



THE IMPACT OF AI ON MANAGING EMOTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY AND EXPLORING HIDDEN BURNOUT IN HYBRID IT WORK ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

As AI-driven management tools increasingly shape hybrid IT work environments, concerns have emerged around their impact on employee emotional well-being. This study investigates the phenomenon of invisible burnout – an unreported psychological strain triggered by continuous AI surveillance and emotional conformity. Employees often feel they must hide their tiredness to meet what the AI systems expect, which increases their stress and goes unnoticed by regular HR processes.

To explore this issue, an approach was employed combining structured surveys (n = 150) with semi-structured interviews among IT professionals working in hybrid settings. Quantitative data were analysed using Pearson correlation and regression techniques, while qualitative responses were subjected to thematic analysis. The results revealed high levels of emotional fatigue and burnout, significantly associated with technological and organizational stressors. Notably, a strong negative correlation emerged between policy awareness and burnout, suggesting that employees with better knowledge of emotional wellness policies experienced lower stress levels.

The findings emphasize a critical gap in AI governance – namely, the insufficient integration of emotional well-being frameworks. This study contributes to the growing discourse on ethical AI use in the workplace and highlights the urgency for emotion-sensitive policies, transparent communication, and trust-building initiatives. Addressing invisible burnout is essential not only for sustaining employee health but also for promoting long-term organizational resilience in an increasingly digitized work culture.

KEYWORDS: Invisible Burnout; AI-Driven Management; Emotional Fatigue; Hybrid Work Environment; Organisational Wellness Policies; Employee Emotional Well-being

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in workforce management has grown rapidly, particularly in areas such as employee monitoring and performance evaluation. This transformation is especially evident in hybrid and remote work settings, where traditional supervision methods are now replaced by AI-powered systems like keystroke monitoring, screen activity tracking, facial recognition, and sentiment analysis. These technologies are not only used to measure productivity but also to assess behavioural trends, attendance, task progress, and even emotional expressions.

Additionally, despite the growing use of AI-driven management, many employees remain unaware of the emotional wellness policies that exist within their organisations. This gap in policy awareness and emotional governance can silently worsen emotional fatigue and contribute to the development of hidden burnout in AI-monitored hybrid work settings. The lack of clear communication and integration of emotional wellness frameworks into AI-managed workflows may further compromise employee well-being. Several international studies (Zacher & Meier, 2023; Como et al., 2023; Klietnik et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024; Chavan, Patel, & Desai, 2025) repeatedly indicate that AI-based monitoring can increase workplace stress, emotional fatigue, feelings of isolation, and ultimately lead to disengagement. Continuous digital supervision often creates mistrust and unease, reducing employees' sense of control and treating them as mere data points. While AI may offer short-term productivity benefits, it poses significant risks to long-term emotional health.

Statement of the Problem

While research on AI-driven employee monitoring is steadily growing, much of it remains concentrated in specific regions, with limited exploration of its emotional and psychological effects across diverse work cultures. As the IT sector rapidly embraces hybrid work models and AI-powered management systems—such as productivity tracking, sentiment analysis, and digital surveillance—it is crucial to understand how these technologies are shaping employee well-being.

A critical concern within the IT sector is invisible burnout—a hidden emotional strain that employees suppress due to workplace expectations, constant digital visibility, or fear of algorithmic judgment. Although this issue has gained some global attention, there remains a gap in understanding why such burnout remains unreported and how effectively current AI and HR governance frameworks address emotional well-being in AI-supervised hybrid IT work environments.



Scope of the Study

This study examines the prevalence and nature of invisible burnout among employees in AI-supervised hybrid work environments within the IT sector. It also assesses the effectiveness of existing AI governance and HR policies in protecting emotional well-being. Using both surveys and interviews, the study aims to identify emotional risks in AI-monitored workplaces and recommend emotion-sensitive governance frameworks. The research supports organisations in promoting psychological safety and sustainable employee performance in an AI-driven work culture.

As AI-driven management continues to reshape hybrid workplaces, it is essential to balance technological efficiency with employee emotional well-being. Understanding the hidden emotional costs, particularly invisible burnout, is crucial for building healthier, more sustainable work environments. This study seeks to address this gap, focusing on the IT sector, and aims to offer meaningful insights and practical solutions to protect employee mental health in evolving digital workspaces. Although the participants were from varied organisational backgrounds, the study's findings are broadly applicable to global IT organisations transitioning to AI-driven hybrid models.

Review of Literature

While several studies explore burnout in AI-supervised environments, there is limited research focusing on the IT sector specifically.

AI Surveillance and Employee Emotional Well-being

Zacher and Meier (2023), in their comprehensive meta-analytic review titled **Workplace Monitoring, AI Surveillance, and Employee Well-being**, published in the **Journal of Occupational Health Psychology** analysed 42 international studies and found that the growing use of AI-based surveillance tools like keystroke logging, facial recognition, and real-time tracking is directly linked to rising emotional exhaustion, stress, and employee disengagement. Their study introduced the concept of "hidden burnout," where employees silently suffer emotional fatigue but do not report it due to fear of being judged or losing their job. They pointed out that current workplace systems and AI tools are not sensitive enough to detect this hidden emotional distress, especially in hybrid and remote work setups. However, their work did not offer practical ways to identify or manage this invisible burnout effectively.

Como et al. (2023) Exploring the emotional impact of hybrid work: The role of organisational support in digital workplaces.

