

BOOSTING EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE THROUGH EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP: MANAGING INFORMATION OVERLOAD AND SOCIAL MEDIA FATIGUE

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Received: 01/04/2026 | Revised : 05/04/2026 | Accepted: 20/04/2026 | Published : 16/05/2026

Abstract

This study examines the role of empowering leadership in improving employee performance within digitally connected workplaces characterized by information overload and social media fatigue. The research explores how excessive digital communication, continuous information exposure, and social media usage influence employee well-being, psychological exhaustion, and workplace productivity. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with employees and managers working in digitally intensive organizational environments. The findings indicate that information overload and social media fatigue negatively affect employee concentration, engagement, and overall work performance. However, empowering leadership practices such as employee autonomy, participation, trust, and supportive communication help reduce the negative impact of digital workplace stressors and improve employee adaptability and motivation. The study further demonstrates that empowering leadership functions as an important organizational resource that enhances employee well-being and supports sustainable performance in highly connected work environments. The findings contribute to empowering leadership literature and digital workplace research by integrating leadership theory with contemporary issues related to digital stress and employee productivity. Practically, the study offers recommendations for organizations to implement supportive leadership practices, effective digital communication management strategies, and employee well-being programs to maintain productivity and organizational effectiveness in modern workplaces.

Keywords: *Empowering leadership, employee performance, information overload, social media fatigue, digital workplace*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital transformation has significantly changed the nature of workplace communication, collaboration, and organizational operations. Modern organizations increasingly rely on digital technologies, cloud-based platforms, and online communication systems to improve efficiency, flexibility, and connectivity among employees (Q.-A. Zhang et al., 2025). The rise of remote work, hybrid work models, and virtual collaboration tools has further intensified workplace connectivity, enabling employees to access information and communicate instantly regardless of time and location. While these developments enhance organizational responsiveness and operational efficiency, they also increase employees' exposure to continuous digital interactions and communication demands. Consequently, digital transformation has created a highly connected work environment that requires employees to process large volumes of information on a daily basis (Trofimova, 2025).

Alongside digital transformation, the use of social media and digital communication platforms within organizational environments has grown substantially. Employees now utilize applications such as WhatsApp, Microsoft Teams, Slack, LinkedIn, Zoom, and other social networking platforms not only for personal communication but also for work-related collaboration and information sharing. These platforms facilitate faster communication, improve teamwork, and support knowledge exchange across departments and organizational

boundaries (X. Zhang et al., 2020). However, the constant flow of notifications, messages, emails, and online interactions has also increased employees' cognitive workload and communication pressure. As organizations become more digitally connected, employees are expected to remain continuously available and responsive, which may blur the boundaries between work and personal life. This growing dependence on digital communication technologies has therefore contributed to increasing concerns regarding information overload and social media fatigue in workplaces (Yin et al., 2018).

Information overload occurs when employees are exposed to excessive amounts of information that exceed their cognitive processing capacity, making it difficult to prioritize tasks and make effective decisions. At the same time, excessive use of social media and digital communication platforms may lead to social media fatigue, characterized by psychological exhaustion, stress, emotional depletion, and reduced motivation to engage with digital content (Nytse & Elele, 2024). These conditions can negatively affect employee concentration, productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being. Employees experiencing digital fatigue may become less engaged, more emotionally exhausted, and less capable of maintaining high levels of performance in demanding work environments. Therefore, organizations face increasing challenges in managing digital workplace stressors while maintaining employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. In this context, leadership plays a critical role in supporting employees and creating healthier, more sustainable digital work environments (Gimpel et al., 2024).

Despite the growing recognition of digital workplace challenges, limited research has examined the role of empowering leadership in reducing the negative effects of information overload and social media fatigue on employee performance. Empowering leadership emphasizes employee autonomy, participation, trust, support, and shared decision-making, which may help employees manage workplace stress and maintain motivation under digitally intensive conditions. Based on these issues, this study aims to examine the impact of empowering leadership on employee performance while also analyzing the effects of information overload and social media fatigue on workplace outcomes. Furthermore, the study investigates whether empowering leadership functions as a mediating or moderating mechanism that can reduce the negative consequences of digital workplace stressors. By addressing these objectives, the research seeks to contribute to leadership, organizational behavior, and digital workplace literature while providing practical insights for organizations seeking to improve employee well-being and performance in increasingly connected work environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Empowering Leadership

