de richtlijnen van de Vereniging van Universiteiten in Nederland (VSNU). Meer informatie over privacy is te vinden op <https://autoriteitpersoonsgegevens.nl/nl/onderwerpen/avg-europese-privacywetgeving>.

### **Contact**

Eventuele opmerkingen of vragen over de survey of het onderzoek kunnen gemaïld worden naar [n.b.heetvelt@students.uu.nl](mailto:n.b.heetvelt@students.uu.nl). Opmerkingen en vragen kunnen ook gemaïld worden naar mijn begeleider, dr. Veerle Brenninkmeijer ([v.brenninkmeijer@uu.nl](mailto:v.brenninkmeijer@uu.nl)).

### **Wat kan ik doen als ik klachten heb over het onderzoek?**

Als u een officiële klacht wilt indienen over het onderzoek, dan kunt u dit doen via de klachtenfunctionaris van de faculteit sociale wetenschappen van de Universiteit Utrecht, via [klachtenfunctionaris-fetsocwet@uu.nl](mailto:klachtenfunctionaris-fetsocwet@uu.nl).

Om deel te nemen aan de survey dient u akkoord te gaan met bovenstaande informatie (zie het volgende blok voor het toestemmingsformulier).

Alvast bedankt!

Vriendelijke groet,

Niels Heetvelt

### **Toestemmingsformulier voor onderzoek**

- Ik heb bovenstaande introductie gelezen en ben volledig geïnformeerd over het doel van het onderzoek en de wijze waarop met mijn gegevens wordt omgegaan.
- Ik weet dat meedoen geheel vrijwillig is. Ik begrijp dat ik mijn toestemming kan intrekken op ieder moment van het onderzoek, zonder opgaaf van redenen en zonder consequenties.

Als u mee wilt doen met het onderzoek en akkoord gaat met het bovenstaande, klik dan onderstaand op 'Ik ga akkoord' om door te gaan met het onderzoek. Mocht u niet akkoord gaan, dan kunt u helaas niet deelnemen aan dit onderzoek. In dat geval kunt u de vragenlijst nu sluiten.

Ik ga akkoord

## Appendix B

### Questionnaire

#### Demografische gegevens

De volgende vragen hebben betrekking op uw achtergrondgegevens.

Wat is uw geslacht?

- Vrouw
- Man
- Anders

Wat is uw leeftijd?

---

Wat is uw hoogst afgeronde opleiding?

- lagere school
- vmbo
- havo
- vwo
- mbo
- hbo/universitaire bachelor
- hbo/universitaire master

Bij welke organisatie ben u werkzaam?

---

Hoeveel jaar bent u werkzaam bij uw werkgever?

---

Hoeveel uur werkt u per week volgens uw contract?

---

Hoeveel uur werkt u per week in de praktijk?

---

Welke werksituatie(s) is/zijn normaliter het meest op u van toepassing? U kunt meerdere antwoorden selecteren.

- Ik werk vanuit huis
- Ik werk op een vaste werkplek buitenshuis (bijvoorbeeld op kantoor)
- Ik werk op externe locaties (bijvoorbeeld bij klanten)
- Ik werk op flexplekken (cafés, zzp plekken)

Heeft u een leidinggevende functie?

- Ja
- Nee
- Anders, namelijk: \_\_\_\_\_

Wat voor contract heeft u?

- Loondienst, vast contract
- Loondienst, tijdelijk contract
- Anders, namelijk: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Response expectation organizational norms**

Onderstaande vragen gaan over uw ervaring met digitale bereikbaarheid in uw organisatie. De term 'digitale berichten' omvat alle berichtgeving via digitale kanalen waarmee men (wel eens) communiceert in uw organisatie, bijvoorbeeld e-mail, WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Intranet etc. Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met de stellingen.

Antwoordschalen:

- 1 = Sterk mee oneens
- 2 = Mee oneens
- 3 = Neutraal
- 4 = Mee eens
- 5 = Sterk mee eens

In mijn directe werkomgeving (bijv. team, afdeling) ...

- reageren de meeste mensen snel op digitale berichten
- word ik via digitale berichten benaderd voor werkgerelateerde zaken buiten reguliere werktijden om
- zorgt de communicatie via digitale berichten ervoor dat mensen met wie ik werk mij op elk moment kunnen benaderen
- wordt van mij verwacht zo snel mogelijk te reageren op digitale berichten
- wordt van mij verwacht te allen tijde bereikbaar te zijn voor digitale berichten
- wordt van mij verwacht digitale berichten te checken buiten reguliere werktijden om
- wordt van mij verwacht onmiddellijk te reageren op digitale berichten

### **Big Five personality traits**

Hieronder vindt u kenmerken die veel of weinig op u van toepassing kunnen zijn. Geef bij elke bewering aan in hoeverre u het hiermee eens of oneens bent.

