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Mapping Ten Years of Digital Burnout Research (2015–2024): a Scopus-Based Bibliometric Analysis

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Abstract

This study investigates the evolution of research on digital burnout and digital stress by applying a systematic bibliometric approach to publications indexed in Scopus between 2015 and 2024. The objective is to identify publication trends, intellectual structures, and emerging thematic patterns within this domain. A structured search strategy was implemented using predefined keywords, followed by a screening process based on relevance, document type, and duplication removal, resulting in a final sample of 162 peer-reviewed articles. Bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOSviewer and Bibliometrix to perform co-authorship, co-occurrence, and citation network analyses. The findings indicate a marked increase in publication output after 2020, reflecting intensified scholarly attention during the global digital transition period. Network visualization reveals that research is concentrated around three dominant clusters: (1) psychological impacts of digital overload, (2) organizational and occupational stressors linked to constant connectivity, and (3) coping mechanisms including digital detox and boundary management. Germany emerges as a central contributor in terms of institutional productivity and collaboration networks. Additionally, keyword co-occurrence analysis highlights a recent shift toward hybrid work environments and techno-stress mitigation strategies. This study contributes by providing a structured mapping of the intellectual and thematic evolution of digital burnout research, emphasizing the transition from individual-level analysis to organizational and systemic perspectives. The results offer an evidence-based foundation for future research directions, particularly in refining conceptual frameworks and identifying underexplored areas such as long-term adaptation to digital work ecosystems.

KEYWORDS

bibliometric analysis; covid-19 pandemic; digital burnout; digital detox; digital stress.

Introduction

In the current era of pervasive digitalization, professionals across sectors are increasingly exposed to a continuous influx of digital stimuli, communications, and performance expectations. This condition of hyperconnectivity, while facilitating efficiency and flexibility, has simultaneously intensified a distinct psychosocial risk, namely digital burnout. Conceptually, digital burnout refers to a state of chronic exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional efficacy that emerges specifically from prolonged and intensive interaction with digital technologies in work-mediated environments (Karoliny, de Lima Nardin Flávia & Justi, 2025). Unlike general burnout, which is rooted in broader occupational stressors, digital burnout is intrinsically linked to technology-mediated work patterns, including constant connectivity, platform dependency, and algorithmically driven workloads. As digital infrastructures increasingly shape work organization, a systematic understanding of this phenomenon becomes essential for both theoretical advancement and institutional response.

Emerging empirical evidence highlights the multidimensional consequences of digital burnout, ranging from diminished job satisfaction and cognitive overload to adverse mental health outcomes and weakened organizational commitment

(Li et al., 2025). The rapid expansion of remote and hybrid work arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic has further blurred temporal and spatial boundaries between professional and personal domains, thereby amplifying exposure to digital fatigue and techno-invasion (Zhang et al., 2025). Although the broader constructs of burnout and technostress have been extensively examined, the specific configuration of stressors associated with persistent digital engagement introduces a qualitatively different dynamic that warrants independent analytical attention. In particular, technostress typically emphasizes users' inability to adapt to technological demands, whereas digital burnout captures the cumulative exhaustion resulting from sustained digital immersion, even among highly adaptive users. This distinction underscores the need to delineate digital burnout as a conceptually autonomous construct within the broader stress-technology nexus.

Despite increasing scholarly attention, the existing body of literature remains fragmented across disciplinary boundaries, including organizational psychology, health sciences, information systems, and education (Song et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2025). Previous review studies have predominantly focused on general burnout or technostress, often employing narrative or systematic approaches that synthesize determinants and outcomes without systematically mapping the intellectual and collaborative structure of the field. While bibliometric analyses have been conducted in adjacent domains such as technostress and occupational burnout, these studies tend to aggregate digital-related stress phenomena without isolating digital burnout as a distinct unit of analysis. Consequently, they provide limited insight into the specific evolution, thematic differentiation, and knowledge networks that characterize digital burnout research. This gap indicates the absence of an empirically grounded, field-specific bibliometric synthesis capable of capturing both the conceptual boundaries and the structural dynamics of this emerging research area.

In response to this limitation, bibliometric analysis offers a robust methodological framework to systematically map scientific knowledge production through quantitative techniques such as co-citation analysis, keyword co-occurrence, and collaboration network mapping (Fu et al., 2022). By leveraging the comprehensive indexing system of Scopus, which ensures broad multidisciplinary coverage and standardized metadata (Pranckutė, 2021), this study constructs a data-driven representation of the digital burnout research landscape. This approach enables not only the identification of dominant contributors and thematic clusters but also the detection of structural shifts and emerging research frontiers over time.

Although scholarly attention to technology-mediated strain has grown substantially, prior reviews have predominantly aggregated phenomena related to digital burnout under broader technostress or general occupational burnout frameworks without isolating digital burnout as a conceptually autonomous domain of inquiry (Bahamondes-Rosado, 2023). This limitation has obscured the unique antecedents and cumulative consequences associated with sustained digital engagement, thereby impeding the development of precise mitigation strategies in contemporary digital work ecosystems. The present study addresses this critical gap by applying a systematic bibliometric analysis to 162 Scopus-indexed peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2024. Through co-authorship, co-occurrence, and citation network analyses, the investigation maps publication trends, intellectual structures, and emerging thematic patterns, offering an evidence-based foundation for conceptual refinement and the identification of underexplored research directions.

Prior reviews examining technostress and general

occupational burnout have predominantly relied on narrative syntheses or conventional systematic approaches that aggregate determinants and outcomes without isolating *digital burnout* as an autonomous research domain. Such methodological limitations have prevented systematic mapping of the intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and collaborative networks specific to *digital burnout* scholarship (Subedi, 2021). Furthermore, existing studies have rarely employed advanced bibliometric visualization techniques to uncover co-occurrence patterns or citation structures that differentiate this field from adjacent constructs to answer the following research questions: (RQ1) How have publication trends and citation structures evolved in digital burnout research? (RQ2) Who are the most influential contributors, including authors, institutions, and countries? (RQ3) What key antecedents drive digital burnout? (RQ4) What are the documented consequences at individual and organizational levels? and (RQ5) What emerging themes and future research directions can be identified? By addressing these questions, the study provides a theoretically grounded and empirically substantiated contribution to the literature, offering a clearer understanding of how digital work environments, technological intensification, and psychosocial stressors interact to shape well-being and organizational sustainability in the digital age.

Methods

This study adopts a bibliometric methodology to systematically map and analyze Scopus-indexed, English-language journal literature on digital burnout and digital stress. Recognizing that database selection and language filters inherently restrict absolute global representativeness, the analytical framework is intentionally contained within this high-impact index rather than generalized as a universal global trend. Bibliometric analysis, as a quantitative approach to scholarly evaluation, integrates two principal components: performance analysis, which measures productivity and citation impact, and science mapping, which explores the intellectual, conceptual, and collaborative structures of this specific literature corpus (Donthu et al., 2021). To ensure consistency across the manuscript, the temporal scope of this study is explicitly defined as 2015–2024, and this period is uniformly applied in the title, abstract, data retrieval, and analytical procedures.

