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Enhancing Employee Wellbeing in the Digital Era: The Influence of Digital Literacy and Affective Leadership in Addressing Digital Burnout

Ramdani Bayu Putra[1)], Hasmaynelis Fitri [2)]

[1)]*Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Putra Indonesia YPTK Padang, Padang, Indonesia*
[*]*Corresponding author: Ramdani Bayu Putra*
Corresponding Email: ramdhani_bayu@upiyptk.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Digital burnout has emerged as a critical global workplace challenge, particularly in digitally intensive environments where constant connectivity strains employee wellbeing. This study examines how digital literacy and affective leadership shape digital burnout and employee wellbeing within the Department of Communication and Informatics of Padang City. It also assessed the mediating effect of burnout on employee wellbeing. An explanatory, cross-sectional survey design was employed, and data were analyzed using variance-based structural equation modeling. The measurement model meets conventional standards for convergent validity, construct reliability, and discriminant validity, with a noted conceptual proximity between digital literacy and wellbeing that warrants attention. Structural findings indicate that affective leadership is negatively related to digital burnout, whereas digital literacy both reduces burnout and strongly enhances employee wellbeing. By contrast, the direct paths from affective leadership to wellbeing, from burnout to wellbeing, and the indirect routes through burnout did not show significant effects. Overall, digital literacy emerges as a central lever for improving wellbeing and curbing technology-related exhaustion in digitally intensive settings, while leadership contributes chiefly through preventive influences on fatigue. Practical implications include tiered digital upskilling, responsive technical support, and digital wellbeing policies aligned with empathic leadership. Future work should refine indicators, explore contextual moderators, and adopt longitudinal designs to strengthen causal inferences.

1. Introduction

The digital era has fundamentally transformed the nature of work, creating both opportunities and challenges in human resource management. The accelerated digital transformation, intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic, has driven the massive adoption of digital technologies across industries (Raj et al., 2020). However, the increasing reliance on these technologies has given rise to a new phenomenon known as digital burnout, which negatively impacts employee wellbeing (Molino et al., 2020). This transformation affects many sectors, including organizational work environments that increasingly depend on digital tools to sustain daily operations (Harstad, 2020). Nevertheless, the influence of digital technology on employees presents both positive and negative dimensions (Al-

Aradi & Omar, 2024). On the one hand, digitalization promotes efficiency and productivity (Van Den Heuvel et al., 2020). Easy access to resources and seamless communication are enhanced by digital connectivity, yet information overload and the fear of missing out (iFOMO) significantly contribute to mental strain (Giorgi et al., 2020). On the other hand, prolonged exposure to digital platforms introduces new risks to employees' mental health, including the emergence of digital burnout.

Survey data from McLean Hospital revealed that 87% of 1,057 office workers in the United States spend an average of seven hours daily in front of screens, with over half reporting fatigue or depression due to digital overload. Similarly, a study by Boston Consulting Group (BCG) found that nearly 48% of employees across eight countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, India, Japan, the UK, and the US) struggle with exhaustion caused by digital work intensity (Gregoire, 2024). The growing prevalence of this issue prompted the World Health Organization (WHO) to classify burnout as an "occupational phenomenon" with potential impacts on employee health and wellbeing (Mclean hospital., 2024). Digital burnout is defined as physical, emotional, and psychological exhaustion caused by excessive use of digital technology in the workplace (Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Symptoms include technological fatigue, discomfort, and distrust toward digital systems (Tarafdar et al., 2019).

Recent national reports have highlighted that digital burnout is also an emerging concern among Indonesian employees, particularly within public sector institutions. A 2023 survey by the Indonesian Civil Service Agency (BKN) and the Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform (KemenPAN-RB) revealed that more than 60% of civil servants experience moderate to high levels of work-related stress due to constant digital demands and online reporting systems (Dara et al., 2025). These patterns suggest that digital burnout has become a pressing issue within Indonesia's public sector, warranting further empirical examination in organizational contexts such as local government departments.

Digital burnout, therefore, refers to a state of persistent strain stemming from prolonged interaction with digital platforms, negatively influencing mental health and overall wellbeing (Marsh et al., 2024b). This condition is particularly relevant in the context of remote work, where blurred boundaries between personal and professional life intensify stress. Additionally, expectations for continuous availability and immediate responsiveness often extending to 24 hours a day, seven days a week further increase work pressure and stress levels, ultimately undermining employee wellbeing (Büchi, 2024; Marsh et al., 2024b). These challenges compel organizations to pay closer attention to employee wellbeing by designing and implementing specific policies to mitigate digital burnout (Thomas & Bradley, 2023). If left unaddressed, this phenomenon can reduce employee performance, increase turnover intentions, and lower job satisfaction (Bondanini et al., 2020).

