

The Relationship Between Digital Overload and Well-Being Among IT Professionals: A Systematic Review and Future Direction

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Abstract

The increased digital workload has significantly transformed the nature of employment in the information technology (IT) sector, hence intensifying concerns regarding employee well-being. Excessive digital expectations, often termed digital overload, pertain to IT professionals who encounter constant connectivity, an influx of information, and rapid technological changes. Although scholarly interest in this subject has intensified, existing studies on digital overload and well-being remain fragmented across disciplines and paradigms. The proposed study addresses this gap by conducting a comprehensive literature review that will synthesize available empirical evidence concerning the relationship between digital overload and well-being among IT professionals. In accordance with the PRISMA principles, a systematic search of extensive academic databases identified 47 peer-reviewed empirical articles for inclusion. The findings consistently indicate a detrimental impact of digital overload on psychological, occupational, and work-life well-being, with stress, burnout, and emotional weariness being the most often documented consequences. This paper proposes a comprehensive framework that positions digital overload as a critical job requirement in digitally intensive environments via thematic synthesis. This research, grounded in the synthesis of disparate studies, aims to expand theoretical understanding in the domains of digital labor and employee well-being, while offering pragmatic advice for structuring IT work processes in a sustainable and health-conscious manner. **Keywords:** Digital overload, IT professionals, Employee well-being, Job demands-resources, Work-life Balance, Digital work

1. Introduction

The rapid digitalization of work has fundamentally transformed the nature of employment in the information technology (IT) sector. The environment in which IT professionals operate is defined by constant connectivity, an abundance of digital devices, a substantial volume of information, and escalating performance pressure. While digital technologies enhance job efficiency and flexibility, they concurrently elevate work pressure, resulting in a condition referred to as digital overload (Barber & Santuzzi, 2015). The state of digital overload denotes a condition in which individuals experience an overwhelming influx of digital demands, rendering them unable of managing these demands efficiently within their cognitive, emotional, or temporal capacities. Digital overload assumes a significant role in the IT sector due to the continual system updates, multitasking demands, frequent disruptions, virtual

collaboration, and the pervasive culture of perpetual connectivity. These circumstances exacerbate the delineation between work and personal life, significantly increase cognitive strain, and make IT professionals particularly susceptible to adverse effects on their well-being. As organizations increasingly rely on digital infrastructure, there is a managerial and societal imperative to comprehend the effects of digital overload on employee well-being (Zhang et al. 2025).

Employee well-being is a multifaceted construct encompassing psychological, emotional, physical, and occupational dimensions. Prior research linked compromised well-being to outcomes like burnout, emotional weariness, stress, low job satisfaction, and declining performance. In highly digitized occupations, such as those within the IT sector, these outcomes can adversely affect both individual employees and the organization's viability, resulting in elevated turnover, absenteeism, and diminished innovation potential (Bloomberg, 20218). Consequently, well-being as a digital work phenomenon has emerged as a prominent area of research within the fields of information systems, organizational psychology, and human resource management literature. Despite the growing academic emphasis on digital overload and well-being, the research remains fragmented. Studies exhibit significant heterogeneity in the conceptualization of digital overload, including related and overlapping categories such as information overload, technostress, communication overload, and technology-induced stress. The operationalization of well-being outcomes differs between general psychological well-being and more particular constructs such as burnout or work engagement. Moreover, empirical research is dispersed over several domains, methodologies, and techniques, hence hindering the progression of knowledge.