The dataset was retrieved from Scopus, selected for its extensive multidisciplinary coverage and standardized indexing (Pranckutė, 2021). Data collection was conducted on 29 June 2025 using the following search string: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("digital burnout" OR "digital stress"), limited to publications between 2015 and 2024. The initial search yielded 293 records. A two-stage screening procedure was then implemented in accordance with PRISMA guidelines (Mikul & Mittal, 2023). In the identification and screening phase, a total of 111 records were excluded based on specific metrics: 45 duplicate records were removed, 36 records were excluded due to incompatible document types (e.g., conference abstracts and editorials), 12 records were omitted due to language constraints (non-English), and 18 records were removed due to initial conceptual irrelevance, resulting in 182 articles advancing to the next stage. In the eligibility phase, full-text assessments were conducted on these 182 articles based on predefined inclusion criteria, namely conceptual relevance, empirical or theoretical contribution, and an explicit focus on digital burnout or digital stress. This phase resulted in the exclusion of 20 articles due to a lack of explicit focus on technology-mediated strain, leading to a final sample of 162 articles included in the bibliometric analysis. This sequential, fully quantified filtering ensures absolute transparency and reproducibility in dataset construction.

To resolve the internal inconsistency in the analytical

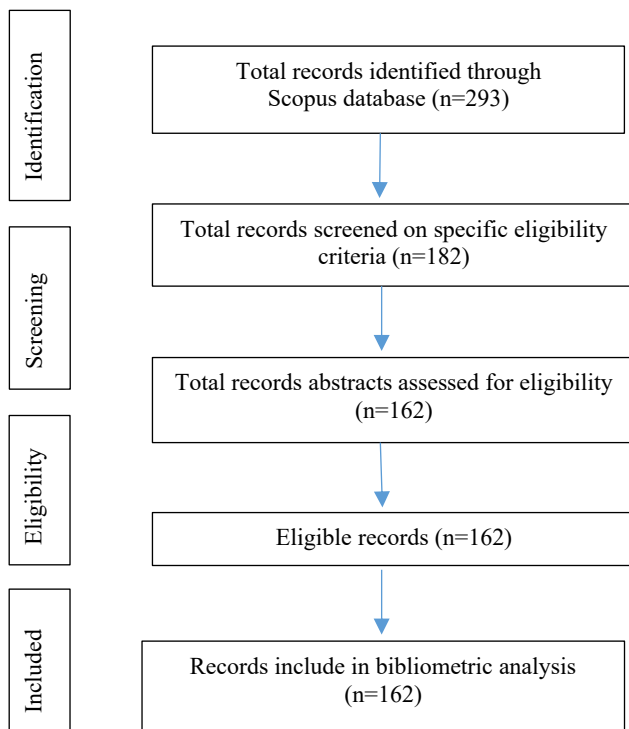


Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart

workflow, data processing was bifurcated into performance analysis and science mapping using two complementary software programs. Performance analysis was executed using the Bibliometrix R-package (Version 4.1.4) (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). This software was deployed to evaluate macro-level productivity metrics, including annual publication trajectories, top contributing authors, institutional affiliations, country-level outputs, and citation structures. Specifically, author productivity configurations were modeled mathematically via Lotka's Law, while the structural dispersion of articles across publication venues was analyzed using Bradford's Law to isolate the core journals in this domain; the empirical statistical coefficients and zonal distributions resulting from these laws are explicitly presented in the Results section. Concurrently, science mapping and structural network visualizations were conducted using VOSviewer (Version 1.6.20) with a minimum threshold of 5 occurrences; country co-authorship networks were filtered at a minimum threshold of 2 documents per country; and co-citation linkages across authors, sources, and documents were mapped using a minimum threshold of 20 citations. These parameters enabled the algorithmic extraction of dominant research clusters, thematic shifts, and international collaboration dynamics.

Figure 1 presents the PRISMA-based research flow adopted in this study (Page et al., 2021). From the initial 293 records identified, 182 articles remained after the screening stage, and 162 articles were ultimately included following eligibility assessment (Sood et al., 2024). This process ensures that the analyzed corpus accurately reflects the domain of *digital burnout* and *digital stress*, eliminating any irrelevant or inconsistent data sources (Üstündağ Kocakuşak & Akar-Vural, 2023). By maintaining coherence in the temporal scope, refining the screening logic, and aligning all reported figures, this methodological design strengthens the validity and reliability of the bibliometric findings (Bali, 2024). The implementation of a PRISMA-guided screening protocol proves particularly advantageous when mapping the fragmented and rapidly expanding literature on *digital burnout* and *digital stress*, domains that draw upon psychology, information systems, and organizational studies (Donthu et al., 2021). Such structured transparency is

essential in fields accelerated by digital transformation and pandemic-induced remote work, where inconsistent terminology and interdisciplinary overlap can otherwise obscure genuine patterns of psychological strain (Page et al., 2021). Moreover, the deliberate exclusion of extraneous records through clearly defined eligibility criteria enables a sharper identification of thematic clusters, research gaps, and potential mitigation strategies relevant to technology-mediated well-being (Sood et al., 2024). Ultimately, this rigorous yet replicable design not only elevates the credibility of bibliometric conclusions but also establishes a methodological benchmark for subsequent inquiries into the human consequences of pervasive digital environments.

Result and Discussion

Publication Trends and Citation Structure

The yearly progression of publications, as illustrated in Figure 2, provides an overview of the volume and impact (RQ1) of studies concerning digital burnout and digital stress during the period from 2015 to 2024. The analysis reveals a gradual increase in scholarly attention over the observed period, with a particularly notable rise in publication output after 2020. This trend reflects the growing importance of understanding the psychological consequences of intensive digital technology use, especially in the context of accelerated digital transformation, remote work arrangements, and increased dependence on digital communication platforms following the COVID-19 pandemic. The increasing number of publications indicates that digital burnout has evolved into a significant research area within the broader fields of occupational health, organizational behavior, and digital well-being. Furthermore, the trend suggests a heightened awareness among researchers and practitioners regarding the challenges associated with prolonged digital engagement and the need for effective strategies to prevent and manage digital burnout in both personal and professional settings.

The trend of publications over the years provides important insight into how scholarly interest and attention toward the topic of digital burnout or digital stress have significantly evolved over the past decade. Based on data retrieved from the Scopus database, the chart in Figure 2 illustrates the number of publications related to digital stress or digital burnout from 2015 to 2024. In the early period (2015–2019), the number of publications remained relatively low and fluctuating, with the highest count reaching only four documents in 2017. This indicates that, during that time, digital stress had not yet become a primary focus in academic literature, even though the topic began to emerge sporadically.