According to a report by CNN Indonesia, a readers' poll revealed that 77.3% of respondents had experienced burnout. The causes varied, with the primary factor being the expectation to remain on standby 24 hours a day (46.7%), followed by excessive workload (38.7%), and back-to-back meetings that seemed never-ending (14.6%) (Janjoz, 2021). A regional comparison of burnout levels among workers in Indonesia and neighboring countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines shows a prevalence rate of 62.91%. The Philippines recorded the highest level at 70.71%, while Malaysia reported the lowest at 58.13%. Singapore stood at approximately 66.84%, with Indonesia falling between these figures. The following chart illustrates the comparative levels of burnout across these countries:

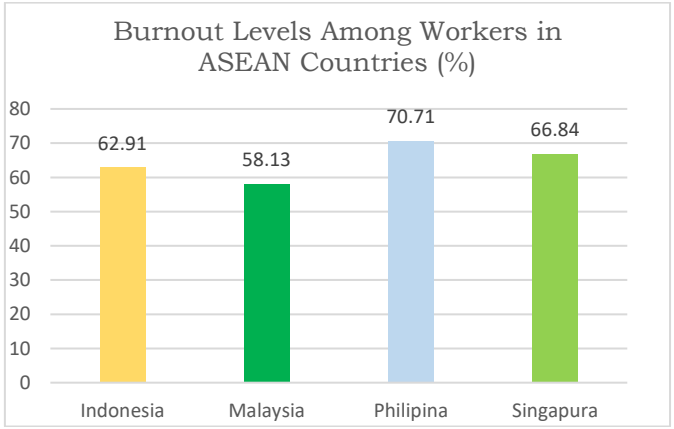

Figure 1. Comparative Burnout Levels of Indonesian Workers within ASEAN

Figure 1 exhibits the comparative burnout levels of Indonesian workers within ASEAN. It show that the burnout rate in Indonesia is lower compared to other countries in the region, such as the Philippines and Singapore, though slightly higher than Malaysia. Economic conditions, job characteristics, and stress levels contribute to these variations. With more than 60% of the adult workforce in the region experiencing burnout, serious attention is required to address employee mental health and overall wellbeing.

Previous studies on digital burnout and employee wellbeing have been conducted extensively. Research by Ceylan et al. (2024), Chaiklin (2010), Jarosiński et al. (2023), Kumpikaitė-Valiūnienė et al. (2021), Kurt (2023), Lebedeva & Pasko (2024), Marsh et al. (2024b), Silva & Abreu (2022), Song et al. (2022), Zreik (2023), indicates that digital burnout is influenced by stress, mental health, psychological resilience, attitudes, digital competence, heavy workload, job pressure, reduced motivation, internet usage flexibility, work-life balance, and the sense of FOMO. These studies applied different populations such as employees, students, and customers. Similarly, research on employee wellbeing in the digital era has also examined multiple influencing factors, including stress management, social support, individual empowerment, AI integration, access to information, work-life balance, digital culture, positive workplace relationships, mental health, and digital self-monitoring (Al-Mansoori et al., 2023; Dixit et al., 2024; Duarte & Dias, 2023; Hendry, 2024; Holly et al., 2023; Jin et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2024). These elements collectively shape employee wellbeing in digital contexts.

This study focuses on digital burnout and employee wellbeing, which have previously been examined separately, by analyzing both direct and indirect effects of influencing factors. The research aims to bridge the gap between digital burnout and wellbeing by investigating the role of digital literacy and affective leadership as key factors at the Communication and Information Office (Diskominfo) of Padang City. Diskominfo serves as a local government institution with significant responsibilities in information technology management, public communication, data security, and digital service development. Given its strategic role, employees are required to possess strong digital literacy skills while being supported by adaptive leadership to manage digital burnout and sustain their wellbeing. Thus, this institution is highly relevant as the research object, as digital literacy and affective leadership are closely linked to digital burnout and employee wellbeing. The study also provides practical contributions to strengthening human resource management in a government institution that is central to Padang's digital transformation.

Findings from a qualitative study conducted by the Regional Civil Service Agency (BKD) highlight that employees experience burnout triggered by heavy workloads, job pressure, limited recognition from superiors, monotonous tasks, and restricted access to professional development (Lestari, 2025). Therefore, this study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions in human resource management, particularly in addressing digital burnout and enhancing employee wellbeing in the digital workplace.

Based on the background and identified problems, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. Does digital literacy influence digital burnout among employees at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City?
2. Does affective leadership influence digital burnout among employees at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City?
3. Does digital literacy influence employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City?
4. Does affective leadership influence employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City?
5. Does digital burnout influence employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City?
6. Does digital burnout mediate the effect of digital literacy on employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City?
7. Does digital burnout mediate the effect of affective leadership on employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City?

1.1 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

This study is theoretically grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), which posits that employee wellbeing results from the dynamic balance between job demands and available resources. Within the digital era, excessive digital connectivity and workload constitute job demands that can trigger digital burnout, while personal and organizational resources such as digital literacy and affective leadership serve as buffers that mitigate strain and enhance wellbeing.

Complementarily, the study also draws on Seligman's PERMA Wellbeing Model (2011), which conceptualizes wellbeing as comprising positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive lens for explaining how digital literacy and affective leadership contribute to sustaining employee wellbeing in digitally intensive work environments (Seligman, 2011).