They found that although hybrid work offers flexibility, this advantage is often reduced due to poor emotional and managerial support. Many remote employees felt isolated as technology replaced daily human interactions. The constant need to stay digitally visible caused emotional fatigue. The study highlighted that when AI monitoring is not combined with human care and timely feedback, it puts more pressure on employees and increases stress. Como et al. suggested regular emotional check-ins, mental health support, and empathetic management to help remote employees. They warned that without these, the long-term impact of hybrid work could seriously harm employee well-being and reduce engagement.

Kliestik et al. (2024) The overlooked side of AI: Emotional burnout in post-pandemic remote workplaces. **Journal of Business Research**

focused on the emotional risks of using AI-powered monitoring in remote work, especially after the pandemic. They found that many companies quickly adopted AI tools like screen-time trackers, automated check-ins, and facial recognition to measure productivity but failed to address employees' emotional well-being. Continuous digital surveillance caused anxiety, stress, and hidden burnout, which remained unnoticed by both managers and AI systems. The study raised serious concerns about the lack of emotional safety in such workplaces. While companies focused on productivity, they largely ignored mental health support. Kliestik et al. recommended that organisations should go beyond digital control and build emotionally supportive systems like access to counsellors, confidential feedback, and empathetic leadership.

Together, these studies suggest that AI surveillance is contributing to increasing levels of emotional fatigue in hybrid workplaces, where employees are under constant pressure to appear emotionally strong and to suppress signs of burnout.

Ethical Limitations in Emotion-Aware AI Governance

The ethical limitations of AI governance, especially concerning employee emotional well-being, have gained significant attention in recent years.

Zhang et al. (2024), in their study published in **Psychology Research and Behaviour Management**, studied the complex effects of technostress caused by AI systems at work. They explained that technostress can have two sides—it can either encourage employees to improve their performance or create mental blocks that make them resist AI tools. The key depends on how well organisations manage the emotional strain of using new technologies. With proper training, clear communication, and emotional support, employees see AI as helpful. Without this support, technostress leads to emotional fatigue, burnout, and lower engagement. Zhang et al. stressed that companies should not focus only on technology but also strengthen employee resilience. They recommended practical steps like stress management sessions, AI training, and open communication to keep AI adoption emotionally safe for workers.

Chavan, Patel, and Desai (2025), in their thought-provoking article published in **AI & Society**, they examined the ethical gaps in using emotion-aware AI systems at the workplace. They observed that while AI policies commonly address data privacy and



fairness, they often overlook the emotional and psychological needs of employees. Tools like facial recognition and sentiment analysis may unintentionally pressure workers to maintain a consistently positive appearance. This creates a phenomenon they termed “emotional conformity,” where genuine emotions are suppressed, increasing the risk of burnout and dissatisfaction. Although insightful, the study was largely conceptual and lacked practical strategies, instead recommending broader policy frameworks to include emotional well-being, particularly in remote and hybrid settings.

Indian Context: Gaps in Hybrid Work Research

Vanitha and Shailashri (2023) conducted a systematic literature review titled “A systematic literature review on impact of hybrid work culture on employee job engagement and productivity – A study of IT professionals in Karnataka”, reviewed hybrid work practices among IT professionals in Karnataka, highlighting improvements in flexibility and productivity, but also challenges in communication and leadership. While their study focused on engagement and performance, it did not explore emotional fatigue or invisible burnout—issues this study addresses. Their work offers a useful Indian context but lacks psychological depth, particularly regarding AI monitoring and wellness policy awareness.

Even with growing global concerns about emotional fatigue and the ethics of AI, there is still limited empirical research directly connecting invisible burnout with AI management frameworks in hybrid workplaces, particularly within underrepresented and non-Western professional contexts. Most existing studies continue to focus on productivity outcomes, algorithmic fairness, or legal aspects, while the emotional consequences of AI surveillance remain largely unaddressed.

Research Gaps

Despite the increasing global research on AI-based employee monitoring, most studies are concentrated in Western, industrialised economies. There is still a noticeable lack of investigation into how these surveillance systems affect the emotional and psychological well-being of workers in non-Western, developing economies. As workforces across various regions rapidly move toward hybrid work models—particularly in the **information technology** (IT), financial services, BPO, and e-commerce sectors—it is essential to understand how such AI-driven managerial practices are shaping employee mental health. In the IT sector especially, where digital surveillance is more intensively deployed, the potential for emotional strain and burnout may be amplified. Many corporate environments are uniquely influenced by socio-cultural hierarchies, job insecurity, and limited historical focus on workplace mental health, making this area of study both urgent and contextually significant.

However, even in the available global literature, two critical gaps remain underexplored.

1. Existing studies confirm the psychological impact of AI monitoring, but they do not adequately explain why emotional burnout often remains hidden or unreported by employees, particularly in AI-supervised workplaces.
2. Current AI governance frameworks do not provide clear guidelines for managing emotional stress, emotional manipulation, and employee well-being in hybrid work settings, leaving emotional safety largely unaddressed and unregulated.

Objectives of the study

1. To analyse the factors influencing invisible burnout and emotional fatigue under an AI-monitored hybrid work environment.
2. To explore employee’s awareness and understanding of organisational emotional wellness policies in AI-supervised hybrid work environments.

