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Impact of Digital Detoxing on Employee Wellbeing among IT Professionals in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of digital detoxing practices on employee well-being among IT professionals in the Sri Lankan context. In the selected context of the increasing integration of digital technologies into the workplace, concerns have emerged regarding the adverse effects of excessive digital engagement on employees' health and overall well-being. Accordingly, this research investigates the role of digital detoxing practices, where it defined as the deliberate reduction or temporary abstinence from digital technology use in enhancing employee well-being. Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire distributed among IT professionals. The findings reveal a significant positive relationship between digital detoxing practices and employee well-being. Furthermore, regression analysis indicates that digital detoxing practices account for a substantial proportion of the variance in employee well-being. These results suggest that promoting and facilitating digital detoxing practices can serve as an effective organizational strategy to improve the well-being of IT professionals. The study contributes to the expanding literature on digital technology use and employee well-being, while underscoring the importance of integrating digital well-being initiatives within the contemporary workplace practices.

***Keywords**: Employee Wellbeing, Digital Detoxing, IT Industry*

Introduction

Digitalization has become one of the most transformative forces shaping contemporary societies and workplaces. Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs), artificial intelligence, mobile applications, cloud computing, and digital communication platforms have fundamentally altered how individuals work, communicate, and interact (Cijan et al., 2019; Vial, 2019). Across the globe, organizations increasingly rely on digital technologies to improve efficiency, facilitate collaboration, enhance knowledge sharing, and support flexible work arrangements. The widespread adoption of digital tools has enabled employees to remain connected regardless of time and location, thereby increasing organizational agility and responsiveness (Verhoef et al., 2021)**.**

The pace of digital transformation accelerated significantly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Organizations worldwide rapidly adopted remote and hybrid working arrangements, resulting in unprecedented dependence on digital platforms such as videoconferencing applications, collaboration software, cloud-based systems, and mobile technologies (Kniffin et al., 2021). While these technological developments have generated numerous benefits, including greater flexibility, productivity, and accessibility, they have also created new challenges for employees. Constant connectivity increased virtual communication, and the expectation of being continuously available has blurred the boundaries between work and personal life, generating concerns regarding employee well-being and sustainable technology use (Ayyagari et al., 2011; Molino et al., 2020).

One of the most significant consequences of excessive digital technology use is the emergence of digital stress and digital fatigue. Digital fatigue refers to the physical, cognitive, and emotional exhaustion resulting from prolonged engagement with digital technologies and virtual communication platforms (Bennett et al., 2021; Vikuk, 2024). Research indicates that continuous exposure to digital devices contributes to information overload, attention fragmentation, technostress, emotional exhaustion, and reduced work engagement (Tarafdar et al., 2019; Schmitt et al., 2021). Employees are increasingly required to process large volumes of information, respond to

frequent notifications, and engage in multiple communication channels simultaneously, often leading to diminished concentration and increased psychological strain (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Wang et al., 2023).

The implications of excessive technology use extend beyond workplace performance and affect broader aspects of employee well-being. Employee well-being has become a critical organizational concern because it influences productivity, creativity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Studies have shown that excessive digital engagement is associated with sleep disturbances, anxiety, depression, emotional exhaustion, and burnout (Chang & Choi, 2016; Reinecke et al., 2017; Montag & Elhai, 2024). Furthermore, social media use and continuous online engagement can create fear of missing out (FOMO), increase psychological dependency on digital devices, and negatively affect work–life balance and interpersonal relationships (Przybylski et al., 2013; Wilcockson et al., 2019). Given the growing prevalence of these challenges, organizations are increasingly seeking strategies to promote sustainable technology use and protect employee well-being in digital work environments.

In response to these concerns, digital detoxing has emerged as a promising strategy for managing technology-related stress and improving well-being. Digital detox refers to a deliberate and temporary reduction or abstention from the use of digital devices and online technologies to restore psychological balance, improve focus, and strengthen offline social interactions (Mirbabaie et al., 2020). More broadly, digital detoxing encompasses a range of self-regulatory behaviours, including limiting screen time, disabling notifications, establishing technology-free periods, and engaging in offline activities to reduce digital dependence (Bigaj et al., 2023). Recent studies suggest that digital detoxing may contribute to improved mental health, enhanced concentration, better sleep quality, and increased subjective well-being (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020; Brown & Kuss, 2024). Consequently, digital detoxing has gained considerable attention among scholars, practitioners, and policymakers seeking solutions to the negative consequences of excessive technology use.

The importance of investigating digital detoxing is particularly evident in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, where employees are increasingly expected to remain digitally connected to perform their roles effectively. This is especially relevant in knowledge-intensive sectors such as information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITES), where digital devices serve as primary work tools and where employees experience high levels of technology exposure (Padmavathy et al., 2022). While technology enhances efficiency and innovation, continuous engagement with digital platforms may also increase vulnerability to technostress, cognitive overload, and digital exhaustion (Tarafdar et al., 2019).

