

DIGITAL BURNOUT AND THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF INDONESIAN ALWAYS-CONNECTED WORKERS

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Received : 26 December 2025	Published : 19 February 2026
Revised : 19 January 2026	DOI : https://doi.org/10.59971/jumawa.v3i2.450
Accepted : 05 February 2026	Link Publish : https://abadiinstitute.org/index.php/JUMAWA/article/view/450

Abstract

The rapid expansion of digitally connected work systems has transformed organizational flexibility while simultaneously intensifying psychosocial risks among employees. Although technostress and digital fatigue have been widely examined quantitatively, qualitative studies exploring the lived experiences of Indonesian workers within always-connected workplaces remain limited. This study aims to investigate how sustained digital connectivity contributes to digital burnout among Indonesian digital and administrative employees. Using a descriptive phenomenological design, data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with ten participants recruited through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using an integrated approach combining Colaizzi's phenomenological analysis and Braun and Clarke's Reflexive Thematic Analysis. The findings revealed five essential themes: notification overload, emotional exhaustion, work intrusion, digital fatigue, and constrained recovery strategies. Participants experienced continuous cognitive fragmentation, emotional detachment, blurred work-life boundaries, and chronic physical exhaustion caused by persistent digital availability. The study further found that individual recovery efforts were frequently undermined by organizational expectations and fear of missing out (FoMO). These findings demonstrate that digital burnout is not merely an individual psychological issue but also a structural and regulatory problem intensified by the absence of a formal Right to Disconnect framework in Indonesia. The study highlights the urgency of organizational digital boundary policies and labor regulations protecting workers' psychological well-being in the digital economy era.

Keywords: Digital Burnout; Digital Fatigue; Right To Disconnect; Technostress; Work-Life Boundaries.

INTRODUCTION

The pervasive integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into twenty-first-century organizational life has fundamentally transformed how, where, and when work is performed. Technologies such as cloud collaboration platforms, mobile work devices (MWDs), and enterprise messaging applications have enabled hybrid, remote, and work-from-anywhere (WFA) arrangements, delivering significant benefits in flexibility, efficiency, and geographic reach (Ayyagari et al., 2011). Yet these advantages are not without cost. The same infrastructure that liberates workers from the confines of a fixed office simultaneously compels them to remain perpetually reachable, dismantling the temporal and spatial boundaries that once separated professional obligations from private life (Derks et al., 2020).

The psychological consequences of this boundary erosion were theorized as early as 1984, when clinical psychologist Craig Brod introduced the construct of technostress, describing it as a modern disease of adaptation arising from an inability to cope healthily with new computer technologies (Brod, 1984, as cited in Ayyagari et al., 2011). Weil and Rosen (1997) subsequently broadened this conceptualization to encompass any negative impact on attitudes, thoughts, behaviors, or body psychology caused directly or indirectly by technology use. Within an organizational context, Ayyagari et al. (2011) operationalized technostress as a stress phenomenon arising from the use of information systems to accomplish work tasks. Drawing on person-environment fit theory, these authors constructed an empirical model demonstrating that specific technological characteristics usability (encompassing ease of use, complexity, and reliability),

intrusiveness (constant presence and anonymity), and dynamism (pace of technological change) correlate directly with work stressors including work overload, role ambiguity, invasion of privacy, work-family conflict, and job insecurity (Ayyagari et al., 2011).

When technostress accumulates without adequate recovery, it cascades into digital fatigue, a condition of mental, physical, and cognitive exhaustion produced by intensive and prolonged interaction with digital communication tools (Grzegorzek, 2024). Unlike conventional occupational fatigue, digital fatigue is etiologically and phenomenologically distinct because it is rooted in constant technological mediation, marked by fragmented attention, consecutive virtual meetings, and the relentless pressure to respond instantaneously to notifications (Hashona & Pusparini, 2026). Empirically, this fatigue encompasses visual, emotional, social, and motivational dimensions rather than mere physical tiredness.

The theoretical transition from sustained digital connectivity to extreme digital burnout is explicable through two complementary frameworks: the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory. Under JD-R logic, digital connectivity functions as a job demand that depletes workers' cognitive and emotional energy; when unbalanced by job resources such as autonomy and social support, this depletion produces emotional exhaustion (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). COR theory, developed by Hobfoll (1989), reinforces this argument by positing that stress emerges from the threat of resource loss, actual resource loss, or failure to gain resources following investment of effort. Unrelenting digital connectivity triggers what Hobfoll described as a resource loss spiral, a self-amplifying cycle in which individuals continually expend cognitive energy without sufficient opportunity for psychological detachment, precluding resource replenishment (Derks et al., 2020).

