

## Remote Workers' Privacy Concerns, Psychological Climate for Face Time, and Organizational Affective Commitment

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### Abstract

*During the Covid-19 pandemic, the shift to high-intensity remote work—three days or more a week—accelerated the digitalization of work processes and the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life through videoconferencing and the use of personal devices for work. This paper explores the relationships between high-intensity remote workers' information and communication technologies (ICT) privacy concerns, psychological climate for face time, and organizational affective commitment. Building on organizational support and social information processing theories, we argue that ICT privacy concerns and perceptions that an organization values physical presence in-office may undermine commitment to the organization. Based on a two-wave study of 1065 remote workers in a large multinational bank, we find that ICT privacy concerns and psychological climate for face time reinforce one another and are negatively associated with subsequent affective organizational commitment.*

**Keywords:** Remote work, Hybrid work, ICT privacy concerns, Visibility, Organizational Commitment

### 1. Introduction

During the Covid-19 pandemic, high-intensity remote work—working from home or settings other than work premises for three days or more a week (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007)—became a standard work arrangement for many organizations around the globe. Before the pandemic, remote work was mostly practiced at a low intensity (i.e., 1 or 2 days remotely at most). Yet, research has shown that experiences of high- vs. low-intensity remote workers significantly

differ (Gajendran & Harrison, 2007), emphasizing the need to better understand the specific implications of high-intensity remote work. The shift to high-intensity remote work has been accompanied by the digitalization of many work processes and the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life (Ravid et al., 2020). In particular, videoconferencing from home offices and the use of personal devices such as smartphones and tablets to conduct work tasks increase the risk of privacy violations (Ball, 2021). Moreover, the use of communications platforms such as Slack and Teams make employees' presence—or absence—at their desk highly visible, creating a context where they can be expected to make up for lack of physical presence in office—face time—for instance by participating to frequent Zoom meetings and turning on their cameras (Cañibano et al., 2022). However, little is known about how this context of privacy concerns and expectations to compensate for the loss of face time may affect remote workers' affective organizational commitment, that is their “emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization” (Allen & Meyer, 1990, p. 1).

This question is important because affective commitment predicts important employee outcomes, most notably retention, performance, and well-being (Meyer et al., 2002). As high-intensity remote work is likely to remain a prominent type of work arrangement (Herath & Herath, 2022), and amidst talks of the “Great resignation” and of a burnout pandemic (Sull et al., 2022), it is beneficial for both employees and organizations to understand the key drivers of commitment in the new digitalized workplace (Connelly et al., 2021).

According to organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002), organizational policies can foster affective commitment by signaling that the organization cares about employee well-being (Butts et al., 2013; Casper & Harris, 2008). Before the pandemic, remote work was seen as one such policy because it was portrayed as a perk offered to enable employees to combine work and life (Hill et al., 2001). Employees who had the opportunity to work remotely interpreted this option as a sign that their organization was attuned to their needs (Awotoye et al., 2020) and thus reciprocated with more effort and affective commitment (Kelliher & Anderson, 2010).

However, in the context of a digitalized pandemic workplace, homes and private devices are used for work and workers' private life is more easily observable by supervisors and peers. For instance, cameras used for videoconferencing may provide insights into one's family situation, lifestyle, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, and other private information. Furthermore, the use of software with new and refined capabilities to track employees' activities has grown in the past two years, in response to a global spike of demand for employee surveillance technologies (Ball, 2021). Workers' use of mobile devices for personal purposes, such as health or family management, can become subject to organizational scrutiny (Hodder, 2020). This context is likely to raise employee privacy concerns, a perception of invasiveness that has been linked with negative attitudes (e.g., anger, unfairness) and increased stress (Ravid et al., 2020, 2022) and that may also erode workers' perceptions that their organization supports them. Moreover, employees may not feel trusted if they perceive that, despite asking them to work remotely, their organization continues to value face time (Adisa et al., 2021; Becker et al., 2021). Under those circumstances, remote work may undermine workers' affective organizational attachment instead of fostering it.

