

Unveiling the Dark Side of Workplace Connectivity: A Qualitative Meta-Synthesis of Digital Presenteeism, Employee Well-Being, and Sustainable Performance

Nurhaeda Zaeni¹, Maryadi², Abd. Rajab³

^{1,2}Department of Management, Faculty of Economics and Business, Institut Teknologi dan Bisnis Nobel Indonesia, Makassar, Indonesia. Email: nurhaedazaeni@stienobel-indonesia.ac.id¹, ahmadmaryadi@gmail.com²

³Department of Management, Faculty of Economics, STIEM Bongaya Makassar, Makassar, Indonesia. Email: abdul.rajab@stiem-bongaya.ac.id³

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: June 25, 2026

Revised: July 03, 2026

Accepted: July 3, 2026

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.52970/grmilf.v6i3.2474>

ABSTRACT

Digital communication technologies have transformed workplace operations by increasing flexibility, efficiency, and collaboration. However, they also contribute to digital presenteeism, where employees remain digitally available and responsive despite fatigue, illness, psychological distress, or being outside working hours. This systematic literature review uses a qualitative meta-synthesis approach to examine the relationship between digital presenteeism, employee well-being, and sustainable performance. Based on 139 peer-reviewed articles from Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, and Emerald Insight, the review identifies key themes such as always-on work culture, blurred work-life boundaries, technostress, hidden labor, productivity paradox, declining well-being, and sustainable performance challenges. The findings show that excessive digital connectivity and constant availability expectations increase techno-overload, emotional exhaustion, work-life imbalance, and burnout. Although digital presenteeism may create short-term productivity, it can weaken long-term employee well-being and organizational sustainability. This study proposes a conceptual framework highlighting the role of organizational support, digital leadership, right-to-disconnect policies, and boundary management practices in reducing the negative effects of digital presenteeism.

Keywords: Digital Presenteeism, Workplace Connectivity, Employee Well-Being, Technostress, Sustainable Performance.

I. Introduction

The digital transformation of modern workplaces represents one of the most profound shifts in organizational life over the past two decades. Organizations across all sectors have become increasingly dependent on digital communication technologies email systems, instant messaging platforms such as WhatsApp, Slack, and Microsoft Teams, video conferencing applications including Zoom and Google Meet, and comprehensive digital workspace solutions like Google Workspace and Microsoft 365 (Akbar et al., 2025). This technological integration has fundamentally altered the spatial, temporal, and relational dimensions of work, enabling communication and collaboration that transcends traditional office boundaries. The massive integration of digital technologies, ranging from artificial intelligence to ubiquitous connectivity, has given rise to new forms of workplace dynamics that simultaneously create opportunities and challenges for employee psychological well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic served as a powerful accelerant for these digital

workplace transformations, forcing organizations to rapidly adopt remote and hybrid work arrangements on an unprecedented scale (Mateen et al., 2025). What began as emergency measures to ensure business continuity evolved into permanent structural changes in how work is organized and performed. Studies examining this transition have documented that hybrid work significantly improved flexibility, focus, and goal achievement while reducing commuting-related fatigue, yet simultaneously created new psychological challenges related to digital overconnection and boundary management (Galanti et al., 2023).

Workplace connectivity through digital technologies offers numerous advantages that have been well-documented in organizational research. These benefits include enhanced communication efficiency, accelerated decision-making processes, facilitation of cross-location collaboration, support for flexible work arrangements, and improved accessibility of information and organizational resources (Mdhluli, 2025). The integration of digital tools with flexible work habits has transformed modern workplaces in ways that can potentially enhance both organizational effectiveness and employee autonomy. However, the literature increasingly recognizes that these benefits are not unequivocally positive. The same technological capabilities that enable flexibility and efficiency also create expectations for constant availability and immediate responsiveness that can generate significant psychological pressure (Oluwalusi, 2025). Research in Nigerian workplaces has demonstrated that while the "always-on" culture supports faster communication and responsiveness, it raises substantial concerns about employee well-being, with findings revealing that always-on work culture significantly increases stress ($\beta = 0.672$, $p < 0.001$) and burnout ($\beta = 0.648$, $p < 0.001$), while negatively affecting work-life balance ($\beta = -0.591$, $p < 0.001$).

Digital presenteeism represents an evolution of the traditional presenteeism construct which historically described employees physically attending work while ill into the digital realm (Marsh et al., 2024). In the digital context, presenteeism manifests as the behavior of continuing to engage in work-related digital activities despite conditions that would normally warrant rest or disengagement from work. This includes responding to work emails during illness, attending virtual meetings while unwell, completing work tasks outside formal working hours, and maintaining constant digital availability even during vacation or recovery periods. The phenomenon differs from traditional presenteeism in several critical ways. First, digital presenteeism is often invisible to organizational tracking systems since it occurs through personal devices and outside formal work settings. Second, the pressure to engage in digital presenteeism can be more insidious because work communications are omnipresent through smartphones and other portable devices. Third, digital presenteeism may be culturally normalized and even rewarded in organizations that equate digital responsiveness with commitment and professionalism (Choi et al., 2024). Research has shown that mobile work during non-work hours affects employees' work attitudes, including presenteeism, through mechanisms that deplete psychological resources and impair sleep quality.