Employee Wellbeing

Employee wellbeing is a multidimensional construct covering physical, psychological, and social aspects (Zheng et al., 2015). According to Danna & Griffin, (1999), wellbeing consists of two main dimensions: physical health and psychological health. Seligman's PERMA model highlights positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment as core elements of wellbeing Seligman, (2011). Workplace wellbeing is associated with higher productivity, stronger loyalty, and reduced absenteeism and turnover (Guest & de Lange, 2021). In modern digital organizations, wellbeing has become more complex due to challenges posed by high levels of digital connectivity (Christianson et al., 2023; Ochoa et al., 2018; Vallo Hult & Byström, 2022). Research also shows that wellbeing improves when organizations create holistic environments that foster work–life balance, social connectedness, and emotional support (Nair & Smritika S. P., 2024). Thus, organizational policies play a crucial role in maintaining employee wellbeing under digital pressures (Shimazu et al., 2020).

Digital Literacy

With the increasing intensity of digital technology utilization in the workplace, serious challenges have emerged such as digital fatigue, burnout, and psychological pressure caused by hyper-connectivity and the demand for constant availability (digital presenteeism) (Marsh et al., 2024a). Digital literacy, defined as the ability to critically understand, evaluate, and effectively use digital technologies, has the potential to serve as a protective mechanism that strengthens digital resilience and reduces the impact of techno-stress (Bulenda, 2024). Empirical studies demonstrate that higher levels of digital literacy are significantly associated with stronger employee resilience, which subsequently lowers job-related stress. In other words, the higher the digital literacy, the lower the levels of stress and digital burnout experienced by employees (Bulenda, 2024).

Digital literacy thus becomes a crucial factor in addressing digital burnout. Employees with strong digital literacy tend to adapt more effectively to new technologies and are able to utilize digital tools without experiencing excessive stress (Çoklar et al., 2017). On the other hand, systematic reviews highlight the dual role of digital technologies: while they enhance communication and productivity, they may also undermine psychological wellbeing if not managed holistically (Bondanini et al., 2025). Therefore, organizations are required not only to encourage digital competencies but also to facilitate healthy technology use through digital literacy to promote overall employee wellbeing. Supporting this view, Elsamani et al., (2023) found that digital literacy acts as a buffer against the negative impacts of technology and contributes positively to employee wellbeing. Based on this discussion, the following hypotheses are proposed:

Hypothesis 1 : Digital literacy has a significant negative effect on digital burnout among employees of the Communication and Information Office of Padang City.
Hypothesis 3 : Digital literacy has a significant positive effect on employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City.

Affective Leadership

Affective leadership refers to a leadership style that emphasizes empathy, emotional support, and attention to employees' wellbeing. Leaders who demonstrate affective qualities are able to recognize the challenges faced by employees in the digital era and strive to build a supportive work

environment (Reardon et al., 2023). Through empathy, emotional reinforcement, and personal care, affective leadership can foster a psychologically safe workplace that serves as an essential resource in preventing digital burnout and strengthening employee wellbeing (Santiago-Torner, Corral-Marfil, et al., 2024).

Research consistently shows that this leadership style contributes positively to employees' emotional health by reducing fatigue, for instance, through autonomy and fair work arrangements in remote work contexts (Santiago-Torner, Corral-Marfil, et al., 2024). Moreover, meta-analytic findings confirm that leader behaviors particularly those emphasizing wellbeing and consistent support are closely linked to improved psychological wellbeing at work (Lundqvist et al., 2022). Thus, affective leadership plays a crucial role in cultivating a healthy organizational culture where employees feel supported in managing digital burnout.

Hypothesis 2 : Affective leadership has a significant negative effect on digital burnout among employees of the Communication and Information Office of Padang City.
Hypothesis 4 : Affective leadership has a significant positive effect on employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City.

Digital Burnout

Digital burnout is a form of exhaustion caused by prolonged exposure to digital technologies, including excessive use of devices and applications in work contexts. The World Health Organization (WHO, 2019) has classified work-related exhaustion as a phenomenon that directly affects mental health. The American Psychological Association further emphasizes that digital burnout arises not only from continuous screen time but also from expectations of constant engagement, quick responsiveness, and sustained productivity demands, *(Association*, 2024).

Digital burnout reduces motivation, productivity, and engagement, and ultimately undermines employee wellbeing (Molino et al., 2020). While digitalization may enhance efficiency and productivity (Van Den Heuvel et al., 2020), it also carries adverse consequences such as hyper-connectivity, information overload, and pressure for continuous availability, which negatively impact employees' physical and psychological wellbeing (Marsh et al., 2024a; Singh et al., 2022). Systematic reviews also confirm this dual effect, showing that digital connectivity simultaneously boosts productivity while increasing the risk of stress and fatigue (Bondanini et al., 2025).

Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, digital burnout functions as a health impairment pathway in which technological stress depletes mental and emotional resources, leading to reduced wellbeing (Marsh et al., 2024a). This theoretical perspective suggests that digital literacy and affective leadership act as critical resources in mitigating burnout and indirectly promoting wellbeing through its mediating role (Al-Aradi & Omar, 2024).