Nonetheless, there exists a notable deficiency of systematic literature evidence about digital overload in professional environments, particularly among IT specialists (Calderon-Monge and Ribeiro-Soriano, 2023). The lack of synthesis signifies a significant vacuum in the research, given that IT professionals are pivotal in digital economy. A comprehensive literature review is essential to consolidate prior findings, delineate conceptual boundaries, and identify existing trends, processes, and research gaps. This project will critically assess and synthesize empirical evidence about the relationship between digital overload and well-being among IT professionals. The review specifically seeks to (a) ascertain the conceptualization and measurement of digital overload within IT-related literature, (b) examine the well-being implications of digital overload, and (c) explore the mediating and moderating factors that influence this relationship. The review synthesizes prior research, contributing to the theoretical framework regarding digital work and well-being, while providing practical recommendations for organizations aiming to foster sustainable and healthy IT work environments.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Digitization in the IT Workplace

Digital overload denotes a condition in which personnel encounter an excessive number of digital demands that exceed their capacity to manage information and address technologically oriented duties. In the IT sector, digital overload is typically caused by continual exposure to digital systems, an abundance of information, frequent digital interruptions, rapid technological advancements, and the necessity for constant access. The conceptualization of digital overload in previous studies is founded on several related categories, including information overload,

communication overload, cognitive overload, and technology overload. These constructions differ in emphasis, although they nonetheless encapsulate the notion of escalating digital labor demands that characterize contemporary IT employment (Höyng and Lau, 2023). The digital overload uniquely impacts IT professionals because to the complexity and rapidity of their tasks, which often require multitasking across various platforms, real-time system troubleshooting, and the imperative to maintain current technical expertise. The widespread use of collaborative work technologies and remote job contracts exacerbates the excessive nature of digital stress (Bakker and Demerout, 2017), since they eliminate the boundaries between work and personal contexts. Consequently, digital overload has emerged as a characteristic feature of IT work environments.

2.2.1 Conceptualizing Employee Well-Being

Occupational well-being, psychological well-being, emotional well-being, and physical well-being are all components that make up the concept of employee well-being. Stress, concern, emotional exhaustion, and burnout are common behaviors that are indicative of psychological well-being. On the other hand, work-related well-being refers to factors such as job satisfaction, engagement, and a healthy balance between work and personal life. There is a clear correlation between the well-being of personnel in the information technology industry and their capacity to handle rising digital demand while maintaining long-term success. According to Tang and Vandenberghe (2021), empirical research consistently links a decrease in well-being with a decline in individual and organizational performance, decreased productivity, inefficient decision-making, plans to leave, and absence due to health-related issues. It is well acknowledged that the safeguarding of employee well-being is an essential component of sustained organizational performance. This is due to the strategic importance of information technology professionals.

2.3 Theoretical viewpoints that connect Digital Overload and Well-Being

A variety of conceptual frameworks have been utilized in order to highlight the connection between excessive usage of digital technology and overall well-being. A paradigm known as the Job Demands Resources (JD-R) model is a conceptualization of digital overload as a job demand that requires employees to use their cognitive and emotional resources, which can result in strain and a decrease in well-being in the event that there is an imbalance with job resources. Similarly, the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory proposes that individuals' prized resources are depleted as a result of the ongoing demands of digital life, which in turn leads to stress and negative impacts on well-being. The technostress concept provides additional justification for the impact that technological stress elements, such as complexity, overload, and constant connectivity, have on the mental state of individuals. In addition, the theory of boundaries places an emphasis on the deterioration of work-life boundaries brought about by digital technologies, which leads to an increase in role conflict and a detrimental impact on well-being (Ashforth et al., 2000). These perspectives, when taken together, provide a strong theoretical foundation for illuminating the influence that digital overload has on the well-being of IT workers, as well as a strong argument for why a comprehensive synthesis of the empirical data that is now available ought to be carried out.

3. Methodology

The methodology that was utilized in this investigation was a systematic literature review (SLR), which was used to examine empirical studies that were carried out to evaluate the relationship between digital overload and well-being among IT professionals. For the purpose of facilitating transparency, rigor, and replicability in accordance with the review requirements, this was accomplished through the use of a systematic approach. The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the recommendations provided by the Preferred Reporting Items of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines.

