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Review

Generation and Regulation of Workplace Stress in Digitally Mediated Work: An Integrative Review

Aparajita Neog*, Tilak Ch Das

Department of Commerce, Gauhati University, Guwahati, Assam-781014, India,

***Corresponding author:** Aparajita Neog, aparajitaneog11@gauhati.ac.in

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Abstract: *Purpose* - Organisations are investing substantial resources in employee well-being initiatives, yet workplace stress persists and intervention outcomes remain mixed. This review proposes an explanation by examining how digitally mediated work generates stress at the level of the work system and why individual-level regulation under-performs against it. *Design/methodology/approach* - The paper is an integrative review. A structured search of Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed, PsycINFO and Google Scholar identified theoretically salient studies, which were selected purposively and analysed through thematic synthesis. The analytical corpus comprises 88 sources. *Findings* - Traditional workplace stressors persist, but digital infrastructure extends their reach and intensity. Digital mediation generates stress through three mechanisms: continuity (sustained exposure and restricted recovery), opacity (limited access to decision-relevant information) and asymmetry (unequal influence over data and decisions). A misalignment between system-level stress generation and individual-level stress regulation is proposed as an explanation for persistent stress despite growing investment in well-being initiatives. *Originality/value* - The argument is formalised in three testable propositions that specify digital configurations of demands, resources and appraisal within the Job Demands - Resources, Conservation of Resources and Transactional frameworks. Implications follow for work design, governance of algorithmic management and digital leadership development.

Keywords: workplace stress; technostress; algorithmic management; psychological detachment; Job Demands-Resources model; Conservation of Resources theory

1. Introduction

Digital technologies increasingly influence core aspects of work by determining task scheduling, structuring task allocation, shaping communication and defining performance evaluation (Kellogg *et al*., 2020; Bondanini *et al*., 2025). In the context of occupational stress research, this shift is a change of kind rather than of setting. The stressors that are most notable under digital mediation, such as always-available connectivity, algorithmic task allocation and pervasive monitoring, are properties of the work system and lie largely beyond the control of any individual worker. Work-related stress carries costs for organisations through absenteeism and presenteeism (Cooper and Dewe, 2008), is associated with impaired performance (Chen *et al*., 2022) and predicts burnout and turnover intention (Üngüren *et al*., 2024); prolonged exposure is linked to emotional exhaustion, cynicism and a range of health complaints (Alarcon, 2011; Sonnentag *et al*., 2023). These consequences are not confined to Western economies. Among IT employees working remotely in India during the pandemic, occupational stress was associated with poorer psychological well-being (Prasad *et al*., 2020), and a meta-analysis of Ethiopian health workers found a pooled prevalence of occupational stress above fifty per cent, with female workers at higher risk (Girma

et al., 2021). The digital ways of managing work introduced during the pandemic have not vanished. Remote and hybrid arrangements persist, with consequences for work–life balance documented in the pandemic-era literature (Shirmohammadi *et al*., 2022) and also evident in post-pandemic settings such as academia (Capone *et al*., 2024).

A second body of research examines how organisations respond. The majority of stress-management initiatives operate at the individual level, through counselling, mindfulness training, wellness applications and, more recently, wearable biofeedback devices and virtual reality recovery environments (Naylor *et al*., 2020; Loveys *et al*., 2022). Organisational-level interventions, including workload adjustment, role modification and flexible scheduling, improve employee health most reliably when several working conditions are changed together rather than in isolation (Montano *et al*., 2014). The intervention record is nonetheless mixed. A large cross-sectional comparison found that participants in individual-level well-being interventions reported outcomes little different from those of non-participants (Fleming, 2024); an overview of systematic reviews finds that organisational-level interventions produce benefits that are real but uneven across outcomes (Aust *et al*., 2023); and a recent systematic-review update concludes that evidence for lasting organisation-level gains remains limited (Giovanis *et al*., 2026). Neither level of intervention appears adequate as a stand-alone solution. The literature has documented these mixed outcomes without identifying the underlying causes.

Existing reviews have mapped and synthesised important aspects of this research domain, so a new review must show what it adds to the evidence base. Kellogg *et al*. (2020) synthesised how algorithms exert managerial control: they direct employees by imposing restrictions and recommendations, evaluate their performance by recording and rating, and discipline their behaviour by replacing and rewarding them. Parent-Rocheleau and Parker (2022) identified six managerial functions performed by algorithms, which encompass monitoring, goal setting, scheduling, compensation, performance management and termination, and analysed the impact of these functions on work design. Zhang *et al*. (2025) organised the literature on algorithmic management and its implications for work and organisations. Ravid *et al*. (2023) conducted a meta-analysis of electronic performance monitoring across 94 independent samples, found no evidence of performance enhancement, and reported that monitoring was associated with elevated employee stress across monitoring configurations. König (2025) likewise found no overall performance effect, with adverse effects concentrated on strain and job attitudes, and showed that employee reactions depend on the transparency and intrusiveness of monitoring. Vignola *et al*. (2023) reviewed employee health in the context of algorithmic management and identified unresolved research questions. Montano *et al*. (2014) and Aust *et al*. (2023) consolidated the evidence on organisational-level interventions. Each of these reviews addresses its own question. None of them connects the systemic generation of stress to the documented limits of individual-level regulation, or specifies the mechanisms that link the two. That connection is what this review adds.

This review asks one question: how does digital mediation generate workplace stress at the level of the work system, and why does individual-level regulation under-perform against it? It addresses this question by introducing a generation–regulation framework. Digital mediation generates stress through three mechanisms: continuity, opacity and asymmetry, all three of which are features of the work system itself. Individual-level regulation, through appraisal, coping and recovery, is structurally mismatched with demands generated in this way, and the framework predicts that it encounters a threshold beyond which additional individual resources have diminishing effect on strain. Three propositions state

the argument in a form that can be tested. The dominant theoretical frameworks in occupational stress research, namely the Job Demands–Resources model (Demerouti *et al*., 2001), Conservation of Resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001) and Transactional Stress Theory (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, 1987), were developed with bounded, physically supervised work environments as their primary context. The objective here is to extend them rather than replace them, a strategy their originators have themselves advocated (Bakker *et al*., 2023; Demerouti, 2025), by specifying the digital configurations of demands, resources and appraisal that these frameworks can accommodate once the design of the mediating system is treated as a source of demands in its own right.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 2 sets out the integrative method and the structured search. Section 3 profiles the corpus by theory, context, characteristics and methods. Section 4 develops the "generation" side of the argument and Section 5 the "regulation" side. Section 6 presents the framework and the propositions. Section 7 draws out theoretical implications, practical implications, limitations and a research agenda organised by theory, context and method. Section 8 concludes.

2. Method

2.1. Design and rationale

This paper is an integrative review (Torraco, 2005; Elsbach and van Knippenberg, 2020; Cronin and George, 2023). An integrative review synthesises relevant literature on a topic to establish new frameworks and perspectives, rather than to catalogue a finite corpus exhaustively. This form of review suits the present objective for two reasons. First, the evidence base is methodologically heterogeneous, incorporating survey studies, qualitative investigations, intervention trials, meta-analyses and systematic reviews. This variation in designs, measures and outcomes makes statistical pooling of effect sizes inappropriate. Second, the aim is explanatory rather than aggregative: to account for the persistence of workplace stress under digital mediation despite increasing organisational investment, which is a question of theory development rather than effect estimation. Thematic synthesis was therefore preferred over meta-analysis, and purposive selection over exhaustive screening. The value of the review lies in establishing a coherent framework across strands of research that rarely cite one another, rather than in exhaustive coverage of any single strand.