Despite considerable quantitative scholarship on technostress and digital fatigue, qualitative research capturing the lived subjective experience of Indonesian workers remains scarce. This gap is particularly consequential given Indonesia's rapid digital economic growth, which has not been matched by commensurate labor regulations governing remote and hybrid work boundaries (Hartono & Ramadhani, 2020). Accordingly, this phenomenological study aims to explore in depth the lived experiences of digital and administrative sector employees in Indonesia who operate within always-connected workplaces, thereby advancing a richer understanding of digital burnout as a psychosocial phenomenon in an emerging-economy context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technostress: Conceptual Foundations

The theoretical backbone of this study rests on Ayyagari et al.'s (2011) landmark empirical model published in *MIS Quarterly*. Using person-environment fit theory, these researchers demonstrated that ICT characteristics produce two dominant technostressors, work overload and role ambiguity, with technological intrusiveness serving as the most powerful predictor of stressor emergence. This model has been validated across multiple national contexts and professional sectors, including Chinese knowledge workers (Tarafdar et al., 2010) and South Asian IT professionals (Srivastava et al., 2015), lending cross-cultural robustness to its core propositions.

More recent scholarship has refined the understanding of technostress antecedents and outcomes. Mahapatra and Pati (2018) extended the model to encompass techno-invasion and techno-overload as primary predictors of psychological well-being among Indian IT sector employees. Similarly, studies conducted during and after the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that mandatory digitalization of work amplified technostress dimensions substantially, particularly for university educators and knowledge

workers who lacked prior exposure to fully digital workflows (Zhao et al., 2022). These findings underscore the contextual sensitivity of technostress and its relevance to rapidly digitalizing economies such as Indonesia.

Digital Fatigue and Burnout

Digital fatigue represents the proximate precursor to digital burnout in the psychosocial stress chain. Dewa et al. (2014, as cited in Grzegorzek, 2024) characterize digital fatigue as a multidimensional construct encompassing visual strain, cognitive overload, emotional numbing, and motivational deficit. Its distinctive feature relative to conventional occupational fatigue is its technological genesis: the phenomenon arises specifically from screen-mediated interaction, virtual meeting fatigue (colloquially termed 'Zoom fatigue'), and the cognitive switching costs associated with constant multitasking across digital (Mr. Shriyak Jain & Dr. Megha Grover, 2025)

Digital burnout, situated at the end of this continuum, is characterized by Maslach and Leiter's classic triad of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished personal accomplishment, adapted for a digitally mediated work context (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The SmartErgo (2026) report on digital fatigue's intersection with cybersecurity risk adds a critical organizational dimension: digitally exhausted workers demonstrate significantly reduced cognitive vigilance, increasing susceptibility to human errors such as phishing clicks and data breach incidents. This reframes digital burnout mitigation from a peripheral HR wellness concern to a core enterprise risk governance imperative.

Theoretical Frameworks: JD-R and COR

Two complementary theoretical frameworks jointly explain the dynamics through which sustained digital connectivity deteriorates into burnout. First, Bakker and Demerouti's (2017) JD-R model posits a dual-process mechanism: job demands consume workers' energy through a health-impairment pathway, while job resources foster motivation through a motivational pathway. Digital connectivity constitutes a perpetually active job demand; when organizational resources such as autonomy, supervisory support, and clear communication protocols are insufficient to counterbalance this demand, emotional exhaustion becomes inevitable.

Second, Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory provides a resource-centered explanation for why digitally connected workers find it increasingly difficult to recover. Resources defined broadly as objects, conditions, personal characteristics, and energies are finite and subject to loss spirals. Constant digital availability denies workers the psychological detachment necessary to replenish depleted resources, creating an accelerating deficit that manifests as burnout. Derks et al. (2020) empirically confirmed this mechanism in a sample of Dutch workers, finding that after-hours connectivity moderated by detachment significantly predicted exhaustion trajectories.