Hypothesis 5 : Digital burnout has a significant negative effect on employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City.
Hypothesis 6 : Digital burnout significantly mediates the relationship between digital literacy and employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City.
Hypothesis 7 : Digital burnout significantly mediates the relationship between affective leadership and employee wellbeing at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City.

1.2 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is a research structure that illustrates the relationships among variables based on theoretical foundations and prior studies. It serves as a roadmap guiding researchers in formulating hypotheses, analyzing data, and demonstrating the direction, focus, and novelty of the study being conducted. Based on the above literature review, the conceptual framework of this study is presented in Figure 1 below.

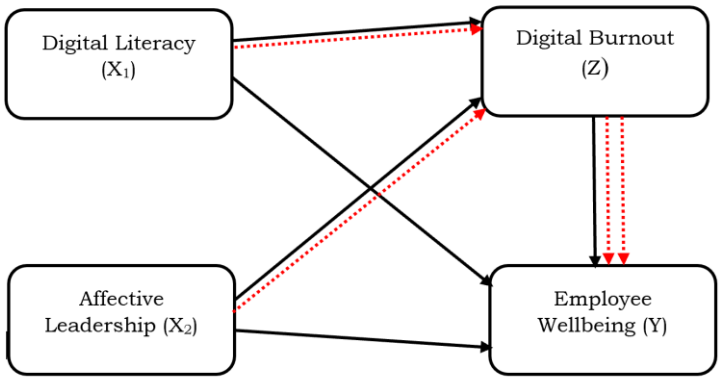

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2. Methods

This study applies a quantitative approach with a cross-sectional survey design. The quantitative method was chosen to examine the causal relationships among variables hypothesized in the developed theoretical framework. The survey method was employed to collect primary data from respondents through structured questionnaires. The research population consists of employees of the Communication and Information Office of Padang City who work in a digital environment, use digital technologies for at least six hours daily, and have access to the internet and digital devices to perform their tasks. The total population is 80 employees. The minimum sample size was determined using (Hair Jr et al., 2017), which suggests 10 times the largest number of indicators or structural paths directed toward a single endogenous construct. With 24 indicators and three structural paths at most leading to one construct, the minimum required sample size was 120 respondents. However, the census method was applied, so the entire population was used as the study sample.

The research variables include employee wellbeing, defined as the condition of optimal individual welfare encompassing physical, psychological, and social aspects, measured with indicators adapted from (Danna & Griffin, 1999). Digital literacy is defined as an individual's ability to use digital technologies effectively, critically, and safely in a work context, assessed with indicators adapted from Ng (Ng, 2012; Van Laar et al., 2017). Affective leadership is described as a leadership style that emphasizes emotional and relational aspects, measured using a scale adapted from Goleman et al. (2002). Digital burnout is defined as physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by excessive use of digital technologies, measured with indicators adapted from Salanova et al. (2013).

Data analysis was performed using SmartPLS 4, a software based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is effective for estimating models with complex indicators, relatively small sample sizes, and non-normal data distributions. The analysis was conducted in two main stages: evaluation of the outer model and the inner model. The outer model assessed the relationships between latent constructs and their indicators to ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument. This included evaluating convergent validity through outer loadings (≥ 0.7) and AVE (≥ 0.5), discriminant validity using the Fornell–Larcker criterion or HTMT (≤ 0.90), and construct reliability with Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability (≥ 0.7). Once the outer model met the required criteria, the inner model was evaluated to test the causal relationships among latent constructs according to the research hypotheses. The inner model was assessed using R^2, Q^2, and f^2 values, along with path coefficients tested through t-statistics and p-values to determine the significance of effects.

3. Results

The characteristics of respondents in this study describe the profile of employees at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City, analyzed through demographic factors including gender, age, highest educational attainment, and length of service. This provides an initial understanding of the background of the respondents involved in the research.

Table1. Respondent Characteristics

Description	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	51	63.75
	Female	29	36.25
Age	30–39 years	28	35.00
	<30 years	21	26.25
	40–49 years	18	22.50
	≥50 years	13	16.25
Educational Level	Bachelor (S1)	36	45.00
	Diploma (D3)	19	23.75
	Master (S2)	11	13.75
	Doctorate (S3)	2	2.50
	Senior High School (SMA)	12	15.00
Length of Service	5–10 years	29	36.25
	11–20 years	19	23.75
	>20 years	16	20.00
	<5 years	16	20.00

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

The table illustrates the distribution of respondent characteristics of employees at the Communication and Information Office of Padang City based on gender, age, educational background, and length of service. The analysis shows that the majority of respondents are male, with 51 individuals (63.75%), while females account for 29 individuals (36.25%). In terms of age, most respondents fall within the 30–39 age group, totaling 28 individuals (35%), followed by those under 30 years with 21 individuals (26.25%), the 40–49 age group with 18 individuals (22.5%), and those aged 50 years and above with 13 individuals (16.25%), indicating that the respondents are predominantly in their productive age.

