
A STUDY ON WORKPLACE STRESS AND BURNOUT IN THE DIGITAL ERA AND ROLE OF HR IN EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

The rapid digitalization of workplaces has transformed organizational functioning, increasing efficiency and flexibility. However, it has also intensified workplace stress and burnout among employees due to constant connectivity, workload pressure, and work-life imbalance. This study examines the relationship between digital workplace stress and employee burnout and evaluates the effectiveness of HR interventions in improving employee well-being. Data were collected from 75 respondents across multiple sectors using a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as percentage analysis, chi-square test, correlation, and regression analysis were applied. The findings reveal that digital stress significantly contributes to burnout, while HR interventions such as flexible work policies and wellness programs play a crucial role in reducing stress and improving job satisfaction.

KEYWORDS: Digital Stress, Burnout, HR Interventions, Employee Well-being, Work-Life Balance.

1. INTRODUCTION

The digital era has significantly reshaped modern workplaces by integrating technologies such as virtual communication tools, remote work platforms, and digital monitoring systems. While these advancements improve productivity, they also create challenges such as technostress, continuous connectivity, and blurred work-life boundaries.

Employees are increasingly expected to remain available beyond working hours, manage multiple digital platforms, and handle high workloads. These factors contribute to **workplace**

stress, which, when prolonged, leads to **burnout**, characterized by emotional exhaustion, reduced productivity, and disengagement.

Human Resource (HR) departments play a critical role in addressing these issues through stress management programs, flexible work arrangements, and employee well-being initiatives.

2. Research Objectives

1. To analyze the level of workplace stress in the digital era
2. To identify causes of stress such as workload and digital pressure
3. To examine the relationship between stress and burnout
4. To evaluate the role of HR interventions in reducing stress
5. To assess the impact of HR initiatives on job satisfaction

3. Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

A review of literature provides the theoretical and empirical base for understanding workplace stress and burnout in the digital era. With the rapid growth of digital technologies, remote work systems, and continuous connectivity, the nature of work has significantly changed. While digitalization has improved flexibility and productivity, it has also increased workload, pressure, and work-life imbalance.

Researchers have highlighted that employees today face higher levels of stress due to constant communication, multitasking, and technological demands. Therefore, Human Resource (HR) management plays a crucial role in designing strategies to support employee well-being and reduce burnout. This chapter reviews major theories and empirical studies related to workplace stress, burnout, and HR interventions.

Brod (1984) coined the term “technostress,” referring to stress caused by the inability to cope with new technologies. This concept became increasingly relevant with the advancement of digital workplaces.

Hobfoll (1989) proposed the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, stating that stress occurs when individuals lose or are unable to maintain valuable resources such as time, energy, and social support. This theory is highly relevant in understanding stress in digitally demanding environments.

Demerouti et al. (2001) developed the Job Demand-Resources (JD-R) Theory, which explains that stress and burnout arise when job demands exceed available resources. The model

highlights the role of organizational support in balancing demands and improving employee well-being.

Grawitch et al. (2006) found that workplace wellness programs, including stress management and health initiatives, significantly improve employee well-being and reduce absenteeism, thereby enhancing organizational productivity.

Krekel et al. (2019) found that organizations investing in employee well-being initiatives experience higher productivity, stronger employee engagement, and improved retention rates.

World Health Organization (2019) officially recognized burnout as an occupational phenomenon resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.

Molino et al. (2020) reported that remote work and increased reliance on digital tools during the COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased technostress and emotional exhaustion among employees.

Carnevale and Hatak (2020) emphasized that HR departments have become more responsible for addressing employee mental health issues in digitally transformed workplaces.

Oakman et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of ergonomic support, effective communication, and psychological safety in managing stress among remote workers.

Kniffin et al. (2021) found that remote working conditions often lead to social isolation, mental fatigue, and blurred boundaries between work and personal life.

Wang et al. (2021) concluded that HR support, virtual communication, and mental wellness initiatives are essential for maintaining employee well-being in digital work environments.

Sivathanu and Pillai (2021) found that flexible working arrangements and digital HR practices positively influence employee satisfaction and reduce workplace stress.

Chaudhuri and Ghosh (2022) highlighted that employees in Indian organizations face increased stress due to workload pressure, digital demands, and high performance expectations.