3.1 Review Design and Protocol

The objective of this study is to evaluate and synthesize empirical research that has been subjected to peer review and focuses on the topic of the relationship between digital overload and employee well-being in the information technology industry. A review protocol was established in advance in order to specify the scope of the research, the databases, the search method, the inclusion criteria, and the procedures for data extraction. In order to minimize the effects of selection bias and maintain methodological coherence throughout the whole review process, this methodology served as a guide.

3.2 Data Sources

The huge academic databases that are well-versed in the fields of information systems, management, and psychology studies were extensively searched for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive literature review. Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and IEEE Xplore were the names of these databases. We made use of the several databases in order to guarantee that the study that was conducted across disciplines about digital work and well-being was thoroughly covered.

3.3 Search Strategy

In order to do the search, a mix of terms that were connected with digital overload, well-being, and IT experts were used. Boolean operators were utilized in order to refine and broaden the scope of the search that was being conducted. An assortment of phrases, including versions of digital overload and information overload, technostress, technology overload, well-being, burnout, and stress, as well as IT experts, were searched for the purpose of conducting keyword searches. In order to conduct the searches, the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the articles were examined. In order to provide an accurate representation of the current state of digital work, the evaluation was formed on the basis of publications that were published during a particular time period.

The criteria used to include and exclude were as follows:

The relevant and quality inclusion and exclusion criteria were established and the studies are incorporated which includes:

- a) Peer-reviewed journal articles,
- b) Empirical findings reported,
- c) Digital overload or relatively similar constructs,
- d) Targeted IT-oriented professionals or work situations that were IT-intensive.
- e) Evaluated at least one of the employee well-being dimensions.

Research papers that were conceptual papers, conference papers, dissertations, book chapters and non-English papers were excluded. Articles that were about general technology application without mentioning of overload, or well-being outcomes were also avoided.

3.5 Study Selection Process

The selection of the study was carried out in a process that consisted of four stages: identification, screening, eligibility evaluation, and inclusion. Before anything else, each and every record that was retrieved from the databases was imported into the reference management program, and duplicate records were removed from the database. The titles and abstracts were then screened to establish whether or not they were relevant in accordance with the inclusion criteria. As part of the verification process for eligibility, the remaining articles were examined in their entirety. Using appropriate consideration, the ambiguous concerns that were present in the selection process were removed in order to guarantee that the review objectives were accomplished.

3.6 Data Extraction and Coding

In order to facilitate the collection of relevant information from each of the studies that were incorporated into the study, a data extraction form that utilized structured form was developed. The following types of data were evaluated and analyzed: the publishing information, the context of the research, the sample characteristics, the research design, the theoretical backdrop, the conceptualization of digital overload, well-being measurements, and the most important findings. A coding system was applied to the data that was gathered in order to facilitate the comparison and synthesis of data from many investigations. The identification of recurrent patterns, relationships, and the categorization of topics was made easier through the process of coding.

3.7 Quality Assessment

Using well-known criteria that are utilized in systematic reviews, a quality evaluation was carried out in order to ascertain the level of methodological rigour that was present in the papers that were included. Some of these criteria included the clarity of the research objectives, the appropriateness of the research design, the transparency of the measurement instruments, and the robustness of the data analysis. It was decided to keep the studies that met the minimum quality standards in order to guarantee the dependability of the findings that were synthesised.