2.2. Search strategy

The literature was identified through structured searches in Scopus, Web of Science, PubMed and PsycINFO, with additional studies retrieved from Google Scholar and backward citation tracing from key articles. These sources were selected to ensure coverage of management, organisational psychology, occupational health and interdisciplinary research on digital labour. The original database searches were run in February 2026. The search window covered 2000 to 2024, the period in which digital work practices reshaped most work environments. Earlier foundational works, including Hochschild (1983), Lazarus and Folkman (1984, 1987), Hobfoll (1989) and Uehata (1991), were retained for their theoretical significance. A supplementary forward-citation search, completed in March 2026, identified studies published in 2025 and 2026 that bear directly on the argument; these are included under the period criterion in **Table 1**.

The core search combined two conceptual clusters, workplace-stress terminology and digital-work terminology, using Boolean operators. The complete string as run in Scopus was: TITLE-ABS-KEY (("workplace stress" OR "job stress" OR "occupational stress" OR "burnout") AND ("digital work" OR "digitalisation" OR "digitalization" OR "remote work" OR "hybrid work" OR

"technostress" OR "algorithmic management" OR "digital surveillance" OR "technology-mediated work")) AND PUBYEAR > 1999 AND PUBYEAR < 2025 AND LANGUAGE (english). The syntax was adapted for the other databases. Additional targeted searches covered constructs that became central during synthesis: emotional labour and emotional intelligence, leadership and organisational climate, work–life balance, recovery and psychological detachment, and technology-enabled interventions.

2.3. Selection

Selection was purposive rather than exhaustive, consistent with the principles of integrative reviewing (Elsbach and van Knippenberg, 2020). The review prioritised meta-analyses and systematic reviews, work in leading disciplinary journals, and recent empirical research on digitally mediated work arrangements. A small number of policy sources, such as Eurofound (2023) and the text of Directive (EU) 2024/2831 (European Union, 2024), were incorporated because they supply evidence absent from the scholarly literature; these are identified as such at the point of citation.

The reference list contains 96 entries. Of these, five are methodological sources cited for the review design itself (Torraco, 2005; Thomas and Harden, 2008; Elsbach and van Knippenberg, 2020; Paul and Criado, 2020; Cronin and George, 2023) and three are background references that do not meet the eligibility criteria and are not counted as workplace evidence: Sharma and Gupta (2023), which concerns students; Loveys *et al*. (2022), which evaluated a stress-management intervention in a non-workplace sample and is cited only to illustrate an intervention modality; and Cooper and Dewe (2008), an editorial. The analytical corpus therefore comprises 88 sources. One mixed-population study, Kasemy *et al*. (2022), surveyed both medical staff and students; only the findings relating to medical staff are used here. Supplementary Table S1 lists all 96 references and identifies each as a corpus source, a methodological source or a background reference, with its publication type. **Table 1** states the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and **Figure 1** shows the search and selection flow. Because the review is integrative, **Figure 1** reports the stages of identification and selection and the composition of the final corpus without asserting exhaustive screening counts.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Criterion	Included	Excluded
Population	Working adults in any sector; for mixed samples, only worker-specific findings used	Students and other non-working populations
Focus	Workplace stress, strain, burnout or closely related outcomes under digitally mediated or organisational conditions	Non-work stress; technical studies of systems without a worker outcome
Publication type	Peer-reviewed empirical studies, meta-analyses, systematic and integrative reviews, theoretical articles and books; selected policy reports and legal instruments, identified as such	Editorials, opinion pieces, book reviews, conference abstracts, anecdotal accounts
Language	English	Other languages
Design	Any empirical or review design with sufficient methodological detail	Studies with insufficient methodological detail
Period	2000–2024 for the structured search; earlier foundational theoretical works retained on significance grounds; 2025–2026 publications added through the supplementary forward-citation search	—

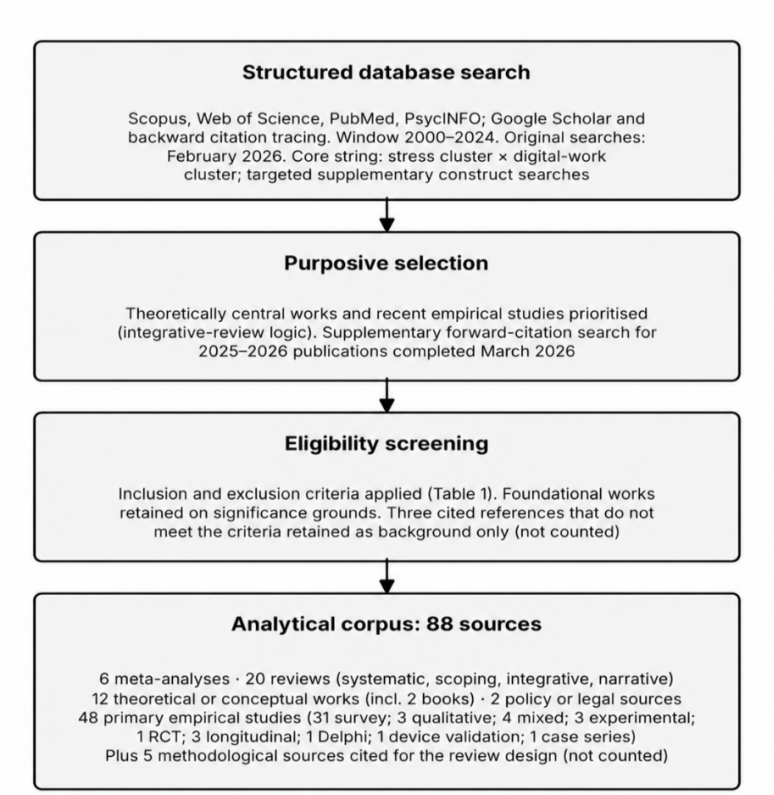


Figure 1. Search and selection flow for the integrative review.

2.4. Analysis

The analysis followed the principles of thematic synthesis (Thomas and Harden, 2008). Findings were extracted using a standardised template capturing study context, design and sample, theoretical framework, stressors examined, outcomes reported and intervention effects. The extracted findings were grouped into five analytical domains: job-level demands, emotional and interpersonal dynamics, leadership and organisational climate, individual resources, and technology-enabled interventions. The synthesis distinguished between stressors operating at the task level and those operating at the system level, and between interventions aimed at individual coping and those focused on work design. The descriptive layer of the analysis profiles the corpus by its theories, contexts, characteristics and methods, following the TCCM convention for review articles (Paul and Criado, 2020). As an interpretive synthesis, the review sets out the authors' analytical framework, the rationale for selection and the organising distinctions, so that readers can evaluate the basis of the claims. Extraction and coding were carried out by the first author using this template. Coding decisions were recorded and revisited during synthesis to check consistency in how studies were assigned to domains. No formal quality-appraisal instrument was applied, consistent with the interpretive aims of an integrative review; instead, the design of each study was recorded and weighed narratively, so that claims drawn from cross-sectional surveys are treated as associational and claims about intervention effects are tied to the designs that produced them.

