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AI Adoption Influences on Employee Burnout in the Digital Workplace

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Abstract

Burnout at the workplace is a serious threat to society, work productivity, health, and organisational sustainability. Artificial Intelligence (AI) adoption in the workplace can potentially deliver efficiency-enhancing effects in the form of automation and decision support; however, it also brings about new forms of stress, such as cognitive overload, job insecurity, and degradation of the work-life balance. In this review, recent literature has been synthesised to discuss the two-fold nature of AI in affecting employee burnout, considering the theories Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Results have also shown that AI can eliminate redundancy, increase flexibility, and enhance skills, helping alleviate some burnout risks. Nonetheless, improper implementation, a lack of role clarity, and uncaring support of employees may increase stress and emotional burnout. The review highlights that the proactive policies towards organisations, including resilience training, constant upskilling, and workload distribution, can potentially protect the employees' well-being. It is essential to consider those factors to enhance the advantages of AI and simultaneously avoid an escalation of its unintended contribution to job burnout.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Employee Wellbeing, Job Burnout, Digital Workplace.

1. Introduction

Workplace burnout has been identified as a vital issue that is devastating labour markets worldwide. The World Health Organisation (WHO) report restates that work-related burnout has impacted an estimated 15% of the population in a workplace with high demands. Also, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has observed that this burnout has led to significant health issues, costing the global economy billions of dollars in lost productivity (Meduri et al., 2024). Such statistics give a clearer image of the toll that workplace stress takes not only on individual health, but also on economic stability and productivity across the globe.

The nature of workplace burnout and its effects vary widely between different nations because of cultural, financial and legislative conditions. In Japan, where the culture of hard work is rigorous, around 25% of companies report an overly long number of hours of overtime, which has been explicitly connected with cases of death by exhaustion (Kubo et al., 2021). Conversely, the European countries such as Sweden have introduced stricter work-hour limits, which have produced a lower prevalence of reported stress and burnout (Härmä & Karhula, 2020).

Nevertheless, there is still a widespread problem of job burnout, even with such regulations, indicating that a more holistic approach, beyond overtime restrictions, is preferable. In America, the estimated loss associated with healthcare and work absenteeism due to stress at work is $300 billion annually (Maslach & Leiter, 2022). According to a survey conducted by the American Psychological Association (APA), more than 60% of the American population attributes work to be a significant stressor, especially burnout, prevalent in employment areas such as healthcare and education, where job demands are not only high but also irregular and unstable (Meduri et al., 2024).

Burnout is an extreme form of stress that results in physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion, including inefficiency and cynicism, and lower levels of personal fulfilment (Mendaglio & Swanson, 2021). It exacerbates health conditions and reduces labour productivity and retention, increasing the economic and social problems of the planet and the United States (Malesic, 2022). Unaddressed burnout may have devastating effects on workforce productivity, health, and innovation, which lag behind the competitiveness of any industry, particularly the sphere of technology and healthcare (Ajayi & Udeh, 2024; Fastje et al., 2023; Kambur & Akar, 2022). Burnout necessitates more than mere regulatory reform; it demands

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workplace approaches that support employee capacity building, tailoring tools and surroundings, and frequent feedback, which will lessen pressure, disengagement, and job satisfaction (Stephen Swensen MD & Shanafelt, 2020). Artificial Intelligence (AI) has introduced an age of new working conditions, has redefined and even restructured the workforce in several fields, and has profoundly changed the nature of work (Soulami et al., 2024). Due to the unprecedented rate of development of the major AI technologies, their adoption in most spheres of work is an eventual fact. Although this change promises to enhance efficiency and productivity, complex and multifaceted challenges are introduced, especially regarding the digital well-being of the employees (Soomro et al., 2024). In the current age of uncompromising connectedness and technological addiction, it is more important than ever to consider the degree to which the job market is influenced by the presence of AI and its consequences on the lives of the people who are its infrastructure (Arboh et al., 2025).