These issues are highly relevant in Sri Lanka, where digitalization has accelerated considerably during the past decade. The Sri Lankan government and private sector have actively promoted digital transformation initiatives, resulting in increased adoption of e-commerce, e-health, online education, fintech services, and digital workplace technologies. Furthermore, the country's IT and ITES sectors have experienced substantial growth and have become among the most digitally intensive industries in the economy. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, remote and hybrid working arrangements became increasingly common, further intensifying employees' reliance on digital technologies for communication, collaboration, and task completion (ICTA Sri Lanka, 2023).

Despite the growing importance of digital technologies within Sri Lankan organizations, empirical research examining the impact of excessive technology use on employee well-being remains limited. Existing studies have primarily focused on technology adoption, digital transformation, and organizational performance, while comparatively little attention has been paid to the behavioural and well-being implications of continuous digital engagement. There is a scarcity of research investigating digital detoxing as a potential mechanism for enhancing employee well-being within highly digitized work environments such as the Sri Lankan IT sector.

Given the increasing prevalence of digital fatigue, technostress, and work–life boundary blurring in the post-pandemic workplace, understanding how employees can develop healthier relationships with digital technologies has become both theoretically and practically important. Therefore, this study seeks to examine digital detoxing as a strategy for promoting employee well-being within the Sri Lankan IT industry. By addressing this emerging issue, the study aims to contribute to the growing literature on digital well-being and provide insights that can assist organizations in developing sustainable workplace practices in an increasingly digital world.

Research Problem

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed contemporary workplaces, particularly within the Information Technology (IT) industry, where employees rely heavily on digital devices and online communication platforms to perform their daily tasks (Vial, 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021). The widespread adoption of remote and hybrid work arrangements following the COVID-19 pandemic has further intensified employees' dependence on information and communication technologies (ICTs) (Kniffin et al., 2021). Although these technologies enhance efficiency, flexibility, collaboration, and accessibility, their excessive and continuous use has also generated significant challenges for employee well-being. Research has linked prolonged digital engagement to information overload, technostress, digital fatigue, work–life boundary blurring, emotional exhaustion, anxiety, and reduced psychological well-being (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Tarafdar et al., 2019; Molino et al., 2020; Schmitt et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2023).

From a practical perspective, organizations increasingly recognize the importance of promoting employee well-being in digital work environments because employee well-being is associated with higher productivity, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and employee retention (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). However, many organizations continue to prioritize technological efficiency and constant connectivity while paying insufficient attention to strategies that help employees manage the negative consequences of excessive digital exposure (Molino et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2023). As a result, employees often remain continuously connected to work-related technologies, increasing their vulnerability to technostress, digital fatigue, and burnout (Tarafdar et al., 2019; Bennett et al., 2021). This represents a practice gap, as organizations lack evidence-based interventions that support sustainable technology use and employee well-being in highly digitalized workplaces.

From an empirical perspective, existing research has predominantly focused on the negative consequences of excessive technology use, including technostress, smartphone addiction, digital fatigue, information overload, and technology-related stress (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008; Tarafdar et al., 2019; Schmitt et al., 2021). Comparatively little attention has been devoted to examining digital detoxing as a proactive behavioural strategy that may alleviate these negative outcomes and enhance employee well-being (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020; Bigaj et al., 2023). Although digital detoxing has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent years, empirical evidence regarding its effectiveness in workplace settings remains limited and fragmented (Mirbabaie et al., 2020; Bigaj et al., 2023). Consequently, there is insufficient understanding of whether digital detoxing can effectively improve employee well-being, creating an important empirical gap in the literature.

A contextual gap is also evident because many digital detox studies have been conducted in Western countries and have largely focused on general consumers, students, or social media users rather than organizational employees (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020; Bigaj et al., 2023). Research examining digital detoxing within developing countries remains scarce despite increasing levels of digital transformation and technology dependence (Verhoef et al., 2021). In Sri Lanka, the rapid expansion of digital technologies, remote working arrangements, and the growing IT and IT-enabled services sector have significantly increased employees' exposure to digital environments. Emerging local studies indicate that employees, particularly in the software and ICT sectors—experience moderate to high levels of digital-related stress and technostress, driven by work demands, role conflict, and continuous connectivity (Weerasekara et al., 2022; Thadshaginiy et al., 2024). Furthermore, research on Sri Lankan software professionals highlights the growing need for digital stress management interventions, emphasizing employees' reliance on both individual coping strategies and organizational support to manage digital overload (Weerasekara & Smedberg, 2023). Despite these insights, little empirical evidence exists regarding how employees intentionally engage in digital detox practices and whether such behaviours contribute to their well-being in the Sri Lankan context.