3. The Corpus: Theories, Contexts, Characteristics, and Methods

3.1. Theories

Three frameworks dominate the corpus. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model views work-related stress as the result of an imbalance between the demands placed on individuals, such as time pressure, workload and conflicting responsibilities, and their access to job resources, including supervisor support,

opportunities for learning and growth, and constructive performance feedback (Demerouti *et al*., 2001). Two characteristics of this model matter for the argument below. It proposes two pathways: a health-impairment pathway, in which excessive demands cause fatigue and exhaustion, and a motivational pathway, in which accessible resources build motivation and engagement (Demerouti *et al*., 2001). Later developments of JD-R theory distinguish challenge demands, which can support growth and motivation when adequately resourced, from hindrance demands, which deplete energy and impede goal attainment without compensating benefit (Bakker *et al*., 2023). The model remains a prominent framework in occupational health psychology, and its originators have signalled that its demand and resource catalogues must keep pace with changing work, including technology-mediated demands and the design of future jobs (Bakker *et al*., 2023; Demerouti, 2025).

Conservation of Resources (COR) theory holds that stress arises in response to the actual or threatened loss of resources, or to failed resource investment (Hobfoll, 1989, 2001). Prolonged exposure to high demands produces a loss spiral in which depletion compounds further depletion (Hobfoll, 2001). Resources tend to move together, accumulating or diminishing in unison as "caravans", while the environmental conditions that sustain or deplete them, the "resource caravan passageways", are shaped predominantly by the organisation rather than by individual action (Hobfoll *et al*., 2018). The work–home resources model extends this reasoning across the boundary between domains, showing how demands and resources in one domain affect the other (ten Brummelhuis and Bakker, 2012).

Transactional stress theory locates stress in an individual's appraisal of situational demands relative to perceived capacity to cope. An event is stressful when it is appraised as threatening and the resources to manage its consequences are judged insufficient (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, 1987). The strength of the theory lies in its recognition of individual differences: identical stimuli evoke different reactions in different people, and the same digital feature may be appraised as a challenge by one employee and as a hindrance by another, producing eustress for the former and distress for the latter. The technostress literature builds directly on this concept. Technostress refers to the stress experienced by users of information and communication technologies (Tarafdar *et al*., 2007), and later work distinguishes techno-eustress from techno-distress (Tarafdar *et al*., 2019). A related concept is the stressor-detachment model, which holds that psychological detachment from work during off-hours helps employees replenish resources between demand episodes (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015).

Emotional labour theory examines how employees regulate emotions to meet organisational display requirements (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2000). Research on supervisor and peer support frequently draws on social exchange theory (Zeb *et al*., 2023). Labour-process and contested-terrain accounts frame the algorithmic-management strand, in which the primary concern is control rather than welfare (Kellogg *et al*., 2020). The ability–motivation–opportunity (AMO) framework, common in HRM research, is essentially absent from this corpus; the workplace-stress literature is organised instead around demands, resources and appraisal.

The three dominant frameworks do not exclude organisational or technological conditions; each treats the environment as a source of demands and resources. What they do not yet specify is the particular configuration of demands, resources and appraisal that digital mediation produces. The JD-R demand and resource catalogues were developed around task and interpersonal features and have only recently begun to incorporate round-the-clock availability expectations, algorithmic performance assessment, information overload and constant digital interruption (Umair *et al*., 2023; Scholze and Hecker, 2024). COR

theory has not yet been applied systematically to resource loss that originates in the architecture of digital work systems, where opaque algorithms and technology-driven monitoring affect employees' sense of autonomy, although its recent restatement for future job design points in that direction (Demerouti, 2025). Transactional theory treats coping as an individual process, and the appraisal literature on technostress shows that coping depends on how the technology is appraised, with the evidence to date drawn largely from student samples (Sharma and Gupta, 2023). Sections 4 and 5 develop these digital configurations in detail.

3.2. Contexts

Healthcare and information technology are the two most frequently studied sectors. The healthcare literature documents that nurse burnout has repercussions for patients and organisations (Jun *et al*., 2021), that clinicians themselves prefer interventions addressing working conditions over those addressing personal resilience (Aiken *et al*., 2023), and that occupational stress among Ethiopian health workers is highly prevalent, particularly among women (Girma *et al*., 2021). This literature also shows the influence of leadership style on job satisfaction (Specchia *et al*., 2021). In the IT sector, the corpus includes cross-national studies of engagement (Gemeda and Lee, 2020) and surveys of remote work in India during the pandemic (Prasad *et al*., 2020). Other well-represented sectors include hospitality (Mansour and Tremblay, 2016; Yousaf *et al*., 2020), construction (Dodanwala *et al*., 2021, 2023) and higher education (García-Arroyo and Segovia, 2019); country-specific evidence includes Egyptian healthcare staff (Kasemy *et al*., 2022). Platform and gig work form a distinct segment, in which algorithmic management is a defining feature of employment (Umair *et al*., 2023; Lu *et al*., 2024). Geographically, the corpus is concentrated in Western countries and in East and Southeast Asia, with fewer studies from Latin America, Africa and South Asia. The exceptions retained here, such as Ethiopia (Girma *et al*., 2021), Egypt (Kasemy *et al*., 2022), Pakistan (Naru and Rehman, 2020), Nigeria (Nwokeoma *et al*., 2019) and India (Prasad *et al*., 2020), matter because the mechanisms examined below may operate differently across regulatory and institutional regimes.

3.3. Characteristics

The constructs studied most often are technostress, work engagement, work–life balance and conflict, burnout and emotional exhaustion, psychological detachment, and employee perceptions of algorithmic monitoring and control. Work overload, role ambiguity, role conflict and job insecurity are the principal task-level demands. On the resource side, the literature emphasises social and organisational support, emotional intelligence, psychological capital and job autonomy. A recurring pattern is that the same digital feature can yield opposite outcomes depending on how it is implemented. Connectivity can increase flexibility while encroaching on personal time; algorithmic monitoring can be perceived as constructive feedback or as intrusive surveillance. This interpretive duality informs the boundary conditions set out in Section 6.

3.4. Methods

Cross-sectional surveys predominate, which limits causal inference throughout the corpus. Longitudinal studies are scarce; only 3 appear in the corpus: a one-year prospective study of organisational support and psychological capital (Ho and Chan, 2022), a multi-wave survey investigating the relationship between tertius iungens orientation and creativity (Ozer and Zhang, 2022), and a three-wave study investigating the curvilinear relationship between instrumental social support, work engagement and task performance (Yun and Beehr, 2023). Few studies evaluate interventions; notable examples include a manualised coaching trial among Nigerian police (Nwokeoma *et al*., 2019) and

Fleming's (2024) large cross-sectional comparison of intervention participants and non-participants. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews supply pooled estimates and comparative conclusions that individual surveys cannot, particularly on burnout and job demands (Alarcon, 2011), role stressors and performance (Gilboa *et al*., 2008), electronic monitoring (Ravid *et al*., 2023; König, 2025) and organisational-level interventions (Montano *et al*., 2014; Aust *et al*., 2023; Giovanis *et al*., 2026). These syntheses do not themselves establish causality; the causal weight of any pooled finding depends on the designs of the underlying studies, most of which are observational. Qualitative and mixed-methods work is concentrated in the algorithmic-management and technostress strands (Lu *et al*., 2024; Marsh *et al*., 2024; Kerr *et al*., 2023).