Research Questions

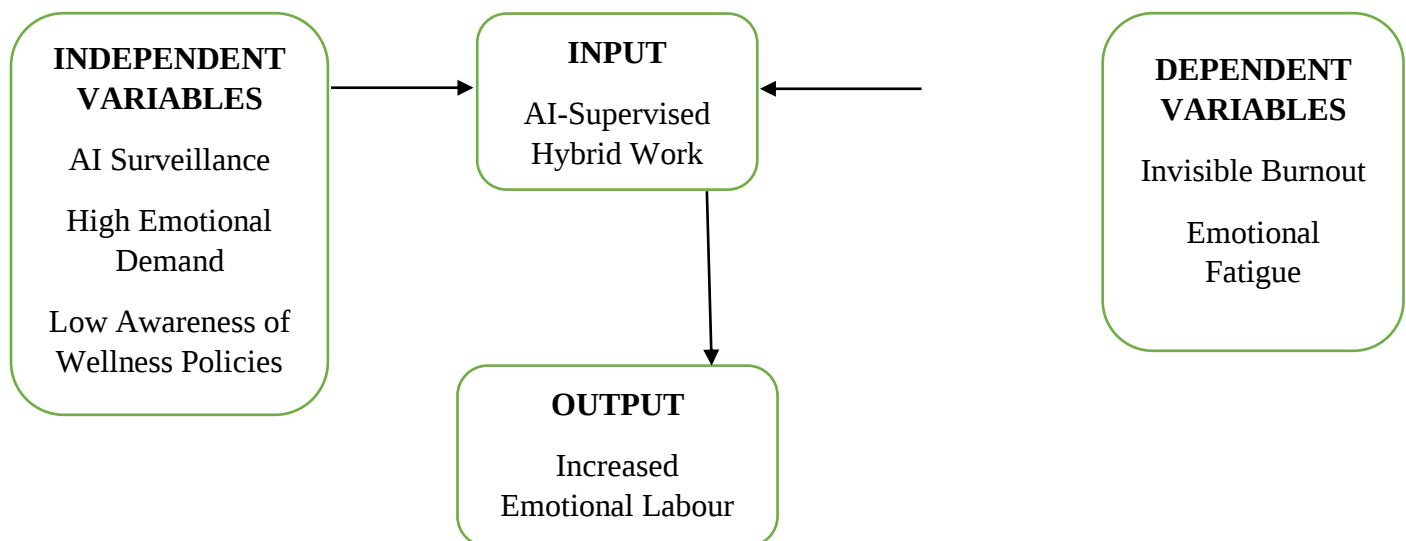
1. What are the key factors influencing invisible burnout and emotional fatigue among employees in AI-supervised hybrid work environments?
2. To what extent are employees aware of organisational emotional wellness policies in AI-supervised hybrid work environments?

Theoretical / Conceptual Framework

This study integrates Burnout Theory, Emotional Labour Theory, and the Technostress Model to explain how AI surveillance, emotional suppression, and digital pressure lead to invisible burnout in hybrid IT workplaces. These frameworks justify the study’s focus on emotional fatigue, policy awareness, and AI-driven work stress.

Invisible burnout and emotional fatigue (dependent variable) are intensified in AI-supervised hybrid work environments due to increased emotional labour, where employees continuously regulate or suppress their true emotions to meet organisational expectations and avoid negative algorithmic judgments.

Technological, and policy-related factors (independent variables), including AI surveillance, high emotional demands, limited emotional support, and low awareness of wellness policies, directly influence employees’ emotional fatigue and contribute to invisible burnout that occurs especially when the emotional and organisational support available is not enough to meet the pressure of job demands.



This framework explains how AI-supervised hybrid work settings, influenced by factors like emotional demands and lack of policy awareness, lead to increased emotional labour. As a result, employees face higher levels of invisible burnout and emotional fatigue.

Research Methodology

This study incorporating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the phenomenon of invisible burnout in AI-driven hybrid work environments. The combination of structured online surveys and semi-structured interviews facilitates both statistical analysis and in-depth thematic understanding.

Sampling and Respondent

The target population were drawn from IT-enabled services (ITES) sector, with significant representation from IT professionals working in hybrid arrangements. A purposive sampling technique was employed to identify individuals who are likely to be affected by AI-based surveillance systems.

As per the study requirements, respondent should be:

- At least 21 years of age, with at least one year of continuous work experience and presently engaged in either a hybrid or remote work setting. This was made to ensure participants are mature, experienced, and currently working in AI-supervised hybrid or remote settings, making their responses relevant and reliable for the study.
- A total of 150 valid survey responses were obtained to ensure statistical robustness for correlation and chi-square test.

Data Collection Procedure

Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. Taking part in the study was fully voluntary, and participants were promised full privacy and secrecy of their information.

The survey consisted of the following components:

- **Demographic factors:** Age, gender, income, education, role, experience and current work model.
- **Invisible Burnout and Emotional Fatigue:** Ten factors rated on a 5-point Likert scale, adapted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach & Jackson, 1981)
- **Factors influencing** burnout included both technological stressors (AI surveillance, monitoring fatigue) and personal stressors (emotional labor, digital overload), measured through 6 structured factors.
- **Perceived Policy Awareness:** Five factors assessing knowledge of and trust in organisational emotional wellness and AI ethics policies

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected respondents to capture qualitative insights relating to emotional strain, perceptions of AI-driven monitoring, and policy effectiveness.

Data Analysis Techniques

Statistical analysis included descriptive measures, correlation, and regression to explore relationships between emotional fatigue, invisible burnout, and awareness of wellness policies. Chi-square tests assessed links with demographic factors. Thematic analysis of interviews uncovered recurring themes like emotional suppression, poor policy awareness, and limited trust in support systems.