Regarding educational attainment, most respondents hold a bachelor's degree (S1) with 36 individuals (45%), followed by diploma (D3) holders with 19 individuals (23.75%), master's degree (S2) holders with 11 individuals (13.75%), high school graduates with 12 individuals (15%), and doctoral degree (S3) holders with 2 individuals (2.5%). For length of service, the majority have worked between 5–10 years with 29 individuals (36.25%), followed by 11–20 years with 19 individuals (23.75%), while both the >20 years and <5 years categories account for 16 individuals each (20%), indicating diverse levels of work experience among respondents.

The next section presents a summary of the outer model testing, including assessments of convergent validity and construct reliability. The purpose of this test is to ensure that the indicators used accurately and consistently measure the latent constructs. Convergent validity examines the extent to which indicators of the same construct are highly correlated, which is determined by loading factor values ≥ 0.6 and AVE ≥ 0.5. Meanwhile, construct reliability evaluates the internal consistency among indicators within a latent variable, assessed through Cronbach's Alpha values ≥ 0.7 or ≥ 0.8. These two assessments are essential to guarantee that the research instrument is valid, reliable, and capable of producing accurate and credible data. The results of this testing are presented in Table 2.

Based on the outer model test results presented in the table, it is evident that all indicators of each latent variable meet the requirements of validity and reliability. The indicators of the Digital Burnout construct (BD1–BD5) show loading factor values ranging from 0.705 to 0.792, with an AVE of 0.570 and Cronbach's Alpha of 0.812, indicating good internal consistency. The Affective Leadership variable (KA1–KA5) is also valid with loading factors between 0.656 and 0.814, an AVE of 0.571, and Cronbach's Alpha of 0.813. Furthermore, the Digital Literacy variable (LD1–LD5) demonstrates relatively high loading factors ranging from 0.687 to 0.947, with an AVE of 0.642 and strong reliability reflected by Cronbach's Alpha of 0.859. Lastly, the Employee Wellbeing construct (WK1–WK5) records loading factor values between 0.724 and 0.813, an AVE of 0.612, and Cronbach's Alpha of 0.841. These results indicate that the research instrument possesses adequate convergent validity and reliability, thus confirming its suitability for accurately measuring the constructs.

Table 2. Convergent Validity and Construct Reliability Test Results

Items	Digital Literacy	Affective Leadership	Digital Burnout	Employee Wellbeing	AVE	Cronbach's Alpha
BD1			0.774		0.570	0.812
BD2			0.792			
BD3			0.705			
BD4			0.752			
BD5			0.749			
KA1		0.759			0.571	0.813
KA2		0.814				
KA3		0.656				
KA4		0.771				
KA5		0.770				
LD1	0.947				0.642	0.859
LD2	0.871					
LD3	0.687					
LD4	0.768					
LD5	0.701					
WK1				0.784	0.612	0.841
WK2				0.724		
WK3				0.784		
WK4				0.813		
WK5				0.804		

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Following the confirmation of convergent validity and construct reliability through the outer model evaluation, further model assessment can be conducted through the evaluation of R-Square and Discriminant Validity tests.

Table 3. R-Square and Discriminant Validity Tests

Construct	R-Square	R-Square Adjusted	HTMT (≤0.90) – Relationship with Other Constructs	Fornell-Larcker (AVE)
Digital Burnout	0.368	0.352	Affective Leadership (0.695) Digital Literacy (0.404) Employee Wellbeing (0.607)	0.755
Employee Wellbeing	0.699	0.687	Affective Leadership (0.592) Digital Burnout (0.607) Digital Literacy (0.806)	0.782
Affective Leadership	-	-	Digital Burnout (0.695) Digital Literacy (0.422) Employee Wellbeing (0.592)	0.756
Digital Literacy	-	-	Affective Leadership (0.422) Digital Burnout (0.404) Employee Wellbeing (0.806)	0.801

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

The R-Square test results show that the Digital Burnout variable has a value of 0.368 with an adjusted R-Square of 0.352, indicating that approximately 36.8% of the variance in this construct is explained by the exogenous variables in the model, which can be categorized as moderate. Meanwhile, Employee Wellbeing recorded an R-Square of 0.699 with an adjusted value of 0.687, meaning that 69.9% of its variance is explained by the independent variables, which represents a

strong explanatory power. Thus, it can be concluded that the research model demonstrates good explanatory capacity, particularly for Employee Wellbeing.

Furthermore, the discriminant validity test using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) reveals that most of the inter-construct correlations fall below the threshold value of 0.90, thereby meeting the discriminant validity requirement. Although the relationship between Digital Literacy and Employee Wellbeing approaches 0.8, which is relatively close to the boundary, it is still within an acceptable range. Additionally, the Fornell–Larcker test confirms that the square root of the AVE for each construct is higher than the correlations with other constructs, indicating that the discriminant validity criterion has been satisfied despite minor limitations. Overall, the model meets both outer and inner model requirements, with satisfactory validity and reliability, making it appropriate for further analysis.