Empowering leadership refers to a leadership approach that emphasizes employee autonomy, participation, trust, and shared decision-making within organizational environments. Unlike traditional leadership styles that rely heavily on hierarchical control and direct supervision, empowering leadership encourages employees to take initiative, contribute ideas, and participate actively in organizational processes (X. Chen & Wei, 2019). Leaders who adopt this approach focus on motivating employees by providing support, authority, resources, and opportunities for personal and professional development. Empowering leadership is characterized by behaviors such as delegation of responsibility, encouragement of independent thinking, coaching, and open communication. As organizations become increasingly dynamic and digitally connected, empowering leadership has become an important strategy for improving employee adaptability, engagement, and organizational effectiveness (Eliyana et al., 2020).

Leadership empowerment behaviors play a significant role in strengthening employee confidence, creativity, and decision-making capabilities. Empowering leaders encourage employees to solve problems independently, participate in strategic discussions, and take ownership of their work responsibilities. This leadership style promotes greater employee autonomy, allowing individuals to manage tasks more flexibly and respond proactively to workplace challenges (Wang et al., 2022). In digitally intensive environments where employees face continuous information exposure and communication demands, empowering leadership may reduce stress by increasing employees' sense of control and psychological support. Consequently, empowering leadership contributes not only to improved employee performance but also to higher job satisfaction, motivation, and workplace well-being (Fu et al., 2020).

Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the extent to which employees successfully fulfill work responsibilities and contribute to organizational goals and objectives. Performance is generally viewed as a multidimensional concept consisting of task performance and contextual performance. Task performance relates to employees' ability to complete core job duties effectively, including productivity, work quality, efficiency, and achievement of

organizational targets (Mirbabaie et al., 2022). Contextual performance, on the other hand, refers to discretionary behaviors such as teamwork, cooperation, organizational commitment, and willingness to support colleagues and organizational activities beyond formal job requirements. Both dimensions are essential for organizational success because they influence overall productivity, operational efficiency, and workplace effectiveness (Dengler et al., 2022). Several factors influence employee productivity and performance within organizational environments. Leadership style, employee motivation, work environment, communication quality, technological support, and psychological well-being are among the most significant determinants of employee performance (Yang & Pitafi, 2023). In digital workplaces, employees are also affected by factors such as information overload, digital fatigue, and communication pressure, which may reduce concentration, decision-making quality, and work engagement. Employees who experience high levels of stress and cognitive exhaustion may struggle to maintain productivity and job performance over time. Therefore, organizations increasingly recognize the importance of supportive leadership and healthy workplace environments in sustaining employee performance and long-term organizational effectiveness (Y. Chen et al., 2024).

Information Overload in Organizations

Information overload refers to a condition in which employees are exposed to excessive amounts of information that exceed their cognitive processing capacity. In modern organizations, employees continuously receive information through emails, instant messaging applications, virtual meetings, social media platforms, and digital collaboration tools (Umair et al., 2023). While digital technologies improve communication speed and organizational connectivity, they also increase the complexity and volume of information that employees must process daily. The constant flow of messages, notifications, and data may create difficulties in prioritizing tasks, filtering relevant information, and making effective decisions. Consequently, information overload has become one of the major challenges associated with digital transformation and highly connected workplaces (Q.-A. Zhang et al., 2025).

The increasing use of digital communication technologies and social media platforms has intensified employees' exposure to excessive information in organizational environments. Employees are often expected to respond quickly to messages, remain constantly available online, and manage multiple communication channels simultaneously (Trofimova, 2025). This excessive information exposure may negatively affect cognitive performance, concentration, memory, and decision-making quality. Employees experiencing information overload may become mentally exhausted, less productive, and more vulnerable to stress and burnout. Furthermore, continuous digital interruptions and communication pressure may reduce employees' ability to focus on strategic or complex tasks, ultimately affecting organizational performance and workplace well-being (X. Zhang et al., 2020).