The relationship between digital presenteeism and employee well-being constitutes a central concern of contemporary organizational psychology and human resource management research. Extensive evidence links excessive digital connectivity and the resulting presenteeism behaviors to multiple dimensions of psychological and physical health deterioration (Rahmi et al., 2025). Technostress and cognitive fatigue have emerged as increasingly prevalent issues in modern workplaces where employees depend heavily on digital technologies, with prolonged engagement leading to cognitive strain, emotional exhaustion, and reduced well-being. The literature documents several pathways through which digital presenteeism undermines well-being. Workplace telepressure the urge to respond quickly to work-related messages sent via digital tools often erodes employees' psychological well-being and blurs work-life boundaries (Qin et al., 2025). Studies have found that workplace telepressure significantly predicts job burnout, with work-related rumination partially mediating this relationship and indicating a cognitive pathway linking constant connectivity to psychological harm.

A critical yet underexplored dimension of the digital presenteeism phenomenon concerns its implications for sustainable organizational performance. While digital presenteeism may produce apparent short-term productivity through increased responsiveness and extended work availability, growing evidence suggests this represents what scholars have termed a "productivity paradox" (Zoonen et al., 2023). Research

demonstrates that constant connectivity may operate as a resource that potentially empowers employees through increased autonomy, yet the relationship between connectivity and exhaustion is complex. Sustainable performance, conceptualized as high-quality work output that can be maintained over time without depleting employee health, motivation, or organizational capacity, requires fundamentally different conditions than short-term productivity maximization. Research demonstrates that employee well-being has become a significant contributor to productivity in today's global economy, with failing employee engagement, burnout, and the resulting economic losses from low productivity representing important business concerns.

Despite the growing body of research examining technostress, work connectivity, work-life balance, and employee burnout, significant gaps remain in our understanding of how these phenomena interconnect within the specific context of digital presenteeism. Existing studies have tended to examine these constructs in isolation rather than integrating them within a comprehensive framework that captures the cascading effects of workplace connectivity on employee behavior, well-being, and performance (Pansini et al., 2023). The Job Demands-Resources Model has been adopted as a theoretical framework to analyze technostress, but more work is needed to clarify whether and how technology can be considered a job demand, resource, or part of personal resources in the workplace. This article aims to address these gaps through a systematic literature review employing a qualitative meta-synthesis approach to: 1. Identify and synthesize the conceptualization and manifestations of digital presenteeism in digital work environments; 2. Examine the factors that drive the emergence of digital presenteeism behaviors; 3. Analyze how digital presenteeism influences employee well-being across multiple dimensions; 4. Investigate the implications of digital presenteeism for sustainable organizational performance; 5. Develop an integrative conceptual framework that explicates the relationships among workplace connectivity, digital presenteeism, well-being, and sustainable performance. This systematic literature review is guided by the following research questions: RQ1: How does the literature conceptualize and characterize digital presenteeism in contemporary digital work environments?; RQ2: What organizational, technological, and individual factors drive the emergence of digital presenteeism?; RQ3: Through what mechanisms does digital presenteeism affect employee well-being?; RQ4: What are the implications of digital presenteeism for sustainable organizational performance?; RQ5: What integrative conceptual framework can be constructed from the synthesis of existing literature?

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Workplace Connectivity

Workplace connectivity describes the condition wherein employees maintain continuous connection to work through digital devices and platforms, enabling and often expecting communication and task engagement regardless of physical location or formal working hours (Anwar & Iqbal, 2023). Advancement in communication technology has made workplaces easy to connect with employees during off-working hours, with the workforce's availability increasing due to flexible use of technologies such as smartphones, laptops, and other portable devices. This permanent connectivity represents a fundamental shift in the temporal and spatial boundaries of work. The literature identifies several related constructs that collectively characterize the connectivity phenomenon. "Always-on culture" refers to organizational environments where constant digital availability is normatively expected (Westover, 2024). Research examines how lack of separation between work and personal life in today's fast-paced workplace can negatively impact employee well-being, productivity, and retention, noting that constant connectivity from new technologies enables an "always on" culture where fully disengaging from work during non-work hours or vacations is challenging. "Digital availability" captures employees' accessibility through multiple communication channels, while "workplace telepressure" describes the psychological experience of urgency and preoccupation with responding quickly to work-related messages (Semaan et al., 2023). The double-edged nature of digital work environments has been increasingly highlighted, with benefits of increased flexibility coming at a personal cost. Workplace

telepressure, as the experience of the urge and preoccupation to quickly reply to work-related messages, represents one potential downside of this connectivity, with evidence suggesting negative effects on a variety of well-being and health outcomes.