Hypothesis

Objective 1:

- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant relationship between technological, or personal factors and the levels of invisible burnout and emotional fatigue among employees in AI-supervised hybrid work environments.
- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant relationship between technological, or personal factors and the levels of invisible burnout and emotional fatigue among employees in AI-supervised hybrid work environments.

Objective 2:

- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant association between employees' awareness of organisational emotional wellness policies and their levels of invisible burnout and emotional fatigue.
- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant association between employees' awareness of organisational emotional wellness policies and their levels of invisible burnout and emotional fatigue.

Validity & Reliability

To ensure validity and reliability, the questionnaire was carefully reviewed by academic experts and subjected to a pilot study to check for clarity, consistency, and relevance. The items were adapted from well-established sources, ensuring that the responses accurately reflected the constructs being studied. Efforts were taken to minimise bias and maintain uniformity throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data were processed using IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis. To test for statistical correlations, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to explore the relationship between independent variables (e.g., policy awareness and emotional support) and dependent variables (such as invisible burnout and emotional fatigue).

The qualitative data from semi-structured interviews were analysed using manual thematic analysis, with coding performed systematically through spreadsheet matrices to ensure consistency.

Descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation were computed to summarise demographic characteristics and Likert-scale survey responses.

Karl Pearson correlation was applied to assess the linear relationships between:

- Perceived emotional support and indicators of invisible burnout
- Levels of emotional fatigue and awareness of emotional wellness policies
- Levels of invisible burnout and awareness of emotional wellness policies.

Table 1: Demographic factor Analysis

Demographic Variables	Category	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	78(52%)
	Female	72(48%)
AGE	Under 25 Years	44(29.3%)
	25–34 Years	38(25.3%)
	35–44 Years	37(24.7%)
	45–55 Years	9(6%)
	55 years and above	9(6%)
Current Role of Respondents	Entry-Level / Junior Roles	43(28.7%)
	Mid-Level Professional / Executive	45(30%)
	Team Leader / Supervisor	18 (12%)
	Manager / Department Head	18 (12%)
	Senior Management / Leadership	9 (6%)
	Freelancer / Self-Employed	17 (11.3%)
Current Work Model	Work from Home	52(34.7%)
	Hybrid (Work from Home & Office)	52(34.7%)
	Office-Centric	46(30.7%)

The demographic profile shows a balanced gender distribution, with slightly more males (52%) than females. Most respondents are under 25 years (29.3%), followed by those in the 25–44 age range, indicating a young, active workforce. The majority hold mid-level (30%) and entry-level (28.7%) positions, showing that most participants are in operational and executive roles. In terms of work models, a large portion prefers work-from-home (34.7%) or hybrid setups (34.7%), while 30.7% follow an office-based approach, reflecting a growing trend towards flexible work arrangements.

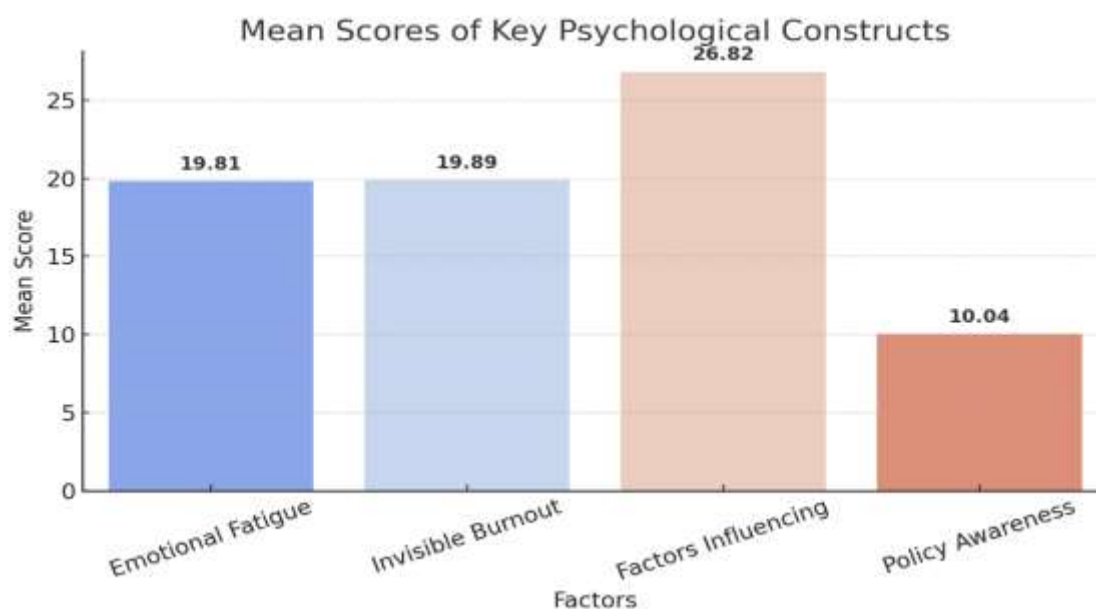
In conclusion, the study highlights that most respondents are young to mid-level professionals who prefer flexible work models like remote or hybrid setups, reflecting a broader shift toward more adaptable and comfortable work environments.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Burnout and Policy Awareness Items

Variables	N	Mean	Standard Deviation
Emotional Fatigue	150	19.806	2.016
Invisible Burnout	150	19.886	2.106
Factors Influencing	150	26.820	2.460
Policy Awareness	150	10.040	1.952

Note: N = 150 respondents.