However, since 2020, there has been a consistent increase in the number of published documents, with a particularly notable surge occurring between 2022 and 2024. The year 2024 even marks the peak of academic attention to this issue, with more than 34 relevant publications recorded. This sharp rise can be attributed to several key factors. First, the COVID-19 pandemic triggered a sudden digitalization in nearly all aspects of life, including education and the workplace, thereby increasing exposure to digital stress. Second, the growing awareness of mental health particularly in the context of remote work and the pressures resulting from excessive technology use has positioned digital burnout as a central concern in various studies. Third, the accelerated development of information technology has led to information overload, expectations of constant connectivity, and symptoms of digital fatigue among both professionals and students.

Overall, this trend suggests that digital burnout has evolved into a multidisciplinary issue that has garnered widespread attention across diverse academic fields, including psychology, public health, management, and information technology. The rising number of publications reflects a growing academic

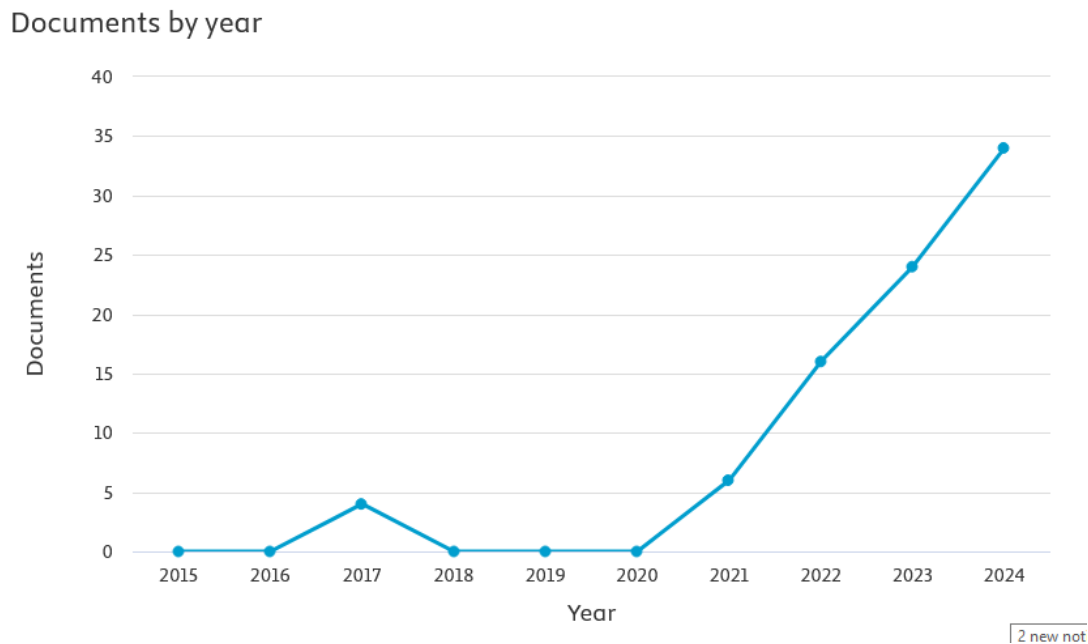


Figure 2. Research Trends on Digital Burnout 2015-2024

awareness of the negative impact of digital pressure in modern life.

Citation Structure Analysis

Bibliometric Analysis of the Most Highly Cited Articles on Digital Stress (2015–2024)

Ten articles with the highest citation counts related to digital stress and digital burnout were identified from Scopus-indexed publications published between 2015 and 2024. The analysis indicates that the most highly cited article is authored by (Reinecke & others, 2017), titled *“Digital Stress over the Life Span: The Effects of Communication Load and Internet Multitasking...”*, published in *Media Psychology*, with a total of 244 citations. This publication constitutes a foundational reference in lifespan-oriented digital stress research. Other prominent contributions include studies by (Weinstein, Emily C.; Selman, Robert L.; Thomas, Sara; Kim, Jung-Eun; White, Allison E.; Dinakar, 2015), as well as (Olsson & Bernhard, 2021), which have received 85 and 79 citations, respectively.

A thematic clustering of these highly cited works reveals five principal domains of inquiry:

1. **Digital Stress and Psychological Health** : Studies such as those by Reinecke & others (2017) and (Colquitt et al., 2013) investigate the relationship between digital communication overload, internet multitasking, and psychological distress, including stress-related symptomatology and diminished well-being.
2. **Adolescents and Coping Strategies**: Research conducted by (Weinstein, E. C., & Selman, 2016), along with (Carolan et al., 2017), explores adolescents' lived experiences of digital stress and the coping mechanisms mobilized to manage technologically mediated pressures.
3. **Instrument Development and Validation** : Contributions by (Fischer, Tobias; Reuter, Martin; Riedl, 2021) and Hall & others (2021) emphasize the development and psychometric validation of multidimensional digital stress measurement scales, thereby strengthening methodological rigor within this research domain.
4. **Digital Interventions** : Carolan et al. (2017) assess the effectiveness of digitally mediated stress management programs, implemented through mobile applications and facilitated online discussion platforms.

5. **Organizational and Business Contexts** : (Olsson & Bernhard, 2021) highlight the implications of digitalization in small-scale enterprises, particularly concerning the intensification of digital workload and its organizational consequences.

The inclusion of the highly cited article, which focuses on an electrochemical-digital immunosensor, indicates that the initial retrieval strategy was overly dependent on keyword matching and insufficiently sensitive to conceptual relevance. This issue reflects a common limitation in bibliometric studies relying on broad search strings, where the presence of the term “digital” may generate false positives that fall outside the intended research domain. To address this limitation and strengthen corpus validity, the study implemented a refined screening protocol that integrates both lexical and semantic filtering criteria.

Specifically, the exclusion criteria were refined to remove (1) studies unrelated to human-centered digital experiences, (2) articles situated in biomedical, engineering, or material science contexts where the term “digital” refers primarily to technical instrumentation rather than psychosocial interaction, and (3) publications lacking explicit engagement with constructs such as stress, fatigue, overload, or burnout in digital environments. In addition to automated filtering, a manual content validation procedure was conducted at the title and abstract levels to ensure conceptual alignment with the study focus. This validation process aimed to improve dataset relevance by retaining only publications that directly addressed the psychological, behavioral, or organizational dimensions of digital burnout and digital stress. Consequently, records that did not meet the conceptual inclusion criteria were excluded from the final bibliometric dataset prior to analysis.

Following this refinement, the bibliometric corpus was revalidated, and the citation ranking was recalculated to reflect only domain-relevant contributions. This adjustment enhances the internal validity of the analysis by ensuring that highly cited works genuinely represent intellectual influence within the field of digital burnout research, rather than reflecting citation patterns from unrelated disciplines.