3.8 Data Synthesis

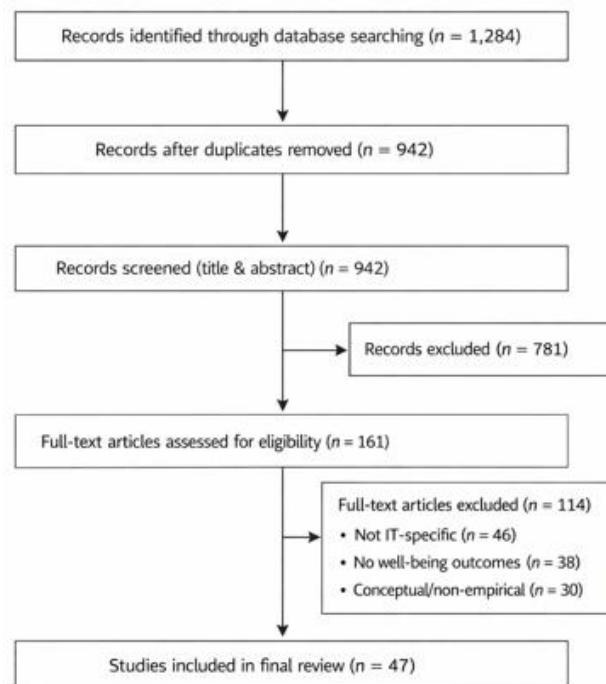
A qualitative thematic synthesis approach was utilized because of the variability of the numerous research designs and the ways in which the outcomes were measured. This method made it possible to combine the findings obtained from a variety of methodological approaches and theoretical perspectives. Data that had been coded were contrasted and modified in order to establish themes, which ultimately resulted in a systematic portrayal of the influence that digital overload has on the well-being of IT professionals.

4. Results

4.1 PRISMA Study Selection Process

The comprehensive search that was carried out in the databases yielded a total of 1,284 records as a consequence of the investigation. Following the removal of duplicates, there were 942 items that were not duplicated that were left to be put through the screening process. Through the use of title and abstract screening, 781 records that did not meet the inclusion criteria were eliminated from consideration. On the basis of the eligibility criterion, each of the 161 articles was examined, and 114 of them were disqualified because they did not concentrate on information technology, did not have any well-being outcomes, or were conceptual-only designs. A total of 47 empirical papers were included in the most recent critique.

Figure 1. PRISMA Flow Diagram



4.2 Descriptive Characteristics of Included Studies

Table 1. Descriptive Profile of Included Studies (n = 47)

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Publication period	2005–2010	4	8.5
	2011–2015	9	19.1
	2016–2020	18	38.3
	2021–2024	16	34.1
Research design	Quantitative	36	76.6
	Qualitative	6	12.8
	Mixed methods	5	10.6

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Sample type	Software developers	18	38.3
	IT consultants	11	23.4
	System analysts/engineers	10	21.3
	Mixed IT roles	8	17.0
Geographical focus	Europe	19	40.4
	North America	14	29.8
	Asia	11	23.4
	Other regions	3	6.4

Since 2016, there has been a significant increase in the number of publications, which indicates that there is a rising concern regarding the intensity of digital labor. This concern is only being exacerbated due to the introduction of remote and hybrid work arrangements.

4.3 Conceptualization of Digital Overload

Table 2. Digital Overload Constructs Used in IT Studies

Construct	Studies (n)	% of Studies
Technostress	28	59.6
Information overload	21	44.7
Communication overload	17	36.2
Technology overload	14	29.8
Multidimensional digital overload	9	19.1

(Multiple constructs used in several studies)

Single-dimension constructs were used in most of the studies, which signified conceptual fragmentation. It is only that 19.1% explicitly addressed a multidimensional phenomenon of digital overload.

4.4 Well-Being Outcomes Examined

Table 3. Well-Being Indicators Reported

Well-Being Dimension	Indicator	Studies (n)	%
Psychological	Stress	31	66.0
	Burnout / emotional exhaustion	27	57.4
Work-related	Job satisfaction	22	46.8
	Work engagement	18	38.3
Work-life	Work-life balance	20	42.6
Physical	Fatigue / sleep problems	9	19.1

Literature of psychological strain prevails, and physical well-being is under the critical lack of research even when it proves to be significant in the context of digitally-intensive work.

4.5 Empirical Relationships Between Digital Overload and Well-Being

Table 4. Direction and Strength of Empirical Relationships

Relationship	Positive	Negative	Non-significant
Digital overload → Stress	29	–	2
Digital overload → Burnout	25	–	2
Digital overload → Job satisfaction	–	21	1
Digital overload → Engagement	–	16	2
Digital overload → Work-life balance	–	18	2

In literature, statistically significant negative effects of digital overload on well-being were reported in over 85 % studies, which does point to high and consistent empirical evidence.