Sharma and Kapoor (2023) reported that Indian companies are increasingly adopting employee wellness programs, mental health counseling, and flexible work policies to manage stress and burnout.

Patel and Verma (2025) concluded that organizations investing in employee well-being initiatives achieve better engagement, lower turnover, and improved overall organizational performance.

3.2 Research Gaps

1. Limited empirical studies based on primary data (survey-based research) in the area of workplace stress and burnout.
2. Limited studies specifically focus on workplace stress in the digital work environment, as most research is based on traditional settings.
3. Insufficient research on the impact of continuous digital connectivity on employees' work-life balance.
4. Few studies analyze the combined effect of digital stress and HR practices on employee well-being and productivity.
5. Lack of research on employee perceptions regarding HR support for mental well-being, especially in Indian organizations.
6. Limited focus on practical and effective HR interventions to manage stress and burnout.
7. Existing studies mainly focus on large organizations, while small and medium enterprises (SMEs) remain underexplored.

4. Research Methodology

- **Research Design:** Descriptive and Analytical
- **Data Type:** Primary and Secondary
- **Sample Size:** 75 respondents
- **Sampling Technique:** Convenience Sampling
- **Statistical Tools Used:**
 - Percentage Analysis
 - Chi-square Test
 - Correlation Analysis
 - Regression Analysis

5. Data Analysis and Interpretation

5.1 Demographic Analysis

- Majority respondents: **25–35 years (45.3%)**
- Female respondents slightly higher (57.3%)
- Most respondents: **Postgraduates (61.3%)**
- Dominant sectors: **Education, IT, Services**

Interpretation:

The study mainly represents young, educated professionals working in digitally intensive environments.

5.2 Digital Stress Analysis

- 58.6% agree digital tools create stress
- 68% receive work messages after working hours
- Majority face difficulty disconnecting

Interpretation:

Digital connectivity is a major contributor to workplace stress and work-life imbalance.

5.3 Burnout Analysis

- 61% experience emotional exhaustion
- 68% feel mentally drained after work
- Work-life balance negatively affected

Interpretation:

Burnout is significantly prevalent due to continuous digital engagement and workload pressure.

5.4 HR Interventions Analysis

- Flexible policies supported by majority
- Wellness programs moderately effective
- HR initiatives improve job satisfaction

Interpretation:

HR interventions are effective but require strengthening and wider implementation.

5. Correlation Analysis

Variables	Digital Stress	Burnout	HR Interventions
Digital Stress	1.00	0.72	-0.45
Burnout	0.72	1.00	-0.52
HR Interventions	-0.45	-0.52	1.00

Interpretation:

- Strong positive correlation between **stress and burnout**
- Negative correlation between **HR interventions and stress/burnout**

6. Regression Analysis

Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²
0.76	0.58	0.56

Regression Coefficients

Variable	Beta	t-value	Significance
Digital Stress	0.68	8.21	0.000
HR Interventions	-0.41	-5.12	0.001

Interpretation:

- Digital stress significantly increases burnout
- HR interventions significantly reduce burnout

7. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis 1

- H₀: No relationship between stress and burnout
- Result: **Rejected (p < 0.05)**
- Conclusion: Significant relationship exists

Hypothesis 2

- H₀: HR interventions do not reduce stress
- Result: **Rejected (p < 0.05)**
- Conclusion: HR interventions are effective

Hypothesis 3

- H₀: No relationship between well-being and job satisfaction
- Result: **Rejected (p < 0.05)**
- Conclusion: Significant relationship exists

8. Key Findings

1. High Level of Workplace Stress in Digital Environment

The study reveals that a majority of employees experience moderate to high levels of stress due to continuous connectivity, virtual meetings, and digital workload.

2. Digital Workplace Stress Significantly Leads to Burnout

The Chi-square test confirms that digital stress has a significant impact on employee burnout. Factors such as multitasking, information overload, and work pressure contribute to emotional exhaustion.

3. Work-Life Imbalance is a Major Cause of Stress

Employees reported difficulty in maintaining work-life balance due to remote work, flexible timings, and constant availability expectations.

4. HR Interventions Help Reduce Stress and Burnout

HR practices such as flexible working hours, counseling, wellness programs, and employee engagement activities significantly reduce stress levels.