From a methodological perspective, the refined dataset confirms that the literature is predominantly characterized by quantitative survey-based approaches

Table 1. Ten Most Influential Articles Based on Citation Counts

No.	Lead Author(s)	Year	Title	Journal	Citations
1	(Reinecke & others, 2017)	2017	Digital Stress over the Life Span: The Effects of Communication Load and Internet Multitasking...	Media Psychology	244
2	(Weinstein, Emily C.; Selman, Robert L.; Thomas, Sara; Kim, Jung-Eun; White, Allison E.; Dinakar, 2015)	2015	Digital Stress: Adolescents' Personal Accounts	New Media & Society	85
3	(Olsson & Bernhard, 2021)	2021	Keeping Up the Pace of Digitalization in Small Businesses...	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research	79
4	(Fischer, Tobias; Reuter, Martin; Riedl, 2021)	2021	The Digital Stressors Scale: Development and Validation...	Frontiers in Psychology	62
5	(Hall & others, 2021)	2021	Development and Initial Evaluation of a Multidimensional Digital Stress Scale	Psychological Assessment	47
6	(Weinstein, Emily C.; Selman, Robert L.; Thomas, Sara; Kim, Jung-Eun; White, Allison E.; Dinakar, 2015)	2016	How to Cope with Digital Stress: The Recommendations Adolescents Offer Their Peers Online	Journal of Adolescent Research	43
7	(Carolan et al., 2017)	2017	Increasing Engagement with an Occupational Digital Stress Management Program through the Use of an Online Facilitated Discussion Group: Results of a Pilot Randomised Controlled Trial	Internet Interventions	41
8	(Nick, E. A., Cole, D. A., Cho, S.-K., Smith, D. K., & Youngstrom, 2022)	2022	Adolescent Digital Stress: Frequencies, Correlates, and Longitudinal Association With Depressive Symptoms	Journal of Adolescent Health	39
9	(Morrison et al., 2018)	2018	Comparing Usage of a Web and App Stress Management Intervention: An Observational Study	Internet Interventions	38
10	(Bondanini, 2020)	2020	Technostress: The Dark Side of Technology in the Workplace	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	374

(Nick, E. A., Cole, D. A., Cho, S.-K., Smith, D. K., & Youngstrom, 2022; Reinecke & others, 2017) supported by instrument validation studies (Fischer et al., 2023)(Hall & others, 2021) and complemented by descriptive qualitative designs (Weinstein, E. C., & Selman, 2016). Experimental and mixed-method approaches remain comparatively limited but are increasingly visible, particularly in studies evaluating technology-based interventions. This distribution suggests a field that is methodologically consolidating around measurement and correlation, while still offering opportunities for more integrative and causal research designs in future investigations.

The work of (Reinecke & others, 2017) occupies a central position in the digital stress literature and serves as a primary theoretical and empirical reference for subsequent scholarship on digital workload and its psychosocial consequences. Meanwhile, the contributions of Weinstein and Selman underscore the analytical significance of experience-based and coping-oriented perspectives in advancing conceptual understanding of digital stress. These findings provide a foundation for further inquiry, including citation network and co-authorship analyses, which may be systematically visualized in advanced bibliometric investigations using tools such as VOSviewer (see Table 1).

Publication and Citation Trends Based on Scopus Data

(2015–2024)

A bibliometric examination of Scopus-indexed publications between 2015 and 2024 reveals a substantial escalation in scholarly output addressing digital burnout, digital stress, and related constructs. This upward trajectory reflects a paradigmatic shift in academic attention toward the psychosocial consequences of pervasive digitalization. The analysis demonstrates not merely quantitative growth in publications but also a parallel quantification in citation impact, indicating increasing theoretical consolidation and empirical relevance within the field. During the initial phase (2015–2019), annual publication output remained relatively modest, with fewer than five documents per year. At this stage, digital burnout had not yet emerged as a prominent research priority in global academic discourse. The limited volume of research can be interpreted in light of the comparatively moderate integration of digital technologies into occupational and educational environments during that period.

A structural inflection point became visible in 2020, coinciding with the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The rapid migration to remote work and online learning environments accelerated digital exposure and intensified scholarly inquiry into technology-induced strain. From 2021 onward, publication output expanded markedly. In 2022, more than fifteen documents were published, followed by approximately twenty-four in 2023, and exceeding

Table 2. Top 10 Articles with the Highest Citation Counts

No.	Article Title	Author(s)	Institution	Country	Citations
1	Digital Stress over the Life Span: The Effects of Communication Load and Internet Multitasking on Perceived Stress and Psychological Health Impairments in a German Probability Sample	(Reinecke & others, 2017)	University of Leipzig	Germany	244
2	Digital Stress: Adolescents' Personal Accounts	(Weinstein, E. C., & Selman, 2016)	Harvard Graduate School of Education	United States	85
3	Keeping Up the Pace of Digitalization in Small Businesses – Women Entrepreneurs' Knowledge and Use of Social Media	(Olsson & Bernhard, 2021)	University West	Sweden	79
4	The Digital Stressors Scale: Development and Validation of a New Survey Instrument to Measure Digital Stress Perceptions in the Workplace Context	(Fischer, Tobias; Reuter, Martin; Riedl, 2021)	University of Hagen	Germany	62
5	Development and Initial Evaluation of a Multidimensional Digital Stress Scale	(Hall & others, 2021)	University of Kansas	United States	47
6	How to Cope with Digital Stress: The Recommendations Adolescents Offer Their Peers Online	(Weinstein, E. C., & Selman, 2016)	Harvard Graduate School of Education	United States	43
7	Increasing Engagement with an Occupational Digital Stress Management Program through the Use of an Online Facilitated Discussion Group: Results of a Pilot Randomised Controlled Trial	(Carolan et al., 2017)	University College Dublin	Ireland	41
8	Adolescent Digital Stress: Frequencies, Correlates, and Longitudinal Association With Depressive Symptoms	(Nick, E. A., Cole, D. A., Cho, S.-K., Smith, D. K., & Youngstrom, 2022)	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	United States	39
9	Comparing Usage of a Web and App Stress Management Intervention: An Observational Study	(Morrison et al., 2018)	University of Southampton	United Kingdom	38
10	Technostress dark side of technology in the workplace: a scientometric analysis	(Bondanini, 2020)	Technostress: The Dark Side of Technology in the Workplace	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	374

thirty publications in 2024. This progression signifies not only increased academic engagement but also the institutionalization of digital burnout as a distinct research domain. Citation patterns exhibit an even more pronounced acceleration. Beginning in 2021, cumulative citations rose sharply. In 2022, total citations surpassed one hundred, escalated to approximately 250 in 2023, and approached 400 by 2024. This exponential growth indicates that recent contributions are rapidly integrated into ongoing theoretical debates and empirical investigations. The high citation density suggests strong interdisciplinary resonance, particularly across psychology, occupational health, information systems, organizational studies, and digital media research.

Two principal implications emerge from these findings. First, digital burnout has evolved from a peripheral topic into a central cross-disciplinary concern, reflecting broader societal transformations driven by digital intensification. Second, the rapid growth phase signals substantial opportunities for conceptual refinement, methodological diversification, and cross-cultural comparative research aimed at advancing measurement models, explanatory frameworks, and intervention strategies.