The Right to Disconnect: International and Indonesian Perspectives

The Right to Disconnect has emerged as a regulatory solution to the structural problem of digital boundary erosion. France pioneered legislative action through the El Khomri Law (2017), mandating that organizations with more than fifty employees negotiate ICT usage charters that include digital quiet hours. Australia's 2024 Fair Work Act amendment grants employees the legal right to refuse after-hours work contact unless refusal is objectively unreasonable. Italy's Law No. 81/2017 on Agile Work similarly requires written agreements that guarantee technical disconnection from work devices (Rifqi, 2022).

Indonesia remains without comparable legislation. The existing Manpower Law (Law No. 13 of 2003, as partially amended by the Job Creation Law/Omnibus Law 2020) does not explicitly address digital work boundaries or remote workers' right to disconnect. This regulatory vacuum creates conditions under which employers may unilaterally impose unlimited digital availability, contravening the spirit of Pancasila Industrial Relations (Hubungan Industrial Pancasila/HIP), which is premised on bipartite dialogue, fairness, and human dignity (Hartono & Ramadhani, 2020). Conceptually, the Right to Disconnect aligns with the Second Precept of Pancasila Just and Civilized Humanity and Article 28D(2) of the 1945 Constitution, which guarantees workers the right to fair and humane treatment in employment relationships.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design consistent with the philosophical tradition established by Husserl and operationalized by Colaizzi (1978). Descriptive phenomenology prioritizes the pure description of phenomena as they are experienced by participants, requiring the researcher to practice epoché (bracketing), a deliberate suspension of prior theoretical assumptions and personal presuppositions throughout data collection and analysis (Sundler et al., 2022). This approach is epistemologically appropriate for investigating digital burnout because the construct is inherently experiential: its psychological and somatic dimensions resist capture through quantitative measurement alone.

Participants and Sampling

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling to ensure that data were gathered from individuals who had directly experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Three inclusion criteria were applied: (1) active employment in Indonesia's digital sector (e.g., software development, social media management, digital marketing) or administrative sector (e.g., public auditing, human resource management, executive administration); (2) intensive use of digital communication channels (including WhatsApp, Slack, Zoom, and Microsoft Teams) for a minimum of eight hours daily; and (3) subjective experience of physical or mental fatigue attributable to digital workload. Ten participants who met all criteria were recruited and agreed to participate. Their demographic and occupational profiles are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant Demographic and Occupational Profiles

ID	Sector	Job Title	Daily Screen Hours	Main Platforms	Work Arrangement
P1	Digital	Social Media Specialist	11	WhatsApp, Slack, Instagram	Work From Anywhere
P2	Digital	Software Engineer	10	Slack, Teams, Jira, GitHub	Hybrid
P3	Administrative	HR Operations Officer	9	WhatsApp, Zoom, LinkedIn	Hybrid
P4	Administrative	Public Sector Auditor	9	WhatsApp, Teams, Email	Work From Anywhere
P5	Digital	UX Researcher	8	Figma, Slack, Google Meet	Fully Remote

P6	Administrative	Executive Assistant	11	WhatsApp, Email, MS Office	Conventional Office
P7	Digital	Content Writer	10	Slack, WhatsApp, Trello	Fully Remote
P8	Administrative	Finance Administrator	8	Email, MS Excel, Zoom	Conventional Office
P9	Digital	Digital Marketing Lead	11	WhatsApp, Zoom, Slack	Hybrid
P10	Administrative	Data Analyst	9	WhatsApp, Internal Database	Hybrid

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted via video conference to accommodate participants' geographic dispersion across Indonesia. Each interview lasted between sixty and ninety minutes and was audio-visually recorded with participants' written informed consent. Recordings were transcribed verbatim immediately following each session. Interview questions were designed to elicit rich experiential accounts of digital workload meaning, work-life boundary experiences, physical and cognitive fatigue symptomatology, and self-initiated recovery strategies. Member checking was subsequently conducted with three participant representatives to validate the accuracy of the essential descriptions derived from the analysis.

Data Analysis

Transcript data were analyzed using an integrated approach combining Colaizzi's (1978) seven-step phenomenological method with Braun and Clarke's (2006) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA). The integration of these two frameworks allowed the study to preserve the philosophical rigor of phenomenological bracketing while benefiting from the systematic flexibility of reflexive thematic coding. Table 2 presents the seven steps of this integrated analytical procedure and their operationalization within this study.