By publication type, the 88 corpus sources comprise 6 meta-analyses (one of which, Girma *et al*., 2021, is reported as a combined systematic review and meta-analysis and is counted once, under meta-analysis), 20 systematic, scoping, integrative or narrative reviews, 12 theoretical or conceptual works including 2 books, 2 policy or legal sources, and 48 primary empirical studies. Of the 48 primary studies, 31 are cross-sectional or other survey designs, 3 are qualitative, 4 are mixed-methods, 3 are experimental or field-experimental, 3 are longitudinal studies and 1 each is a randomised trial, a Delphi study, a wearable-device validation study and an early case-series. Theoretical and conceptual articles are therefore not counted among the primary studies. The full classification is given in Supplementary Table S1, and **Figure 1** reports the same counts.

4. How Digital Mediation Generates Stress

4.1. The pre-digital baseline

Workload consistently emerges as a major predictor of workplace stress. Overload, whether quantitative (more tasks than the available time allows) or qualitative (demands beyond what can realistically be delivered), is associated with strain among dual-career couples (Elloy and Smith, 2003), and a meta-analysis across occupational groups revealed work demands predict poorer performance (Gilboa *et al*., 2008). Meta-analytic evidence also shows that higher workload, role ambiguity and role conflict are associated with stronger burnout symptoms, particularly emotional exhaustion and cynicism (Alarcon, 2011). In JD-R terms, workload becomes a stressor when it exceeds the resources available to manage it. Consistent with transactional theory, coping style moderates the relationship between overload and exhaustion, as a study of university teachers shows (García-Arroyo and Segovia, 2019). COR theory adds a temporal element: chronic excessive workload depletes resources faster than they are restored, and without adequate respite this depletion progresses towards disengagement and exhaustion. The Japanese phenomenon of karoshi, death attributed to overwork, is the extreme end of this trajectory; prolonged excessive overtime has been linked to serious cardiovascular events (Uehata, 1991).

Work–life conflict carries much of the strain associated with overload. In the hospitality sector, work–family conflict mediates the relationship between workload and job stress (Mansour and Tremblay, 2016), while among police officers, emotional intelligence relates to work–life balance, with organisational support moderating the relationship (Kumarasamy *et al*., 2016). This suggests that time-management training alone is unlikely to be sufficient; reducing workload-induced strain requires structural changes to staffing and the provision of adequate recovery periods.

Role ambiguity, role conflict and job insecurity form a second cluster of job demands. Role stressors are associated with elevated strain and poorer performance (Gilboa *et al*., 2008) in settings as varied as construction (Dodanwala *et al*., 2021, 2023) and digital-platform entrepreneurship (Nambisan and Baron,

2021), while work stress during the pandemic was likewise associated with impaired performance (Saleem *et al*., 2021). Job insecurity and overload are associated with stress and poorer performance, as evidence from Pakistan's fast-food sector shows (Naru and Rehman, 2020), and job stress predicts burnout and turnover intention, with perceived job security and financial dependency moderating these relationships (Üngüren *et al*., 2024).

Whether job demands translate into strain depends on the communicative and relational context in which they are experienced. Managers identify clear and timely communication as a defining workplace competency and its absence as a persistent source of friction (Coffelt and Smith, 2020), while ambiguous communication can be expected to aggravate role stressors in complex or decentralised settings. Support from peers and supervisors is associated with lower strain and better job-related behaviour, partly through reduced job stress (Giao *et al*., 2020). Integrative reviews further confirm this protective effect (Bavik *et al*., 2020; Jolly *et al*., 2021), and research in the hospitality industry highlights the role of work–social support in shaping the outcomes of occupational stress (Yousaf *et al*., 2020). However, this protective effect has limits, as discussed in Section 5.

Leadership and organisational climate are a further moderating layer. Leadership style is associated with engagement and performance among ICT professionals (Gemeda and Lee, 2020) and with job satisfaction in nursing, as review evidence shows (Specchia *et al*., 2021). In the pre-digital account, leaders transmit or mitigate organisational demands. Section 5.3 returns to what digital mediation adds to this role: leaders now also set norms around online availability and govern the use of performance data, and these norms are the channels through which system-level pressure reaches teams.

4.2. Transformation, not replacement

Digital mediation has not replaced job demands. It has re-housed them within an infrastructure that extends their reach and frequency. Digital workload is intensified by the volume of information, the influx of notifications and the constant inflow of tasks; in digitally dense workplaces, the number of communication channels and the frequency of interruption are themselves sources of demand (Marsh *et al*., 2024), and in gig work technostress and overload are associated with poorer well-being (Umair *et al*., 2023). Role ambiguity is compounded when task allocation is algorithmic and its logic opaque (Parent-Rocheleau and Parker, 2022). Job insecurity is reinforced when monitoring data feed evaluation systems that employees cannot inspect (Parent-Rocheleau and Parker, 2022). In technology-rich settings, the challenges employees report is tied to the structure of the work arrangement (Babapour Chafi *et al*., 2021), and technostress is associated with remote and hybrid configurations rather than with any single task (Kasemy *et al*., 2022; Banerjee and Gupta, 2024). The environmental dimension interacts with the digital one: the connectivity that enables flexibility also imposes after-hours availability demands, and coordination tools double as surveillance mechanisms.

System-level generation differs from the episodic demands emphasised in classical theory because it operates through three mechanisms embedded in the design of the work system rather than in the characteristics of the individual occupying a role. This is why the stress it produces persists as employees move in and out of positions. The three mechanisms are related but distinct. Continuity refers to sustained exposure and restricted recovery: demand that does not pause, and the removal of the intervals in which resources would otherwise be rebuilt. Opacity refers to limited access to decision-relevant information: employees cannot see what was measured, how it was weighted or what would change

the outcome. Asymmetry refers to unequal influence over data and decisions: the organisation can collect, combine and act on information about employees in ways employees cannot reciprocate or contest. Opacity and asymmetry are easily conflated but do not reduce to one another. A system can be transparent, disclosing its rules fully, while employees still have little power to challenge or alter the decisions it produces; conversely, a system can be contestable in principle yet so opaque that no one knows what to contest. Opacity concerns information; asymmetry concerns power.

4.3. Continuity

Chronic overload and job insecurity can persist without any digital mediation, so the distinction drawn here does not rest on traditional stressors having definite endpoints. It rests on how digital systems extend exposure and restrict recovery. A demanding project, even if prolonged, may still leave evenings and weekends in which resources can be rebuilt. However, when constant connectivity, always-on expectations and algorithmic scheduling extend demands into non-work time, they may reduce opportunities for psychological detachment, recuperation and replenishment of resources (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015). The consequences are visible at the work–home interface. Constant connectivity allows work to spill into rest and leisure time, and the resulting work–family conflict is associated with poorer well-being (Rus *et al*., 2021). Managing boundaries becomes an ongoing task rather than a daily transition, especially where the physical distinction between work and personal life has dissolved (Shirmohammadi *et al*., 2022; Brough *et al*., 2020).