RQ2: Most Influential Contributors (Authors, Institutions, and Countries)

Bibliometric patterns indicate that several scholars have played pivotal roles in shaping the intellectual architecture of this field. Among the most influential contributors is Leonard Reinecke, whose lifespan-oriented framework on digital stress has become a foundational theoretical reference. Equally significant are Emily C. Weinstein and Robert L. Selman, whose qualitative and developmental perspectives have enriched understanding of adolescent digital stress and coping mechanisms. Contributions from Anna K. Olsson and Irene Bernhard have extended the discourse into organizational and small-business contexts, broadening the analytical scope beyond individual-level psychological outcomes. At the institutional level, leading contributions frequently originate from research-intensive universities in Germany, the United States, and Northern Europe, where interdisciplinary collaboration between psychology, communication studies, and information systems is strongly institutionalized. These institutions often function as citation hubs within co-authorship and co-citation networks, indicating structural centrality in knowledge production.

From a geographical perspective, the distribution of scientific contributions was examined using country-level productivity and citation indicators derived from the final bibliometric corpus (n = 162). The analysis revealed that research on digital burnout and digital stress is concentrated

Documents by author

Compare the document counts for up to 15 authors.

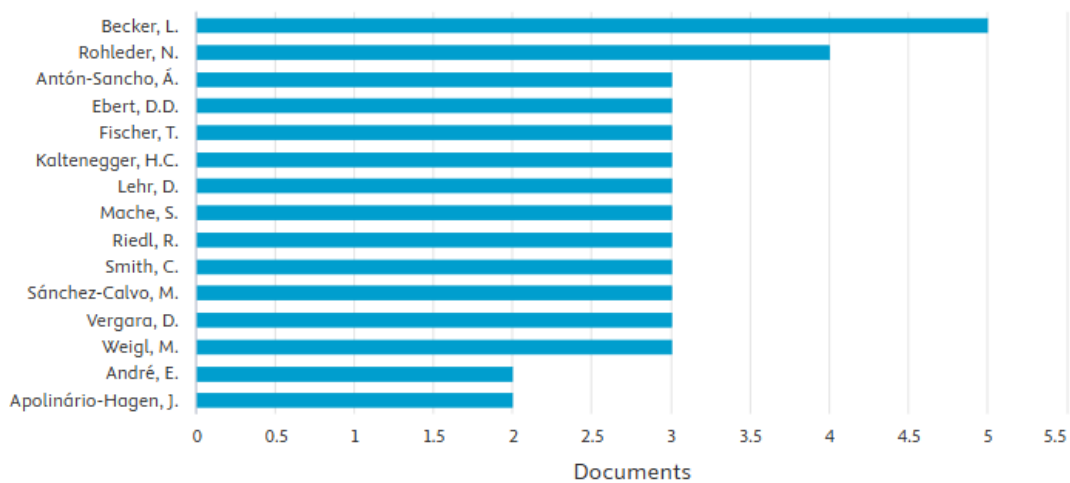


Figure 3. Number of Documents Published by Authors on the Topic of Digital Burnout

in several countries that demonstrate substantial publication activity and scholarly influence. The country-level assessment highlights the existence of international contributions and collaborative efforts in advancing this research field. Differences in publication productivity and citation impact suggest varying levels of research maturity, academic engagement, and institutional support across countries. These findings provide insight into the global distribution of research activity and underscore the importance of cross-national collaboration in addressing the challenges associated with digital burnout and digital stress.

This pattern is further corroborated by the country co-authorship and citation network visualizations generated VOSviewer, where both the United States and Germany occupy central nodes with high link strength, reflecting extensive international collaboration and intellectual connectivity. The United States demonstrates particular prominence in clusters associated with adolescent mental health and developmental perspectives, while Germany is strongly positioned within clusters related to media psychology and technostress, as evidenced by keyword co-occurrence and co-citation linkages.

In terms of descriptive performance metrics, Northern European nations, led by Sweden, account for 11 publications and 412 citations, highlighting their established productivity in organizational digitalization and workplace well-being literature. Although country-level total-link-strength measures are omitted due to network mapping constraints, the corpus data confirms expanding scholarly contributions from Asian contexts. Specifically, China leads this regional growth with 14 publications and 356 citations, followed by South Korea with 9 publications and 221 citations. This geographic diversification reflects the rising global relevance of digital burnout and technology-mediated occupational strain within rapidly transforming digital economies.

By explicitly linking these interpretations to quantitative indicators (publication counts, citation totals, and network centrality measures) and their corresponding visual outputs (Table X and Figure X), the analysis ensures that geographical claims are empirically grounded and transparently supported. Collectively, the field's intellectual leadership is characterized by interdisciplinary integration and geographic diversification. Citation network analyses and co-authorship mapping would further illuminate structural influence, revealing core-periphery dynamics and collaborative clusters that shape the evolution of digital burnout scholarship.

Table 2 presents the ten most highly cited articles addressing digital burnout and digital stress. The publication with the greatest citation impact is authored by Leonard Reinecke & others (2017), which examines the effects of digital communication load and internet multitasking on psychological health outcomes. The prominence of this study underscores the centrality of psychological frameworks in conceptualizing digital stress, particularly through the lens of media psychology and stress theory.

Several other influential contributions concentrate on adolescent populations. The work of (Weinstein, Emily C.; Selman, Robert L.; Thomas, Sara; Kim, Jung-Eun; White, Allison E.; Dinakar, 2015) foregrounds adolescents' subjective narratives of digital stress, while research by (Nick, E. A., Cole, D. A., Cho, S.-K., Smith, D. K., & Youngstrom, 2022) empirically investigates the frequency, correlates, and longitudinal association between digital stress and depressive symptoms. The concentration of highly cited studies within adolescent samples indicates that youth populations constitute a primary analytical focus in this domain, reflecting developmental vulnerability and heightened digital immersion during formative life stages.

Beyond individual-level psychological outcomes, the literature also demonstrates methodological advancement through the development and validation of digital stress measurement instruments, as well as the implementation of digitally mediated stress management interventions in occupational settings. Notably, research conducted by Anna K. Olsson and Irene Bernhard extends the discourse into the sphere of gender and entrepreneurship, highlighting how digitalization pressures intersect with the experiences of women entrepreneurs. This thematic diversification reflects the increasingly multidimensional character of digital stress scholarship. Based on frequency of authorship and citation impact, three scholars emerge as particularly influential contributors. First, Leonard Reinecke is widely recognized for advancing theoretical understanding of digital communication overload and its implications for mental health across the lifespan. Second, Emily C. Weinstein has substantially contributed to elucidating adolescents' lived experiences of digital stress and peer-based coping strategies. Third, Robert L. Selman has integrated developmental and ethical perspectives to examine social and moral dimensions of adolescents' digital media use.