5. Well-being Initiatives Improve Job Satisfaction

Employees who receive support through HR well-being initiatives show higher job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement.

6. Digital Overload and Continuous Connectivity are Key Stressors

Frequent emails, notifications, and virtual meetings increase mental fatigue and reduce productivity.

7. Supportive Management Reduces Stress Levels

Employees with supportive leadership and communication experience lower stress and better work performance.

8. Need for Stronger HR Policies for Mental Health

The study highlights the need for more structured and consistent HR policies focused on mental health and employee well-being.

9. Employees Prefer Flexible and Balanced Work Environment

Respondents strongly favor flexible work arrangements and balanced workload distribution for better well-being.

9. CONCLUSION

The present study examined the impact of digital workplace stress on employee burnout and evaluated the role of HR interventions in managing stress and improving employee well-being.

The findings clearly indicate that digital transformation, while improving efficiency, has significantly increased employee stress due to workload pressure, constant connectivity, and work-life imbalance. The study confirms that workplace stress has a direct and significant impact on employee burnout.

However, HR interventions play a crucial role in reducing stress and enhancing employee well-being. Practices such as flexible work policies, counseling, wellness programs, and employee engagement initiatives help in improving job satisfaction and reducing burnout.

The study concludes that organizations must adopt a proactive and employee-centric approach by integrating HR strategies with digital work environments. A balanced approach combining productivity and employee well-being is essential for long-term organizational success.

10. Recommendations

1. Promote Work-Life Balance

Organizations should implement clear policies to ensure boundaries between work and personal life.

2. Strengthen HR Wellness Programs

Regular mental health counseling, stress management workshops, and wellness initiatives should be introduced.

3. Implement Flexible Work Policies

Flexible working hours and hybrid work models should be encouraged to reduce stress.

4. Manage Digital Workload

Organizations should limit excessive meetings, emails, and digital interruptions to reduce overload.

5. Enhance Communication and Support

Managers should maintain open communication and provide emotional support to employees.

6. Provide Stress Management Training

Employees should be trained in time management, coping strategies, and digital discipline.

7. Recognize and Reward Employees

Appreciation and recognition systems should be strengthened to improve motivation and morale.

Managerial Implications

Strategic HR Role

HR managers must play a proactive role in designing policies that balance productivity with employee well-being.

Improved Employee Productivity

Reducing stress and burnout leads to higher efficiency, engagement, and performance.

Employee-Centric Work Culture

Organizations should create a supportive and healthy work environment to retain talent.

Digital Work Management

Managers must ensure effective use of digital tools without overburdening employees.

11. Implications

11.1 Managerial Implications

- HR policies have a direct impact on employee productivity and performance.
- Well-being initiatives (like counseling, flexible hours) improve employee engagement and retention.
- Managers must control digital workload by limiting excessive meetings and after-work communication.

11.2 Theoretical Implications

- Supports **JD-R Theory**: High job demands increase stress, while HR support reduces it.
- Supports **Burnout Theory**: Continuous stress leads to emotional exhaustion and low performance.
- Identifies **digital stress (technostress)** as an important modern factor affecting employees.

11.3 Practical Implications

- Organizations should integrate employee well-being into core HR strategy.
- Digital workload and constant connectivity must be managed proactively.
- Promote work-life balance through flexible policies and clear boundaries.
- Improve awareness and communication of HR wellness programs.

12. LIMITATIONS

- **Limited Sample Size**: The number of respondents included in the study is relatively small, which may not fully represent the entire population.
- **Geographical Limitation**: The study is restricted to a specific region, so the findings may not be applicable to other cities, states, or countries.
- **Time Constraint**: The research was conducted within a limited time period, which restricted detailed analysis and data collection.

- **Use of Convenience Sampling:** The sampling method used may lead to bias, as respondents were selected based on ease of access rather than random selection.
- **Self-Reported Data:** The study is based on responses given by participants, which may be influenced by personal opinions, perceptions, or bias.
- **Limited Variables Considered:** The study mainly focuses on workplace stress, burnout, and HR role, while other factors like personality traits, leadership style, and organizational structure are not deeply analyzed.
- **Dynamic Nature of Technology:** Digital tools and work environments are constantly evolving, so the findings may become less relevant over time.

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