2.2. Digital Presenteeism

Digital presenteeism extends the traditional presenteeism concept into the digital work domain. While traditional presenteeism involves physical presence at the workplace despite illness or other conditions warranting absence, digital presenteeism encompasses working through digital means when similar conditions would suggest disengagement from work activities. The manifestations of digital presenteeism include multiple behaviors documented across the literature. These include employees responding to work messages after formal working hours (Grotto, 2022), participating in virtual meetings while experiencing illness or fatigue, experiencing guilt when unable to respond immediately to work-related notifications, continuing work tasks during designated vacation or rest periods, and finding difficulty in mentally and behaviorally disconnecting from work despite being ostensibly off-duty. Research indicates that ICT-related interruptions from work into personal life trigger employees to suddenly disengage from their nonwork roles and re-engage in work activities, which can translate into adverse well-being outcomes.

The drivers of digital presenteeism have been identified as operating at multiple levels. At the organizational level, norms promoting rapid response expectations play a significant role. Studies have demonstrated that colleagues' norms promoting the need to respond quickly to work-related messages have negative effects on work recovery experiences. At the individual level, factors such as job insecurity, high exchange ideology, and personal achievement orientation contribute to presenteeism behaviors (Choi et al., 2024). Research has shown that mobile work during non-work hours increases sleep deprivation and presenteeism, with exchange ideology reinforcing these relationships.

2.3. Employee Well-Being

Employee well-being encompasses multiple dimensions including physical health, psychological well-being, emotional states, and social functioning within the work context (M & U, 2026). Contemporary conceptualizations recognize that well-being extends beyond the mere absence of illness to include positive states such as work engagement, life satisfaction, work-life balance, psychological safety, and recovery capacity. The relationship between digital connectivity and well-being is complex and multifaceted. Research drawing on the Job Demands-Resources model demonstrates that digitalization poses challenges for employee well-being through multiple pathways (Louati et al., 2026). Studies have found that excessive workload and work-family conflict are strongly associated with increased stress, which in turn negatively affects mental health and overall well-being. The concept of technostress has emerged as a particularly important mediating mechanism, encompassing stress reactions induced by technology use including techno-overload, techno-invasion, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity, and techno-uncertainty.

Recovery from work represents another critical well-being dimension affected by digital connectivity. Research identifies extended hours, intensive workload, and reduced social support as main energy-consuming elements of remote work. Psychological detachment the ability to mentally disengage from work during non-work time is recognized as essential for recovery, yet digital connectivity directly undermines this capacity. Studies demonstrate that work-related technology use during evenings requires self-regulatory resources and reduces psychological detachment, which in turn impedes employees' ability to engage in mood repair regarding affective well-being.

2.4. Sustainable Performance

Sustainable performance refers to organizational and individual outcomes that maintain quality and effectiveness over extended periods without depleting the resources human, psychological, or organizational required to produce them. Organizations must maintain sustainable employee well-being while maintaining performance at a time of growing job demands, digital overload, and the erosion of work-life boundaries. The literature increasingly recognizes a tension between short-term productivity metrics and sustainable performance. Digital fatigue is not solely caused by the intensity of technology use, but due to the imbalance between high digital job demands and the lack of available digital resources. When organizations prioritize immediate responsiveness and constant availability, they may achieve apparent productivity gains while simultaneously undermining the psychological resources required for sustained high performance. Evidence supports the proposition that sustainable performance requires balance between productivity demands and employee well-being. Research indicates that remote and hybrid work models can improve performance and well-being when supported by clear boundaries and inclusive organizational strategies, but that without such support, the same arrangements can trigger deterioration in both dimensions.

2.5. Theoretical Foundations

This review draws upon four primary theoretical frameworks that collectively explain the mechanisms linking workplace connectivity, digital presenteeism, well-being, and sustainable performance.

- a. Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Theory provides a foundational lens for understanding how digital connectivity can function as either a job demand or resource depending on organizational context and implementation (Pansini et al., 2023). Studies show that most consider ICT as a job demand negatively affecting human behavior, thoughts, and attitudes, while some report that ICT acts as a resource, thus reducing the impact of job demands. The theory's dual-process model wherein demands lead to strain through health impairment processes while resources lead to engagement through motivational processes illuminates how unbalanced digital work environments generate negative outcomes.
- b. Boundary Theory explicates how technology enables and enforces the blurring of traditionally distinct life domains (Boikanyo, 2026). Hybrid work has become a defining feature of the modern organization, yet growing evidence suggests that hybrid arrangements may intensify employee stress by eroding traditional work-nonwork boundaries. Boundary blurring is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct encompassing temporal, spatial, and psychological domains that function as chronic job demands, depleting resources and undermining recovery.
- c. Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory explains how continuous digital connectivity depletes the psychological, emotional, and temporal resources employees require for effective functioning and recovery. The theory posits that individuals strive to protect and accumulate valued resources, and that resource depletion as occurs through constant work engagement leads to stress and diminished well-being. Research demonstrates that digital flexibility can trigger resource depletion when boundaries become blurred, leading to technostress and emotional exhaustion.
- d. Technostress Theory provides a framework specifically addressing technology-induced stress (Salzmann-Erikson et al., 2024). Technostress represents a contemporary form of stress induced by information and communication technology, associated with reduced job satisfaction, diminished organizational commitment, and adverse outcomes. The theory identifies specific technology characteristics including its intrusive nature, complexity, pace of change, and uncertainty as sources of psychological strain.