The descriptive statistics shed light on the emotional challenges faced by individuals in AI-integrated environments. Emotional Fatigue (M = 19.89, SD = 2.11) and Invisible Burnout (M = 19.86, SD = 2.02) were reported at comparably high levels, indicating that while emotional strain is evident, a significant portion of burnout remains hidden and unexpressed—highlighting the complexity of emotional sustainability in the age of automation. Policy Awareness scored lower (M = 10.04, SD = 1.95), suggesting a gap in employees' understanding of organizational measures aimed at mitigating AI-related stress. Notably, Factors Influencing burnout, which include both personal and technological components, had the highest mean (M = 26.82, SD = 2.46), emphasizing how AI-driven workflows, digital fatigue, and self-management challenges contribute to emotional strain.

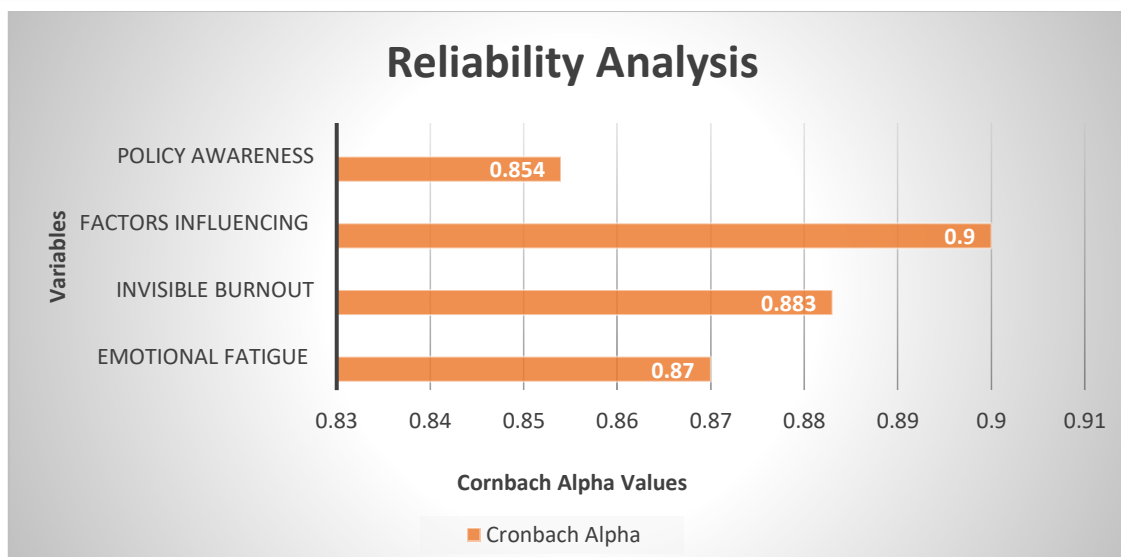


The graph highlights that Factors Influencing burnout scored the highest, pointing to significant effects from personal and technological aspects. Emotional Fatigue and Invisible Burnout were nearly equal, indicating both external and internal stress are present. The lowest mean for Policy Awareness suggests a need for better communication of relevant policies.

Table 3: Reliability Analysis

Variables	No. of factors	Cronbach Alpha
Emotional Fatigue	5	0.870
Invisible Burnout	5	0.883
Factors Influencing	6	0.900
Policy Awareness	5	0.854

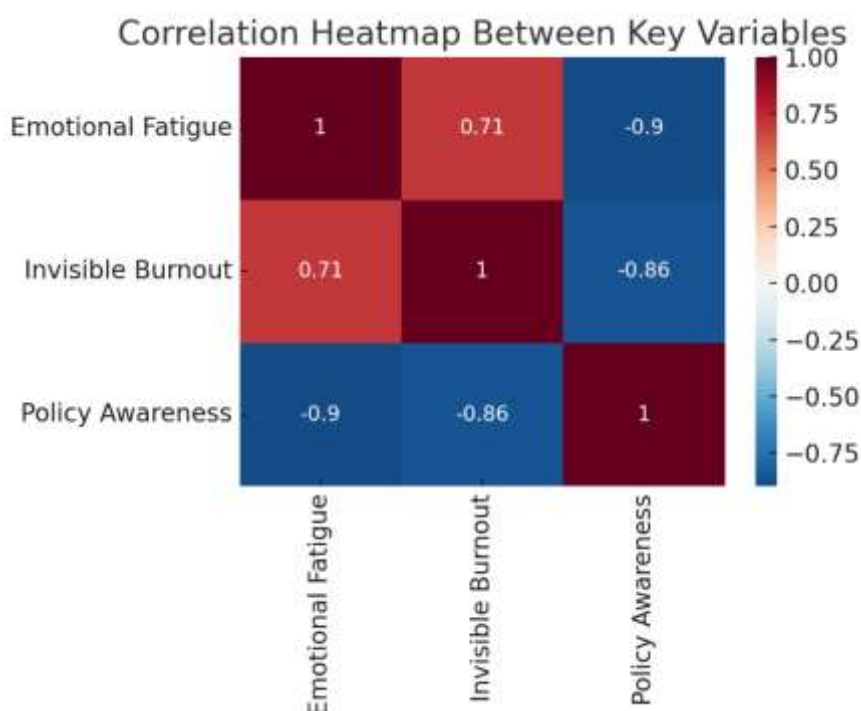
The reliability analysis shows strong internal consistency for all variables, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.854 to 0.900. The highest reliability was observed for Factors Influencing ($\alpha = 0.900$), indicating consistent responses regarding personal and technological elements affecting emotional well-being in AI-driven settings. Invisible Burnout ($\alpha = 0.883$) and Emotional Fatigue ($\alpha = 0.870$) also demonstrated high reliability, confirming the effectiveness of the scale in capturing both surface-level and hidden emotional strain. Policy Awareness ($\alpha = 0.854$) reflects a reliable assessment of participants' understanding of organizational support systems. These findings validate the use of these measures in examining how AI impacts emotional sustainability and helps identify unnoticed burnout.