Relying on a two-wave study of remote workers in a large multinational bank, this paper explores the relationships between information and communication technologies (ICT) privacy concerns, psychological climate for face time, and organizational commitment. ICT privacy concerns refer to the extent to which employees are preoccupied that their personal information can be traced, documented, and exploited by their organization because of using ICT such as computers, the internet, and mobile phones (Nimrod, 2018). Psychological climate for face time, "the extent to which an employee perceives that their workplace encourages and rewards physical presence on site" (Afota et al., 2022; p. 7), captures employees'

individual perception that, in their organization, the act of working must be readily observable and visible. We posit that when employees experience privacy concerns and view their organization as still valuing face time, they may interpret these unsettling observations as indications that their organization does not support them adequately. As a result, their affective organizational commitment may suffer. Moreover, we build on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) to argue that these two organizational cues pertaining to privacy and face time are interconnected and reinforce one another over time.

We contribute to the remote work, digitalized workplace, and organizational commitment literature by identifying two important mechanisms (i.e., ICT privacy concerns and psychological climate for face time) that hinder remote workers' affective attachment to organizations. By doing so, we shed light on the reasons why organizations and employees may not reap the benefits of remote work in the post-pandemic workplace. Moreover, we show that these mechanisms mutually reinforce each other over time, unveiling the vicious circle created by this accumulation of concerns. At a time when post-pandemic hybrid work arrangements are consolidating, we offer practical recommendations for managers to safeguard affective commitment.

## 2. Background and hypotheses development

Remote work is often portrayed as a flexible work arrangement that companies implement to offer employees greater latitude to manage their work-life interface (Hill et al., 2001). Flexible work policies are thought to have a beneficial impact on employees' work attitudes, including affective organizational commitment, because employees tend to interpret them as indications that their organization cares about their well-being (Casper & Harris, 2008). Organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002) indeed predicts that when employees feel supported and cared for, they tend to reciprocate the support and attention they receive through greater efforts and positive attitudes towards their organization, including affective organizational commitment. Thus, to the extent that employees interpret remote work as a sign that management is supportive of their needs, this work arrangement should foster affective organizational commitment (Hunton & Norman, 2010).

Yet, there are indications that remote work does not systematically lead to increased affective commitment. For example, studies have found that

remote work was associated with a number of consequences – for example perceived job and career threat, isolation, reduced interpersonal resources, difficulties to develop meaningful work relationships and poor organizational identification (Cañibano & Avgoustaki, 2022; Cooper & Kurland, 2002; Fay & Kline, 2012) - that are known to hinder affective commitment (Chang et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2020). Therefore, remote work cannot be assumed to have a positive effect on affective commitment, making it important to identify which specific factors may be detrimental. Given the fast-paced digitalization of the workplace, this paper explores the influence of ICT privacy concerns and psychological climate for face time as two emerging and underexplored antecedents of reduced commitment amongst remote workers.

### 2.1. ICT privacy concerns and commitment

ICT privacy is a growing concern for all employees (Farha et al., 2022). Specifically, the exponential increase of ICTs and employee monitoring technologies in the workplace is raising questions about how employees' personal information is recorded, analyzed, and exploited by organizations (Ravid et al., 2022). This is problematic because employees tend to respond negatively to feelings of privacy invasion (see Ravid et al., 2020 for a review).

Remote workers are particularly likely to worry about their privacy. They conduct a significant amount of their tasks from home and the boundaries between their personal and work lives have eroded, increasing the potential for digitalized work processes and supervision to feel invasive (Ravid et al., 2020). Videoconferencing and webcam monitoring open up a window into remote workers' personal lifestyles and interactions with family members, and the use of personal computers and devices for work entails the potential monitoring of workers' internet use for administrative, health and entertainment purposes (Hodder, 2020).

Privacy concerns have indeed been heightened during the pandemic and especially lockdowns, as homes and personal lifestyles became exposed to supervisors, peers, and customers (Vaziri et al., 2020). As is typical of function creep, that is the gradual extension of the scope of monitoring as afforded by technology (Ball, 2021), remote work monitoring is not only personally invasive but also socially invasive, for instance when children appear in the background of videoconferences or use the internet on a worker's device (Cousineau et al., 2022).