Once all constructs are validated and the outer model requirements have been met, the next stage is the evaluation of the inner model, which assesses whether the proposed research hypotheses are accepted or rejected. A summary of the inner model testing results is presented in the form of tables and figures.

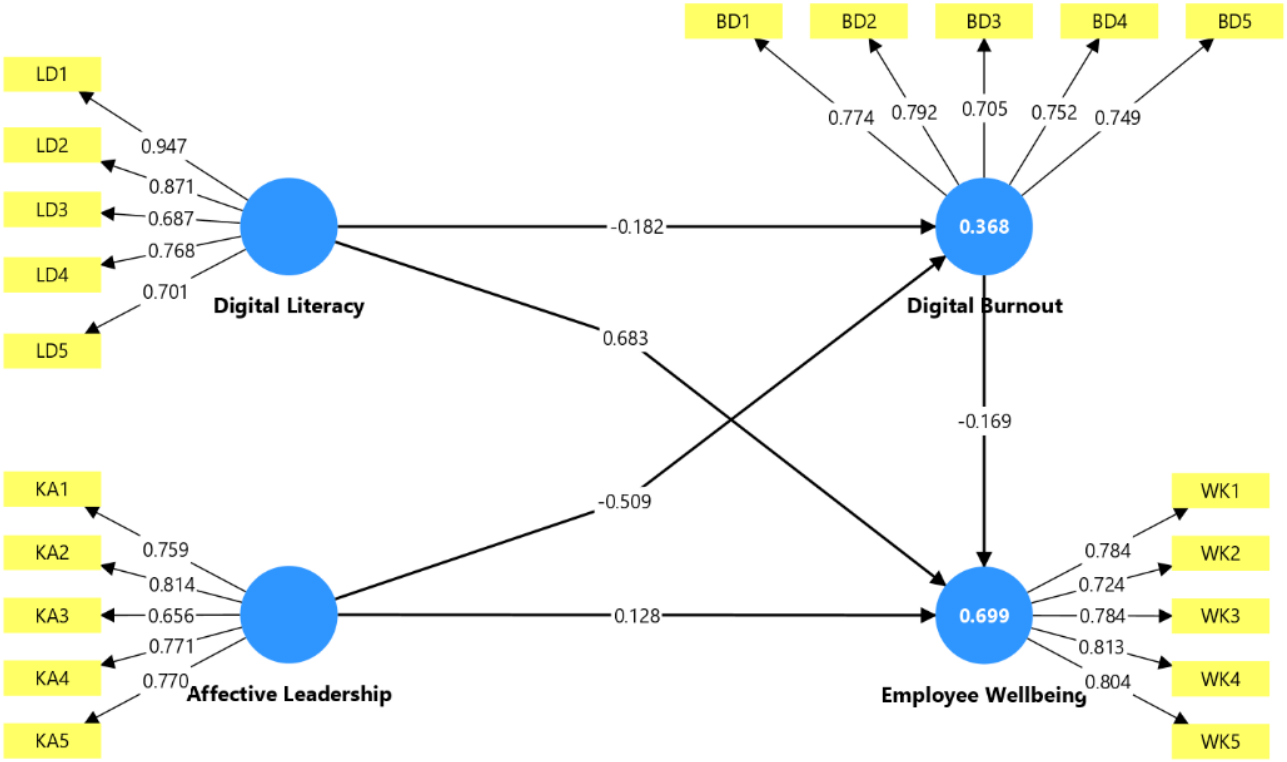

Figure 1. Path Diagram (Path Model)

The results of the inner model testing, as illustrated in the figure above, show that Digital Burnout is explained by the exogenous constructs by 36.8% (moderate category), while Employee Wellbeing is explained by 69.9% (strong category). The direct path relationships between variables indicate that Digital Literacy has a negative effect on Digital Burnout (-0.182) and a positive effect on Employee Wellbeing (0.683). Affective Leadership also has a negative effect on Digital Burnout (-0.159) and a positive effect on Employee Wellbeing (0.128), although the latter effect is relatively small. In addition, Digital Burnout negatively affects Employee Wellbeing (-0.169). Overall, the model confirms that digital literacy and affective leadership play an essential role in reducing burnout and enhancing employee wellbeing. The results of the inner model testing can further be summarized in the Table 4.

Table 4. Results of Path Coefficient (Inner Model) and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis/ Measures	Original Sample (O)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Digital Literacy -> Digital Burnout	-0.182	0.085	2.146	0.032	Accepted
Affective Leadership -> Digital Burnout	-0.509	0.084	6.049	0.000	Accepted
Digital Burnout -> Employee Wellbeing	-0.169	0.088	1.913	0.056	Rejected
Affective Leadership -> Employee Wellbeing	0.128	0.081	1.584	0.113	Rejected
Digital Literacy -> Employee Wellbeing	0.683	0.060	11.451	0.000	Accepted
Digital Literacy -> Digital Burnout -> Employee Wellbeing	0.031	0.022	1.409	0.159	Rejected
Affective Leadership -> Digital Burnout -> Employee Wellbeing	0.086	0.051	1.688	0.091	Rejected