A recent study by Whelan *et al*. (2026) illustrates this mechanism. Among 405 full-time hybrid workers, technostress was associated with higher burnout when employees worked from home, largely because it impaired psychological detachment; greater control over remote-work arrangements weakened this association. Continuity is sustained, on this reading, by limited scope for recovery and weak enforcement of boundaries, and it is this combination that right-to-disconnect policies have sought to address. Eurofound (2023) reported that a majority of employees in the European firms surveyed received work-related communication outside working hours even where a right-to-disconnect policy was in place. The binding constraint therefore appears to lie in implementation rather than in adoption, a conclusion the Australian experience of the right to disconnect also supports (Josserand and Boersma, 2024). A policy protects recovery only when employees can uphold it against prevailing workplace norms; otherwise, it shifts the burden of disconnecting from the organisation to the individual.

4.4. Opacity

Algorithmic evaluation systems often return ratings with little accompanying justification. Employees are left without the information they need to identify the causes of a poor rating, so a setback comes to feel beyond their control, which weakens motivation and adaptive coping. Transactional theory places appraisal at the centre of the stress response, and appraisal requires inputs: what was assessed, how it was weighted and which actions could change the outcome (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). When the six managerial functions, monitoring, goal setting, performance management, scheduling, compensation and termination, are carried out by algorithms operating on concealed logic, routine management becomes a source of unpredictability and reduced autonomy (Kellogg *et al*., 2020; Parent-Rocheleau and Parker, 2022).

Empirical evidence from platform work supports this account. In a mixed-methods study of platform workers, algorithmic management was identified as a hindrance demand that differs from conventional supervisory

control in its opacity, unpredictability and surveillance-based evaluation (Lu *et al*., 2024). Emerging research indicates that these dynamics extend beyond gig platforms into mainstream organisations, where algorithmic systems reshape autonomy, transparency and strain in ways the literature is only beginning to address (Kellogg *et al*., 2020; Zhang et al., 2025). A narrative review of workers' health under algorithmic management discusses opacity among the conditions associated with strain (Vignola *et al*., 2023). At the empirical level, interview evidence from delivery riders shows algorithmic management generating both job demands and resources, with workers using job crafting as a means to strengthen existing resources and develop new ones (Lippert *et al*., 2023).

4.5. Asymmetry

The organisation's ability to collect and act on employee data substantially exceeds employees' ability to comprehend or influence the system in return. This tilts the resource balance structurally rather than situationally, and it does so whether or not the system is transparent: disclosure of the rules does not by itself confer the power to challenge the decisions. The meta-analytic evidence on electronic performance monitoring is consistent with this reading. Across 94 independent samples, the presence of monitoring was associated with higher work stress across monitoring configurations, without demonstrable performance benefit; employees reported more favourable attitudes where monitoring was transparent and minimally invasive (Ravid *et al*., 2023). A recent review corroborates the pattern and shows that the effects of monitoring depend on the regulatory environment in which it operates (König, 2025).

Asymmetry has now become a regulatory concern. Directive (EU) 2024/2831 on improving working conditions in platform work was adopted on 23 October 2024 and entered into force on 1 December 2024; member states have until 2 December 2026 to transpose it into national law (European Union, 2024). The Directive requires human oversight of algorithmic decisions that significantly affect platform workers and prohibits dismissal on the basis of an automated decision alone. Its adoption is an institutional acknowledgement that asymmetry is a property of the work system that requires governance; its practical effect on workers will depend on the timing and content of national transposition, which will vary across member states.

Within the JD-R framework, the three mechanisms align more closely with hindrance demands than with challenge demands, because they deplete resources and diminish motivation rather than support growth (Bakker *et al*., 2023; Lu *et al*., 2024). They also add to job pressure while removing the autonomy and the access to information that would otherwise help buffer it. One qualification runs through the evidence and is carried into the propositions below: transparency and governance shape employee attitudes towards the same monitoring technology, which may accordingly be appraised as a hindrance or as a challenge (Lu *et al*., 2024; Vignola *et al*., 2023; König, 2025), even though the association between monitoring and stress holds across configurations (Ravid *et al*., 2023). Generation of stress is therefore a consequence of organisational design choices rather than of technology itself.

5. Individual Regulation and Its Ceiling

5.1. What regulation achieves

Individual regulation reduces strain, but within limits, and those limits are the concern of this section. Research on emotional labour has long documented the psychological costs of regulating emotion at work. Surface acting involves suppressing genuine emotion, and deep acting involves modifying internal states to match required displays. Both demands sustained regulatory effort and contribute to cumulative exhaustion, with surface acting generally carrying the

higher cost (Hochschild, 1983; Grandey, 2000).

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the most prominent individual-level resource in this literature. Trait EI is protective against occupational stress, partly through the emotional-labour processes it shapes (Mikolajczak *et al*., 2007). It is also associated with better work–life balance (Kumarasamy *et al*., 2016) and job satisfaction through a sequential pathway involving psychological empowerment and work engagement (Gong *et al*., 2020). Moreover, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between EI and job performance (Alwali and Alwali, 2022). The boundaries of EI as a regulatory resource remain less well specified than its benefits. EI enables individuals to respond adaptively to acute emotional demands; it does not modify the structural sources of pressure in the workplace. Hence, EI-focused training is likely to yield modest and short-lived gains as long as those conditions remain unchanged.

Other personal and social resources follow similar trajectories. Psychological capital and perceived organisational support predict flourishing over a one-year horizon (Ho and Chan, 2022). Positive everyday exchange with co-workers relates to creativity (Ozer and Zhang, 2022), and the broader literature on health and well-being at work treats relational quality as a resource in its own right (Sonnentag *et al*., 2023). The effects of organisational support on employee performance vary depending on the form it takes. In a study of frontline workers in flexible manufacturing, Chen *et al*. (2020) distinguished reinforcing organisational support, which was positively related to new forms of performance, from inhibitive organisational support, which affected employees' sense of awe but had no significant effect on performance. Work–life balance is a further recurrent regulatory resource. Effective management of work and personal roles, and access to flexible arrangements, are associated with lower stress and higher satisfaction; meta-analytic findings link work–life balance arrangements to organisational performance (Wong *et al*., 2020), and conceptual work maps their definitions, causes and consequences (Brough *et al*., 2020). Poor boundary management is associated with adverse outcomes, particularly in remote and virtual settings where the physical separation of work and personal space has eroded (Shirmohammadi *et al*., 2022).

Two limitations recur across this literature. The first is intrinsic to the resource. Instrumental social support enhances task performance up to a point, beyond which additional support is associated with lower performance; Yun and Beehr (2023) document this curvilinear pattern, mediated through work engagement, so even interpersonal resources show diminishing returns. The second is a mismatch of scale, and here the argument moves from evidence to prediction. Individual-level resources address demands that fall within their reach. Emotional intelligence can help an employee manage a difficult client interaction; it cannot remove a round-the-clock expectation of availability. Psychological capital can help an individual recover from a setback; it cannot change the algorithm that produced it. The reviewed studies show individual and organisational resources buffering episodic demands. The framework developed in Section 6 predicts, rather than demonstrates, that this buffering weakens when demands are structural and continuous; individual resources may remain helpful under such conditions even though they cannot remove the source of strain. In COR terms, structurally generated demand converts the ordinary cycle of loss and recovery into a loss spiral, because resources invested in appraisal and coping are not replenished while the underlying conditions remain unchanged, so each coping episode begins from a lower baseline than the last (Hobfoll, 2001; Hobfoll *et al*., 2018).