4.6 Mediators and Moderators

Table 5. Mediating and Moderating Mechanisms

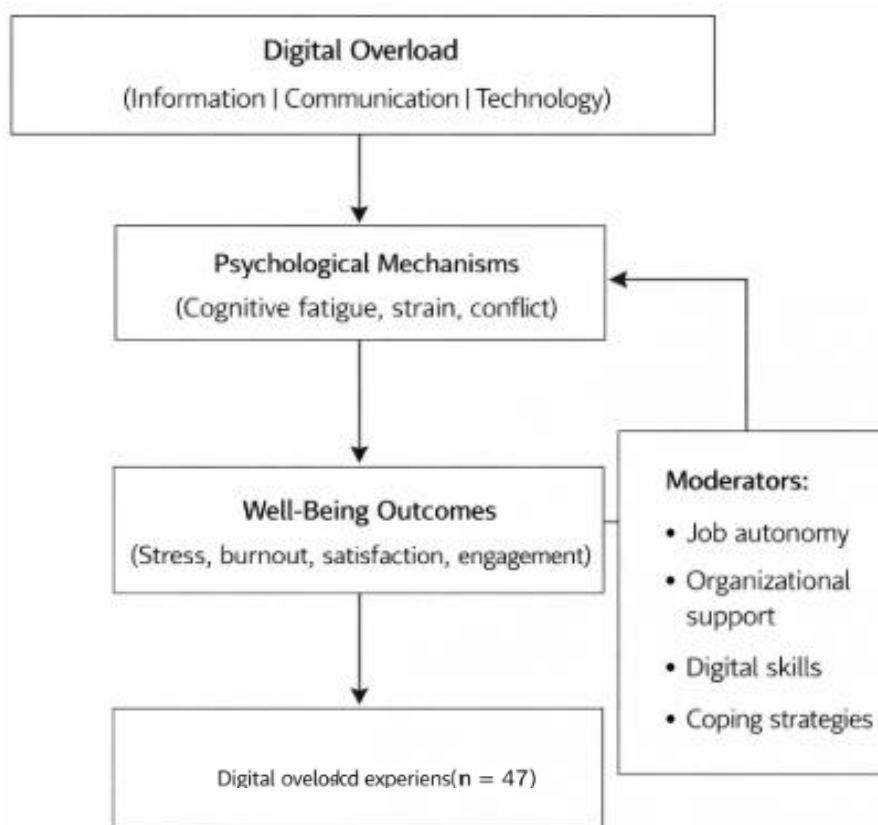
Mechanism Type	Variable	Studies (n)
Mediators	Cognitive fatigue	14

Moderators	Psychological strain	12
	Work–life conflict	10
	Job autonomy	9
	Organizational support	11
	Digital competence	7
	Coping strategies	6

The presence of organisational resources was investigated more than the individual, which is evidence of a managerial bias in the field of intervention research.

4.7 Integrated Results Framework

Figure 2. Digital Overload–Well-Being Framework



5. Thematic Synthesis and Discussion

According to the systematic coding and synthesis of the 47 included studies, it was possible to identify four prevailing themes that provide the explanation of how digital overload impacts

the well-being of IT professionals. These themes combine empirical data on constructs, outcomes, and mechanisms beyond disjointed results to a logical insight.

5.1 Theme 1: Digital Labor Intensity as a Job Necessity

The concept of digital overload as one of the manifestations of a work demand is one of the recurring themes that can be found throughout the vast body of research already available. The majority of the studies that were examined (n=38) (about 81% of them) clearly positioned digital overload as a high level of digital work intensity. This is because digital overload is characterized by a high amount of information, frequent interruptions, high rates of task-switching, and constant monitoring of the system. Having such restrictions was usually related with a higher level of cognitive activity and a shorter amount of time needed for recuperation. The level of similarity between this subject and the Job DemandsResources (JD-R) model is quite high. In this model, digital overload is chosen as a demand that consumes both cognitive and emotional resources. There was a reduction in well-being results regardless of vocation or location in situations where digital demands were greater than the capacity of the employees to process them, according to empirical data. This was the case without regard to the employment status of the employees. This suggests that digital overload is not a stressor that is merely a result of the context in which it occurs, but rather a structural feature of modern information technology job.