Furthermore, a population gap exists because existing studies have rarely focused on IT professionals, despite being one of the most digitally exposed employee groups (Padmavathy et al., 2022). IT professionals typically experience prolonged screen time, continuous online communication, frequent digital interruptions, and high levels of technological engagement as part of their daily work activities (Tarafdar et al., 2019). These characteristics make them particularly vulnerable to digital fatigue, technostress, and work–life boundary

challenges (Molino et al., 2020). Nevertheless, limited research has specifically examined the role of digital detoxing in improving the well-being of IT employees (Weerasekara et al., 2022; Thadshaginiy et al., 2024).

Finally, a theoretical gap exists because research on digital detoxing remains largely descriptive and exploratory, with limited theoretical explanation regarding the mechanisms through which digital detoxing influences employee well-being (Mirbabaie et al., 2020; Bigaj et al., 2023). Existing studies have focused primarily on documenting technology-related problems or describing digital detox practices, while insufficient attention has been given to explaining how digital detoxing may function as a resource recovery mechanism, facilitate boundary management, or reduce technology-related job demands. Consequently, stronger theoretical development is needed to explain the relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being in workplace settings.

Therefore, the central research problem addressed in this study is the limited understanding of whether and how digital detoxing practices contribute to employee well-being among IT professionals in Sri Lanka. Addressing this problem is important because it can provide evidence-based insights into strategies that help employees manage digital overload while supporting organizations in promoting sustainable digital well-being in increasingly technology-dependent workplaces (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Tarafdar et al., 2019; Verhoef et al., 2021).

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of digital detoxing practices on employee well-being among IT professionals in Sri Lanka and to determine whether digital detoxing can serve as an effective strategy for managing the negative consequences of excessive digital technology use in the workplace and this leads to the research question of "How do digital detoxing practices influence employee well-being among IT professionals in Sri Lanka?"

Literature Review

Digital detoxing has emerged as an important concept in response to the growing dominance of digital technologies in everyday life and work environments. Although the term is relatively recent, it is conceptually linked to the broader idea of "detoxification," which refers to abstaining from harmful substances or behaviours to restore physical or psychological balance (Logacheva et al., 2022). In the digital context, this notion has evolved as individuals increasingly experience constant connectivity through smartphones, laptops, and online platforms, leading to a need for intentional disengagement from digital environments (Ugur & Koc, 2015). Digital detoxing is therefore defined as a deliberate and temporary reduction or cessation of digital devices used to restore psychological balance, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being.

The increasing integration of digital technologies into organizational life, particularly in the IT sector, has significantly reshaped how employees work, communicate, and manage tasks. While these technologies enhance efficiency and flexibility, they also expose employees to prolonged screen time, cognitive overload, and continuous connectivity pressures. In IT-intensive environments, employees often experience extended periods of sedentary work and high cognitive demands, which contribute to both physical strain and psychological stress (Jones, Hill, & Henn, 2015).

Research consistently shows that excessive digital engagement can negatively affect employee well-being through multiple pathways. These include distraction and reduced cognitive performance (Carrière et al., 2018; Quoidbach et al., 2010), information overload, emotional exhaustion, and reduced productivity (Tarafdar et al., 2007; Schmitt et al., 2021). In addition, continuous exposure to digital communication tools has been associated with technostress, which arises when employees struggle to cope with constant connectivity, workload pressure, and role expectations mediated through technology (Tarafdar et al., 2007; Duke & Montag, 2017).

Furthermore, the boundaryless nature of digital work has intensified work–life imbalance. Employees are increasingly expected to remain reachable beyond formal working hours, which blurs the distinction between personal and professional life (Derks & Bakker, 2014). This "always-on" culture contributes to stress, anxiety, and reduced recovery time, ultimately affecting overall well-being.

Employee well-being is a multidimensional construct encompassing physical, psychological, and social functioning at work (Grant, 2007). It is widely recognized as a critical determinant of job satisfaction, performance, and organizational effectiveness (Warr, 1994; Vyas et al., 2022). Within digital workplaces, employee well-being has become increasingly important due to its direct link with productivity, retention, and engagement outcomes (Bellet et al., 2023).

However, digital work environments also introduce new risks to well-being. Excessive screen exposure, sedentary behaviour, sleep disruption, and constant digital interruptions negatively affect both physical and mental health. Studies further indicate that prolonged smartphone and technology use contributes to stress, anxiety, depression, and reduced sleep quality (Chang & Choi, 2016; Wolniewicz et al., 2018). These effects highlight the growing tension between digital productivity and employee well-being in modern organizations.