Antwoordschalen:

- 1 = Sterk mee oneens
- 2 = Mee oneens
- 3 = Neutraal
- 4 = Mee eens
- 5 = Sterk mee eens

Ik ben iemand die...

- Zich veel zorgen maakt

- Gespannen kan zijn
- Ontspannen is, goed met stress kan omgaan
- Gemakkelijk zenuwachtig wordt
- Emotioneel stabiel is, niet gemakkelijk overstuurt raakt
- Kalm blijft in gespannen situaties
- Sombor is
- Humeurig kan zijn
- Spraakzaam is
- Doorgaans stil is
- Veel enthousiasme opwekt
- Hartelijk, een gezelschapsmens is
- Terughoudend is
- Soms verlegen, geremd is
- Vol energie is
- Voor zichzelf opkomt
- Graag nadenkt, met nieuwe ideeën speelt
- Vindingrijk is
- Waarde hecht aan kunstzinnige ervaringen
- Origineel is, met nieuwe ideeën komt
- Scherpzinnig, een denker is
- Een levendige fantasie heeft
- Benieuwd is naar veel verschillende dingen

- Het fijne weet van kunst, muziek of literatuur
- Weinig interesse voor kunst heeft
- Een voorkeur heeft voor werk dat routine is
- Grondig te werk gaat
- Volhoudt tot de taak af is
- Doorgaans geneigd is tot slordigheid
- Geneigd is lui te zijn
- Een werker is waar men van op aan kan
- Dingen efficiënt doet
- Plannen maakt en deze doorzet
- Gemakkelijk afgeleid is
- Een beetje nonchalant kan zijn
- Attent en aardig is voor bijna iedereen
- Vergevingsgezind is
- Behulpzaam en onzelfzuchtig ten opzichte van anderen is
- Snel ruzie maakt
- Soms grof tegen anderen is
- Koud en afstandelijk kan zijn
- Mensen over het algemeen vertrouwt
- Geneigd is kritiek te hebben op anderen
- Graag samenwerkt met anderen

## **Irrational need for control**

Onderstaande vragen gaan over de wijze waarop u over bepaalde dingen denkt en hoe u bepaalde dingen ervaart ten aanzien van uw werk. Geef aan in hoeverre de stellingen op u van toepassing zijn. Dit doet u door het best passende antwoord te kiezen.

Antwoordschalen:

1 = Helemaal niet van toepassing

2 = Niet van toepassing

3 = Neutraal

4 = Van toepassing

5 = Helemaal van toepassing

- Ik kan niet tegen onduidelijkheid in mijn werk
  
- Ik kan alleen goed omgaan met situaties op het werk wanneer ze voorspelbaar zijn
  
- Ik kan goed met onverwachte gebeurtenissen omgaan in mijn werk
  
- Ik kan er slecht tegen risico's te moeten nemen in mijn werk
  
- Ik kan niet tegen onzekerheden in mijn werk

## **Workplace telepressure**

De volgende vragen zijn gebaseerd op uw gedachten en ervaringen ten aanzien van het gebruik van digitale communicatiemiddelen in uw werk. Denk hierbij vooral aan communicatiemiddelen waarbij u kunt bepalen wanneer te reageren (zoals email, WhatsAppberichten, Microsoft Teams, Intranet etc.). Beoordeel in welke mate u het eens of niet eens bent met de volgende stellingen.

Antwoordschalen:

1 = Sterk mee oneens

2 = Mee oneens

3 = Neutraal

4 = Mee eens

5 = Sterk mee eens

Wanneer ik gebruik maak van digitale communicatiemiddelen voor werkgerelateerde zaken...

- vind ik het moeilijk om me te focussen op andere dingen wanneer ik een berichtje ontvang van iemand



- kan ik me beter concentreren op andere taken wanneer ik gereageerd heb op mijn berichten
- kan ik niet stoppen met denken aan een berichtje totdat ik hierop heb gereageerd
- voel ik een sterke drang om zo snel mogelijk op anderen te reageren
- heb ik een overweldigend gevoel om direct te reageren op een bericht/verzoek dat ik ontvang
- vind ik het moeilijk mezelf te weerstaan om meteen op een berichtje te reageren

### **Workplace telepressure algemeen**

Workplace telepressure wordt gedefinieerd als een bezorgdheid en drang om snel te reageren op werk gerelateerde, digitale berichten tijdens werktijden of buiten werktijden om.

Op een schaal van 1 tot 5, in hoeverre ervaart u over het algemeen workplace telepressure met betrekking tot uw werk?

Ik ervaar workplace telepressure in mijn werk

0      1      2      3      4      5

## Appendix C

### Scree plot factor analysis response expectation organizational norms