III. Research Method

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology combined with a Qualitative Meta-Synthesis approach. The SLR methodology provides a rigorous, transparent, and replicable process for identifying, selecting, and evaluating relevant literature (Mdhluli, 2025). The review followed PRISMA principles and utilized a systematic approach to ensure rigor and reproducibility. The qualitative meta-synthesis component enables the integration of conceptual and empirical findings across studies into coherent thematic clusters and a unified conceptual framework.

3.2. Review Protocol

The review protocol was developed following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines. The protocol specified inclusion and exclusion criteria, search strategies, data extraction procedures, quality assessment criteria, and synthesis methods prior to conducting the review to minimize bias and ensure methodological consistency.

3.3. Data Sources

Literature research was conducted across multiple academic databases to ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant research. Primary databases included Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, Wiley Online Library, and SAGE Journals. Google Scholar served as a supplementary source to identify additional relevant publications not indexed in the primary databases.

3.4. Search Strategy

The search strategy employed Boolean operators to combine keywords representing the core constructs of interest:

("digital presenteeism" OR "online presenteeism" OR "virtual presenteeism" OR "workplace connectivity" OR "constant connectivity" OR "always-on culture" OR "digital availability" OR "workplace telepressure" OR "technostress") AND ("employee well-being" OR "employee wellbeing" OR "burnout" OR "emotional exhaustion" OR "work-life balance") AND ("sustainable performance" OR "employee performance" OR "productivity" OR "organizational outcomes")

Searches were limited to articles published between 2010 and 2025 to capture the most relevant contemporary research while including foundational theoretical contributions.

3.5. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

a. Inclusion Criteria

Articles were included if they: (1) were published in peer-reviewed academic journals; (2) addressed workplace connectivity, digital presenteeism, or related constructs (telepressure, always-on culture); (3) examined employee well-being, health, or performance outcomes; (4) provided empirical or conceptual contributions; (5) were available in English; and (6) were accessible in full-text format.

b. Exclusion Criteria

Articles were excluded if they: (1) focused exclusively on technology without reference to work behaviors or outcomes; (2) examined presenteeism only in physical workplace contexts without digital

dimensions; (3) were editorials, opinion pieces, or non-peer-reviewed publications; (4) lacked methodological rigor or clarity; or (5) did not provide substantive insights relevant to the research questions.

3.6. Article Selection and PRISMA Flow

The initial database search yielded 2,847 records. After removing 923 duplicates, 1,924 unique records underwent title and abstract screening. This process excluded 1,456 records that did not meet inclusion criteria based on preliminary assessment. Full-text review of 468 potentially eligible articles resulted in exclusion of 329 articles. The final sample comprised 139 articles included in the qualitative meta-synthesis, consisting of 89 empirical studies, 31 conceptual/theoretical papers, and 19 systematic reviews.

3.7. Data Extraction

Data extraction followed a standardized protocol capturing: author(s) and publication year; geographic/organizational context; research objectives; theoretical framework(s) employed; methodological approach and sample characteristics; key variables and constructs examined; principal findings; and implications for theory and practice.

3.8 Quality Appraisal

Quality assessment employed criteria appropriate to the study design of each included article. For quantitative studies, criteria included clarity of research objectives, appropriateness of sampling and data collection methods, validity and reliability of measures, and analytical rigor. For qualitative studies, criteria encompassed methodological coherence, data saturation, reflexivity, and transferability. Studies rated as low quality were excluded from the final synthesis.

3.8. Data Analysis and Synthesis

The synthesis employed thematic analysis procedures following established qualitative meta-synthesis approaches. Initial coding identified key concepts and findings across included studies. Through iterative comparison and abstraction, codes were aggregated into higher-order categories and ultimately into overarching themes. The synthesis process also involved comparing and contrasting findings across studies, identifying points of convergence and divergence, and developing an integrative conceptual framework that represents the relationships among key constructs.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. Result of Research

The qualitative meta-synthesis identified seven major thematic clusters that characterize the literature on digital presenteeism, employee well-being, and sustainable performance. These themes represent both the mechanisms through which digital connectivity generates presenteeism and the consequences of such behaviors for individuals and organizations.