5.2: The Psychological Strain as a Mediating Mechanism

The most frequently seen mechanism that was discovered to be associated with the correlation between digital overload and well-being outcomes was found to be psychological strain. A total of thirty research, which is about sixty-four percent of the total, identified mediators such as cognitive tiredness, emotional exhaustion, and perceived stress. Not only did these intermediates express the way in which digital overload was translated into negative outcomes, but they also conveyed the way in which this transformation occurred. The Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which is based on the assumption that prolonged depletion of resources leads to stress and low well-being, is supported by the consistent identification of strain-based mediators. According to the findings, the most significant adverse effect of digital overload is the consumption of cognitive and emotional resources, which ultimately results in burnout, a lack of interest, and unhappiness with one's job.

5.3 Theme 3: Boundary Erosion and Work -Life Conflict

The third topic that was discussed was the implications of digital overload on the blurring of the lines between work and personal life. According to the findings of the study, almost 43 percent of the participants (n=20) explicitly linked digital overload with work-life conflict. This was particularly the case when it came to remote working, mobile technologies, and international collaboration. Because of the constant connectivity and the expectations of quick reactivity, the boundaries between time and space were not obvious, and it became increasingly difficult to maintain a psychological disconnection from one's work. By demonstrating that digital technologies can not only blur borders but also heighten the permeability of boundaries in IT occupations, this topic builds on the perspective of the boundary theory. This is because it demonstrates that digital technologies can do both of these things. According to the evidence, boundary erosion is a very important avenue through which digital overload undermines well-

being. This is especially true in the context of project-based and knowledge-intensive information technology work.

5.4 Theme 4: Buffering Role of Organisational and individual Resources

When it comes to establishing the impact that digital overload has on well-being, the final topic that was discussed was the moderating role that resources play. It was found that organizational resources were more frequently investigated than individual ones, accounting for around 38 percent (n=18) of the studies that looked at moderators. Having job autonomy, having support from the organization, and having leadership that is supportive all helped to alleviate the negative effects of digital overload. Individual resources, such as digital skills and coping methods, were also found to have a buffering impact; however, these resources were explored less frequently than others. This component lends credence to the JD-R paradigm given that it demonstrates that the detrimental effects of digital demands can be mitigated by the utilization of the resources. As a result, there is a dearth of understanding regarding the interaction between personal capacities and structural circumstances in digitally demanding working conditions. This is demonstrated by the asymmetry in attention that exists between organizational resources and individual resources.

5.5 Integrated Discussion

Overall, the thematic synthesis demonstrates that digital overload is a multidimensional job requirement that has an effect on the well-being of IT professionals due to psychological strain and boundary erosion, but that this impact is significantly influenced by the resources that are available. There is a high level of empirical convergence independent of the conceptual and methodological differences, as evidenced by the similarities in negative impacts that researchers have found in their investigations. Bringing together the study on technostress, digital overload, and well-being into a unified explanatory model is a contribution that the findings provide to the existing body of literature. Instead of addressing digital overload as a problem, interventions are required at the organizational level. This review is not a stressor in isolation; rather, it is a systemic characteristic of the job that is done in information technology. This review brings together information from a variety of fields, and as a result, it makes a contribution to the development of the theory of digital work. Additionally, it offers a foundation upon which the design of sustainable IT work practices could be founded.

6. Future Research Directions

Although the evidence concerning the phenomenon of digital overload and its impact on well-being in the IT field is growing, the systematic review shows that there are a number of significant gaps that should be addressed in the study. The purpose of the future research should be to enhance the theoretical coherence, the methodological rigor, and relevance.