In response to these challenges, digital detoxing has gained attention as a potential behavioural strategy to mitigate the negative effects of excessive technology use. Research suggests that reducing or temporarily disconnecting from digital devices can help individuals restore attention, improve emotional stability, and enhance social connectedness (Vishwakarma, 2022; Boguszewicz et al., 2021). By limiting digital exposure, individuals may reduce cognitive overload, improve sleep quality, and regain psychological balance.

Moreover, digital detoxing has been associated with reduced social isolation and improved face-to-face interactions, which are critical for psychological well-being (Vishwakarma, 2022). However, the effectiveness of digital detoxing is not universally agreed upon. While some studies highlight its benefits, others suggest that complete disconnection may lead to anxiety, fear of missing out (FOMO), and work-related stress, particularly in highly connected professional environments (Elhai et al., 2016; Reinecke et al., 2017). This inconsistency in findings indicates that digital detoxing is a complex behavioural phenomenon that may produce both positive and negative outcomes depending on context, intensity, and occupational demands.

In digitally intensive workplaces, particularly IT organizations, employees are highly exposed to continuous communication demands, multitasking, and performance pressure mediated by technology. This exposure contributes to technostress, defined as stress experienced due to the inability to cope with ICT demands (Tarafdar et al., 2007). Technostress has been linked to reduced productivity, burnout, and lower job satisfaction.

Additionally, fear of missing out (FOMO) intensifies compulsive technology use, further exacerbating stress and reducing psychological detachment from work (Elhai et al., 2016; Reinecke et al., 2017). Employees often feel pressured to remain constantly available, which negatively affects recovery time and increases emotional exhaustion (Lanaj, Johnson, & Barnes, 2014). Over time, this can lead to sleep disruption, reduced performance, and declining mental health (Chang & Choi, 2016; Haug et al., 2015). Digital detoxing, therefore, can be conceptualized as a coping mechanism that enables psychological detachment from work-related digital demands and supports recovery processes. It may also encourage healthier technology habits and improve work–life balance by restoring boundaries between work and personal life (Derks & Bakker, 2014).

This study is grounded in multiple complementary theories that collectively explain the relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being. First, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model provides a foundational lens for understanding how excessive digital demands (e.g., constant connectivity, information overload) create strain, while personal and organizational resources (e.g., digital detoxing, autonomy, recovery time) can buffer these effects and enhance well-being (Lesener, 2019). Second, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) explains how digital detoxing may support the fulfilment of basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby enhancing intrinsic motivation and well-being. Third, Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) helps explain why individuals engage in digital detoxing, as it reflects intentional behaviour aimed at satisfying psychological needs such as stress reduction, focus restoration, and social reconnection (Ruggiero, 2018). Finally, Social Information Processing Theory (SIPT) provides insight into how reduced digital communication may influence interpersonal relationships, identity formation, and social interaction patterns in workplace settings (Marmat, 2022). Together, these theories provide a comprehensive conceptual foundation for understanding how digital detoxing influences employee well-being through psychological, behavioural, and organizational mechanisms.

Based on the synthesis of the literature, it is evident that while digital technologies are essential for modern work, their overuse creates significant risks to employee well-being. Digital detoxing emerges as a promising but underexplored strategy to address these challenges. However, existing research remains fragmented, with limited empirical evidence in organizational and developing country contexts, particularly within the IT sector in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study seeks to empirically examine the impact of digital detoxing on employee well-being among IT professionals in Sri Lanka, contributing to both theory development and practical interventions for sustainable digital workplace practices.

Methodology

The present study adopts a positivist research philosophy, which is grounded in the assumption that social phenomena can be measured objectively and analyzed through observable, quantifiable data. Positivism is appropriate for this study because the research aims to examine the causal relationship between digital detoxing practices and employee well-being, which requires hypothesis testing and statistical analysis of measurable variables (Saunders et al., 2009). This philosophical stance enables the researcher to maintain objectivity, minimize bias, and ensure replicability of findings. Consistent with the positivist paradigm, the study employs a deductive research approach, whereby existing theories such as the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) are used to develop the hypothesis. Deduction is appropriate as it allows the study to move from theory to empirical testing, thereby examining whether established theoretical relationships hold within the context of IT professionals in Sri Lanka (Saunders et al., 2009).

A quantitative survey research design is adopted to collect standardized data from a relatively large number of respondents. This design is suitable because it enables systematic examination of relationships between variables such as digital detoxing behaviours and employee well-being. The study uses a cross-sectional design, where data is collected at a single point in time. This approach is appropriate given the time-bound nature of the research and its focus on identifying existing relationships rather than long-term behavioural changes. The target population of the study consists of executive-level employees working in the Information Technology (IT) industry within the Colombo District of Sri Lanka. The Colombo District is selected due to its concentration of IT companies, technology parks, and headquarters of major IT and IT-enabled service organizations, making it the most relevant and accessible hub for the study. The sampling frame includes executive-level employees working in selected IT and ITES organizations registered in the Colombo District. These employees are appropriate respondents as they are actively engaged in digital work environments and experience high levels of technology dependency, making them suitable for examining digital detoxing and well-being outcomes. The study employs a convenient sampling technique, and the sample size of 192 respondents is considered adequate for quantitative analysis, particularly for regression-based statistical techniques. The sample size is also consistent with commonly accepted guidelines for structural equation modelling and multivariate analysis, which recommend a minimum of 150–200 responses for reliable estimation depending on model complexity.