Source: Processed Research Data, 2025

Based on the results of the Path Coefficient (Inner Model) and hypothesis testing, it can be explained that out of the seven hypothesized paths, only three were statistically significant. First, Affective Leadership demonstrated a significant negative effect on Digital Burnout, with an original sample value of -0.509, a T-statistic of 6.049, and a p-value of 0.000, thus supporting the hypothesis. Second, Digital Literacy had a significant negative effect on Digital Burnout, with a coefficient of -0.182, a T-statistic of 2.146, and a p-value of 0.032, indicating that higher digital literacy reduces employee burnout. Third, Digital Literacy significantly and positively influenced Employee Wellbeing, with a coefficient of 0.683, a T-statistic of 11.451, and a p-value of 0.000, confirming that digital literacy enhances employee wellbeing. Meanwhile, other hypothesized paths—including the direct effect of Affective Leadership on Employee Wellbeing, the effect of Digital Burnout on Employee Wellbeing, and the two mediation effects—were not significant, as their p-values exceeded 0.05. This indicates that the strongest influence in the model comes from Digital Literacy.

4. Discussion

1. Digital literacy influences Digital Burnout

The findings indicate that digital literacy has a significant negative effect on digital burnout, meaning that stronger digital competence correlates with reduced burnout. Mechanistically, digital literacy lowers techno-anxiety and techno-overload—forms of technostress that arise when individuals feel pressured to work faster, longer, or with excessive information. By strengthening ICT efficacy, work efficiency, and task control, employees experience less cognitive-emotional fatigue. Recent evidence suggests that technology exposure without sufficient resources elevates stress and burnout, whereas digital interventions that enhance skills and support mitigate work stress (Indra et al., 2024; Würtenberger et al., 2025). Further, empirical studies show that higher digital literacy positively correlates with digital employee resilience, which subsequently reduces stress and burnout (Bulenda, 2024). Thus, digital literacy is a key factor in preventing burnout, enabling employees to adapt to system changes, configure tools effectively, and adopt healthy usage strategies (Çoklar et al., 2017).

2. Affective Leadership Influences Digital Burnout

The findings of this hypothesis indicate a significant negative relationship, meaning that the more affective the leader's behavior, the lower the level of employees' digital burnout. Theoretically, ethical or inclusive leadership strengthens psychological support, reduces role demands, and alleviates emotional exhaustion, a mechanism consistent with meta-analyses showing that positive leadership styles are negatively associated with burnout. This aligns with evidence that ethical leadership decreases fatigue through affective commitment and moral climate, and with studies demonstrating that transformational or inclusive leadership is inversely correlated with burnout across various organizational settings. Therefore, strengthening affective dimensions such as empathy, emotional

support, and constructive feedback can serve as effective managerial interventions to mitigate digital burnout in technology-intensive workplaces (Li & Peng, 2022; Santiago-Torner, González-Carrasco, et al., 2024). In other words, affective leadership, by fostering empathy, emotional support, and personal attention, can establish a psychologically safe work environment and is expected to become an essential resource in preventing digital exhaustion and enhancing employee wellbeing (Santiago-Torner, Corral-Marfil, et al., 2024).

3. Digital literacy influences employee wellbeing

The hypothesis results indicate that digital literacy has a significant positive effect on employee wellbeing, meaning that higher levels of digital literacy are associated with better employee welfare. Cross-sector literature reports that competent use of technology enhances autonomy, efficiency, and smoother work experiences, which in turn improve wellbeing and mental health indicators. Intervention studies also reveal that certain digital solutions can reduce job stress and enhance psychological outcomes. From a practical standpoint, organizations can maximize these benefits by providing continuous upskilling, fast technical support, and healthy digital work policies (e.g., the right to disconnect). The consistency of these empirical findings strengthens the validity of prior research and establishes digital literacy as a primary driver of wellbeing in this model (Indra et al., 2024; ÖZSARI & TEK, 2025; Sansovini & Magida, 2025) found that digital literacy acts as a buffer against the negative impacts of technology and contributes positively to employee wellbeing.

4. Affective Leadership Influences Employee Wellbeing

The hypothesis results indicate a positive but non-significant relationship between affective leadership and employee wellbeing. Substantively, this suggests that leadership affectivity alone is insufficient to enhance wellbeing without adequate work conditions such as job design, workload, autonomy, and fairness. Recent literature emphasizes that the influence of leadership on wellbeing is often indirect for example, by reducing fatigue or fostering an ethical climate and may depend on organizational culture and job demands. This evidence supports the view that interventions targeting structural factors (e.g., reducing work stressors and improving governance practices) are more decisive for wellbeing than leadership affectivity alone (Li & Peng, 2022; Onan et al., 2025). However, this finding contrasts with Reardon et al (2023), who argued that affective leaders understand employee challenges in the digital era and strive to create a supportive work environment. Other studies also highlight that affective leadership, through empathy, emotional support, and personal attention, fosters a psychologically safe workplace, which is expected to serve as an important resource in preventing digital exhaustion and strengthening employee wellbeing (Santiago-Torner, Corral-Marfil, et al., 2024).