Table 4: Pearson Correlation Results between Key Constructs

Variables	Pearson Correlation (r)	Significance (p)
Emotional Fatigue & Factors influencing	0.706	0.01
Invisible Burnout & Factors influencing	0.734	0.01
Emotional fatigue& Policy Awareness	-0.897	0.01
Invisible Burnout & Policy Awareness	-0.856	0.01

Note: Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Pearson correlation analysis highlights key relationships between burnout and policy awareness in AI-driven work settings. Emotional Fatigue and Invisible Burnout both show strong positive correlations with Factors Influencing ($r = 0.706$ and $r = 0.734$, respectively; $p < 0.01$), indicating that personal and technological stressors drive burnout. In contrast, both burnout types are strongly negatively correlated with Policy Awareness ($r = -0.897$ and $r = -0.856$; $p < 0.01$), suggesting that lower policy awareness is linked to higher burnout levels.



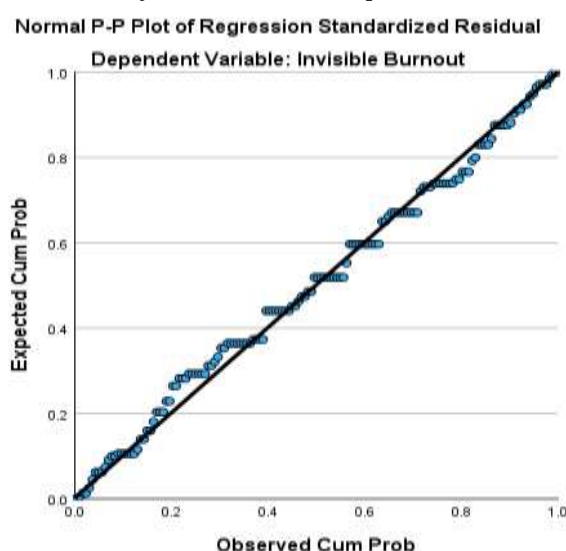
Red (closer to +1) → Strong positive relationship.
Blue (closer to -1) → Strong negative relationship.

The heatmap clearly illustrates strong positive correlations between burnout variables and influencing factors, suggesting that personal and technological stressors play a key role in emotional strain. In contrast, the strong negative correlations with policy awareness indicate that greater awareness is associated with reduced burnout.

Table 5: Regression Analysis among Independent and Dependent Variables

Predictor Variable (Invisible Burnout)	Standardized Beta	p- value	R ² - value
Policy Awareness	-0.682	<0.001	
Factor Influencing	0.240	<0.001	
Model Overall	-	-	0.760

This multiple regression analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant model ($R^2 = 0.760$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that 76% of the variance in invisible burnout can be explained by policy awareness and influencing factors within AI-supervised hybrid work environments. Among the predictors, policy awareness exhibited a significant negative impact on invisible burnout ($\beta = -0.682$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that lower awareness of emotional wellness policies is strongly associated with higher levels of hidden burnout. Conversely, factors influencing the work environment showed a significant positive contribution ($\beta = 0.240$, $p < 0.001$), implying that organizational or technological pressures directly escalate burnout experiences.

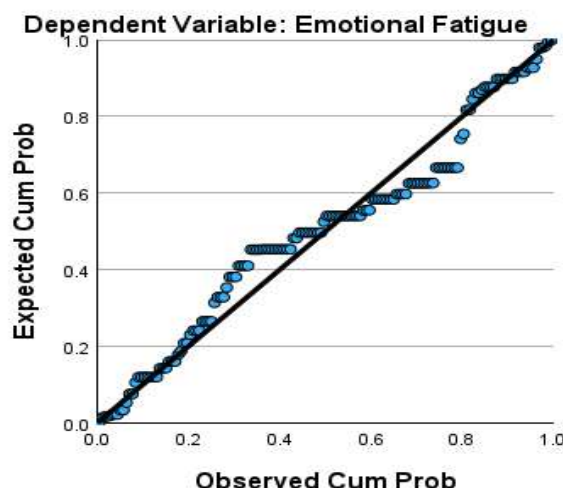


This normal P-P plot of standardized residuals for the dependent variable *Invisible Burnout* shows that the data points closely follow the diagonal line, indicating that the residuals are approximately normally distributed. This supports the assumption of normality in regression analysis, suggesting the model is statistically appropriate and the results are reliable.