Primary data was collected using a structured online questionnaire, which is appropriate due to the digital nature of the target population and the geographical concentration of respondents across multiple organizations. Online distribution also ensures efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and higher response convenience for IT professionals who are familiar with digital platforms. Digital detoxing, treated as the independent variable, refers to intentional behaviours aimed at reducing or managing digital technology use to enhance mental and emotional well-being. This construct is measured using 7 items adapted from prior studies on digital detox and technology disengagement (Josephine B. Schmitt, 2021), employing a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include statements such as “I intentionally limit my use of digital devices after work hours,” “I take regular breaks from screens to avoid feeling overwhelmed,” and “I disconnect from work-related communication during my personal time.” Employee wellbeing, the dependent variable, is defined as the overall psychological, emotional, and mental state of employees in relation to their work. This construct is measured using 6 items adapted from validated scales adapted from Jan- Emmanuel De Neve, (2019) also using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Sample items include “I feel mentally and emotionally well at work,” “I am satisfied with my overall work-life balance,” and “I feel energized and positive during my workday.”

To ensure content validity, measurement items will be adapted from established and peer-reviewed instruments. The questionnaire will be reviewed by academic experts in human resource management and information systems to ensure clarity, relevance, and conceptual alignment. A pilot study will be conducted with approximately 20 – 30 IT employees to identify ambiguities and improve questionnaire design. Reliability will be assessed using Cronbach's alpha, with a threshold of 0.70 or above considered acceptable for internal consistency.

The data collected was analyzed using statistical software (SPSS). Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize respondent characteristics, while inferential statistics (such as correlation and regression analysis) was used to test the hypothesized relationships between digital detoxing and employee well-being.

Conceptual Framework

To strengthen the theoretical foundation of this study, the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007) and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000) are adopted as the primary theoretical lenses. The JD-R model explains employee well-being as a balanced function between job demands and job resources. In the context of this study, digital overload characterized by constant connectivity, information excess, and technology-driven work demands can be conceptualized as a job demand that depletes employees' psychological and cognitive resources. Continued exposure to such demands can lead to fatigue, stress, and reduced wellbeing. Equally, digital detoxing practices (e.g., reducing screen time, disconnecting from work-related communication after hours) can function as a recovery mechanism, helping employees restore their exhausted resources and reduce strain.

Matching with this, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) emphasizes the importance of fulfilling basic psychological needs autonomy, competence, and relatedness for enhancing wellbeing. Digital detoxing can support autonomy by allowing employees to regain control over their technology use and boundaries between work and personal life. It may also improve overall psychological well-being by reducing pressure from constant digital engagement. Together, these theories provide a coherent explanation of how digital detoxing contributes to employee wellbeing: while digital overload acts as a stress-inducing demand, digital detoxing serves as a resource-enhancing practice that promotes recovery, autonomy, and psychological balance. Based on the JD-R model and Self-Determination Theory, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Digital detoxing practices have a significant positive impact on employee well-being.

Ethical Considerations

The study will adhere to strict ethical guidelines. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that no personal identifiers were collected. Data was used solely for academic purposes and stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

Data Analysis and Results

The study achieved a high response rate, ensuring the reliability of the findings. Out of 200 questionnaires distributed, 195 responses were received, of which 21 were discarded due to incompleteness, resulting in 174 valid responses and an effective response rate of 87%. The demographic profile indicates that most respondents were male (58.6%), while females represented 41.4% of the sample. In terms of age distribution, most respondents (52.3%) were between 31–40 years, followed by 28.2% in the 20–30 age category. Regarding educational qualifications, the largest proportion (40.2%) were graduates, while others possessed diplomas, postgraduate, professional, or non-professional qualifications. Additionally, most respondents (55.7%) had 1–3 years of work experience, and 69% reported that their spouse was not employed in the IT sector.

