



Technostress in the Digital World : Impact on Employee Work Performance and Mental Health

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Abstract

Modern work terminology uses ‘technostress’ to describe the negative consequences of digital technology. While digital technology boosts productivity and efficiency, it’s excessive use has increased stress, affecting employee well-being and productivity. This study uses People at Work 2023: A Global Workforce View Report data and regression analysis to examine technostress’s effects on mental health and work performance. Digital tools increase flexibility and efficiency, but these have increased stress, especially in Asia-Pacific compared to North America. Constant connectivity and pressure to stay online harm employees’ mental health, making it harder to balance work and life. The regression analysis shows that ‘managers not being equipped to handle mental health’ significantly worsens the impact of stress on work performance, emphasizing the need for better mental health awareness training for managers. Lack of diversity, equity, and inclusive initiatives (DEI) increases stress, emphasizing the need for inclusive workplaces. Wanting more flexibility in working hours and having open conversations about mental health had no significant effect, suggesting that while these factors raise awareness and improve work-life balance, they do not reduce stress alone. Thus , this study emphasizes the need for mental health initiatives, ”right to disconnect” policies, and better management training to reduce technostress and improve employee well-being.

Keywords: Technostress. Mental Health. Work Performance. Job Flexibility. Managerial Support. Diversity.



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1 Introduction

The digital workplace, once heralded as a breakthrough in organizational efficiency, has become a space where employees are vulnerable to new forms of stresses in their lives. With overuse of information and communication technology directly or indirectly, the job demand has resulted into a form of stress related to technology, known as technostress. Technology overload, its complexity, insecurity and the pressure to stay constantly connected burns out the workers, increases their anxiety and brings mental exhaustion, thereby , reducing the well-being and productivity of the workers(Ayyagari, Grover, & Purvis, 2011; Tarafdar, Cooper, & Stich, 2019; Tarafdar, Pullins, & Ragu-Nathan, 2015; Wang, Ding, & Kong, 2023) . Further, with increasing reliance on online communication tools, workers witness many other kinds of challenges such as

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cyberbullying. It is the repeated harmful behavior through digital means such as emails, social media that causes mental stress which adds to the toxicity of the working environment (Nielsen et al., 2015) . Together, these phenomena are reshaping employee experiences, their morale and mental well-being in digital environments. A report by WHO's (2022) estimated the mental health disorders cause world economy US 1 trillion dollars a year with about 15% of workers reporting mental disorders .

2 Key Techno Stressors in the Context of Contemporary Digital Challenge

A recent survey reported eight out of ten individuals experienced cyberbullying at workplace in the last six months and 15-20% experienced it last week (Bernard, 2023). Studies show that individuals who experience cyberbullying have heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and even post-traumatic stress disorder (Coyne et al., 2017) . The anonymity afforded by digital platforms amplifies the reach and intensity of bullying, making it more pervasive and psychologically damaging. Recent research by Kowalski, Toth, and Morgan's (2018) emphasizes that workplace cyberbullying often goes unnoticed or unaddressed, leading to a toxic work environment that undermines employee morale and productivity. Existing studies suggest that individuals experiencing cyberbullying are more likely to suffer from technostress, as their negative experiences are often exacerbated by digital tools (Zhang et al., 2022). This creates a vicious cycle, where employees find it increasingly difficult to disengage from toxic online interactions, thus heightening their stress levels and impacting their overall health.

With the rise of remote and hybrid working models, technostress has further worsened as employees struggle to maintain a balance between personal and professional life on account of many factors such as extended work hours, blur boundary between home and workplace (Tarafdar, Cooper, & Stich, 2019). It has changed the perception of job satisfaction, quality of work life among workers globally. The report reveals that more than 44% of Indian workers have complete flexibility in choosing where they want to work- on-site, remotely, or in a hybrid arrangement. This contrasts with just 24% of workers in Singapore, 20% in Australia, and only 16% in China. Additionally, 80% of Indian workers believe they could relocate overseas and still work for their current employer, compared to only 30% of Australians who feel the same. Across the regions, their expectations about workplace flexibility initiatives in the next five years also differ. In Australia, 30% of workers are optimistic about the adoption of a four-day workweek, while 34% of Singaporean employees foresee hybrid work becoming the norm. In India, 39% prioritize having full flexibility in their hours related to productivity and results rather than fixed schedules. Meanwhile, 38% of workers in China expect more opportunities to purchase additional vacation days. In all, it highlights techno-anxiety impacts different regions differently. Workers may also face stress due to lack of their defined role in hybrid settings (Richardson & Antonello, 2023).