When employees perceive that ICT tools invade their privacy, they may interpret such intrusion into their personal space as the sign that their organization

does not trust them (Ball, 2021). In other words, employees' ICT privacy concerns reflect their perception that the organization uses technology to make sure that they are really doing their work. Such distrust indicates low support from the organization and should result in reduced affective commitment according to the organizational support theory (Rhodes & Eisenberger, 2002). We therefore hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 1:** Among high-intensity remote workers, there is a negative time-lagged relationship between ICT privacy concerns and organizational affective commitment.*

### 2.2. Psychological climate for face time and commitment

In the workplace, psychological climate refers to employees' individual perceptions of their work environment practices, policies and expectations (Parker et al., 2003). Climate perceptions have been shown to be significant predictors of organizational commitment (Carr et al., 2003). This is because, consistent with organizational support theory, positive climate perceptions reflect employees' interpretation that their organization adopts policies and practices that demonstrate support, hence leading them to reciprocate through commitment. For example, having a work-family supportive climate (Agarwala et al., 2020), or a benevolent ethical climate (Cullen et al., 2003) have been positively related with affective commitment. On the contrary, climates that are perceived as unsupportive, such as egoistic climates, have been negatively related with commitment (Cullen et al., 2003).

Psychological climate for face time reflects employees' perception that their work environment encourages physical presence in the office (Afota et al., 2022). For example, pay increases and promotions that seem to be based on the extent to which one is visible in the office (i.e., displays face time) contribute to shape such climate. A psychological climate for face time poses a virtually unsurmountable challenge for high-intensity remote workers, whose visibility in the office is limited (Elsbach et al., 2010). Thus, psychological climate for face time is likely to be interpreted as lack of organizational support for remote workers. Indeed, when visibility is seen as a requirement to succeed in the organization, those who are the most visible get better evaluations, swifter career progress, and increased rewards (Feldman et al., 2020). Conversely, invisible, or barely visible remote workers can suffer career penalties (Bourdeau et al., 2019). Research has documented that being aware that

there is a cost associated with the lack of face time leads remote workers to compensate by responding very fast to email, instant messaging and phone solicitations and making themselves visible online, which they experience as a strain (Cristea & Leonardi, 2019). Based on the above discussion, we argue that psychological climate for face time is likely to be perceived as a sign of lack of support by high-intensity remote workers and hence have a negative effect on their affective commitment. We thus hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 2:** Among high-intensity remote workers, there is a negative time-lagged relationship between psychological climate for face time and organizational affective commitment.*

### **2.3. The interconnection between ICT privacy concerns and psychological climate for face time**

Drawing on social information processing theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), we posit that, in the context of high-intensity remote work, ICT privacy concerns and psychological climate for face time are two social information cues that reinforce one another to convey a lack of organizational support for remote workers. Taken together, these cues contribute to reducing affective commitment to the organization both directly and indirectly.

Social information processing theory is rooted in the idea that individuals' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are shaped by social information cues from the environment (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). At work, individuals typically probe their environment in search of information that they interpret to make sense of their workplace. Furthermore, when a cue points to a specific organizational expectation (e.g., remote workers need to be seen working), other cues conveying the same message become more salient (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978).

Along these lines, we argue that ICT privacy concerns and psychological climate for face time are different cues that reinforce one another because they each direct workers' attention to the organization's distrust of remote workers. For instance, if workers experience privacy concerns, they may start inferring lack of trust from the organization. Their emerging perceptions of distrust may then influence how they interpret cues of a face time climate, making them more sensitive to even weak signals of subsequent privacy breach/face time climate.

On the one hand, a psychological climate for face time signals to employees that they need to be visible to be perceived as dedicated and performant. In these climates, employees typically perceive that their

organization monitors their physical presence on site to assess their contribution. Because high-intensity remote workers are mostly offsite, they are likely to infer that their organization relies on alternative monitoring indicators. Thus, they should be more likely to believe that their online presence is closely monitored (Adisa et al., 2021; Becker et al., 2021), which should raise ICT privacy concerns (Ravid et al., 2022; Tomczak & Behrend, 2019).

Moreover, in a psychological climate for face time, remote workers may feel pressured to be constantly visible to compensate for their lack of physical presence in the office (Afota et al., 2022; Cañibano et al. 2022). Such visibility in a personal space and potentially on personal devices where employees and members of their family may conduct personal internet searches, write personal messages, or upload personal photos, may be experienced as invasive because even if the organization does not have a software specifically directed at surveilling employees, the fact that work processes unfold online still enables companies to track and observe employee behaviors (Tomczak & Behrend, 2019). We therefore hypothesize:

***Hypothesis 3:** Among high-intensity remote workers, there is a positive time-lagged relationship from psychological climate for face time to ICT privacy concerns.*

On the other hand, ICT privacy concerns reflect employees' beliefs that their organization collects data that they consider personal or sensitive through ICT devices. Workers who have ICT privacy concerns will be particularly attentive to the way their organization monitors their work. In other words, monitoring systems can act as a social cue that directs workers' attention towards organizational expectations regarding the work that is performed remotely (Stanton & Julian, 2002).