Table 1: Response Rate

No. of Questionnaires Distributed	Responses Received	Responses Discarded	Responses Considered	Effective Response Rate
200	195	21	174	87%

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

The reliability and validity of the measurement scales were assessed to ensure the quality of the data. Cronbach's alpha values for digital detoxing (0.685) and employee well-being (0.615) exceeded the acceptable threshold of 0.6 (Field, 2013), indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Furthermore, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values for digital detoxing (0.602) and employee well-being (0.655), along with significant Bartlett's test results ($p = 0.000$), confirmed sampling adequacy and suitability for factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis revealed that factor loadings were within acceptable ranges, and the cumulative explained variance exceeded 50% for both constructs, confirming construct validity. No items were removed, and the dataset was deemed statistically sound and free from bias.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Digital Detoxing	7	0.685
Employee Well-being	6	0.615

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

Digital Detoxing demonstrated Cronbach's alpha value of 0.685, while Employee Well-being reported Cronbach's alpha value of 0.615. Although both values exceed the minimum threshold of 0.60 suggested for exploratory research, they fall below the more stringent criterion of 0.70 commonly recommended for established scales. Therefore, the reliability of both constructs can be considered acceptable but moderate rather than strong. The findings suggest that the scales possess adequate internal consistency for exploratory analysis, although future studies may improve reliability through scale refinement.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Variable	KMO	Chi-Square	Sig.
Digital Detoxing	.602	917.335	.000
Employee Well-being	.655	181.732	.000

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) values were 0.602 for Digital Detoxing and 0.655 for Employee Well-being. Since both values exceed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.50, the sample was deemed adequate for factor analysis. Furthermore, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant for both constructs ($p < .001$), indicating that the correlation matrices were suitable for factor extraction. Thus, the data met the assumptions required for exploration factor analysis.

Table 4: Validity Statistics

Variable	Items	Highest FL	Lowest FL	Cumulative %
Digital Detoxing	7	.954	.721	66.389%
Employee Well-being	6	.709	.387	60.108%

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

For Digital Detoxing, factor loadings ranged from 0.721 to 0.954, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50 and indicating satisfactory convergent validity. The extracted factor explained 66.389% of the total variance, suggesting that the construct adequately represented the underlying concept.

For Employee Well-being, factor loadings ranged from 0.387 to 0.709, with one item loading below the recommended threshold of 0.50. While the cumulative variance explained was 60.108%, which exceeds the

commonly accepted benchmark of 50%, the low-loading item may indicate a weak contribution to the construct. Therefore, further examination of this item is recommended. If the item is theoretically important, its retention may be justified; otherwise, removing the item could improve construct validity and internal consistency.

Preliminary data screening confirmed that no significant outliers were present, as indicated by boxplot analysis. Descriptive statistics revealed that the mean values for digital detoxing (3.5411) and employee well-being (3.4741) were within acceptable ranges. Standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis values fell within acceptable thresholds, indicating approximate normality of the data distribution. Histogram analysis further supported the normal distribution assumption. Additionally, scatterplot analysis confirmed a linear relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being, validating the suitability of correlation and regression analyses.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

Statistic	Digital Detox	Employee Well-being
Mean	3.5411	3.4741
Std. Deviation	0.488	0.530
Variance	0.238	0.281
Skewness	0.599	0.939
Kurtosis	0.454	0.553

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

Correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of digital detoxing are associated with improved well-being. Regression analysis further confirmed this relationship, with an R^2 value of 0.507, suggesting that 50.7% of the variance in employee well-being is explained by digital detoxing practices. The model was statistically significant ($F = 177.049$, $p < 0.001$). The regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.712$) indicated a strong positive effect, supporting the hypothesis that digital detoxing practices significantly influence employee well-being. The regression equation was derived as: Employee Well-being = 0.735 (Digital Detoxing) + 5.374. Overall, the findings confirm a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being, leading to the acceptance of the study hypothesis.

Table 6: Correlation Analysis

	Digital Detox	Employee Well-being
Digital Detox	1	0.712**
Employee Well-being	0.712**	1

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

Table 7: Regression Summary

R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	Sig.
0.712	0.507	0.504	177.049	.000

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

Table 8: Coefficients

Variable	B	Beta	Sig.
Constant	5.374	—	.000
Digital Detoxing	0.735	0.712	.000

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

Table 9: ANOVA Statistics

Source	F	Sig.
Regression	177.049	.000

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

Based on the regression analysis, the hypothesis that digital detoxing practices significantly impact employee well-being is supported. The regression model (Table X) demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between digital detoxing practices and employee well-being. The intercept and the coefficient for digital detoxing practices are both statistically significant ($p < .001$), indicating that digital detoxing practices have a significant positive impact on employee well-being.

Equation 1: Regression – Employee Well-being and Digital Detoxing Practices

$Y = mX + C$

Employee Well-being = 0.735 (Digital Detoxing Practices) + 5.374

Table 10: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.712a	.507	.504	2.25084

***Source**: Analyzed data, 2025*

According to the model summary table, the R square is 0.504 (50.4%), meaning that digital Detoxing accounts for 50.4 % of the variance in employee new sign. The ANOVA table indicates that model 1 is significant since the sig value is 0.000. It indicates a favourable effect, and that effect is quite important. That indicates a strong positive and statistically significant relationship between digital detoxing and employee wellbeing. Finally, it can be concluded that the relationship is accepted.