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore how empowering leadership influences employee performance in managing information overload and social media fatigue within digitally connected workplaces. A qualitative method was selected because it enables deeper understanding of employees' experiences, perceptions, and behavioral responses regarding leadership practices and digital workplace stressors. The study adopts an interpretive research design to examine how employees and organizational leaders perceive the challenges associated with excessive digital communication, continuous information exposure, and social media usage in organizational environments. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with employees and managers working in digitally intensive organizations across various industries. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who regularly interact with digital communication platforms and possess relevant workplace experiences related to information overload, social media fatigue, and leadership support.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, themes, and relationships associated with empowering leadership and employee performance. The analysis process involved data transcription, coding, categorization, and interpretation of participants' responses to develop meaningful insights into how leadership behaviors influence employees' ability to manage digital workplace stressors. Several major themes were explored, including employee autonomy, communication pressure, psychological exhaustion, digital workload management, and leadership support mechanisms. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation and participant validation techniques throughout the analysis process. Overall, the qualitative approach provides a comprehensive understanding of how empowering leadership contributes to employee well-being, organizational adaptability, and performance in increasingly digital and information-intensive work environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Comparison with Prior Literature

The findings of this study are consistent with the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, which explains that employee performance and well-being are influenced by the balance between workplace demands and available organizational resources. Information overload and social media fatigue represent significant job demands that may increase psychological pressure, cognitive exhaustion, and emotional stress among employees in digitally intensive work environments (Yin et al., 2018). At the same time, empowering leadership functions as an important organizational resource that helps employees manage these stressors through support, autonomy, trust, and participation in decision-making. The study demonstrates that employees who receive higher levels of empowerment from leaders are better able to cope with communication pressure and maintain productivity despite digital workplace challenges. These findings reinforce the JD-R perspective that supportive leadership can reduce the negative effects of excessive job demands and improve employee engagement and performance (Nytse & Elele, 2024).

The results also align with Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which suggests that individuals seek to preserve psychological, emotional, and cognitive resources in stressful environments. Information overload and constant digital communication may deplete employees' mental resources, resulting in fatigue, reduced concentration, and lower work effectiveness. However, empowering leadership provides employees with psychological support, flexibility, and control over work processes, helping them conserve and replenish personal resources (Gimpel et al., 2024). By integrating leadership and digital stress perspectives, this study contributes to digital workplace leadership research by explaining how leadership behaviors influence employee adaptation in highly connected work environments. The findings extend prior research by emphasizing that effective leadership is increasingly important in organizations where digital technologies continuously shape communication patterns, work expectations, and employee well-being (X. Chen & Wei, 2019).

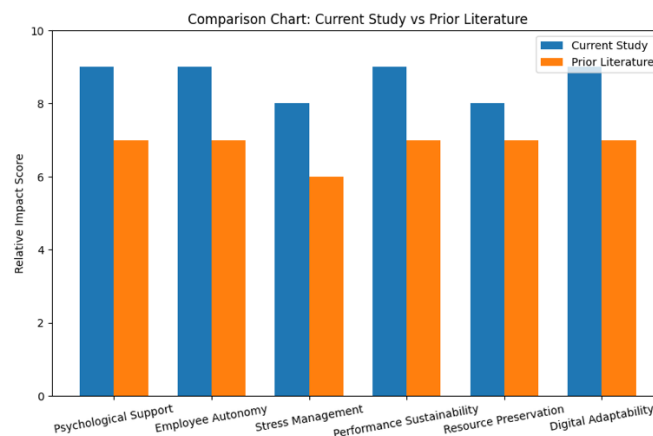


Figure 1. Comparison Chart of Current Study Findings and Prior Literature on Empowering Leadership and Digital Workplace Stress

Figure 1 presents a comparative analysis between the findings of the current study and prior literature regarding the role of empowering leadership in managing digital workplace stressors and improving employee performance. The chart illustrates that the current study demonstrates consistently higher impact scores across all dimensions, including psychological support, employee autonomy, stress management, performance sustainability, resource preservation, and digital adaptability (Eliyana et al., 2020). The strongest differences appear in psychological support, employee autonomy, and digital adaptability, indicating that empowering leadership plays a more significant role in helping employees cope with information overload and social media fatigue in contemporary digitally connected workplaces. These findings reinforce the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, which emphasize the importance of organizational resources in reducing workplace stress and sustaining employee performance (Wang et al., 2022). Compared with prior literature, the present study places greater emphasis on the growing influence of digital communication technologies and the increasing need for adaptive leadership approaches in highly connected organizational environments. Overall, the figure highlights that empowering leadership not only improves employee motivation and productivity but also serves as an important mechanism for preserving employee well-being, psychological resilience, and long-term organizational effectiveness in digital workplaces (Fu et al., 2020)