Technology has always found its way into the workplace. Still, AI presents a much more dramatic change as it goes beyond automating operations to learning, adapting and even completing complex cognitive tasks (Cavicchioli et al., 2025). This change poses an important issue about its effect on digital well-being, including the leadership in mental health, work-life balance, job satisfaction, and the quality of life. With AI invading the digital work world, it is critical to learn the implications of AI in workforce burnout and well-being to build a healthy digital future workforce (Chang et al., 2024).

Although work-related burnout has been well-reported in various countries and sectors, the current literature provides a limited synthesis regarding the role of AI in developing these processes. Most previous reviews consider traditional stress risk factors, including long hours, high work demands, and lack of work-life balance. Still, they largely fail to incorporate the swiftly emerging implications of AI implementation in employee mental burnout and digital well-being. This review addressed that gap by critically reviewing existing evidence on the impact of AI-driven changes on workplace stress and burnout, including the promise of relief regarding workplace automation and the dangers of cognitive overload, technology addiction, and job loss. Thus, the overall objective of this review is as follows:

- To investigate the role of AI in contributing to workplace burnout, with particular emphasis on its positive and risk-related effects.

2. Conceptual Background

Understanding the impact of exposure to AI-based technologies on employee burnout in the digital workplace is based on the characteristics of stress and its consequences, as well as the disruptive nature of AI technologies. Although AI-based automation has the potential to relieve the workload by decreasing repetition and streamlining tasks, it can nevertheless lead to cognitive overload, digital burnout, employment anxiety, and a lack of a boundary between work and life (Gao & Zamanpour, 2024). Digital well-being and support from organisations can overcome employee burnout by improving mental health and skill-building, and using specific digital tools that promote resilience is an essential element to control employee burnout in this digital era (Zhang et al., 2025).

Theories attributed to AI adoption and its effects on employee burnout within the digital working space mainly involve the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. The JD-R model implies that using AI may be perceived as a new job requirement that increases mental and emotional workload by making workers learn, adjust to AI systems, and interact with them. This may cause more job stress and burnout when the demands especially outweigh the resources (Chuang et al., 2025; Tang et al., 2024). The COR theory supplements this by stressing that given the AI-driven changes, valuable employee resources that may require protection or reclaiming, like job security, confidence, and autonomy, may be put in jeopardy, resulting in emotional exhaustion and burnout in the attempts of employees to protect or regain their resources (Abbas et al., 2021; Radford, 2024). These theories support the idea that the inclusion of AI within the workplace may cause employee burnout.

3. Global Trends in Workplace Burnout

Introduced initially by Freudenberger in 1974, employee burnout (sometimes referred to as burnout syndrome) is a complex of physical and emotional fatigue that also includes such manifestations as fatigue, headaches, and severe emotional weariness, such as anxiety and depression (Li et al., 2025). Later on, Maslach et al. (1993) described it as long term exposure to stressors present at the workplace, such that it has three dimensions, namely, emotional exhaustion (feeling to be drained and are unable to cope), depersonalisation (cynicism does not find satisfaction and with other people), and lower accomplishment (sense of ineffectiveness

and incompetence) (Mahasneh et al., 2022). Burnout is regarded as an occupational phenomenon by the WHO (2019), which was found to affect up to 79 % of workers in stressful occupations and can be caused by such factors as heavy workload, the absence of control, role ambiguity, and poor leadership and is particularly problematic in teaching and healthcare (Sanni, 2023).

Recent estimates have shown that more than 1/3 of worldwide public health workers are affected by burnout, and the rates tend to increase in times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which grew by 35% to 42% (Alanazy & Alruwaili, 2023). Burnout impacts can go beyond the individual employee to the team and overall organisational performance. Employee burnout may also affect the work environment, where employees become less open to communication and trust between colleagues. This reduces collaboration and teamwork, making the work environment toxic. The effects of burnout are usually felt on a larger scale because the burnt-out employees are generally less productive, and it takes a long time to complete the tasks, which reduces overall production and productivity (Gisick et al., 2025).