Thus, the constant tracking of personal data and activities through the monitoring of presence and response times to emails, messages and other requests may lead employees to perceive that visibility (i.e., being seen working) is important to their organization. For instance, applications like Upwork take random camera shots several times per hour to monitor time spent in front of the computer. Others, like Sneek, compile a "wall of faces" for the team to see that is updated every one to five minutes. More generally, electronic monitoring conveys the message that being seen is important and that remote workers cannot be trusted to work as hard as they would in the office unless they are closely watched (Staples, 2014). The more concerned employees are about technology-

mediated monitoring, the more likely they are to develop the perception that their workplace values face time. We thus hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 4:** *Among high-intensity remote workers, there is a positive time-lagged relationship from ICT privacy concerns to psychological climate for face time.*

Building on the idea that these two social cues reinforce one another over time, we also posit that they mediate one another's relationship with commitment and thus hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 5:** *Among high-intensity remote workers, ICT privacy concerns mediate a negative time-lagged relationship between psychological climate for face time and organizational affective commitment.*

**Hypothesis 6:** *Among high-intensity remote workers, psychological climate for face time mediates a negative time-lagged relationship between ICT privacy concerns and organizational affective commitment.*

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Sample and procedures

Data for the current research came from a larger project aimed at understanding the experience of remote workers in terms of well-being (e.g., anxiety, isolation), performance (e.g., self-efficacy), and attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction). Participants were employees from a large multinational financial company working mainly in the US, Spain, and France. The organization's upper management provided us with a list of employees' emails. We sent prospective respondents a secured and individual link to an online questionnaire and informed them of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses.

While the larger research project involved four waves of data collection over a 6-months period, this study only uses the data of two waves, referred to as Time 1 and Time 2, because psychological climate for face time, affective organizational commitment, and ICT privacy concerns were measured on these two occasions. Time 1 occurred in January 2021 and Time 2 began 8 weeks later. We used an 8-week time lag to be able to observe changes in the study variables while limiting the risk that significant changes in the workers' environment (e.g., changes in remote work policies) would obscure the interpretation of the results. At both times, most invited participants were working remotely most of the workweek.

A total of 1065 respondents qualified as high-intensity remote workers at both Time 1 and Time 2. Response rate at Time 2 was 70%. Among them, more than half were working remotely full time at each measurement occasion (54.9% at Time 1 and 53.2% at Time 2).

Sixty percent of the respondents were women. Average age was 44.8 years ( $SD = 9.7$ ), and average organizational tenure was 10.3 years ( $SD = 9.1$ ). 73.8% were individual contributors while 26.2% had managerial responsibilities. About half of respondents worked in support functions (e.g., IT, communication, human resources; 48.5%), 21.5% in operations (e.g., risk management, trade processing), 14.1% in product development divisions, and 15.9% held client facing positions. 66% worked remotely only occasionally before the pandemic (1 day a week or less) while 7.1% were already high-intensity remote workers. 31.9% of respondents worked in the US, 25.3% worked in France, 24.3% worked in Spain. The rest (18.5%) worked in various locations, mostly in Europe (Belgium, Austria, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Sweden, etc.).

#### 3.2. Measures

We translated all measures into French and Spanish and back-translated them to English. Participants responded to each item on a five-point agreement Likert scale.

*ICT privacy concerns* were measured using the two items ( $\alpha = .83$  at Time 1 and  $\alpha = .86$  at Time 2) of the privacy dimension in Nimrod's (2018) technostress scale ("*I feel uncomfortable that my use of these technologies can be easily monitored*"). In the instructions, technologies were referred to as "*technological tools you use to perform your job (for example, video conferencing, instant messaging or collaborative work tools...)*".

*Psychological climate for face time* was measured with three items ( $\alpha = .77$  at both Time 1 and Time 2) developed by Hoang et al. (2008) to assess corporate climate for telecommuting. We used the three items of Hoang et al.'s measure that pertain to perceptions of an organizational climate that values face time over remote work (e.g., "*The culture of [Organization name] is still predominantly office-centric and thus being a remote worker is a disadvantage.*")

*Affective organizational commitment* was assessed with the three items directed at the organization ( $\alpha = .85$  at Time 1 and  $\alpha = .82$  at Time 2) from the short form of the Workplace Affective Commitment Multidimensional Questionnaire (WACMQ-S; Perreira et al., 2018). A sample item is "*[Organization name] means a lot to me.*".

