

Chapter 4

Cognitive Unburdening: Investigating the Mediated Pathway From Digital Detox to Psychological Well Being Through Reduced Cognitive Load

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of digital detoxification on the psychological well-being of Generation Z in North India. Using structured questionnaires, data was collected from individuals aged 11 to 26. The measurement model's validity and reliability were confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis. Also, the mediation analysis was performed using the SPSS macro PROCESS by Hayes. The study confirms that digital detoxification positively influences well-being, mediated by reduced cognitive overload. Findings highlight the need for mindful technology use and periodic disconnection to enhance mental health. This research contributes insights into the complex interplay of digital detox, cognitive load, and well-being, offering implications for promoting healthier digital habits and improved psychological health.

INTRODUCTION

The world has become more connected than ever. People across the globe are increasingly using digital tools, not just at their workplace but also in general whether

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it is home or any other place. This has been further accentuated by the digital shift created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The event has been a black swan event that has disrupted people's lives in more than many ways one can think of. Due to the constraints imposed by the lockdowns and social distancing work from home has become the new normal and people are relying more and more on digital tools, online platforms, and other text-based communication tools. These are becoming increasing substitutes for face-to-face and personal interactions. The general conversation is becoming more focused on overuse as a negative consequence of digital communication. The idea of consumers' perceived digital overuse (PDO), which is a pervasive social phenomenon sensitive to current inequities is increasingly being spoken about (Gui & Buchi, 2021). The construct of perceived digital overuse was investigated in this study. From a representative sample of Italian internet users, the results revealed that digital communication use and the level of social pressure to function digitally are positively related to perceived digital overuse. Authors also believe that use of digital technologies, on one hand, has led to increased flexibility in terms of time, place, and device (Shepherd-Banigan et al., 2015) while on the other, this is also resulting in increased stress and overload due to the exacerbated bombardment of information and heightened use of digital tools to manage work (Karr-Wisniewski & Lu, 2010). As a result, people are beginning to realize that more and more use of digital tools is leading to a dip in productivity instead of enhancing it. Similar thoughts were expressed in many other studies (Bawden & Robinson, 2009; Becker et al., 2013) where media multitasking was brought out as a unique predictor of anxiety and depression. People who work remotely and have few leisure activities to choose from when they're feeling lonely are more likely to abuse technology. Its effects can include everything from problems with technology addiction to mental health impairment. "Digital detoxing," a technique that advocates purposefully limiting technology use to lower digital participation and physiological stress, has gained popularity thanks to a conforming countermovement (Mirbabaie et al., 2020).

A highly significant assessment regarding the state of global health and healthcare, as well as an analysis of the current state of play in the industry, was released in January 2023. Widening global health disparities, digital innovation, artificial intelligence, and connectivity, worsening mental health and well-being of carers, carer shortages, and carer burnout were identified as burning trends/issues in global healthcare, according to the report (Global Health and Healthcare Strategic Outlook: Shaping the Future of Health and Healthcare, World Economic Forum, 2023). It was revealed that COVID-19 came with severe challenges that people already faced—such as burnout and issues with mental health and wellbeing—even more severe. There is still a risk even with initiatives to enhance working conditions in the healthcare industry, such as the WHO and ILO guidance on developing and implementing better occupational health programmes for health professionals.

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