5.2. Detachment: the mechanism the system removes

The stressor-detachment model holds that detachment during non-work time is the principal means by which employees replenish resources between episodes of heightened demand (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015). Continuity, the first generative mechanism, removes this recovery opportunity: when connectivity to work is constant, the opportunity to detach shrinks, and a manageable resource loss can escalate into a continuing loss spiral. The hybrid-work evidence cited above is consistent with this pathway. Technostress was associated with impaired detachment, impaired detachment with burnout, and the association weakened where employees held greater structural control over their arrangements (Whelan *et al*., 2026). Instructing workers in an always-on system simply to "detach" asks them to compensate individually for a deficit created by the work system itself.

5.3. The intervention record

Fleming (2024) examined survey data from 46,336 employees across 233 UK organisations. The survey instrument recorded around ninety well-being offerings, from which Fleming evaluated a smaller set of individual-level mental well-being intervention categories, including resilience and stress-management training, mindfulness, relaxation classes, well-being and sleep applications, coaching and volunteering. Using propensity-score matching, participants and non-participants reported little difference on most well-being measures; volunteering was the sole exception. The design is cross-sectional, and self-selection into interventions limits causal interpretation: employees who join programmes may differ from those who do not in ways the matching cannot fully remove. The findings therefore show an absence of observable difference between participants and non-participants, not that individual interventions never work. Fleming's own interpretation is grounded in JD-R theory: individual-level interventions may fail to meet employees' resource needs because they do not address the job demands placed on them. Interventions that modify working conditions are associated with measurable health benefits (Montano *et al*., 2014), although an overview of fifty-two systematic reviews finds those benefits uneven across outcomes (Aust *et al*., 2023). More recently, an updated systematic-review concluded that evidence for lasting benefits at organisation-level remains limited (Giovanis *et al*., 2026). Taken together, these findings suggest that neither individual-level nor organisational-level interventions are reliably sufficient in isolation, a pattern the framework in Section 6 predicts and Proposition 3 formalises.

Technology-enabled interventions show the same logic on a smaller scale. Wearable devices and biomarkers are being developed to monitor occupational stress (Morales *et al*., 2022) and have been validated for continuous 24-hour physiological measurement (Shishavan *et al*., 2023), while employees' perceptions of such devices remain mixed (Tindale *et al*., 2022). The challenge lies in governance. Surveillance-based monitoring is itself a source of strain under algorithmic management (Vignola *et al*., 2023), and a wearable perceived as a surveillance tool rather than a support is likely to add to anxiety rather than relieve it. A mixed-methods study employing value-sensitive design found that although most employees were receptive to digital stress-management tools, their acceptance was limited by concerns about efficacy, privacy and accountability (Kerr *et al*., 2023). The concern is therefore less the technology than the conditions under which it is implemented. Without transparent governance, a technology intended for well-being may instead be experienced as controlling.

Virtual reality environments are designed to assist employees in redirecting attention away from work and so to facilitate recovery, but a scoping review finds that evidence from real workplace settings remains scarce and of limited quality (Naylor *et al*., 2020). Whether the stress-reducing effects of a relaxing

VR experience persist once employees return to their usual working environment has not been established. Wearable physiological monitoring has, separately, been validated for continuous measurement of work-related stress over 24-hour periods (Shishavan *et al*., 2023), but the combination of immersive experiences with wearable biofeedback has not been evaluated in the sources reviewed here, and no claim about its effectiveness can be made.

Workplace coaching shows promise within its scope: a manualised programme of rational-emotive occupational health coaching produced significant stress reductions among Nigerian police officers in a randomised trial (Nwokeoma *et al*., 2019). These regulatory interventions help manage stress once it has arisen; they do not reduce the volume of strain the system produces.

Digital leadership is among the few interventions that can bridge the individual and structural levels. Leaders with strong emotional regulation, empathy and digital fluency can change the local conditions under which employees work, including communication norms, availability expectations and the way performance data are used (Ertiö *et al*., 2024). COR theory predicts that such leadership contributes to employees' resource reserves through support and recognition. Its advantages are likely to be reduced, however, when the broader system continues to generate pressure: the leader can modulate how systemic pressures reach the team but cannot remove their source.

The two-level structure also helps to explain why organisations continue to rely on interventions with a weak aggregate record. Organisations gravitate towards solutions that are cheapest and quickest to deploy. Individual-level programmes require minimal redesign of existing work structures and can be implemented rapidly, which partly accounts for their popularity despite mixed evidence (Fleming, 2024). Organisational-level change, covering workload calibration, guaranteed recovery periods, transparent monitoring practices and genuine scheduling autonomy, is more consequential and more disruptive, because it alters how the organisation extracts and measures work. On this reading, persistent stress alongside expanding wellness expenditure is proposed to reflect a mismatch between the level at which stress is generated and the level at which organisations choose to intervene, rather than a shortcoming of the available tools. This is an explanation offered for the pattern in the reviewed evidence, not a documented trend in stress prevalence.

6. An Integrative Framework: Generation, Regulation, and Governance

6.1. The framework

Figure 2 presents the framework. At the system level, the Generation block represents the digital mediation of the work system through the three mechanisms, each tied to a design feature: continuity arises from connectivity norms and scheduling architecture, opacity from algorithmic decision logic and its disclosure, and asymmetry from the monitoring regime and the distribution of control over data and decisions. A Baseline block of episodic, task-level job demands sits alongside Generation, because digital mediation amplifies these demands rather than replacing them. Both blocks feed the Regulation block at the individual level, where employees engage in appraisal, coping, recovery and detachment, and from there to the Outcomes block, which records strain, burnout, engagement and well-being measured at the individual level. A Resources block of job and personal resources sits beside the regulation-to-outcomes path. Two interaction terms are marked on it: resources moderate the regulation-to-outcomes path (the conventional buffering effect), and Generation in turn moderates that buffering effect (the ceiling), so that the strength of resource buffering is predicted to decline as generation intensifies. On the right, a Governance block covering organisation-level interventions such as monitoring policy, work

redesign, enforceable disconnection and value-sensitive design feeds back into the Generation block; a feedback arrow from Outcomes to Governance indicates that employee outcomes inform governance decisions. Interventions are placed on the paths they act on: individual-level programmes act on the regulation-to-outcomes path, and governance acts on Generation. Proposition 1 concerns the direct path from Generation to Outcomes over and above the Baseline block; Proposition 2 concerns the Generation × Resources interaction marked on the resources path; and Proposition 3 concerns the Governance-to-Generation path and its alignment with individual-level measures.