Table 2. Integrated Analytical Framework: Colaizzi and Braun & Clarke

Step	Colaizzi Integration	Braun & Clarke Integration	Operationalization
1	Familiarization: Repeated reading of transcripts to grasp the essence of the data.	Familiarising with data: Reading and noting initial impressions.	Researchers listened to audio recordings and read all ten verbatim transcripts multiple times.
2	Extracting Significant Statements: Identifying sentences directly relevant to the phenomenon.	Generating initial codes: Systematically coding the transcripts.	Researchers highlighted text units related to notification overload, emotional exhaustion, and work intrusion using qualitative software.

3	Formulating Meanings: Deriving conceptual meanings from extracted statements.	Generating initial themes: Clustering codes into candidate themes.	Direct quotations were translated into psychological meanings while preserving participant context.
4	Clustering Themes: Organizing formulated meanings into coherent thematic clusters.	Reviewing themes: Checking alignment of themes with codes and overall data.	Formulated meanings were organized into sub-themes and main clusters describing the structure of digital burnout.
5	Exhaustive Description: Writing a comprehensive description of the phenomenon.	Defining and naming themes: Establishing the conceptual essence of each theme.	Researchers composed a narrative integrating participant voices with theoretical understandings of digital burnout.
6	Essential Structure: Distilling the comprehensive description into fundamental dimensions.	Writing up: Producing a final analytical report rich in qualitative narrative.	Researchers formulated concise essential statements about the deepest psychological structure of digital burnout.
7	Participant Validation: Returning findings to participants for credibility confirmation.	Member Checking / Validation: Ensuring credibility of the qualitative analysis.	Analytical findings were returned to three participant representatives to verify the accuracy of the essential descriptions.

Ethical Considerations

All participants provided written informed consent before data collection. Participant identities were anonymized through the use of identification codes (P1–P10). Recordings and transcripts were stored on password-protected servers accessible only to the research team. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at any point without consequence. To protect participant confidentiality in reported quotations, no identifying information (workplace names, client names, specific geographic locations) was included in data excerpts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Five essential themes emerged from the integrated phenomenological analysis, collectively capturing the existential structure of digital burnout among Indonesian workers: notification overload, emotional exhaustion, work intrusion, digital fatigue, and recovery strategies. The thematic architecture is presented in Table 3 before each theme is explored in narrative depth.

Table 3. Thematic Structure of Digital Burnout Lived Experiences

Main Theme	Codes / Sub-themes	Formulation of Lived Experience Meaning
Notification Overload	• Constant message flow • Demand for rapid responses • Cognitive attention fragmentation	A feeling of helplessness and distress is caused by an unending flood of digital stimuli that disrupts concentration and increases work errors.
Emotional Exhaustion	• Cynicism and apathy • Emotional detachment • Loss of internal motivation	A depletion of psychological resources that causes employees to feel estranged from their work and indifferent toward their responsibilities.
Work Intrusion	• Blurred temporal boundaries • Expectation of after-hours availability • Domestic role conflict	The penetration of work demands into private family space destroys opportunities for workers' mental recovery.
Digital Fatigue	• Eye strain and physical discomfort • Systemic cognitive exhaustion • Reactive presenteeism	Accumulated physical and mental burden from uninterrupted screen exposure triggers sharp declines in performance quality.
Recovery Strategies	• Self-imposed digital limits • Weekend digital detox • Social barriers / FoMO	Conscious attempts to withdraw from digital networks are often undermined by normative organizational pressures and fear of missing out.

Notification Overload

Across all ten participants, digital notifications from work devices had ceased to function merely as communication aids and had instead become a source of chronic anxiety. The constant stream of messages across platforms, including WhatsApp, Slack, and Microsoft Teams, generated excessive sensory stimulation that participants experienced as uncontrollable. Workers described an inability to govern the flow of incoming information that demanded immediate attention, forcing rapid task-switching, a pattern consistent with research documenting the cognitive efficiency costs of digital multitasking (Grzegorzek, 2024). This perpetual fragmentation of attention produced measurable secondary effects: increased data entry errors, cognitive confusion described by participants as 'brain freeze,' and recurring guilt about failing to meet the normatively prescribed response speeds of their digital work ecosystem.

A public sector auditor (P4) captured the phenomenological texture of this experience:

"My phone sounds every minute. It contains instructions, revisions, and coordination questions. I cannot complete one analytical document with focus, because every five minutes, my attention is fractured by Slack pop-ups and the office WhatsApp group. It feels as though I am being chased all day without ever actually finishing work calmly."