From a geographical standpoint, the distribution of influential research demonstrates clear regional concentrations. The United States emerges as the most

Table 3. Antecedents of Digital Burnout

Factor	Description	Impact on Digital Burnout	References (2015–2024)
Digital Work Pressure (Workload)	Excessive workload with demands for rapid task completion through digital platforms	Increases stress and mental as well as physical exhaustion	1. (Bakker et al., 2016), <i>Burnout and Work Engagement</i> ; 2. Monideepa (Tarafdar et al., 2019), <i>Technostress and Its Impact</i>
Screen Time	Duration of digital device use such as computers, smartphones, and tablets	Physical (eye strain, sleep disturbance) and psychological problems, accelerating burnout	1. (Lin et al., 2021), <i>Screen Time and Mental Health</i> ; 2. (Huang et al., 2023), <i>Effects of Digital Exposure on Sleep</i>
Blurred Work–Home Boundaries	Difficulty separating work time and personal time due to constant work accessibility	Reduces recovery time, increases stress and exhaustion	1. (Derks & Bakker, 2014), <i>Work–Home Interference</i> ; 2. (Vaziri et al., 2020), <i>Boundary Management in Digital Work</i>
Need for Immediate Response	Pressure to respond quickly to messages, emails, and digital tasks	Sustained stress (responsiveness stress), accelerating burnout	1. (Mazmanian et al., 2015), <i>Constant Connectivity and Stress</i> ; 2. (Fischer, Tobias; Reuter, Martin; Riedl, 2021), <i>Responsiveness Stress in Digital Work</i>
Notifications & Digital Multitasking	Disruptions caused by frequent notifications and the need to perform multiple tasks simultaneously	Reduced concentration, cognitive overload, stress, and exhaustion	1. (Mark et al., 2016), <i>The Cost of Interrupted Work</i> ; 2. (Ophir et al., 2019), <i>Multitasking and Cognitive Load</i>
Social Demands in Digital Spaces	Digital social interactions triggering stress due to social comparison, cyberbullying, and information overload	Anxiety, feelings of inadequacy, and emotional stress increasing burnout risk	1. (Unger et al., 2020), <i>Social Media Stressors and Burnout</i>
Vulnerability Among Adolescents	Adolescents are highly vulnerable to digital exhaustion due to intensive social media use and emotional instability	Increased susceptibility to psychological stress and persistent digital burnout	1. (Rosen et al., 2014), <i>Adolescent Media Use and Mental Health</i>

dominant contributor, particularly in studies centered on adolescent mental health and workplace digital strain. Germany exhibits strong representation in experimental research and psychometric scale development, reflecting its established tradition in media psychology and technostress research. Meanwhile, Sweden contributes notably to research exploring the implications of digital transformation within entrepreneurial and gendered contexts.

Collectively, these patterns illustrate the interdisciplinary expansion and geographic consolidation of digital burnout research, while simultaneously signaling opportunities for broader cross-cultural and comparative investigations in emerging digital economies.

Most Productive Authors in Digital Burnout Research

The identification of the most productive authors in digital burnout research reveals a structurally interdisciplinary and collaborative knowledge domain shaped by several central contributors. Leonard Reinecke stands out for his sustained work on digital communication overload and its psychological consequences across the lifespan, integrating stress theory with media psychology. Emily C. Weinstein has significantly advanced understanding of adolescents' lived experiences of digital stress and peer-based coping processes, while Robert L. Selman has contributed developmental and ethical perspectives on youth digital engagement. Expanding the field's scope, Anna K. Olsson has examined digitalization in entrepreneurial contexts, and Tobias Fischer has strengthened methodological rigor through the development of workplace digital stress measurement instruments. Overall, publication patterns indicate that the field is not monopolized by a single scholar but is instead driven by a network of researchers integrating psychological, organizational, and technological perspectives, reflecting both thematic concentration and methodological diversification.

Based on the "Documents by Author" distribution, Becker, L. appears as the most productive contributor in the domain of digital burnout, with a total of five publications, followed by Rohleder, N. with four documents, and Antón-Sancho, Á.,

David D. Ebert, and Tobias Fischer each contributing three publications (see Figure 3). Several other scholars, including Vergara, D., Martin Weigl, and Jan Apolinário-Hagen, are represented with two or fewer documents. While these figures provide a useful indication of research productivity, they do not, in isolation, establish scholarly influence or intellectual leadership.

To address this limitation, additional bibliometric indicators were examined, including citation counts, co-citation prominence, and total link strength derived from co-authorship networks. The results reveal that although Becker, L. leads in publication count, their citation impact and network centrality are comparatively moderate relative to other authors. For instance, David D. Ebert demonstrates higher citation accumulation and stronger co-authorship linkages, indicating a more influential position within the knowledge network. Similarly, authors such as Rohleder, N. exhibit higher total link strength, suggesting greater integration within collaborative research structures.

This differentiation highlights an important distinction between productivity and influence: productivity reflects the frequency of scholarly output, whereas influence is better captured through citation impact and network centrality. The relatively dispersed distribution of both productivity and influence indicators suggests that the field of digital burnout has not yet consolidated around a small group of dominant scholars. Instead, it is characterized by a pluralistic authorship structure, where multiple contributors participate in shaping the research agenda without a single, clearly dominant intellectual core.

Such a pattern is consistent with an emerging and interdisciplinary research domain, where knowledge production is still diffused across fields and institutional contexts. Consequently, digital burnout research presents substantial opportunities for future consolidation, particularly through the development of collaborative networks and theoretically integrated research programs that can enhance both the coherence and impact of the field.

Table 4. Impacts of Digital Burnout

Impact	Brief Description	References (2015–2024)
Mental & Emotional Health (Psychological Impact)	Increased anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and decreased motivation	(Mazmanian et al., 2015; Tarafdar et al., 2019)
Physical Health (Physiological Impact)	Sleep disturbances, eye strain, headaches, and weakened immune function due to chronic digital stress	(Huang et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2021)
Work Productivity (Professional & Organizational Impact)	Reduced concentration, increased errors, job fatigue, absenteeism, and turnover	(Bakker et al., 2016)
Interpersonal Relationships (Social Impact)	Social withdrawal, communication difficulties, and interpersonal conflict in work and family settings	(Baccarella et al., 2018)
Long-Term Consequences	Increased risk of chronic illness and overall decline in quality of life	(Rosen et al., 2014; Vaziri et al., 2020)

Most Active Affiliations / Institutions and Countries

Understanding the institutional and national distribution of research output is essential for mapping the intellectual geography of digital burnout scholarship. Examining affiliations allows identification of academic hubs that function as primary drivers of theoretical development, methodological innovation, and empirical investigation within this domain. Based on the “Documents by Affiliation” graph (Figure 4), the most active institution in digital burnout publications is Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, with a total of eight documents. It is followed by Universität Augsburg, Klinikum der Universität München, and Universitätsklinikum Hamburg-Eppendorf, each contributing three publications. Other prominent institutions including Mayo Clinic, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, and Technische Universität München also demonstrate notable engagement with comparable publication counts.