5. Digital Burnout Affects Employee Wellbeing

The hypothesis testing results show a negative but non-significant effect of digital burnout on employee wellbeing at the 5% error level. However, the result can be considered acceptable at the 10% level. Theoretically, burnout reduces vitality, job satisfaction, and overall wellbeing. Systematic meta-analyses confirm that higher levels of burnout are associated with declines in wellbeing, particularly mental health, and further suggest that organizational interventions aimed at reducing burnout tend to improve wellbeing. The lack of statistical significance in this study may be influenced by sample size limitations or low variability in wellbeing indicators. From a practical perspective, wellbeing enhancement initiatives should continue to focus on minimizing sources of burnout while also strengthening job resources to achieve statistically meaningful effects. These findings are generally consistent with prior studies, though not significant at the 5% level. For example, Molino et al (2020) found that intensive digital technology use increases digital burnout, which negatively affects employee wellbeing. Similarly, Al-Aradi & Omar (2024) noted that the impact of digital technologies on employees may carry both positive and negative consequences.

6. Digital Burnout has an influence in mediating digital literacy towards employee wellbeing.

The results of this hypothesis test indicate that digital burnout does not have a significant mediating effect on the relationship between digital literacy and employee wellbeing. Although the direct influence of digital literacy on wellbeing was found to be strong in the previous hypothesis, this suggests that digital literacy may enhance wellbeing primarily through direct mechanisms such as increased autonomy, efficiency, workflow, or self-efficacy rather than solely by reducing burnout. Furthermore, digital interventions can improve wellbeing by strengthening employee capacity and

engagement while also lowering stress levels. For organizations, these findings highlight the importance of designing literacy programs that go beyond being merely "anti-burnout" and instead promote positive work experiences (e.g., user-friendly application design, productivity training, and healthy technology use policies) (Aye et al., 2024; Indra et al., 2024). Previous studies also support this finding, noting that in modern, technology-driven work environments, demands such as hyper-connectivity, information overload, and the expectation of constant availability may trigger digital burnout, which in turn negatively affects employees' physical and mental wellbeing (Marsh et al., 2024a; Singh et al., 2022). Similarly, other studies confirm the dual effect of digital connectivity: while it supports productivity, it simultaneously increases the risk of fatigue and job-related stress (Bondanini et al., 2025). Empirical evidence further indicates that burnout triggered by digital demands significantly reduces wellbeing and employees' psychological performance.

7. Digital Burnout has an influence in mediating Affective Leadership towards Employee Wellbeing

The findings of this hypothesis reveal that the non-significant effect indicates the mediation pathway through burnout was not supported in this sample. Theoretically, inclusive or ethical leadership is typically associated with reduced exhaustion and greater wellbeing. When mediation effects are absent, several explanations may apply: (1) leadership may exert its influence through alternative mediators such as organizational support, fairness, or job crafting; (2) the variation in burnout levels may not be large enough to produce an impact on wellbeing; or (3) contextual moderators such as organizational culture and workload may weaken the mediation pathway. From a managerial perspective, enhancing leadership quality remains important but should be combined with improvements in job design and resources to achieve a tangible impact on wellbeing (Li & Peng, 2022). Marsh et al (2024a) emphasize that within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, digital burnout operates as a health impairment pathway where technology-related stress depletes mental and emotional resources, leading to diminished wellbeing. This provides a theoretical argument that affective leadership, as a source of digital and emotional resources, has the potential to suppress digital burnout and indirectly enhance employee wellbeing through its mediating function.

5. Conclusion

Based on the hypothesis testing results, three substantive findings emerge. First, Affective Leadership has a significant negative effect on Digital Burnout, indicating that empathetic and supportive leadership behaviors are effective in reducing digital fatigue. Second, Digital Literacy has a significant negative impact on Digital Burnout while exerting a strong positive influence on Employee Wellbeing, positioning digital competence as a key driver of employee welfare. Third, the direct path from Affective Leadership to Employee Wellbeing and the effect of Digital Burnout on Employee Wellbeing were not significant, nor were the two mediation paths. This suggests that improvements in wellbeing within this context are more strongly influenced by digital literacy and structural work factors rather than by burnout reduction alone.

For the Padang City Communication and Information Office, the implication is to prioritize tiered digital literacy programs (core application training, information security, notification management), responsive technical support, and digital wellbeing policies (e.g., the right to disconnect and workload governance). These initiatives should be integrated with strengthening affective leadership capacity (constructive feedback, empathetic communication) and improving job design and resources to achieve a measurable impact on wellbeing. Methodologically, the close relationship between Digital Literacy and Employee Wellbeing suggests the need to refine indicators in future studies, while also testing moderators (e.g., job demands, social support) and adopting longitudinal designs to enhance causal inference. Overall, strategies that combine digital competence development, supportive leadership, and healthy work governance represent the most promising route for reducing burnout and enhancing employee wellbeing.

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