This testimony illustrates how notification overload operates not merely as a logistical inconvenience but as a fundamental assault on the cognitive integrity required for complex professional tasks, an experience that Ayyagari et al. (2011) would attribute to the intrusive dimension of technological characteristics generating work overload as a primary technostressor.

Emotional Exhaustion

Emotional resource depletion emerged as the most psychologically destructive dimension of digital burnout among participants. All ten workers reported a dramatic emotional transformation: an initial state of high work engagement had eroded into profound cynicism, emotional coldness, and pervasive apathy toward all work-related activities. This exhaustion rendered employees incapable of mobilizing sufficient energy to care about their own performance outcomes or team success, a phenomenon directly congruent with the emotional exhaustion subscale of the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

A Digital Marketing Lead (P9) articulated this transformation with particular clarity:

"I used to be very enthusiastic about designing marketing campaigns. Now, even seeing a client notification appear makes my stomach hurt and my chest tighten. I feel emotionally numb. I just complete tasks minimally, submitting files without caring whether the result is good or not. I feel empty and have no remaining energy to care anymore."

This account exemplifies what the JD-R model identifies as the health-impairment pathway: sustained digital job demands, unmitigated by adequate job resources, produce emotional depletion that disrupts both motivational processes and organizational commitment (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The apathy described also represents a psychologically unconscious self-protective mechanism against further resource damage consistent with COR theory's prediction that individuals will sacrifice psychological engagement to protect remaining resource reserves (Hobfoll, 1989).

Work Intrusion

The normative promise of flexible work had, in participants' lived experience, transmuted into aggressive spatial and temporal intrusion into domestic life. Employees reported that supervisors, colleagues, and clients felt entitled to send work communications outside official working hours, including late at night, on weekends, and during national holidays. This created a condition of perpetual mental alertness in which workers never truly felt free from occupational surveillance, rendering psychological detachment, identified by Sonnentag and Fritz (2015) as a critical recovery mechanism, effectively impossible.

An Executive Assistant working in a conventional office arrangement (P6) described the phenomenological collapse of domestic sanctuary:

"Even though I am physically at home, my phone remains active. My boss often sends emails at 10 p.m. and asks for follow-ups on WhatsApp half an hour later. I dare not ignore them because I fear being perceived as lacking dedication. As a result, I eat dinner with my children while holding my work device in my left hand. My home is no longer a place of rest; it has become an extension of my office desk."

This testimony illustrates the mechanism Derks et al. (2020) identified as normative connectivity: the implicit organizational expectation that workers remain perpetually reachable, irrespective of official working hours. The consequent domestic role conflict and erosion of family relationship quality are not merely personal inconveniences; they constitute structural impediments to the psychological detachment that COR theory identifies as essential for resource replenishment.

Digital Fatigue

Digital fatigue manifested in participants as a cumulative physical and cognitive degradation distinct from the tiredness associated with physical exertion. Workers reported profound eye discomfort, chronic headaches, sleep disturbance from blue-light exposure, and musculoskeletal pain from prolonged static posture. Cognitively, the fatigue impaired decision-making capacity, increased the frequency of minor errors, and triggered procrastination findings consistent with the multidimensional model of digital fatigue articulated in recent scoping literature reviews (SmartErgo, 2026).

A Software Engineer (P2) provided a detailed account of this embodied deterioration:

"After eight consecutive hours of meetings on Zoom and Slack, my eyes are blurry and painful. I frequently experience migraines in the evenings. Sleep is not restful because my mind seems to keep running through code and notifications. When I wake in the morning, my body feels extremely heavy, as though I have not rested at all."

This phenomenological account reveals the mechanism that scholars have termed reactive presenteeism, where workers are physically or virtually present in their roles but operating below functional cognitive capacity, producing outputs vulnerable to consequential errors (Mr. Shriyak Jain & Dr. Megha Grover, 2025).

In organizational contexts involving sensitive data or high-stakes decision-making, this state of degraded cognitive vigilance substantially elevates the risk of human error, including security lapses that may expose proprietary information (SmartErgo, 2026).

Recovery Strategies

To mitigate psychological resource depletion, participants independently adopted a repertoire of recovery strategies. These included activating 'Do Not Disturb' modes on devices outside working hours, imposing strict screen time limits, undertaking weekend digital detoxes, and engaging in compensatory physical activity or device-free interpersonal interaction. However, the implementation of these strategies was systematically undermined by two interacting pressures: unwritten social sanctions embedded within organizational culture, and the internal anxiety of Fear of Missing Out (FoMO), which participants reported as a near-constant cognitive presence.