*Control variables.* All our analyses included controls for the autoregressive effects of the predicted variables. Thus, controlling for stable background variables (e.g., demographics, job level, tenure) was not necessary as their effects are assumed to be constant over short periods of time (Zapf et al., 1996).

To assess the nature of missing data, we conducted an attrition analysis (Goodman & Blum, 1996). We ran a logistical regression analysis in which the probability of high-intensity remote workers to remain in the study at Time 2 was predicted by the study variables at Time 1. The logistic regression was significant,  $\chi^2(3) = 11.19, p = .01$ . Respondents did not differ on psychological climate for face time, nor on affective organizational commitment. However, those with higher privacy concerns were more likely to drop out of the study at Time 2 ( $b = -.14; SE = 0.06; p < .05$ ). This result may suggest that privacy concerns have risen between the two waves of the study. Since employees with higher concerns dropped out more than the others, our results regarding outcomes of privacy concerns are conservative. To reduce the bias associated with non-random attrition, we performed all subsequent analyses using maximum likelihood (ML) procedure. This estimation approach uses all the observed data to produce estimates and is a reliable technique to handle missing data (Enders, 2010).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Preliminary analyses

Bivariate correlations among the study variables and descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1. Prior to testing our hypotheses, we conducted measurement invariance analyses to ensure that the structures of ICT privacy concerns, psychological climate for face time and affective organizational commitment were equivalent between Time 1 and Time 2. Using *Mplus* 8.6, we ran a series of models separately for each construct in which equality constraints were sequentially added (i.e., factor structure, factor loadings, items intercepts, items residuals).

**Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations for the study variables**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. ICT privacy concerns (T1)	1.95	1.00	-				
2. ICT privacy concerns (T2)	2.04	1.10	.59**	-			
3. Psychological climate for face time (T1)	2.28	0.94	.21**	.23**	-		
4. Psychological climate for face time (T2)	2.27	0.93	.22**	.27*	.70**	-	
5. Affective organizational climate (T1)	4.06	0.82	-.25**	-.26**	.41**	.35**	-
6. Affective organizational climate (T2)	4.03	0.82	-.26**	-.26**	.39**	.43**	.80**

Note. \* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\* =  $p < .001$

Following recommendations for invariance testing (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002), we compared nested models based on the  $\Delta$  Comparative fit index (CFI) criteria (i.e., a difference  $< .01$  indicating a non-significant change in fit). Strict invariance (i.e., equality of loadings, intercepts, and residuals) was supported for the three study variables (ICT privacy concerns:  $\chi^2[3] = 0.92, CFI = 1.00$ , Tucker–Lewis index (TLI) = 1.00, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .00; psychological climate for face time:  $\chi^2[12] = 23.03, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .03$ ; affective organizational commitment:  $\chi^2[12] = 29.65, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .04$ ). Thus, we retained these more parsimonious models for the rest of our analyses.

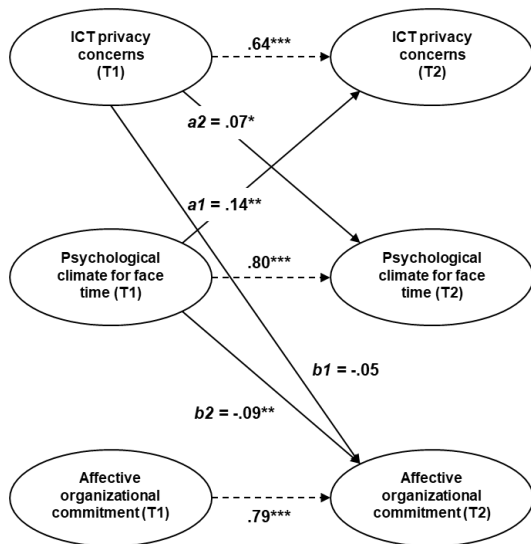
We conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses on Time 1 data to verify the distinctiveness of the study variables. ICT privacy concerns, psychological climate for face time, and affective organizational commitment were defined by their respective items. Using chi-square difference tests, we compared this three-factors baseline model against alternative nested models combining the study items into two-factors or single-factor models. Our proposed three-factors model provided good fit to the data ( $\chi^2[17] = 28.60, CFI = .99, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .02$ ) and outperformed all other combinations.