6.1 Conceptual and Theoretical Directions

First and foremost, it is imperative that future works incorporate multidimensional conceptualizations of digital overload within their scope. Only 19.1 percent of the papers that were examined considered digital overload to be a composite construct; nonetheless, the majority of these articles utilized independent dimensions, such as excessive information or excessive technological stress. The combining of many dimensions would make it possible to

gain a more in-depth understanding of the ways in which different digital demands interact with one another and have an effect on wellbeing collectively (Wang et al. 2022). In addition, despite the fact that the Job Demands-Resources and Conservation of Resources frameworks are the most prevalent, there is still a lack of theoretical integration. To further understand the complexities of digital labor in information technology contexts, additional research is required to investigate the possibility of hybrid theoretical frameworks that include stress, boundary, and self-regulation perspectives.

6.2 Methodological Directions

There is a significant amount of bias in the approaches used in the literature (76.6% of the cross-sectional survey), which limits the ability to draw conclusions about causality. It is necessary to do research that is both long-term and utilizes experience sampling in order to study the influence that digital overload has on well-being over time. Using experimental and intervention-based designs would be an excellent way to examine the effectiveness of organizational initiatives that aim to reduce the amount of digital overload being experienced by individuals. This would further demonstrate the usefulness of these techniques. These objective and behavioral measurements of digital overload (such as digital trace data or system use logs, for example) should also be considered a priority for future study in order to enhance self-reported measures and reduce the amount of bias that is caused by popular methods.

6.3 Contextual and Population-Specific Directional

The assessment reveals that there is a significant amount of research that is focused on the Western setting, while the developing economies constitute a very small percentage of the total numbers. It is necessary for research to be conducted across cultural boundaries in order to investigate the impact that institutional, cultural, and regulatory variables have on the experiences of digital overload. In addition, future research should have separated the information technology positions, career advancement, and employment patterns. This is because the digital demands and coping capacities of these populations are likely to be very different from one another. Emerging digital work circumstantial, including as AI-driven systems, algorithmic management, and platform-based information technology work, are not adequately examined. Researching the potential dangers of poor future wellbeing in the information technology business requires taking into account these contexts.

6.4 Resource, Intervention, Directions

Lastly, individual resources including digital resilience, self-regulation as well as recovery practices were considered in comparatively less detail despite the fact that organisational resources were often reviewed as moderators. Further studies are needed on the interaction between personal and organisational resources in mitigating the impact of digital overload.

Table 6. Future Research Agenda

Domain	Key Gap Identified	Suggested Direction
Conceptualization	Fragmented overload constructs	Multidimensional digital overload models
Theory	Single-theory dominance	Integrated stress–boundary frameworks
Methodology	Cross-sectional bias	Longitudinal and experimental designs

Context	Western-centric samples	Cross-cultural IT studies
Intervention	Limited evidence	Evaluation of digital well-being interventions

7. Conclusion

This systematic literature analysis was conducted with the purpose of analyzing the evidence from 47 empirical research in order to evaluate the relationship between digital overload and well-being in information technology professionals. According to the findings, there is a substantial and trustworthy body of evidence demonstrating that high levels of digital requirements have a detrimental effect on the psychological, work-related, and work-life well-being of individuals. The impacts of digital overload are mostly an issue of influence on well-being, notably psychological strain and loss of boundaries, and the effects are buffered by organizational and personal resources. Digital overload is a critical necessity in the workplace. This review has the potential to contribute to theoretical knowledge of digital work and well-being by integrating discontinuous studies from a variety of domains. Additionally, it serves to remind researchers of the importance of doing studies that are multidimensional, theory-based, and intervention-oriented. In actuality, the findings underline the necessity of developing digital working circumstances that are sustainable in order to strike a balance between the demand of technology and the availability of necessary resources. The problem of digital overload is not only essential for ensuring the well-being of workers, but it is also essential for the long-term viability and general performance of information technology organizations.

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