Predictor Variable (Emotional Fatigue)	Standardized Beta	p- value	R ² - value
Policy Awareness	-0.812	<0.001	
Factor Influencing	0.118	0.025	
Model Overall	-	-	0.811

This regression analysis demonstrated a very strong and statistically significant model predicting emotional fatigue ($R^2 = 0.811$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that 81.1% of the variance in emotional fatigue among employees in AI-supervised hybrid work settings can be explained by policy awareness and influencing factors. Among the predictors, policy awareness showed a strong negative effect on emotional fatigue ($\beta = -0.812$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that lower awareness of wellness-related policies significantly increases emotional fatigue. In contrast, factors influencing work conditions (personal and technological) had a smaller but statistically significant positive impact ($\beta = 0.118$, $p = 0.025$), implying that organizational or technological pressures contribute moderately to emotional strain. The residual P-P plot confirms the normality assumption is met, further supporting the robustness of the model.

Normal P-P Plot of Regression Standardized Residual



The P-P plot for the dependent variable Emotional Fatigue shows that the standardized residuals are mostly aligned with the diagonal line, indicating a normal distribution. This suggests that the assumption of normality is met, supporting the validity and reliability of the regression model.

Table 6: Chi-Square Test Results

The Chi-Square test was conducted to examine the associations between key psychological variables—emotional fatigue, invisible burnout, and emotional wellness policy awareness with demographic and organizational factors such as gender, age, current role, and work model.

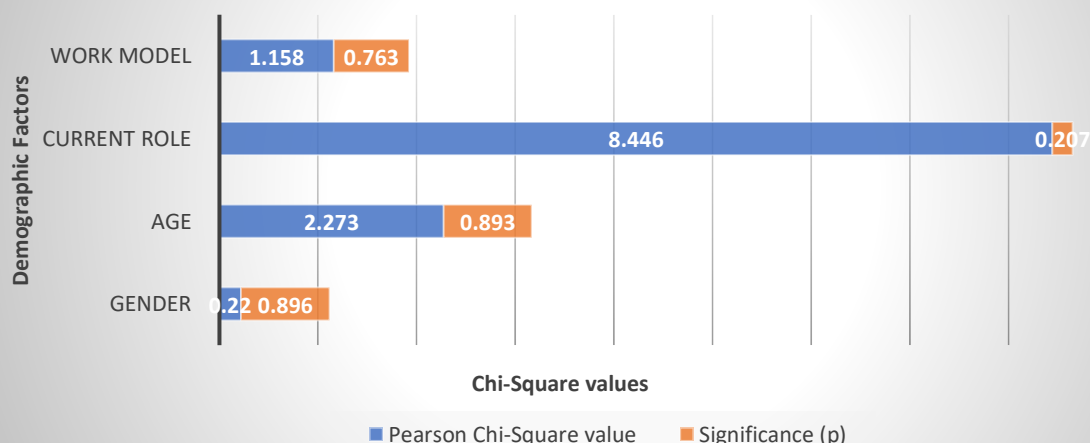
Emotional Fatigue vs Demographic Factors

Emotional Fatigue (variables)	Pearson Chi-Square value	p-value
Gender	0.220	0.896
Age	2.273	0.893
Current Role	8.446	0.207
Work Model	1.158	0.763

Note: No significant demographic associations were observed because p-values >0.05

The Chi-Square results show no significant association between emotional fatigue and gender ($\chi^2 = 0.220$, $p = 0.896$), age ($\chi^2 = 2.273$, $p = 0.893$), current role ($\chi^2 = 8.446$, $p = 0.207$), or work model ($\chi^2 = 1.158$, $p = 0.763$). This indicates that emotional fatigue affects individuals across all age groups, roles, and work models, and is equally prevalent among both men and women. Therefore, it is likely driven by organizational or psychological factors rather than demographic characteristics.

Emotional Fatigue vs Demographic Factors





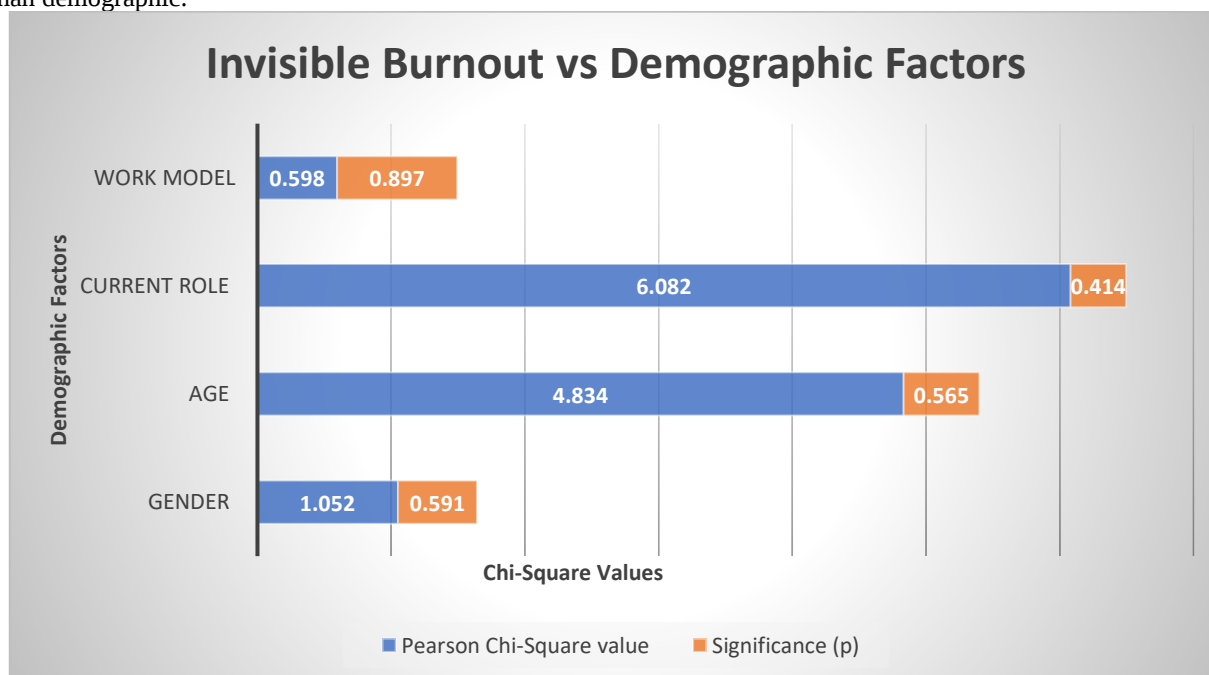
This bar chart illustrates the relationship between emotional fatigue and demographic factors using Pearson's Chi-Square values and significance levels. The analysis indicates no statistically significant association ($p > 0.05$) between emotional fatigue and gender, age, current role, or work model.