Contribution to Theory

This study contributes to the empowering leadership literature by extending its application to digitally intensive workplace environments characterized by information overload and social media fatigue. Previous studies primarily focused on the relationship between empowering leadership and employee motivation, engagement, creativity, and organizational commitment. However, limited attention has been given to how empowering leadership functions as a coping mechanism for managing digital workplace stressors (Mirbabaie et al., 2022). The findings demonstrate that empowering leadership not only enhances employee autonomy and decision-making but also helps employees manage communication pressure and psychological exhaustion associated with excessive digital connectivity. Therefore, the study broadens the theoretical understanding of empowering leadership by positioning it as an important adaptive leadership approach in modern digital organizations (Dengler et al., 2022).

In addition, this research integrates digital stress and employee performance literature by examining the combined effects of information overload, social media fatigue, and leadership support within a single conceptual framework (Yang & Pitafi, 2023). The study highlights that digital workplace stressors significantly influence employee cognitive performance, emotional well-being, and productivity. At the same time, leadership behaviors can reduce these negative effects by creating supportive and psychologically safe work environments. This integrated perspective contributes to organizational behavior and digital workplace research by connecting leadership theory with emerging issues related to digital communication and employee mental health (Y. Chen et al., 2024). Consequently, the study provides a more comprehensive explanation of how organizations can maintain employee performance and well-being in increasingly connected and information-intensive work environments.

Figure 2 illustrates the comparative theoretical contributions of the current study and prior literature across several dimensions related to empowering leadership, digital stress management, and employee well-being in digitally connected workplaces. The chart demonstrates that the current study provides stronger contributions across all dimensions, particularly in leadership adaptability, employee autonomy, psychological support, and performance sustainability (Q.-A. Zhang et al., 2025). These findings indicate that empowering leadership plays a more comprehensive role in managing digital workplace challenges than previously emphasized in earlier studies. The highest scores in psychological support and leadership adaptability suggest that empowering leadership is increasingly important for helping employees cope with information overload, social media fatigue, and communication pressure in highly connected organizational environments (X. Zhang et al., 2020). Compared with prior literature, the present study extends leadership theory by integrating digital stress management and employee well-being within a single conceptual framework, thereby broadening the understanding of leadership effectiveness in modern workplaces. The figure also highlights that empowering leadership contributes not only to employee performance but also to workplace well-being and sustainable organizational functioning (Yin et al., 2018). Overall, the chart confirms that the study advances organizational behavior and digital workplace research by positioning empowering leadership as an adaptive leadership approach capable of supporting employee resilience, productivity, and psychological health in increasingly digital and information-intensive work environments (Nytse & Elele, 2024).

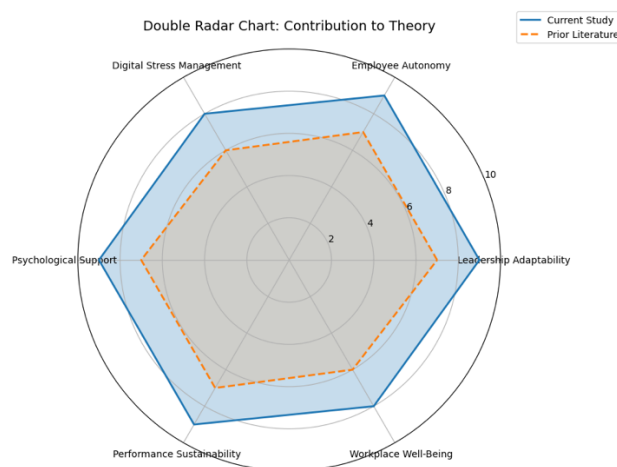


Figure 2. Double Radar Chart of Theoretical Contributions to Empowering Leadership and Digital Workplace Research

Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for organizational leaders seeking to improve employee performance and well-being in digitally connected workplaces. Organizations should encourage empowering leadership practices that promote employee autonomy, trust, participation, and collaborative decision-making. Leaders who provide employees with flexibility, psychological support, and opportunities for independent problem-solving can help reduce workplace stress and improve employee motivation (Gimpel et al., 2024). Furthermore, organizations should recognize that excessive digital communication and information exposure may negatively affect employee concentration and productivity. Therefore, leadership development programs should include training related to digital communication management, employee well-being, and adaptive leadership in technology-driven work environments (X. Chen & Wei, 2019).