A UX Researcher (P5) articulated the structural paradox confronting workers who attempt self-directed recovery:

"I once tried switching off all work notifications after 6 p.m. for a full week. The outcome was that I felt considerably calmer. But the following Monday, I received a subtle reprimand from my manager for being perceived as slow in responding to an urgent issue that evening. My colleagues continued to reply to work messages late at night. In the end, to protect my performance evaluation, I was compelled to reactivate those notifications."

This testimony encapsulates the core structural contradiction of digital burnout recovery: individual-level strategies are rendered ineffectual when pitted against organizational normative expectations that valorize uninterrupted responsiveness. The asymmetry of power between individual recovery needs and institutional connectivity demands calls for regulatory intervention beyond individual behavioral modification (Derks et al., 2020).

DISCUSSION

The findings of this phenomenological study provide a nuanced, experience-near account of how technostress and digital fatigue interact destructively to produce digital burnout among Indonesian workers. Taken together, the five emergent themes, notification overload, emotional exhaustion, work intrusion, digital fatigue, and constrained recovery, constitute a phenomenological structure of digital burnout that is simultaneously psychological, somatic, relational, and institutional in its dimensions.

Ayyagari et al.'s (2011) framework for technostress remains highly applicable in interpreting the Indonesian context. The intrusive dimension of contemporary workplace technologies operating through MWDs and multi-platform messaging ecosystems that demand constant presence functions as the principal driver of work overload and work-family conflict experienced by participants. The expectation of instant response corrodes workers' temporal autonomy, converting technological flexibility into an instrument of unbounded attention extraction (Derks et al., 2020).

From an integrative JD-R and COR perspective, digital burnout is the product of a chronic imbalance in which digital connectivity demands both enacted (actual after-hours use) and normative (organizational expectations) consistently exceed individual coping capacity, triggering systematic psychological resource depletion. The fatigue documented by participants is not a transient state but a multiplicative resource loss process: failure to recover on any given day compounds the burden carried into subsequent days, creating a self-reinforcing deterioration spiral (Hobfoll, 1989). This spiral carries significant organizational risk implications. As SmartErgo (2026) demonstrated, digitally fatigued workers exhibit diminished cognitive vigilance, substantially increasing the probability of human errors, including security lapses such as phishing compliance, that can precipitate data breaches with severe financial and reputational consequences. Digital burnout mitigation thus represents not merely a welfare concern but a strategic organizational risk management priority.

The contextual specificity of Indonesia introduces additional structural factors that intensify the phenomenon. Research conducted across Indonesian provinces corroborates these qualitative findings: studies of WFA workers in Kalimantan confirm that techno-invasion and techno-overload significantly damage psychological well-being by disrupting psychological detachment (Technostress and Psychological Well-Being among WFA workers, 2024); investigations of public sector auditors at Indonesia's Supreme Audit Board (BPKP RI) demonstrate a linear relationship between digital pressure and burnout risk, with digital support systems (technostress inhibitors) playing a crucial moderating role Hashona & Pusparini, (2026) studies of MSME employees in Semarang show that technological complexity directly induces emotional exhaustion that reduces actual work (Rifqi, 2022); and analyses of HR staff in Indonesia's technology sector indicate that the combined burden of digital workload, role ambiguity, and remote work pressure predicts up to 73% of the variance in technostress levels (Joecy, 2025).

These findings are further complicated by a *rechtsvacuum* (legal vacuum) in Indonesian labor law. Indonesia's Manpower Law does not explicitly regulate the normative rights of remote workers or the digital work boundaries of hybrid arrangements, creating conditions under which employers may impose unlimited digital availability without legal accountability (Hartono & Ramadhani, 2020). This regulatory gap undermines the Pancasila Industrial Relations values of *musyawarah* (deliberation) and *keadilan* (justice). The case of PT Spectra Duta Karya, in which the absence of written WFH agreements led to violations of workers' rest rights, illustrates the tangible legal vulnerability created by this vacuum (Hartono & Ramadhani, 2020).