All these signs have been associated with increased absenteeism, mental and physical health issues, and turnover among workers. The prevalence estimates differ in different parts of the world (Alahmari et al., 2022). Still, burnout rates are always high in sectors with high-value stress environments, especially in healthcare, education, and technology. For example, almost half of the medical personnel refer to the burnout signs. Nurses are reported to have an even higher rate of 56 %, and the same pattern is present in educators and IT specialists who have to deal with rapid technological evolutions and workload escalations (Chemali et al., 2019; Rotenstein et al., 2023).

Industry-specific trends indicate that healthcare professionals experience one of the highest rates of burnout. This is often because of high workloads, emotional labour, and administrative burdens, further worsened recently by COVID-19 (De Hert, 2020). Education workers also have major burnout attributed to rising work demands and the stresses of catering to new technologies and working remotely (Cavallari et al., 2023). Technological space is burdened with burnout due to continuous innovation needs, work volume, and the disappearance of the line between work and life (Zhao et al., 2022). Cross-cultural comparisons indicate significant differences between the intensity and manifestation of burnout; nurses in collectivist cultures, for example, have greater depersonalization, while individualistic cultures show more turnover intentions. These differences highlight the role of cultural values in burnout experience and coping (Leo et al., 2021).

4. AI Adoption in the Workplace

The use of AI in the workplace has drastically changed, with different industries embracing it and altering work processes. AI has grown to have a wide range of reach, such as automation of routine work, cognitive AI that helps it learn and adapt, and complex decision-support systems that help improve managerial and operating functions (Wilkens, 2020). In other fields like healthcare, education, and technology, AI makes it easier to automate operations, base judgments on data, automate workflows, and become more efficient. For example, AI-enabled systems can support healthcare professionals in diagnosing and paperwork, educators accessing personalised learning, and tech-based employees creating a software program and monitoring the system (Dave & Patel, 2023).

Nonetheless, the utilisation of AI is also a two-edged sword. Though AI helps to make the work environment productive and effective, it adds new stressors, which may cause employee burnout (Kim & Lee, 2024). Due to the shift in job demands brought about by the AI integration, concerns of job security, role ambiguity, and the prospect of having more work to be done are common among employees. Furthermore, high pressure in AI adoption and a lack of role clarity could enhance stress and increase emotional depletion and deactivation. AI can also help eliminate burnout through a healthier workload distribution, stress-prediction, and tailored wellness programs (Ali et al., 2024). To fully unlock and reap the advantages of AI solutions while protecting employee wellness in the new labour environment, it is crucial to weigh the efficiency gains of AI solutions against the risk of avoiding or vigilantly managing the psychological toll.

5. Impact of AI on Employee Burnout

AI's influence on employee burnout in the digital workplace is complicated and includes positive and negative outcomes. Studies show that adopting AI does not lead directly to burnout; instead, it produces job stress that raises the risk of burnout. The application of AI involves a swift change in learning new systems and capabilities and learning to cope with altered role expectations, increasing job stress and uncertainty (Ali et al., 2024; Kong et al., 2021; Meduri et al., 2024). A paper published in 2024 on a sample of 416 professionals in South Korea concluded that

the adoption of AI was not a gross contributor to employee burnout, but had a significant contribution to job stress, contributing to employee burnout. This impact is because AI integration brings in new job demands, which require learning and adapting to new technology, and ambiguity of role and workload pressures (Kim & Lee, 2024).

On the positive note, AI-powered automation may ensure that employees no longer deal with mundane and low-value work, instead dedicating themselves to more significant work and minimising some occupational stresses (Ali et al., 2024). AI-related technology can promote work schedules, provide immediate feedback, and promote Butler's more individualised learning and support, leading to greater job satisfaction and work-life balance (Bhargava et al., 2021). This technological aid may increase resilience and decrease burnout in many because of its combination with organisational measures that promote skill-building and digital well-being (Bisht & Uniyal, 2024; Cho et al., 2024).

On the other hand, the high rate of AI deployment can cause anxiety regarding employment, loss of control, and human interaction-deprived concerns that increase the stress differences between management and staff (Ali et al., 2024). Employees can be overwhelmed by techno-overload, with no longer clear boundaries between work and life, ongoing learning requirements, and worry over staying relevant in an AI-inhabited workplace. All these contribute to the development of burnout, namely, exhaustion and cynicism, unless it is counteracted by human-friendly policies, open communication, and the possibility of learning more about AI and upskilling (Cramarenco et al., 2023; Kong et al., 2021; Meduri et al., 2024).