### 4.2. Hypotheses testing

We tested the hypotheses simultaneously using structural equation modelling (SEM) to model latent variables with *Mplus* 8.6. Because the measures included in this study were captured in only two of the data collection waves, we used a *half-longitudinal design* (as opposed to a *full longitudinal* approach that requires three data points; Cole & Maxwell, 2003) to test the hypothesized indirect effects. With this approach, mediation path *a* is obtained by regressing the independent variable at Time 1 on the mediator at Time 2, controlling for the autoregressive effect of the mediator at Time 1. Mediation path *b* is concomitantly obtained by regressing the mediator at Time 1 on the dependent variable at Time 2, controlling for the autoregressive effect of the mediator at Time 1. Thus, the half-longitudinal design allows to control for prior levels of the dependent variables, providing more rigorous evidence of causality than cross-sectional data analyses (Cole & Maxwell, 2003).

We specified a model that contained (1) the hypothesized cross-lagged effects of ICT privacy concerns at Time 1 on psychological climate for time at Time 2 and of psychological climate for face time at Time 1 on ICT privacy concerns at Time 2 (2) the hypothesized main effects of ICT privacy concerns at

Time 1 and of psychological climate for face time at Time 1 on affective organizational commitment at Time 2 and (3) the autoregressive paths from each variable at Time 1 to the same variable at Time 2. In addition, we specified correlations between predictors at Time 1 and residuals of endogenous variables at Time 2. This model (see Figure 1) yielded an excellent fit to the data ( $\chi^2[101] = 151.68$ , CFI = .99, TLI = .99, RMSEA = .02; Hu & Bentler, 1999).



**Figure 1. Half-longitudinal mediation model**

Note: Standardized coefficients are reported.

Path  $a1*b1$  is the indirect effect of psychological climate for face time on affective organizational commitment through ICT privacy concerns; path  $a2*b2$  is the indirect effect of ICT privacy concerns on affective organizational commitment through psychological climate for face time.

Correlations between predictors and residuals of predicted variables are omitted but were estimated.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

We found marginal support for hypothesis 1 which predicted a negative association between ICT privacy concerns and affective organizational commitment ( $b = -.05$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p = .06$ ). Psychological climate for face time was negatively related to affective organizational commitment ( $b = -.09$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p = .003$ ), lending support for hypothesis 2. In support of the cross-lagged reciprocal effects predicted in hypotheses 3 and 4, ICT privacy concerns at Time 1 was positively related to psychological climate for face time at Time 2 ( $b = .07$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p = .03$ ) and psychological climate for face time at Time 1 was positively related to ICT privacy concerns at Time 2 ( $b = .14$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $p = .001$ ).

We probed the indirect negative effects of psychological climate for face time on affective organizational commitment through ICT privacy concerns (hypothesis 5) and of ICT privacy concerns on affective organizational commitment through psychological climate for face time (hypothesis 6) using the maximum likelihood bootstrapping procedures recommended by MacKinnon et al. (2004). Bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) were generated based on 5,000 resamples of the data. The indirect effect of ICT privacy concerns on affective organizational commitment through psychological climate for face time was marginally significant ( $b = -.007$ , 90% CI =  $[-.017, -.001]$ ). The indirect effect of psychological climate for face time on affective organizational commitment via ICT privacy concerns was negative and significant ( $b = -.006$ , 95% CI =  $[-.014, -.001]$ ). Thus, hypothesis 5 was marginally supported and hypothesis 6 was supported.

## 5. Discussion

As remote work has become institutionalized in the “new normal” digitalized workplace (Herath & Herath, 2020), questions remain about which organizational practices facilitate or hinder its success. In particular, growing concerns have emerged regarding the loss of privacy associated with extensive ICT use (Ravid et al., 2020) and the consequences of many organizations’ persisting practices that encourage and reward physical presence in the office (Afota et al., 2022). Using a two-wave design in a sample of 1,065 high-intensity remote workers, the present research examined the consequences of high-intensity remote workers’ (1) ICT privacy concerns and (2) perceptions that their organization values face time in the office (i.e., psychological climate for face time) on their affective commitment to the organization, a key indicator of employees’ work experience.