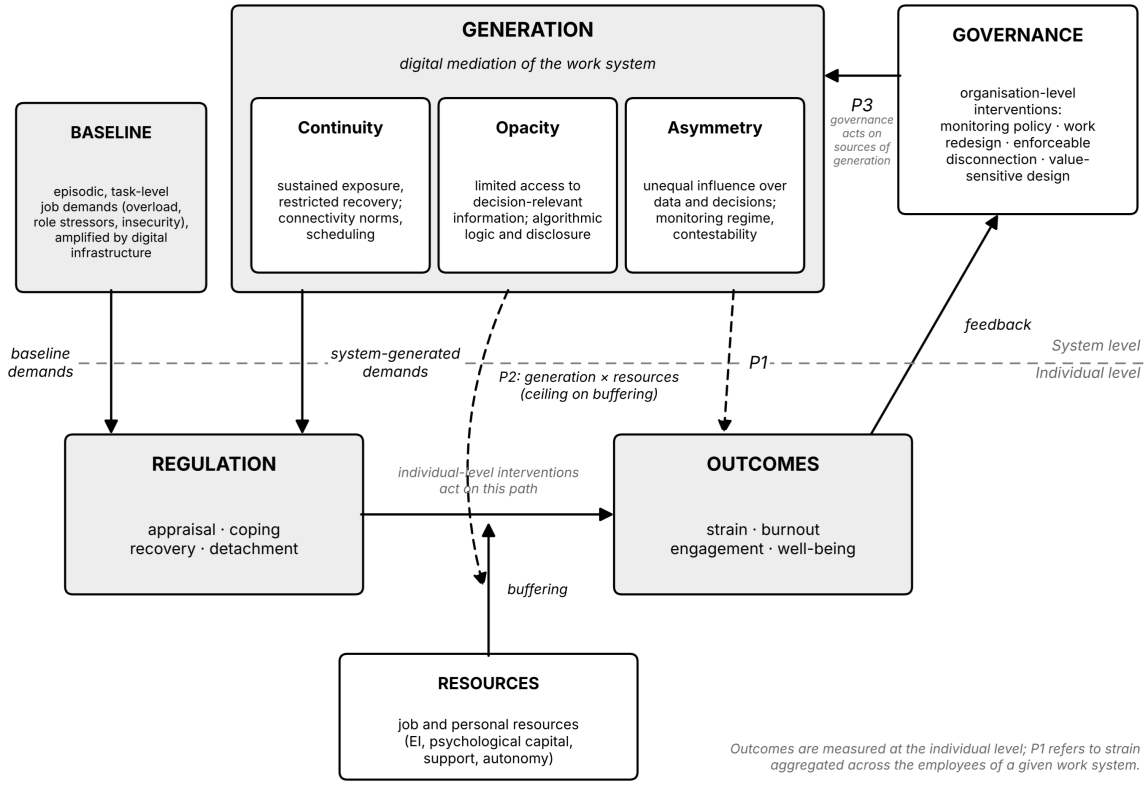


Figure 2. System-level generation and individual-level regulation of workplace stress in digitally mediated work.

The Generation block and the Baseline block of episodic job demands are properties of the work system; Regulation, Resources and Outcomes are measured at the individual level, and Proposition 1 refers to strain aggregated across the employees of a given work system. Resources moderate the regulation-to-outcomes path, and Generation moderates that moderation (the ceiling in Proposition 2). The Governance-to-Generation arrow represents organisation-level interventions acting on the sources of generation; Proposition 3 holds that sustained improvement is more likely when individual-level measures on the regulation path are aligned with such governance.

Table 2 summarises how the five analytical domains of the synthesis, together with the digital infrastructure that generates system-level demands, map onto the two levels of the framework.

Table 2. Multi-level factors in the generation and regulation of workplace stress.

Domain	Key elements	Position in the framework	Selected sources
Job-level demands	Overload, role ambiguity, job insecurity	Baseline demands, amplified by digital infrastructure	Gilboa*et al.*(2008); Alarcon (2011); Umair*et al.*(2023)
Digital infrastructure	Connectivity, algorithmic allocation and evaluation, monitoring	Generation: continuity, opacity, asymmetry	Kellogg*et al.*(2020); Lu*et al.*(2024); Ravid*et al.*(2023)
Emotional and interpersonal dynamics	Emotional labour, co-worker support, form of organisational support	Regulation resources with diminishing returns	Grandey (2000); Yun and Beehr (2023); Chen*et al.*(2020)
Leadership and climate	Availability norms, use of performance data, local climate	Modulation of how generated pressure reaches teams	Ertiö*et al.*(2024); Specchia*et al.*(2021)
Individual resources	Emotional intelligence, psychological capital, coping, detachment	Regulation, effective against episodic demand	Udayar*et al.*(2020); Ho and Chan (2022); Sonnentag and Fritz (2015)
Interventions	Individual programmes, wearables, coaching; redesign, monitoring governance	Regulation path versus governance-to-generation path	Fleming (2024); Montano*et al.*(2014); Kerr*et al.*(2023)

6.2. Three propositions

Three propositions state the framework in testable form. They are theoretical predictions derived from the synthesis; the reviewed evidence is consistent with them but does not establish them.

Proposition 1 (system-level generation). In digitally mediated work, the degree of continuity, opacity and asymmetry in the work system predicts employee strain, aggregated across the employees of that system, over and above episodic job demands, and its contribution rises with the intensity of digital mediation.

Proposition 2 (structural–regulatory mismatch). The strain-reducing effect of individual resources, including emotional intelligence, psychological capital and coping skill, is predicted to weaken as system-level generation intensifies: generation moderates the buffering effect of resources, so that the marginal benefit of additional individual resources diminishes at high levels of generation, even though those resources may remain helpful in absolute terms.

Proposition 3 (design–intervention alignment). Sustained improvement in well-being is more likely when individual-level stress-management measures are aligned with changes to organisational design than when either is implemented alone; standalone individual-level interventions are predicted to yield gains that are smaller and less durable where systemic conditions remain unchanged.

Boundary conditions need to be specified. The propositions are expected to hold most strongly in settings characterised by high digital mediation and low employee discretion, such as platform work, algorithmically scheduled service work and monitored remote roles. They are expected to hold weakly where digital technology facilitates work rather than organises or controls it, where employees retain scheduling autonomy, or where collective representation restricts the use of monitoring data. Proposition 1 is further contingent on implementation, since the same monitoring technology may operate as a hindrance demand or as a feedback resource depending on transparency and governance (Lu *et al*., 2024; Vignola *et al*., 2023).

7. Discussion

7.1. Theoretical implications

The contribution of this review is to extend, rather than replace, the three dominant frameworks by specifying the digital configurations of demands, resources and appraisal that they can accommodate. It does so by identifying mechanisms that connect two bodies of literature that presently have so far

developed in isolation from each other: research on what digital work systems do to employees, and research on why stress interventions produce mixed results. Fleming's (2024) JD-R interpretation of the intervention findings, discussed in Section 5.3, presupposes but does not specify why the demands that interventions fail to address are continuously regenerated. The three mechanisms supply that account.

Within the JD-R model, the extension has two components. The first is catalogue expansion. The demand catalogue should incorporate techno-overload, algorithmic surveillance, opaque decision systems, after-hours availability expectations and notification load; the resource catalogue should incorporate feedback transparency, algorithmic explainability, platform autonomy and recovery-friendly work design. The most direct empirical evidence currently available comes from a survey of 898 white-collar employees in which digital job demands and digital job resources operated through distinct health-impairment and motivational pathways (Scholze and Hecker, 2024), and recent statements of the theory are open to this expansion (Bakker *et al*., 2023; Demerouti, 2025). The second component goes beyond the catalogue. In the original model, demands and resources are primarily attributes of jobs, created through organisational design and mediated by direct supervision. Under digital mediation, an increasing share of what counts as a demand or a resource is a property of the technological system itself: what a platform discloses, how an algorithm arranges and rates work, and whether technical or cultural barriers to disconnecting exist (Kellogg *et al*., 2020; Parent-Rocheleau and Parker, 2022). Treating the design of the mediating system as a source of demands in its own right is the move that the generation–regulation distinction formalises.