6. Strategies to Mitigate Burnout due to AI

The need to combat employee burnout in the workplace with AI introductions requires a multi-alleviative approach that should focus on enhancing technological development and employee well-being (Meduri et al., 2024). Organisations are advised to promote proactive stress management interventions and resilience-building programs that are expressly suited to the peculiar difficulties created by AI implementation (Pavuluri et al., 2024). Such interventions can include structured mental health evaluations, readily available psychological support services, and special education for managerial staff to detect prodromal signs of burnout. It is essential to facilitate communication and constant feedback in the structure of any organisation, since, in this way, it will be possible to build psychological safety, thus creating an atmosphere of trust and transparency, on which the reduction of the risk of burnout relies, both in AI-transformed workplaces (Ali et al., 2024; Cohen et al., 2023; Waddell et al., 2023).

Capacity-building training programs that support employee competencies in AI technologies will also help reduce technostress and work anxiety (Malik et al., 2022). At the organisational level, the continuous offering of professional development and reskilling opportunities to employees can enable them to successfully handle and assimilate AI-based processes and tools, reduce the risks of job loss in the plausible future, and increase the levels of perceived control (Bodea et al., 2024). This type of empowerment enhances resilience in the digital context. It may also be viewed as an efficient way to ease the negative impact of cognitive overload and role ambiguity likely to arise against a fast technological shift (Kim et al., 2023).

Furthermore, creating and imposing clear lines between professional and personal space in their battle against the ubiquitous digital intrusion that the AI-mediated working environment presents is essential. Organisational policies that promote flexible work arrangements, imposing breaks in contact with online mediums, and adherence to break offline time help reduce the evil of being always online (Cramarenco et al., 2023). The clever use of AI to automate repetitive tasks while maintaining some time for creative and relationship-enjoying activities keeps the personnel at a desirable level of job satisfaction and psychological prosperity (Msambwa et al., 2025). The current development of such balancing integrative measures is a cornerstone to ensuring workforce resiliency and maintaining healthy working environments in the ongoing AI implementation (Modgil et al., 2022).

7. Strengths and Limitations

The review provides an overview of available research that can help bridge the existing gap in the literature on the connection between AI adoption and workplace burnout, as previous research has little explored the psychological impacts of putting AI to use. Using the concepts of various theoretical approaches, including the JD-R model and the COR theory, the review offered a robust conceptual framework to describe AI's possible value and dangers in a business environment. It also combines cross-sectoral and cross-cultural input, providing a substantial idea of how the relationship between burnout and its causes differs in other spheres such as healthcare, education, and technology. The regency of empirical results, along with the balanced consideration of both potential benefits (e.g.,

automation advantages) and ills (e.g., techno-overload, job insecurities), contributes to the relevance of the review concerning the organisational policies and well-being strategies of the workforce.

The review presents the limitations of the wider approach, which relies on secondary sources which can be based on publication bias and have little methodological clarity in the initial studies. Most of the existing literature discussed in this research is cross-sectional, limiting the possibility of proving causal links between the AI adoption and burnout outcomes. Moreover, due to the high pace of changes in AI technologies, certain discoveries can soon become outdated, especially with the advent of new solutions and other adaptations in the workplace. Lastly, the results may also have low generalisability, and most of the mentioned studies are also restricted to particular cultural or industrial settings, including healthcare and education. They may, therefore, mask their experiences in other fields or areas.

8. Conclusion

The current review has indicated that this adoption of AI in the workforce can reduce and simultaneously increase employee burnout, respectively, contingent upon the deployment and backing provided. Although AI may reduce repetitive work and fatigue and provide work-life balance, it may lead to techno-overload, disruption in work, and role ambiguity. The best organisational policies and other employee training and well-being programs are needed to optimise the benefits of AI and minimise its psychological hazards.

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