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

Our study enriches the digitalized workplace, remote work, and organizational commitment literature in several ways. We identify antecedents of commitment that are highly relevant to remote work situations. First, we found that a psychological climate for face time was associated with a decrease in affective organizational commitment eight weeks later. Consistent with organizational support theory (Eisenberger et al. 1986), this finding suggests that remote workers who perceive that their organization keeps valuing and rewarding physical presence in the office despite mandates to work remotely tend to

interpret this psychological climate for face time as a lack of support from the organization and thus retaliate in the form of lower affective organizational commitment. This perspective complements research that showed that relational issues (e.g., isolation, infrequent communication) and loss of self-efficacy tend to dampen remote workers' affective commitment (Wang et al., 2020).

Second, we found that ICT privacy concerns marginally predicted lower affective organizational commitment. This finding is in line with our theorizing that ICT privacy concerns reflect workers' perception that they are being monitored, hence not trustworthy. Thus, organizations viewed by workers as invading their privacy through ICT devices seem to convey the message that they do not support remote workers. In response to this lack of support, remote workers display lower affective commitment to their organization. The relationship between ICT privacy concerns and affective organizational commitment was only marginally significant. While replications are needed to endorse this finding, the stronger attrition we observed among respondents with higher ICT privacy concerns may have resulted in a weaker relationship between ICT privacy concerns and affective organizational commitment.

Third, in line with the tenet of social processing information theory (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) that available social cues increase the salience of corroborating information, psychological climate for face time and ICT privacy concerns were reciprocally related. Psychological climate for face time predicted higher ICT privacy concerns and ICT privacy concerns contributed to perceptions of a climate for face time. This finding extends the literature on technostress and in particular techno-invasion (Nimrod, 2018) by identifying the mutually reinforcing effect between two types of concerns: when work is digitalized and happens in a space and/or on devices that are also used for personal purposes (Vaziri et al., 2020), privacy concerns encompass a larger share of workers' personal lives and are heightened by employers' expectations of visibility. In turn, employers' visibility expectations aggravate privacy concerns. By identifying ICT privacy concerns as an antecedent to psychological climate for face time, we add to the understanding of the emergence of such climate perceptions and emphasize the importance for organizational studies to account for employees' privacy attitudes.

## 5.2. Practical implications

Our findings suggest important avenues for action. We show that employees' perceptions that their

privacy is invaded negatively impact their commitment to the organization. However, sales of employee electronic monitoring software, aka "bossware" (e.g., front-facing cameras, tracking of keylogging, mouse movement, browser activity) have skyrocketed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Cousineau et al., 2022). Given that electronic monitoring has no positive effect on worker performance (Ravid et al., 2022), organizations should not only refrain from using employee surveillance technologies but also explicitly communicate that they are *not* tracking remote workers' activities. We also show that implementing high intensity remote work while maintaining a climate that values facetime, has negative consequences. Organizations that maintain high-intensity remote work in the post pandemic era, will need to ensure the rest of their policies signal a supportive climate towards remote workers. More generally, this research reinforces the importance to nurture trust towards remote workers. For instance, this can be done by adopting rewards and advancement policies that treat office and remote workers equitably.

## 5.3. Limitations and future research

While our two-wave design allowed us to test our hypotheses in a more robust way (i.e., controlling for baseline levels of predicted variables and applying a temporal separation of predictors and outcomes) than a cross-sectional design would have permitted, we acknowledge that a three-wave data would have been ideal to test our mediational model (Cole & Maxwell, 2003). We also measured psychological climate for face time at the individual level: though this choice is aligned with the individual-level construct of psychological climate (Parker et al., 2003), future research may examine if shared climate perceptions explain additional variance in affective organizational commitment. Further investigations may also examine potential moderators in the relationships we examined. For example, managerial support, employee work-life segmentation preferences, and employees' personality traits and values may be of particular interest. Additionally, researchers may examine whether country context (e.g., US vs EU) moderates our findings, as the legislation on employee surveillance is generally more protective in Europe than in the US (Aloisi & De Stefano, 2022).

## 6. Conclusion

In the context of the digitalization of work, this study sheds light on two mutually reinforcing factors



– psychological climate for face time and ICT privacy concerns – that contribute to dampen high-intensity remote workers’ affective organizational commitment to their organization. We hope that this research will encourage future researchers from both the information systems and organizational studies fields to further explore the determinants of remote workers’ experiences.

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