a. The Emergence of Always-On Work Culture

The synthesis reveals that digital presenteeism is fundamentally embedded within broader organizational cultures that normalize and reward constant availability (Westover, 2024). Research demonstrates that continuous connectivity is prevalent in modern workplaces, aided by smartphones and email, with supervisors often pressuring subordinates to remain connected to work through after-hours communications. This always-on expectation has transformed from an occasional requirement into a normative standard in many organizational contexts. Studies across multiple national contexts document the

pervasiveness of always-on expectations (Oluwalusi, 2025). In Nigerian workplaces, digital tools have created a culture where employees are expected to remain connected even outside normal working hours, with significant consequences for psychological well-being. The research found that always-on work culture significantly increases perceived stress and burnout while negatively affecting work-life balance. The cultural dimension of always-on expectations is particularly significant. Employees often feel compelled to demonstrate commitment and professionalism through digital responsiveness, with distinct implications for well-being outcomes.

b. Boundary Blurring Between Work and Personal Life

A second major theme concerns the erosion of boundaries between work and non-work domains enabled by digital technologies (Mohite & Agrawal, 2025). Remote work has led to the blurring of personal-professional boundaries, raising significant concerns about employee well-being, with challenges including overwork, digital fatigue, and difficulty disengaging from work. Research drawing on boundary management theory and telepressure frameworks documents the psychological strain resulting from constant connectivity (Balcioglu et al., 2023). Studies demonstrate that married women who work remotely experience heightened role conflict as the boundaries between work and family become increasingly blurred, with significant impacts on mental health and overall well-being. The boundary blurring phenomenon operates across temporal, spatial, and psychological dimensions (Boikanyo, 2026). Hybrid work intensifies employee stress by eroding traditional work-nonwork boundaries, with boundary blurring conceptualized as a multidimensional construct that functions as a chronic job demand, depleting resources and undermining recovery.

c. Technostress and Psychological Strain

The synthesis identifies technostress as a central mechanism linking digital connectivity to employee harm (Marsh et al., 2024). Digital workplace technologies are powerful enablers in modern organizations but can also threaten employee well-being, with research identifying hyperconnectivity, techno-overwhelm, hassles, Fear of Missing Out, and techno-strain as key manifestations of what researchers term "Workplace Technology Intensity." Multiple dimensions of technostress are documented in the literature. Instant messaging technologies significantly influence perceived techno-complexity, techno-overload, and techno-invasion, which in turn affect both employee performance and well-being. Studies comparing teleworkers and office workers have identified significant differences in how these technostressors affect employees depending on their work context.

Research from hospitality settings provides particularly compelling evidence of the psychological strain imposed by digital connectivity (Bajrami et al., 2025). All three forms of digital job demands hyperconnectivity, online reviews, and 24/7 digital communication significantly reduced employee psychological well-being while increasing turnover intentions. Hyperconnectivity and constant communication strongly predicted burnout and performance decline. The cognitive demands of digital work compound technostress effects (Rahmi et al., 2025). Prolonged engagement with digital technologies leads to cognitive strain, emotional exhaustion, and reduced well-being through mechanisms including cognitive overload, multitasking demands, and constant connectivity.

d. Digital Presenteeism as Hidden Labor

A distinctive characteristic of digital presenteeism is its invisibility within formal organizational systems. Research emphasizes the hidden labor dimension of digital presenteeism where employees continue working through digital means outside formal recognition or compensation systems. Studies examining the hidden nature of digital presenteeism reveal that traditional attendance-based performance metrics may mask underlying health and well-being problems. Research examining supervisor ratings found that substantial productivity loss occurs through continued work despite health issues. The hidden nature of digital presenteeism also means that traditional metrics may not capture the full extent of work being performed. Research suggests that digital presenteeism often goes unrecognized because it occurs through

personal devices, outside formal work settings, and without explicit organizational tracking. Information asymmetry about employees' state of health means that workers may decide to work when they are sick, with presenteeism representing a principal-agent relationship where the full costs are borne by the employee while apparent benefits accrue to the organization.

e. The Productivity Paradox

A critical insight from the synthesis concerns what multiple studies characterize as a productivity paradox. Research demonstrates that long working hours are positively associated with sickness presenteeism, which in turn is negatively related to employees' well-being and job performance. The apparent productivity from extended digital availability may thus represent an illusion that masks declining actual performance. The paradox operates through resource depletion mechanisms. Research demonstrates that burnout fully mediates the negative relationship between work overload and employee outcomes, indicating that the process through which excessive workloads undermine performance operates through psychological depletion rather than the work demands themselves. Studies examining after-hours connectivity provide nuanced evidence relevant to the productivity paradox (Zoonen et al., 2023). Research found that after-hour connectivity operates as a resource that potentially empowers employees through increased autonomy, yet the relationship between connectivity and exhaustion is complex, with autonomy serving as a mediator that can either buffer or intensify the effects of constant availability.