Discussion

This study examined the impact of digital detoxing practices on employee well-being among IT professionals in Sri Lanka. The findings provide strong empirical evidence of a significant positive relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being, suggesting that employees who intentionally regulate or reduce their digital technology use experience higher levels of psychological and emotional well-being. This result aligns with emerging research emphasizing the importance of controlled technology use in reducing technostress and promoting psychological recovery in digitally intensive work environments (Tarafdar et al., 2019; Schmitt et al., 2021)

The correlation analysis revealed a strong positive relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being ($r = 0.712$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that individuals who engage in behaviours such as limiting screen time, disconnecting after work hours, and taking intentional breaks from digital platforms tend to report better well-being outcomes. This finding is consistent with prior studies which suggest that excessive digital engagement contributes to cognitive overload, emotional exhaustion, and reduced psychological recovery, while structured disengagement enhances mental restoration and emotional balance (Wilcockson et al., 2019; Reinecke et al., 2017). However, the strength of the relationship observed in this study appears comparatively higher than some earlier findings, which may reflect the intensified digital dependency within IT work environments in Sri Lanka following the COVID-19 pandemic.

The regression analysis further confirmed that digital detoxing significantly predicts employee well-being, explaining 50.7% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.507$). This indicates that digital detoxing is not only associated with well-being but also plays a substantial explanatory role in shaping employee psychological outcomes. This finding

extends prior research by empirically demonstrating the predictive power of digital detoxing in a professional work setting, whereas much of the existing literature has focused on general populations such as students or social media users (Syvertsen & Enli, 2020; Bigaj et al., 2023). The result supports the argument that reducing constant digital connectivity allows employees to restore cognitive resources, reduce information overload, and improve work–life balance, consistent with the conservation of resources perspective embedded in stress and recovery theories.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings strongly support the principles of the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, which posits that excessive job demands such as constant digital connectivity contribute to strain, while personal resources and recovery mechanisms help restore well-being (Lesener, 2019). Digital detoxing can be interpreted as a personal recovery resource that reduces digital job demands and facilitates psychological detachment from work. The findings also align with Self-Determination Theory (SDT), as digital detoxing may enhance autonomy by allowing individuals to control their technology use, thereby improving intrinsic motivation and well-being. Furthermore, the results extend the digital well-being literature by providing empirical evidence from a developing country context, thereby strengthening the external validity of existing theoretical models in non-Western settings.

The findings are particularly significant within the Sri Lankan IT sector, where rapid digital transformation, remote working arrangements, and high ICT dependency have intensified employees' exposure to continuous connectivity demands. In such contexts, employees often experience blurred work–life boundaries, after-hours communication pressure, and high cognitive workload, which increase vulnerability to technostress and burnout (Derks & Bakker, 2014; Tarafdar et al., 2007). The strong relationship identified in this study suggests that digital detoxing may serve as a culturally and contextually relevant coping mechanism in Sri Lanka's IT industry, where formal organizational policies on digital well-being remain limited.

From a practical perspective, the findings highlight the need for organizations to actively integrate digital detoxing strategies into employee well-being initiatives. IT organizations should consider implementing interventions such as restricting after-hours communication, promoting scheduled digital breaks, encouraging mindfulness and recovery practices, and establishing clear work–life boundaries. Such practices may help reduce employee burnout, improve job satisfaction, and enhance productivity, consistent with prior evidence linking recovery experiences to improved work outcomes (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Molino et al., 2020).

Moreover, the results emphasize the dual nature of digital technologies in modern workplaces. While ICTs are essential for efficiency, collaboration, and innovation, unregulated and excessive use can lead to significant psychological and physiological strain, including sleep disturbances, anxiety, and reduced cognitive performance (Chang & Choi, 2016; Wolniewicz et al., 2018). Therefore, a balanced approach is required, where organizations not only promote digital efficiency but also actively support digital well-being through structured recovery opportunities.

Overall, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on digital technology use and employee well-being by demonstrating that digital detoxing is a significant positive predictor of well-being among IT professionals. It further extends theoretical understanding by positioning digital detoxing as a resource recovery mechanism within the JD-R framework and provides important contextual insights from a developing economy. These findings highlight the importance of integrating digital well-being practices into organizational strategies to ensure sustainable employee health in increasingly digitized work environments.