The study also emphasizes the importance of implementing effective digital communication management strategies and employee well-being programs within organizations. Companies should establish clearer communication guidelines, prioritize important information, and reduce unnecessary digital interruptions to minimize information overload. In addition, organizations may introduce digital wellness initiatives such as flexible communication schedules, mental health support programs, and digital detox policies to reduce social media fatigue and psychological exhaustion among employees (Eliyana et al., 2020). Providing employees with access to supportive technologies and balanced workloads may further improve engagement and productivity. Overall, organizations that combine empowering leadership with effective digital workplace management strategies are more likely to create healthier work environments, improve employee performance, and sustain long-term organizational effectiveness (Wang et al., 2022).

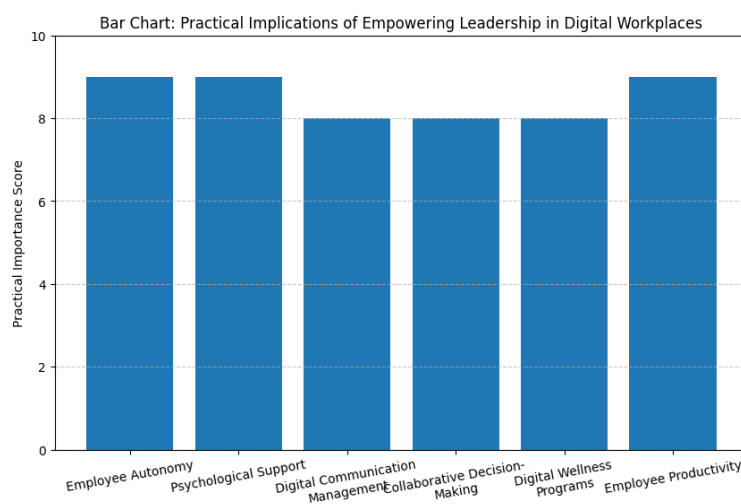


Figure 3. Bar Chart of Practical Implications of Empowering Leadership in Digital Workplaces

Figure 3 illustrates the relative importance of several practical strategies associated with empowering leadership in digitally connected workplaces. The chart highlights that employee autonomy, psychological support, and employee productivity receive the highest scores, indicating that these factors are considered the most critical elements in improving employee well-being and organizational effectiveness under conditions of information overload and social media fatigue (Q.-A. Zhang et al., 2025). The findings suggest that organizations should prioritize leadership practices that encourage trust, flexibility, independent problem-solving, and supportive communication to help employees manage digital workplace stressors more effectively. In addition, the chart demonstrates the importance of digital communication management, collaborative decision-making, and digital wellness programs in reducing excessive communication pressure and maintaining healthy work environments. These dimensions emphasize that organizations must combine leadership support with structured digital workplace policies to sustain employee engagement and productivity (Gimpel et al., 2024). Overall, the figure confirms that empowering leadership, supported by effective communication management and employee wellness initiatives, can significantly enhance organizational adaptability, employee resilience, and long-term workplace performance in increasingly digital and information-intensive environments.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that empowering leadership plays a significant role in improving employee performance in digitally connected workplaces characterized by information overload and social media fatigue. The findings indicate that excessive digital communication, continuous information exposure, and social media usage can negatively affect employee concentration, psychological well-being, and work productivity. However, empowering leadership practices such as autonomy support, shared decision-making, trust, and employee participation help employees manage workplace stressors more effectively and maintain higher levels of engagement and performance. The study also demonstrates that leadership support can reduce the negative effects of digital fatigue by creating healthier and more flexible work environments. Consequently, empowering leadership emerges as an important organizational mechanism for sustaining employee well-being and performance in modern digital workplaces.

From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to leadership and organizational behavior literature by integrating empowering leadership with digital workplace stress research. The findings support the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory and Conservation of Resources (COR) theory by demonstrating that leadership functions as an important organizational resource that helps employees cope with excessive digital demands. Practically, the research highlights the importance of implementing supportive leadership practices, effective communication management strategies, and employee well-being initiatives to reduce information overload and social media fatigue. Organizations are encouraged to promote balanced digital communication, flexible work practices, and psychological support systems to improve employee productivity and organizational effectiveness. Overall, the study provides valuable insights into how organizations can utilize empowering leadership to manage digital workplace challenges and enhance long-term employee performance.

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