f. Employee Well-Being Deterioration

The synthesis reveals comprehensive evidence that digital presenteeism contributes to deteriorating employee well-being across multiple dimensions (Mateen et al., 2025). Research documents that a considerable proportion of employees report moderate to high levels of digital burnout, primarily linked to mental exhaustion, difficulty disconnecting, and reduced motivation for online meetings. Specific well-being outcomes linked to digital presenteeism include emotional exhaustion, sleep disruption, work-life conflict, and burnout. Studies consistently document emotional exhaustion because of constant connectivity. Digital connectivity during evening hours impairs sleep quality and recovery (Choi et al., 2024). Research found that mobile work during non-work hours increases sleep deprivation, which in turn increases presenteeism, creating a reinforcing cycle of deteriorating health and continued digital work engagement. The intrusion of work into personal time generates role conflicts with negative well-being consequences. Studies found that technostress influences workplace flourishing through work-family conflict, with work-family conflict explaining a substantial portion of variance in employee well-being outcomes. Multiple studies identify burnout as a terminal outcome of sustained digital presenteeism. Job burnout arises from the imbalance between resources and demands, with research emphasizing that measures to prevent burnout should be multi-level and aimed at strengthening individual, work-related, and organizational resources.

g. Implications for Sustainable Performance

The final thematic cluster concerns the implications of digital presenteeism for sustainable organizational performance. Research concludes that digital fatigue represents a structural risk requiring leadership-based interventions to maintain sustainable employee performance. Studies examining the relationship between connectivity and performance outcomes reveal complex patterns. While supportive organizational practices and increased job autonomy can foster work-life balance equilibrium, factors such as high workload, persistent stress, and technostress emerge as significant disruptors that not only diminish work-life balance but also adversely affect efficiency. Research on burnout prediction documents the cascading effects of digital overload on organizational outcomes. Leadership styles, organizational culture, employee proficiency, and engagement measures all affect psychological well-being, with job demands-resources theory and established clinical tools providing bases for understanding stress management strategies. The literature emphasizes that sustainable performance requires systemic organizational interventions. Studies found that strategically integrated digital detox policies, including restricted digital

access hours, digital mindfulness training, and right-to-disconnect initiatives, reduced burnout levels and improved work engagement and overall productivity.

4.2. Discussion

a. Redefining Presence in Digital Work Contexts

The synthesis reveals that digital connectivity has fundamentally transformed how organizations understand and evaluate employee presence, productivity, and commitment. Presence is no longer solely a physical phenomenon bounded by workplace location and formal working hours (Pam & Mason, 2025). Rather, presence has become a multi-dimensional construct that includes digital availability, responsiveness, and engagement through technology-mediated channels. This transformation carries significant implications for how organizations conceptualize and manage work. The redefinition of presence creates new forms of organizational control that operate through normative expectations rather than direct supervision (McCartney et al., 2023). Research has demonstrated that supervisors may pressure subordinates to remain connected to work through after-hours communications, developing the concept of "supervisor off-work boundary infringements" to describe these intrusions during employees' non-work hours. This form of control is particularly insidious because it operates through expectations and norms rather than explicit demands, making it difficult for employees to resist without appearing uncommitted.

b. Digital Presenteeism as Organizational Exploitation

The synthesis supports the interpretation of digital presenteeism as a subtle form of organizational exploitation that extracts additional labor without corresponding compensation or recognition. When organizations implicitly or explicitly expect constant digital availability, they effectively extend the working day without formally acknowledging this extension. The information asymmetry about employees' health status allows this extraction to continue largely invisible to organizational monitoring systems. This exploitation is particularly problematic because it is often voluntarily undertaken by employees who perceive constant responsiveness as necessary for career advancement or job security. Studies have distinguished between voluntary and involuntary presenteeism motivations, with distinct consequences for well-being. Yet even "voluntary" presenteeism may reflect internalized organizational norms rather than genuine personal preference.

c. Theoretical Integration

The findings support theoretical integration across the four frameworks employed in this review, revealing complementary mechanisms through which digital connectivity generates negative outcomes.

- 1) Job Demands-Resources perspective, the synthesis confirms that digital connectivity functions primarily as a job demand when organizational expectations exceed employees' capacity to manage the resulting workload and responsiveness requirements (Pansini et al., 2023). The literature demonstrates that ICT often operates as a demand negatively affecting well-being, though organizational context and individual characteristics can moderate whether technology is experienced as demanding or resourceful.
- 2) Boundary Theory illuminates how digital technologies enable the dissolution of traditional work-life boundaries that historically protected non-work time and domains (Boikanyo, 2026). The multi-dimensional nature of boundary blurring encompassing temporal, spatial, and psychological dimensions explains the pervasive impact of digital connectivity across diverse aspects of employee experience.
- 3) Conservation of Resources Theory explains the depleting effects of constant connectivity on the psychological resources required for sustained functioning. When employees continuously allocate attention, energy, and time to work-related digital activities, they experience resource depletion that

undermines recovery and regeneration, ultimately diminishing their capacity for sustained performance.