The digital skills of the employee play a significant role at the workplace as evident in AWS Global Digital Skills Study (Gallup, 2022). The study emphasizes that advanced digital skills not only play a pivotal role in enhancing productivity and better compensation for workers but also gives higher job satisfaction and job security. It estimates that advanced digital skills contribute \$6.3 trillion annually to the global economy. Workers with these skills, even though they are not the majority, generate substantial national and global value. For instance, in 19 countries studied, these skills account for \$4.2 trillion of their GDP. Including basic and intermediate skills, the total global value rises to \$18.5 trillion, or 12% of global GDP. Further, in high-income countries, workers with advanced digital skills earn, on average, 50% more than those without such skills, while in middle-income countries, the income premium rises to 72%. Moreover, job openings that list more than 10 digital skills offer salaries 40% higher than similar positions without digital requirements. Nearly 72% of workers using advanced digital skills report high

job satisfaction, compared to just 43% of those using only basic digital skills. Furthermore, they express greater confidence in their job security, with 72% feeling secure in their jobs, compared to 48% of those with only basic skills. The entire statistics implies that it puts a constant pressure on the workers to upgrade their digital skills to maintain high rising profile and this is further worsened as technology itself continuously evolves to let the businesses flourish. It highlights the necessity for both employers and employees to invest in digital skills development. It complements the findings on technostress by showing that while digital tools can lead to stress even though these offer substantial economic and personal benefits. According to World Health Report: Transforming Mental Health for All, WHO's (2022), "workplace is a key example of a setting where transformative action on mental health is needed". It advocates sincere action should be taken by employers to provide a positive, inclusive work environment that values and gives commitment to strengthen care for mental health of workers.

Realizing the importance of technostress in this digital era, this study aims (i) to examine how the technostress affects the employee outcome such as mental health, work performance. (ii) to explore how job resources including open conversations about mental stress, managerial support and competence to handle the problems related to mental health, induction of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, desire for more flexible schedules affect the productivity and wellbeing of the workers. The focus of the study is Asia Pacific, Latin America, and North America regions which have distinct labour dynamics. By examining the relationship between technostress and employee outcomes in digital environment particularly regarding mental health and work performance, the study would suggest policies that organisations should undertake to foster balanced, supportive and healthy work environment enabling the employees to thrive in the presence of digital challenges.

3 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is based on the Job-Demand Resources (JD-R) model given by (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). It proposes how balancing job demands with resources can reduce the stress and improve the wellbeing of the employee. Excessive use of technology, its complexity, and constant evolution creates heavy demand on workers and puts continuous pressure to stay upskilled, adversely affecting their productivity and well-being. However, if they are adequately buffered by job resources such as job flexibility, autonomy, managerial support, effective and open communication, diversity, equity, inclusion initiatives, it would reduce the stress, improve job satisfaction and enhance their overall wellbeing.

4 Data Variables and Research Methodology

4.1 Data Source and Variables

This study employs a quantitative research design to explore the impact of technostress on employee work performance and mental health. The data for this study is derived from the People at Work 2023: A Global Workforce View Report published by the ADP Research Institute. It is based on responses from a large-scale survey conducted between 28 October and 18 November 2022, covering a sample of 32,612 workers from seventeen countries across four major regions viz Asia Pacific, Europe, North America and Latin America. The methodology is designed to capture employee perceptions and experiences related to the pressures of working with digital tools, focusing on work performance and mental health outcomes. The study focuses on only on nine countries, four from Asia Pacific (China, India, Australia, Singapore), three from Latin America, and two from North America (USA, Canada). Europe was left out of this study because of the way its labor market works, with strong worker rights and a lot of movement between

countries. Europe is more competitive than other places because it is easy to move around as compared to other regions. The study considers areas with unique new trends and problems, like the diversity in the Asia-Pacific region, the upbeat but demanding workers in Latin America, and the focus on new ideas and inspiration in North America. These factors are more in line with the study's goals, so Europe is less important to this study's reach. The variables used in the study are as follows:

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- **Impact of Stress on Work (SoW):** it measures the extent to which stress affects an individual's work performance, productivity, and efficiency. It evaluates how stress levels negatively correlate with job outcomes, such as meeting deadlines, maintaining focus, and achieving goals (Ayyagari, Grover, & Purvis, 2011; Barley, Meyerson, & Grodal, 2011; Ragu-Nathan, Tarafdar, & Bhanu S. Ragu-Nathan, 2009; Tarafdar, Cooper, & Stich, 2019; Wang, Ding, & Kong, 2023) .
- **Work Suffering Due to Poor Mental Health (WSPMH):** it assesses how an individual's work is negatively impacted by poor mental health. It captures the deterioration in the quality of work, decreased motivation, and potential absenteeism linked to mental health issues (Ayyagari, Grover, & Purvis, 2011; Tarafdar, Cooper, & Stich, 2019; Wang, Ding, & Kong, 2023).
- **Open Conversations about Mental Health (OCMH):** it measures the degree to which there are open and supportive discussions about mental health in the workplace. It includes the frequency and comfort level of employees when talking about mental health with colleagues and managers, and the presence of a stigma-free environment. It is expected that more conversations about mental health can destress the workers, provided he gets a good feedback and support from the system (Demerouti Evangelia et al., 2001; Qiang, Kanliang, & Qin, 2005; Sangal et al., 2021) .
- **Managers Not Equipped to Handle Mental Health (MNMH):** it reflects the level of preparedness and training that managers have in addressing mental health issues in the workplace. It captures whether workers by their perception and experience feel that managers can provide support or if they lack the necessary skills and resources to effectively handle mental health concerns among their team members (Çiçek & Kılınç, 2021; Sanjeeva Kumar, 2024; Wu et al., 2021).
- **Desire for More Flexibility in Working Hours (DMFHW):** it measures employees' expressed need or preference for greater flexibility in their working hours. It captures the extent to which individuals feel that rigid or traditional work schedules contribute to their stress or impact their work-life balance. A higher score on this variable would indicate a stronger desire for alternative work settings, such as hybrid work or remote work, that allow for better management of personal and professional responsibilities (Bond & Galinsky, 2011; Eaton, 2003; Ray & Pana-Cryan, 2021).
- **Lack of DEI Participation (LDEI):** it evaluates the extent to which an organization lacks active participation in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives. It measures the absence or inadequacy of policies and practices aimed at fostering an inclusive work environment, where diverse perspectives and backgrounds are valued. A higher value on this variable indicates greater shortcomings in DEI participation, potentially leading to feelings of exclusion, increased stress, and dissatisfaction among employees from underrepresented groups (Duchek, Raetze, & Scheuch, 2020; Hong & Page, 2004; Jackson, Joshi, & Erhardt, 2003).

4.2 Methodology

By using descriptive statistics, the key findings are derived that are relevant to the analysis of technostress and its consequences on employee well-being and performance. To analyze the data

further, and provide nuanced insights on how various stressors interact in the digital environment and affect the relationship between technostress, work performance, and mental health, the study undertakes regression analysis. The study examines the relationship between impact of stress on work (SoW) as dependent and the independent variables related to working environment namely open conversations about mental health (OCMH), managers not equipped to handle mental health (MNMH), desire for more flexibility in working hours (DMFWH), and lack of DEI participation (LDEI). The model equation is follows:

$$SoW = \beta_0 + \beta_1 OCMH + \beta_2 MNMH + DMFWH + \beta_3 LDEI + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

where β_0 is the intercept, $\beta_{k=1,2,3,4}$ are coefficients of independent variables, ϵ is the error term.