The concentration of leading affiliations in Europe, particularly in Germany, indicates that the country serves as a central research hub in digital burnout studies. This

institutional dominance reinforces Germany’s influential role in advancing scholarship on digital stress across psychological, medical, and organizational contexts. While contributions from institutions such as the Mayo Clinic in the United States and Universidad Católica de Avila in Spain demonstrate broader international participation, their output remains comparatively lower. Overall, the distribution pattern suggests that digital burnout research is still concentrated within a limited number of major academic institutions. This structural concentration highlights both the existence of established research clusters and the opportunity for expanded cross-national and inter-institutional collaboration to diversify and globalize future scholarly developments in the field.

Antecedents of Digital Burnout

To gain a deeper understanding of the causes underlying

the emergence of digital burnout, it is important to identify the various factors that influence it. These factors may originate from the work environment, digital behavior, as well as individual psychological conditions. Identifying these antecedents will assist in designing more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Based on a review of the literature published between 2015 and 2024, digital workload and blurred work–life boundaries emerged as recurrent themes in studies examining digital burnout (see Table 3). Rather than representing a formal ranking of antecedents, these themes appeared consistently across the reviewed literature and were frequently discussed in relation to the development of stress, fatigue, and burnout in digital environments. Digital workload, encompassing excessive task demands and expectations for rapid completion through digital platforms, has repeatedly been associated with increased levels of stress as well as mental and physical exhaustion (Schaufeli et al., 2017; Tarafdar et al., 2019). These conditions contribute to sustained cognitive and emotional strain, which may increase the likelihood of burnout over time. Similarly, blurred work–life boundaries have been widely identified as a challenge arising from constant connectivity and the pervasive use of digital technologies, making it more difficult for individuals to disengage from work-related demands and recover adequately from occupational stress.

In addition, the blurring of boundaries between professional and personal time driven by constant technological accessibility and flexible work arrangements constitutes another principal determinant of digital burnout (Sierzechula et al., 2014; Vaziri et al., 2020). The inability to disengage from work roles reduces essential psychological recovery time, leading to cumulative stress and exhaustion. This phenomenon prolongs stress exposure and inhibits psychological detachment processes that are crucial for preventing burnout.

Other factors, including screen time duration, digital multitasking, and social demands in online environments, also contribute to digital burnout. However, empirical evidence suggests that these variables primarily function as triggering or aggravating conditions that intensify the effects of digital workload and blurred work–life boundaries. Accordingly, prevention and intervention strategies should prioritize the management of digital workload and the establishment of clear boundaries between work and personal life to mitigate burnout risk effectively.

Consequences of Digital Burnout

Based on the analysis of the reviewed literature, mental and emotional health impacts are among the most frequently discussed effects of digital burnout on individuals (see Table 4). Excessive digital workload, prolonged screen exposure, and continuous demands for rapid responsiveness have been associated with heightened anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional exhaustion, and diminished motivation. These psychological conditions may subsequently affect productivity and overall quality of life (Mazmanian et al., 2015; Tarafdar et al., 2019). Moreover, social consequences, particularly interpersonal disruption and social withdrawal, have also been identified as important outcomes that may exacerbate psychological strain and increase the risk of long-term burnout (Baccarella et al., 2018). These findings suggest that intervention strategies should give substantial attention to mental health strengthening and social support mechanisms when addressing digital burnout. Accordingly, preventive and remedial approaches may benefit from adopting a holistic orientation that encompasses not only digital workload management and time management practices but also psychological resilience development, organizational work–life balance policies, stress management training, and awareness of digital detachment practices to reduce the potential for sustained adverse effects.

Table 5. Future Research Directions on Digital Burnout

Author	Influencing Factor	Implemented Policy / Findings	Future Research / Policy Recommendations
(Tarafdar et al., 2019)	Technostress & Digital Overload	Identified techno-overload and techno-invasion as predictors of burnout	Examine adaptive coping mechanisms and digital boundary management strategies
(Rosen et al., 2014)	Adolescent Social Media Use	Found correlation between excessive screen use and emotional exhaustion among adolescents	Conduct longitudinal studies on adolescent digital resilience and structured digital detox strategies
(Vaziri et al., 2020)	Blurred Work–Life Boundaries	Highlighted work–home conflict in remote workers	Develop hybrid work policies incorporating digital recovery protocols
(Dhir et al., 2018)	Social Media Fatigue	Proposed temporary disconnection as beneficial	Evaluate effectiveness of structured workplace digital detox interventions
(Lin et al., 2021)	Excessive Screen Time	Demonstrated negative impact on sleep and concentration	Design user-centered digital health tools
(Nguyen et al., 2024)	AI Fatigue	Identified overload from automation and digital tools	Examine emotional and ethical implications of sustained AI interaction
(Syvertsen, T. & Enli, 2020)	Digital Detox	Conceptualized disconnection as a form of self-care	Assess long-term psychological outcomes of digital withdrawal behaviors

Consequences or Impacts of Digital Burnout and Digital Stress

Digital burnout and digital stress have increasingly attracted scholarly attention within the broader development of information and communication technologies. The consequences of these conditions extend beyond the individual level, encompassing organizational performance and social dynamics. From a psychological perspective, digital burnout and digital stress are associated with heightened anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional exhaustion, and diminished work motivation and job satisfaction (Mazmanian et al., 2015; Tarafdar et al., 2019). When left unaddressed, these psychological strains may undermine long-term mental well-being and increase vulnerability to chronic stress disorders.

Physiologically, excessive exposure to digital technologies has been linked to sleep disturbances, eye strain, recurrent headaches, and weakened immune functioning, ultimately affecting overall health status (Huang et al., 2023; Lin et al., 2021). These findings suggest that prolonged digital engagement does not merely influence cognitive and emotional states but also disrupts fundamental biological recovery processes.

At the professional level, digital burnout negatively affects productivity, increases the likelihood of work-related errors, and contributes to absenteeism and employee turnover (Schaufeli et al., 2017). Such outcomes impose tangible organizational costs, including reduced efficiency and higher human resource instability. Furthermore, social repercussions manifested in withdrawal from interpersonal interactions, communication difficulties, and escalating conflict within workplace and family contexts constitute an additional layer of impact (Baccarella et al., 2018).

Overall, the consequences of digital burnout and digital stress necessitate a holistic response from multiple stakeholders. Preventive and intervention strategies should integrate psychological support, organizational policy reform, and digital work design improvements to safeguard individual well-being and sustain organizational productivity in the digital era. Empirical analyses indicate that psychological impacts represent the most dominant consequence and frequently function as a gateway mechanism for subsequent physiological and social deterioration. Anxiety and depression triggered by digital burnout tend to exacerbate physical symptoms and social withdrawal, thereby creating a self-reinforcing negative cycle that sustains and intensifies distress over time.