- 4) Technostress Theory identifies specific characteristics of digital technologies that generate psychological strain (Salzmann-Erikson et al., 2024). The intrusive, complex, rapidly changing, and uncertain nature of digital work technologies creates stress reactions that compound the effects of extended work demands.

d. The Short-Term Productivity Trap

A critical insight from the synthesis concerns the trap of short-term productivity gains at the expense of long-term sustainable performance. Organizations that reward digital presenteeism through implicit cultural approval or explicit performance metrics may achieve immediate responsiveness benefits while systematically undermining the human capital required for sustained organizational effectiveness. The productivity trap operates through several mechanisms identified in the literature. First, continuous digital engagement prevents the psychological recovery necessary for cognitive restoration and creative renewal. Second, the stress and exhaustion resulting from constant connectivity diminish the quality of work even as quantity may increase. Third, the burnout and turnover resulting from unsustainable work patterns create discontinuities and knowledge losses that undermine organizational performance.

V. Conclusion

This systematic literature review and qualitative meta-synthesis reveals that workplace connectivity, while offering genuine benefits for organizational flexibility and communication efficiency, carries significant hidden costs for employee well-being and organizational sustainability. Digital presenteeism emerges not as an individual pathology but as a rational response to organizational cultures, work designs, and performance expectations that normalize constant availability and interpret responsiveness as commitment. The phenomenon represents a contemporary manifestation of broader tensions between technological affordances and human well-being, between short-term productivity and long-term performance sustainability.

The synthesis demonstrates that digital presenteeism operates through multiple, interconnected mechanisms including the blurring of work-life boundaries, the multiplication of communication channels and response demands, the creation of always-on cultural norms, and the development of technostress and emotional exhaustion. These individual-level experiences accumulate to undermine employee well-being across physical, psychological, and social dimensions. More critically, the productivity paradox reveals that short-term indicators of performance may mask longer-term deterioration in sustainable performance driven by talent loss, diminished engagement, reduced innovation capacity, and organizational culture degradation.

Addressing digital presenteeism requires action at multiple levels. Organizations must explicitly develop and enforce policies supporting the right to disconnect and must redesign work systems to eliminate unnecessary connectivity demands. Leaders must model healthy digital boundaries and communicate that sustainable performance, not constant connectivity, represents organizational values. Performance measurement systems must evolve beyond responsiveness metrics to assess quality, innovation, and sustainability. National policymakers may need to strengthen regulatory protections for digital boundaries and rest rights. Ultimately, this review demonstrates that creating sustainable organizational performance in digitally connected work environments requires deliberate management of connectivity itself recognizing that unlimited connection is not an unmixed blessing but a potential liability for both individual well-being and organizational effectiveness. Future organizational success will depend not on maximizing digital connectivity, but on managing it in service of human flourishing and genuine, sustainable performance.

References

- Akbar, M. A., Varias, V., Risa, T. D., Bhirawa, M. A., & Nugraha, R. (2025). Workplace stress in the era of digital transformation: A psychological approach to employee well-being. *RIGGS: Journal of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Business*. <https://doi.org/10.31004/riggs.v4i3.2493>
- Anwar, F., & Iqbal, Z. (2023). Devils of the digital era: Tetheredness to technology and mental health in the context of the workplace. *International Journal of Membrane Science and Technology*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.15379/ijmst.v10i5.3525>
- Bajrami, D. D., Borota, D., Martinov, D., Markovic, B., Suput, S., Milić, M., Radosavac, A., & Miljkovic, O. (2025). Managing digital workloads in hospitality: Insights from serbia on employee retention and performance. *Journal of the Geographical Institute Jovan Cvijic SASA*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.2298/ijgi250707022d>
- Balcioğlu, Y. S., Artar, M., & Erdil, O. (2023). A Study on Middle-Class Married Female Teleworkers: The Effect Of Work-Life Conflict On Job Satisfaction: A Study on Work-Family Conflict, Job Satisfaction And Interpersonal Communication Satisfaction. *Pressacademia*. <https://doi.org/10.17261/pressacademia.2023.1797>
- Boikanyo, D. H. (2026). Always On, Always Stressed? Hybrid Work, Boundary Blurring, And Employee Well-Being In The Modern Organisation. *Business Excellence And Management*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24818/beman/2026.s.i.6-01>
- Choi, W., Kang, S., & Choi, S. B. (2024). The dark side of mobile work during non-work hours: Moderated mediation model of presenteeism through conservation of resources lens. *Frontiers in Public Health*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1186327>
- Cioffi, G., Balducci, C., & Toderi, S. (2025). Digital stress-preventive management competencies: Definition, identification and tool development for research and practice. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph22020267>
- Galanti, T., Ferrara, B., Benevene, P., & Buonomo, I. (2023). Rethinking the unthinkable: A delphi study on remote work during COVID-19 pandemic. *Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12090497>
- Grotto, A. R. (2022). An episodic process model of after-hour ICT-related interruptions at home. *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1155/2022/2740582>
- Louati, H., Saidi, K., Bouslimi, J., Sayari, S., & Aljohani, A. (2026). The critical role of HR in managing stress and enhancing wellbeing in the age of digitalization. *Frontiers in Sustainability*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/frsus.2026.1696502>
- M, D., & U, M. (2026). Employee well-being and mental health: Determinants of workplace productivity in the contemporary economy. *International Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation*. <https://doi.org/10.51244/ijrsi.2026.1304000157>
- Marsh, E., Vallejos, E. P., & Spence, A. (2024). Digital workplace technology intensity: Qualitative insights on employee wellbeing impacts of digital workplace job demands. *Frontiers in Organizational Psychology*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3389/forop.2024.1392997>
- Mateen, A., Khoso, R. A., Ullah, Dr. W., Shakil, M., & Latif, Dr. A. (2025). Employee well-being in hybrid work environments: Balancing productivity, preventing digital burnout, and promoting mental health in the era of remote and flexible work. *Inverge Journal of Social Sciences*. <https://doi.org/10.63544/ijss.v4i4.180>
- McCartney, J., Franczak, J., Gonzalez, K., Hall, A. T., Hochwarter, W. A., Jordan, S. L., Wikhamn, W., Khan, A. K., & Babalola, M. T. (2023). Supervisor off-work boundary infringements: Perspective-taking as a resource for after-hours intrusions. *Work & Stress*. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1080/02678373.2023.2176945>
- Mdhuli, N. I. (2025). Perils of perpetual connectivity: Navigating the “always-on” culture in the modern workplace. *Sa Journal of Human Resource Management*. <https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v23i0.3019>
- Mohite, S., & Agrawal, A. (2025). Remote work flexibility and the blurring of personal-professional boundaries:

- Impact on employee well-being. International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2025.v07i02.40850>
- Nirmala, T., Djamil, N., & Andaningsih, I. R. (2025). Digital Detox Policy As A Strategic Tool To Reduce Burnout And Increase Productivity In Multinational Companies. Maneggio. <https://doi.org/10.62872/pa9drr31>
- Nirwan, S. (2026). Right to disconnect: Employee well-being and legal awareness in the digital workplace. International Journal of Advanced Research in Commerce, Management & Social Science. [https://doi.org/10.62823/ijarcms/09.02\(i\).8899](https://doi.org/10.62823/ijarcms/09.02(i).8899)
- Oluwalusi, A. O. (2025). Exploring the psychological effect of “always-on” work culture in nigeria’s modern workplaces. Journal of Global Economics, Management & Business Research. <https://doi.org/10.56557/jgembr/2025/v17i39866>
- Pam, E., & Mason, E. (2025). Designing for presence. M/C Journal. <https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.3213>
- Pansini, M., Buonomo, I., Vincenzi, C. D., Ferrara, B., & Benevene, P. (2023). Positioning technostress in the JD-r model perspective: A systematic literature review. Healthcare. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare11030446>
- Pansu, L. (2018). Evaluation of “right to disconnect” legislation and its impact on employee’s productivity. International Journal Of Management and Applied Research. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.18646/2056.53.18-008>
- Qin, K., Yu, Z., Cai, Q., Jiang, N., & Chung, K. S. (2025). How workplace telepressure fuels job burnout among educators: Mediated by work-related rumination and moderated by perceived organizational support. Behavioral Sciences. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.3390/bs15081109>
- Rahmi, K. H., Fahrudin, A., Supriyadi, T., Herlina, E., Rosilawati, R., & Ningrum, S. R. (2025). Technostress and cognitive fatigue: Reducing digital strain for improved employee well-being: A literature review. Multidisciplinary Reviews. <https://doi.org/10.31893/multirev.2025380>
- Salzmann-Erikson, M., Olsson, A.-K., Rezagholi, M., Fjellström, D., & Osarenkhoe, A. (2024). Bridging technostress and continuous learning in knowledge-intensive organizations: A socio-technical systems approach for the future of healthy working life. Journal of Infrastructure Policy and Development. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd8938>
- Semaan, R., Nater, U. M., Heinzer, R., Haba-Rubio, J., Vlerick, P., Cambier, R., & Gomez, P. (2023). Does workplace telepressure get under the skin? Protocol for an ambulatory assessment study on wellbeing and health-related physiological, experiential, and behavioral concomitants of workplace telepressure. BMC Psychology. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01123-4>
- Westover, J. H. (2024). Taking the stress out of taking time off: Reducing workplace anxiety through flexible policies and a culture of trust. Human Capital Leadership Review. <https://doi.org/10.70175/hclreview.2020.13.3.1>
- Zoonen, W. van, Treem, J. W., & Sivunen, A. (2023). Staying connected and feeling less exhausted: The autonomy benefits of after-hour connectivity. Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1111/joop.12422>