5 Results and Analysis

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

The findings from data reveal that technostress, defined as stress induced by the use of digital technologies, is increasingly becoming a major factor in employee burnout with more than 50% workers on an average feeling the impact of stress on their work as evident in Table 1. With the increasing digitization of workplaces, employees are struggling to balance the flexibility afforded by remote work with the constant pressure of being always connected. Workers in India and Australia reported high levels of stress, with Australians experiencing an average of 12 instances of stress per month, while Indian workers reported 11 instances. This stress is largely attributed to the continuous need to interact with digital tools, compounded by the pressure to be always available. This highlights the growing impact of technostress, particularly in regions where digital work is prevalent. Table 1 highlights the significant impact of poor mental health and stress on work across various regions. China experiences the highest percentage of workers reporting that their work suffers due to mental health issues (54%), followed closely by India (49%). Stress levels are high in India, where 76% of workers report stress impacting their work, and workers face 11 instances of stress per month. Conversely, the USA sees the highest frequency of stress (13 instances per month), yet a comparatively lower percentage (54%) feel the impact of stress on work. Countries like Brazil, Chile, and Argentina report a similar stress impact on work (67%), though their mental health concerns are slightly lower compared to India and China.

Table 1. Impact of Mental Health and Stress on Work

Country	% of Workers who feel work suffers due to poor mental health	% of Workers who feel impact of stress on work	Average stress instances per month
China	54	67	10
India	49	76	11
Australia	37	57	12
Singapore	37	65	9
Brazil	31	67	11
Chile	39	67	10
Argentina	34	67	9
USA	32	54	13
Canada	34	54	12

Source: AWS Global Digital Skills Study (Gallup, 2022; Richardson & Antonello, 2023)

These findings suggest that technostress exacerbates mental health issues, making it more difficult for employees to maintain balance in personal and professional life. In response to these mental health concerns, companies in the Asia-Pacific region have begun introducing mental health initiatives. However, the efficacy of these measures remains limited as technostress continues to challenge workers in highly digital environments.

Table 2 provides survey data analysis of mental health conversations and support across countries. The result shows that India and China lead in fostering open conversations about mental health, with 71% and 65% of workers feel comfortable discussing their mental issues, despite a significant portion of managers in both countries being ill-equipped to handle these conversations (40% and 42%, respectively). Countries like Singapore and Chile have lower percentages of open conversations (52%), and a higher proportion of managers are seen as unprepared (38% and 47%). The USA and Canada stand out with the highest implementation of employee assistance programs (40% and 38%), suggesting better support structures for mental health in these regions.

Table 2. Mental Health Conversations and Support across Countries

Country	% of Workers who can have open conversations about mental health	% of Workers who feel that managers not equipped to handle mental health
China	65	42
India	71	40
Australia	56	35
Singapore	52	38
Brazil	63	43
Chile	52	47
Argentina	55	44
USA	58	35
Canada	52	34

Source: AWS Global Digital Skills Study (Gallup, 2022; Richardson & Antonello, 2023)

Table 2 highlights a significant gap in employer preparedness when it comes to addressing technostress. Many workers feel that their employers are not equipped to handle the stress caused by digital tools and the pressures of constant connectivity. For example, 47% of workers in Chile and 44% in Argentina reported that their managers and colleagues were not adequately trained to support employees dealing with mental health issues stemming from technostress. While flexibility is often touted as one of the major benefits of digital workplaces, the report indicates that too much flexibility, without clear boundaries, can contribute to technostress. Remote workers reported feeling greater levels of stress due to constant digital communication, and employees who worked solely from home experienced some of the highest levels of technostress. Hybrid workers, who had the balance of both in-office and remote work, were the most satisfied with their work conditions, suggesting that moderation in digital engagement could help mitigate stress levels. Table 3 indicates a strong desire for flexibility in working hours, particularly in India (76%) and China (73%), reflecting the growing demand for work-life balance in these regions. On the other hand, Australia reports the lowest preference for flexibility (61%).

Regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, Brazil has the lowest percentage of workers reporting a lack of participation (20%), while China and Singapore see 30% of workers feeling their companies do not engage in DEI initiatives. Common DEI efforts across countries include mentoring, awareness events, and staff training, with some regions, like Singapore and Argentina, incorporating DEI assessments and monitoring.