Conclusion

Digital detoxification is removing oneself from electronic devices to have a more balanced and healthier lifestyle. It is essential to uphold moral principles during this period, which includes defending intellectual property rights and abstaining from plagiarism in any creative projects carried out during detox. This will lead to improved interactions with others, increased focus and productivity, and improved mental health. The results of this study show that digital detoxification techniques significantly and favorably affect the well-being of IT workers. Regression research showed a considerable correlation between these two variables, with digital detoxification practices accounting for a significant amount of the diversity in employee well-being. This demonstrates how

important digital detoxification is for improving IT workers' general well-being by reducing the possible drawbacks of excessive digital use. These results are consistent with earlier studies that highlight the value of digital well-being and the possible advantages of integrating digital detoxification techniques into daily routines for both individuals and organizations.

The findings of this study demonstrate that digital detoxing practices have a significant positive impact on employee well-being among IT professionals in Sri Lanka. This has several important practical implications for organizations operating in highly digitalized work environments. First, the results suggest that IT organizations should actively incorporate digital well-being policies into their human resource management strategies. Given the strong dependence on ICTs in the IT sector, employees are frequently exposed to continuous digital communication, after-hours work expectations, and prolonged screen time. Organizations can address this by establishing clear guidelines on after-hours communication boundaries, encouraging employees to disconnect from work-related digital platforms outside working hours, and promoting structured recovery periods during the workday.

Second, the findings highlight the importance of integrating digital detoxing practices into employee well-being programs. Organizations can introduce initiatives such as scheduled “screen-free breaks,” digital-free meeting hours, or designated periods where employees are encouraged to disengage from emails and messaging platforms. These interventions may help reduce cognitive overload, improve focus, and enhance psychological recovery, ultimately contributing to higher productivity and job satisfaction.

Third, managers and team leaders play a critical role in shaping digital behaviour norms. Leadership support for work–life balance and responsible technology use can reduce employees’ perceived pressure to remain constantly available. Training programs for managers can therefore be implemented to promote awareness of technostress, digital fatigue, and the importance of psychological detachment from work. Finally, from a broader organizational perspective, the findings suggest that employee well-being strategies in the IT sector should move beyond traditional wellness initiatives (such as physical health programs) and include technology-use management strategies. This is particularly relevant in the post-pandemic hybrid work environment, where digital dependency has become an integral part of daily work practices.

Recommendations

IT organizations can adopt a more comprehensive and structured approach to promote digital wellbeing among employees by implementing a range of organizational policies and supportive practices. For instance, introducing no-meeting periods during the workday can help employees focus on deep work without constant digital interruptions, thereby reducing cognitive overload. Establishing clear after-hours communication boundaries, such as discouraging emails and messages outside working hours, can support work–life balance and prevent burnout associated with continuous connectivity. Additionally, organizations can encourage scheduled screen breaks by integrating short, regular intervals into the work routine, allowing employees to rest and recover from prolonged digital exposure.

Beyond these practices, companies can organize digital wellbeing awareness sessions and training programs to educate employees about the risks of excessive technology use and the benefits of digital detoxing strategies. These initiatives can also provide practical techniques, such as mindfulness, time management, and boundary setting, to help employees manage digital demands more effectively. Furthermore, the role of leadership is crucial; supervisors and managers should actively support healthy digital behaviors by demonstrating appropriate technology use, respecting non-working hours, and fostering an open culture where employees feel comfortable setting boundaries. Organizations may also consider integrating digital wellbeing into HR policies, offering flexible work arrangements, and providing access to wellbeing resources or counselling services. Collectively, these interventions can create a supportive work environment that minimizes digital stress and enhances overall employee wellbeing.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Although this study provides important insights into the relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study adopts a cross-sectional research design, which captures data at a single point in time. As a result, the findings do not allow for the examination of long-term behavioural changes or causal inferences over time. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to examine whether the positive effects of digital detoxing on well-being are sustained over extended periods. Second, the study is based on self-reported data, which may be subject to common method bias and social desirability bias. Future studies could strengthen methodological accuracy by incorporating multi-source data, such as supervisor ratings, objective digital usage tracking, or behavioural analytics of screen time.

Third, the study focuses exclusively on executive-level IT professionals in the Colombo District of Sri Lanka, which limits generalizability to other occupational groups, regions, or hierarchical levels. Future research could expand the sample to include employees from other sectors (e.g., banking, education, healthcare) and compare differences across industries and job roles. Fourth, while this study examines the overall relationship between digital detoxing and employee well-being, it does not deeply explore the underlying psychological mechanisms. Future research should investigate mediating variables such as technostress, psychological detachment, sleep quality, or work–life balance, as well as moderating variables such as personality traits or job demands. Finally, future studies could also adopt mixed method approaches by combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to gain deeper insight into how employees experience and interpret digital detoxing in real workplace contexts. Overall, addressing these limitations would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of how digital detoxing functions as a sustainable strategy for enhancing employee well-being in increasingly digitalized work environments.

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