For COR theory, the extension is to include digital control resources among the resource categories: the ability to influence when, how and for whom one is available, and the capacity to understand the systems by which one's work is evaluated. Loss spirals in digital work are predicted to intensify where organisational data capacity outstrips employee access to information. The theory gains explanatory reach when algorithmic transparency is treated as a condition of the resource caravan passageways through which recovery occurs (Hobfoll *et al*., 2018); continuous connectivity obstructs those passageways, and the karoshi trajectory is the limiting case of the spiral the theory predicts.

For transactional theory, the appraisal–coping model retains its value in explaining individual variation, and it should now be read alongside a structural account of the conditions of appraisal. Opacity restricts secondary appraisal of controllability because the information needed to assess control is withheld by the system being appraised, and the efficacy of coping depends on whether the work structure permits genuine recovery. Appraisal remains an individual process; the conditions under which it takes place are configured by organisational and technological design.

7.2. Implications for practice

The findings of this review suggest a shift in priorities from reactive, individual-level support towards the design of work structures that protect well-being.

Work design. Workload should be calibrated to what can be completed within reasonable time and capacity, and roles should be clearly defined, especially under hybrid arrangements. Organisational interventions are associated with favourable health outcomes when several conditions, including demands, control and support, are addressed simultaneously rather than individually (Montano *et al*., 2014).

Protected recovery. Recovery time should be guaranteed rather than left to negotiation. Where employees must advocate for their own disconnection,

recovery is typically the first casualty of pressure (Sonnentag and Fritz, 2015). The European company-level record indicates that a right-to-disconnect policy has limited effect on its own (Eurofound, 2023), and the Australian experience points to the same implementation challenge (Josserand and Boersma, 2024).

Governance of monitoring. Wearable devices, dashboards and algorithmic systems should operate under defined, transparent rules with employee involvement in their implementation, and the collection and use of sensitive data should be bounded. Employees respond more favourably when monitoring is transparent and framed as feedback than when it is intrusive. Moreover, the meta-analytic record shows no average performance gain from monitoring in any case (Ravid *et al*., 2023; König, 2025). For organisations engaged in platform work in the European Union, Directive (EU) 2024/2831 will require human oversight of consequential algorithmic decisions once transposed into national law, for which the deadline is 2 December 2026 (European Union, 2024). Treating that requirement as a design principle rather than a compliance deadline is the less costly path.

Leadership development. Digital leaders need technical proficiency together with emotional regulation and situational awareness, because they set the local climate that determines how organisational pressures are interpreted and transmitted to employees (Ertiö *et al*., 2024).

Integration, not substitution. Emotional intelligence training, mindfulness, wearable technologies and coaching are useful individual-level supports. The evidence reviewed in Section 5.3 suggests that their benefits are more likely to be sustained when they are integrated with changes to organisational design than when they are introduced as substitutes for reducing demands (Fleming, 2024; Montano *et al*., 2014).

Communication and boundaries. Defined norms on after-hours availability and response expectations, together with structured email practices such as limiting checking frequency or agreeing team-level protocols, can reduce strain in the short run (Kushlev and Dunn, 2015; Wijngaards *et al*., 2022). Such measures matter most for remote and hybrid workers, for whom the boundary between work and personal time has become indistinct (Shirmohammadi *et al*., 2022). A defined cut-off for messages restores a boundary that individual self-discipline alone cannot hold.

7.3. Limitations

This review is integrative and interpretive. It synthesises a purposively selected set of studies rather than an exhaustively assembled corpus; no meta-analytic pooling was conducted; and the themes reflect the authors' analytical interpretation. A differently constituted corpus could weight the levels of analysis differently, and the selection logic is set out in Section 2 so that readers can evaluate the basis of the conclusions.

The corpus is dominated by cross-sectional designs, so the associations reported throughout are not causal estimates, and the propositions in Section 6 are theoretical predictions rather than established findings. The structured search covered 2000 to 2024, a period of rapid change in digital work practices. Studies published in 2025 and 2026 that bear on the central argument were added through a supplementary search (Demerouti, 2025; König, 2025; Zhang *et al*., 2025; Giovanis *et al*., 2026; Whelan *et al*., 2026), but the fast-developing literature on AI-mediated supervision is only partially covered. The review is restricted to English-language publications, which introduces language bias, and the geographical spread of the evidence is uneven, with most studies from Western countries or from East and Southeast Asia. Algorithmic management has been treated as a single category, although algorithmic mediation in office settings

differs materially from that in gig-platform work, so industry-specific variation in the forms and sources of strain is not fully captured.

7.4. Future research

Theory. The sharpest test of the framework is the interaction in Proposition 2: whether the stress-buffering effect of detachment and other regulatory resources weakens as measured continuity, opacity and asymmetry rise. Longitudinal designs are needed to establish whether the generation–regulation gap persists over time and how loss spirals unfold under continuous digital demand. The proposed extension of COR theory, treating algorithmic transparency as a condition of the passageways through which resources are preserved or drained, can be tested within such designs.

Context. Sector-comparative research across healthcare, education, gig work, banking and manufacturing should identify which digital design features contribute most to generation in each setting, and thereby test the boundary conditions in Section 6. Non-Western contexts deserve particular attention, because regulatory frameworks and collective representation, both moderators in the framework, differ sharply across them. The transposition of Directive (EU) 2024/2831 offers a quasi-experimental opportunity to study the asymmetry mechanism, but with a qualification: transposition deadlines fall on 2 December 2026, and member states will adopt implementing measures at different times and with different content, so platform workers will not move from unregulated to regulated conditions simultaneously. Staggered national implementation is itself useful, since it allows comparison of workforces under differing regulatory timing (European Union, 2024).

Method. Intervention trials should combine individual-level training with structural redesign; quasi-experimental comparison of combined against individual-only approaches would test Proposition 3 directly. Experience-sampling and diary designs suit the continuity mechanism, which operates day to day. Research on the ethics and governance of monitoring should establish what forms of monitoring employees consider acceptable and how governance arrangements shape strain, thereby extending the value-sensitive design approach (Kerr *et al*., 2023; Tindale *et al*., 2022). Delphi work on technostress prevention (Berger *et al*., 2024) and systematic evaluation of resilience-based programmes in the public sector (Hollaar *et al*., 2025) offer methods for building the governance element of the framework rather than only measuring its absence.

8. Conclusion

Workplace stress remains a durable problem for organisations and employees. In digitally mediated work, structural features of the workplace, including continuous connectivity, algorithmic management and blurred work–life boundaries, have become primary contributors to strain, while most organisational responses remain concentrated on the individual rather than the system. The misalignment between system-level generation and individual-level regulation is proposed here as an explanation for the persistence of stress and the mixed record of well-being interventions. On this account, sustainable reductions in stress require shifting the unit of analysis from the individual employee to the work system. Individual interventions remain valuable, but they are unlikely to compensate on their own for work structures that continually regenerate pressure. Leadership practice, governance of digital monitoring and the integration of individual support with structural redesign together form the architecture required to manage stress in digitally mediated workplaces. The three propositions translate this argument into claims that can be tested, and the extensions proposed to the JD-R, Conservation of Resources and Transactional frameworks provide a

theoretical basis for that testing.

Supplementary materials: Supplementary Table S1, which classifies all 96 cited references by status (analytical corpus, methodological source or background reference) and by publication or study type, was provided to the reviewers during peer review and is available from the corresponding author on request.

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