Table 3. Desire for Flexibility and DEI Initiatives

Country	% of Workers who DMFWH	% of Workers who feel LDEI	Key DEI Initiatives undertaken
China	73	11	Mentoring, awareness events
India	76	6	Staff training, mentoring, DEI initiatives
Australia	61	24	Mentoring, training, DEI initiatives
Singapore	72	21	Mentoring, DEI assessments
Brazil	65	23	Training, DEI initiatives
Chile	67	29	Awareness events, mentoring
Argentina	66	34	Training, DEI Monitoring
USA	70	25	Staff training, Awareness, Mentoring
Canada	69	28	Staff training, awareness, mentoring

Source: AWS Global Digital Skills Study (Gallup, 2022; Richardson & Antonello, 2023)

5.2 Multivariate Regression Analysis

The results of regression analysis in Table 4 reveals significant insights into the factors affecting the impact of stress on work (SoW). The results show mixed significance for the independent variables. The intercept has a coefficient of 0.1487 with a p-value of 0.6091, which is not statistically significant. This suggests that when all independent variables are held constant at zero, the baseline impact of stress on work is not meaningfully different from zero, indicating limited explanatory power from the intercept alone.

Table 4. Results of Regression Model

Impact of Stress on work (SoW)	Coefficient	Standard error	t- stat	p-value	Remark
Intercept	0.1487	0.2685	0.5538	0.6091	Insignificant
Open conversations about mental health (OCMH)	-0.0011	0.0005	-1.9489	0.1231	Insignificant
Managers not equipped to handle mental health (MNMH)	1.3031	0.2446	5.3270	0.0059	Significant
Desire for more flexibility in working hours (DMFWH)	0.1515	0.3313	0.45730	0.6711	Insignificant
Lack of DEI participation (LDEI)	-0.5576	0.1869	-2.9827	0.0406	Significant

Source: Author's calculations

The variable open conversations about mental health (OCMH) has a negative coefficient of -0.0011, with p-value of 0.1231, which is also insignificant. This indicates that open conversations about mental health do not have a statistically meaningful impact on reducing stress at work within this model, though the negative coefficient suggests a slight potential trend toward stress reduction. On the other hand, managers not equipped to handle mental health (MNMH) shows a positive and statistically significant coefficient of 1.3031 with p-value of 0.0059. This suggests that when managers are not equipped to handle mental health issues, the impact of stress on

work increases significantly, highlighting the critical role of managerial support in mitigating workplace stress.

The variable desire for more flexibility in working hours (DMFWH) has an insignificant coefficient of 0.1515 and p-value of 0.6711, indicating that the desire for more flexibility does not have a statistically significant impact on the relationship between stress and work. Finally, Lack of DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) Participation (LDEI) has a negative coefficient of -0.5576 with p-value of 0.0406, making it statistically significant. This suggests that a lack of DEI participation significantly exacerbates the negative effects of stress on work, underscoring the importance of DEI initiatives in the workplace to reduce stress-related work issues.

6 Conclusion and Policy Implications

The findings from the People at Work 2023 Report, along with the regression analysis results, provide an important insight into the detrimental effects of stress and poor mental health management in workplace. As organizations increasingly adapt to modern work environments, the negative impact of stress on work performance and mental well-being is becoming more pronounced. The regression results indicate that open conversations about mental health (OCMH) had an insignificant impact on reducing stress at work, suggesting that while fostering openness is important, it does not significantly alleviate the burden of stress on its own. This finding highlights the need for support mechanisms beyond mere dialogue, such as comprehensive mental health programs. Notably, the analysis revealed that managers not being equipped to handle mental health (MNMH) had a significant positive impact on stress at work, indicating that when managers lack the skills to support their teams' mental health, the impact of stress is exacerbated. This underlines the importance of managerial training in mental health awareness and support. Similarly, the lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) participation (LDEI) showed a significant negative effect, meaning that when DEI initiatives are lacking, stress at work increases, suggesting the importance of fostering inclusive, healthy environment to reduce workplace stress. In contrast, desire for more flexibility in working hours (DMFWH) showed insignificant results, implying that flexibility alone may not be enough to reduce stress levels. The findings challenge the assumption that flexible working hours alone are a solution for workplace stress, pointing to the need for more integrated approaches, including managerial support and mental health resources.

In conclusion, the key findings suggest that organizations should focus on enhancing mental health interventions, such as improving managerial capacity to handle mental health issues and promoting DEI initiatives. Simply fostering open discussions or offering flexibility is insufficient without a robust support system in place. Therefore, comprehensive mental health strategies, training programs, and a stronger emphasis on DEI can significantly contribute to reducing workplace stress and improving overall employee well-being.

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