The Right to Disconnect offers a structurally appropriate remedy. Philosophically, this right resonates with the Second Precept of Pancasila (Just and Civilized Humanity) and Article 28D(2) of the 1945 Indonesian Constitution, which guarantees workers' rights to fair and humane treatment. Operationally, it rests on three principles: the right to refuse engagement with work communications outside official working hours; freedom from disciplinary action or career penalties for exercising this right; and a reciprocal organizational obligation to refrain from transmitting work instructions after hours. Table 4 presents a comparative analysis of existing international regulatory models and their adaptation potential for the Indonesian context.

Table 4. Comparative Analysis of Right to Disconnect Regulations and Adaptation Potential for Indonesia

Country	Regulatory Basis	Scope & Sanctions	Lessons & Adaptation Challenges for Indonesia
France	French Labor Code (El Khomri Law, 2017)	Companies with >50 employees must negotiate an ICT usage charter; violations may incur administrative fines.	Lessons: Requires formal amendment to Indonesia's Labor Law or the Job Creation Law. Challenges: Most Indonesian businesses are micro-enterprises (MSMEs) difficult to monitor strictly.
Italy	Law No. 81/2017 on Agile Work (Lavoro Agile)	Flexible work agreements must include technical measures guaranteeing employee device disconnection.	Lessons: WFA/WFH policies must be formalized in written Collective Labor Agreements (PKB). Challenges: Limited bargaining power of trade unions in Indonesia's bipartite negotiations.
Australia	Fair Work Act Amendment (2024)	Employees may refuse to read or respond to work contact after hours, unless refusal is objectively unreasonable.	Lessons: Provides flexible standards based on job level and compensation. Challenges: Indonesia's paternalistic workplace culture makes direct refusal of superiors' instructions socially difficult.
Indonesia (Conceptual)	Proposed legislative amendment based on Pancasila Industrial Relations (HIP)	Regulating digital communication time limits, prohibiting sanctions for ignoring after-hours instructions, and imposing fines for violating employers' rules.	Urgency: Halt the rising number of workers experiencing mental disorders due to burnout. Implementation: Can begin with the issuance of Ministerial Regulations specific to hybrid work.

CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study concludes that digital burnout among Indonesian digital and administrative sector workers is a serious psychosocial pathology generated by the structural conditions of an always-on workplace culture. The essential structure of this experience is constituted by cognitive exhaustion from notification flooding, emotional exhaustion expressed as profound occupational cynicism, and the destruction of restorative private space through the technological intrusion of work demands. Individual recovery efforts are systematically neutralized by normative organizational pressures and performance evaluation anxieties. At the macro level, these dynamics are compounded by the absence of legal frameworks protecting digital work boundaries in Indonesia, a gap that contradicts the foundational commitments of Pancasila Industrial Relations.

Recommendations for Organizations

Organizations are advised to transition from synchronous communication models, which mandate instant responses, toward structured asynchronous communication frameworks. Internal ICT ethics charters should be formalized, establishing 'digital quiet hours' (e.g., no work messages after 7 p.m. or on weekends). Management should institutionalize microbreak protocols between consecutive virtual meetings to restore cognitive and visual capacity and minimize reactive presenteeism. Critically, the development of empathetic digital leadership styles is essential to ensure that employees who enforce personal digital boundaries outside working hours do not face social sanctions or career penalties (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

Recommendations for Policymakers

Indonesia's Ministry of Manpower is urged to formulate specific regulations, whether through Ministerial Regulations (Permenaker) or amendments to the Manpower Law, formally recognizing the Right to Disconnect as a normative workers' right in the digital economy era. Such regulations should mandate that employers develop written agreements on flexible working hours through equitable bipartite dialogue; provide legal protection for workers against sanctions arising from digital disconnection outside working hours; and establish enforcement mechanisms to monitor corporate compliance with obligations to protect workers' mental health. Doing so would position Indonesia as a regional leader in digital labor rights and support the development of a healthy, sustainable, and productive digital work ecosystem aligned with Pancasila values.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study's findings are bounded by its qualitative design and purposive sampling strategy; the experiences documented are not intended to be statistically representative of the broader Indonesian workforce. Future research should employ mixed-method designs that integrate phenomenological findings with quantitative measurement of burnout severity, using validated instruments such as the Maslach Burnout Inventory or the Copenhagen Burnout Inventory. Longitudinal studies tracking digital resource depletion across extended periods would provide critical evidence for policy advocacy. Additionally, sector-specific investigations, particularly in Indonesia's rapidly expanding fintech, e-commerce, and public digital governance sectors, would contribute more granular insights for organizational intervention design.

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