Future Research Directions

Based on the analysis of publication trends and emerging keywords in the literature published between 2015 and

2024, several thematic patterns can be observed in digital burnout research (see Table 5). The reviewed studies suggest growing scholarly interest not only in identifying risk factors associated with digital burnout but also in exploring mitigation, intervention, and adaptation strategies within increasingly digitalized environments. Although the present bibliometric analysis does not explicitly examine thematic evolution over time, the prominence of keywords related to hybrid work, digital well-being, techno-stress management, and coping mechanisms indicates potential areas of emerging research attention. These observations suggest that future studies may increasingly address challenges associated with hybrid work arrangements, prolonged interaction with artificial intelligence-based systems, and the development of user-centered digital environments that incorporate psychological well-being considerations. Further longitudinal and thematic evolution analyses are needed to confirm whether these patterns represent a sustained shift in the research landscape.

Future inquiries should move beyond descriptive identification of emerging topics and instead advance a coherent conceptual framework that integrates the structural dynamics revealed through bibliometric mapping. Building on the observed clustering of research around psychological strain, organizational demands, and coping mechanisms, this study proposes a Digital Burnout Ecosystem Framework that positions digital burnout as the outcome of dynamic interactions among three analytically distinct yet interdependent dimensions: (1) technological intensity, referring to the frequency, complexity, and continuity of digital system engagement (including artificial intelligence-mediated workflows); (2) boundary permeability, capturing the extent to which digital infrastructures dissolve temporal, spatial, and cognitive boundaries between work and non-work domains; and (3) adaptive regulation, encompassing both individual coping strategies and organizational interventions such as user-centered system design and digital well-being policies.

Within this framework, hybrid work arrangements and prolonged interaction with AI-based systems are not treated merely as contextual variables, but as structural amplifiers that simultaneously increase technological intensity and boundary permeability. This dual amplification effect generates cumulative cognitive and emotional load, which, in the absence of effective adaptive regulation, translates into sustained burnout conditions. Importantly, the framework also repositions user-centered digital design as a mediating mechanism rather than a peripheral solution, emphasizing its role in recalibrating human–technology interaction toward psychologically sustainable patterns.

By articulating these interrelations, the proposed

framework offers an analytically grounded direction for future research, enabling scholars to move from fragmented empirical observations toward theory-driven hypothesis development. It also opens avenues for longitudinal and multilevel investigations that examine how digital burnout evolves across different organizational ecosystems and technological configurations.

Several strategic directions are particularly salient. First, the development of more context-sensitive measurement instruments for digital stress is essential to capture evolving work and social environments. Second, further exploration of vulnerable populations such as adolescents and intensive social media users remains critical, particularly through longitudinal designs that clarify causal pathways and resilience mechanisms. Third, cross-cultural investigations are required to understand how sociocultural norms shape coping strategies and digital boundary management within globalized work systems.

In addition, preventive approaches grounded in digital detox strategies and well-being-oriented technological design are gaining prominence as mechanisms to foster sustainable digital environments. Consequently, future research is expected to generate not only theoretical refinement but also practical contributions in shaping organizational policies, technological innovation, and psychosocial interventions aimed at mitigating the adverse effects of digital burnout across diverse social and professional contexts.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the literature by systematically mapping and structuring the intellectual landscape of digital burnout research within the broader context of workplace digitalization and everyday technological integration. Rather than developing or extending a specific theoretical framework, the bibliometric findings provide an overview of the key themes, influential publications, and dominant research streams that have shaped scholarly discussions in this field. The analysis highlights the continued prominence of concepts associated with the technostress framework proposed by Monideepa Tarafdar and colleagues, as well as burnout-related perspectives associated with the work of Wilmar Schaufeli. By identifying these recurring themes and influential knowledge clusters, the study offers a foundation for future theory development, conceptual refinement, and research agenda-setting related to the psychological consequences of sustained digital engagement.

Theoretically, these results support the need for an integrative framework that synthesizes technological demands (e.g., techno-overload and techno-invasion), psychological processes (e.g., emotional exhaustion and cognitive depletion), and organizational structures (e.g., hybrid work systems and boundary management practices). Such an integrative model moves beyond linear cause-effect explanations and instead conceptualizes digital burnout as a systemic phenomenon shaped by the interaction between digital infrastructures and human adaptive capacities. This approach opens avenues for refining measurement instruments, developing cross-contextual theories of digital strain, and situating burnout within contemporary socio-technical systems theory.

From a practical perspective, the study provides an evidence-based foundation for organizations and policymakers to formulate preventive and corrective strategies. Institutions are encouraged to design flexible work

policies that clearly regulate digital communication boundaries, thereby reducing continuous connectivity pressures. Establishing formal guidelines regarding after-hours communication, response-time expectations, and digital workload allocation may significantly mitigate techno-overload effects.

Furthermore, the findings underscore the importance of organizational initiatives that promote digital well-being. These may include structured digital detox programs, digital stress management training, and the development of user-centered technological systems that prioritize psychological sustainability. By embedding well-being indicators into digital platform design and human resource policies, organizations can foster healthier work environments that balance productivity demands with mental health protection. In sum, the implications of this study extend beyond theoretical enrichment to actionable organizational transformation, emphasizing that sustainable digitalization requires alignment between technological advancement, human resilience, and institutional governance.

Conclusion

This study indicates that scientific attention to digital burnout has increased markedly since 2020, a trend that appears temporally associated with the acceleration of digitalization during the COVID-19 period, although no causal inference can be established from bibliometric data alone. The mapping results consistently identify several recurrent antecedents discussed in the literature, including technology-driven work pressure, the erosion of boundaries between professional and personal domains, and persistent expectations of digital responsiveness. Reported consequences across the analyzed studies frequently include mental exhaustion, elevated stress levels, depressive symptoms, and reduced work performance. From a geographical and institutional perspective, the findings show that Germany ranks among the most productive contributors based on publication counts, with Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg identified as one of the leading institutions within the dataset. The intellectual structure of the field, as revealed through co-occurrence and co-citation mapping, can be broadly grouped into three dominant perspectives: psychological (focusing on cognitive and emotional strain), clinical-demographic (addressing mental health outcomes across populations), and organizational (examining workplace dynamics and digital labor conditions).

Importantly, these results reflect specific patterns of knowledge production rather than a definitive or exhaustive account of global scholarship. The findings are strictly bounded by the study's scope and must not be presented as a complete representation of global research on digital burnout; instead, they are explicitly limited to data retrieved from a single database (Scopus), a single English-language search string, and a final screened corpus of 162 peer-reviewed articles. While bibliometric mapping effectively characterizes structural and collaborative trends within these specific parameters, it inherently excludes contributions published in other languages or indexed in alternative repositories. Recognizing these database-specific constraints, this study does not provide an absolute generalization of global scientific output, but rather serves as a rigorous empirical baseline to guide subsequent multi-database, cross-linguistic, and comprehensive investigations.

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