Invisible Burnout vs Demographic Factors

Invisible Burnout (Variables)	Pearson Chi-Square value	p-value
Gender	1.052	0.591
Age	4.834	0.565
Current Role	6.082	0.414
Work Model	0.598	0.897

Note: No significant demographic associations were observed because p-values > 0.05

The Chi-Square analysis showed no significant association between invisible burnout and gender ($\chi^2 = 1.052$, $p = 0.591$), age ($\chi^2 = 4.834$, $p = 0.565$), current role ($\chi^2 = 6.082$, $p = 0.414$), or work model ($\chi^2 = 0.598$, $p = 0.897$). This suggests that invisible burnout can affect individuals regardless of gender, age, job position, or work arrangement. Both men and women, across all roles and age groups, are equally susceptible, indicating that the factors contributing to invisible burnout are likely psychological or organizational rather than demographic.



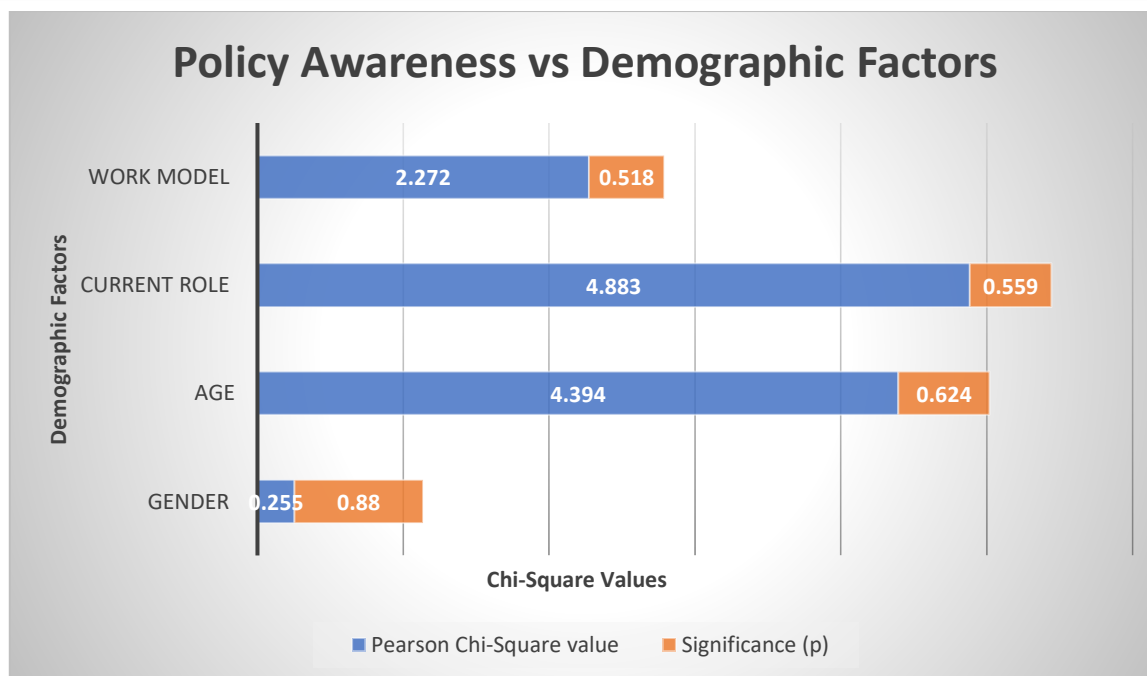
This graph reveals no significant association ($p > 0.05$) between invisible burnout and any demographic factor, indicating uniformity across groups.

Policy Awareness Vs Demographic Factors

Policy Awareness (Variables)	Pearson Chi-Square value	Significance (p)
Gender	0.255	0.880
Age	4.394	0.624
Current Role	4.883	0.559
Work Model	2.272	0.518

Note: No significant demographic associations were observed because p-values > 0.05 .

The Chi-Square analysis indicates no statistically significant association between policy awareness and gender ($\chi^2 = 0.255$, $p = 0.880$), age ($\chi^2 = 4.394$, $p = 0.624$), current role ($\chi^2 = 4.883$, $p = 0.559$), or work model ($\chi^2 = 2.272$, $p = 0.518$). These results suggest that awareness of policies is consistent across all demographic and professional groups. Regardless of gender, age, job role, or work setting, individuals show similar levels of policy awareness, implying that demographic characteristics do not influence an employee's familiarity with organizational policies.



This indicates no statistically significant relationship ($p > 0.05$) between policy awareness and demographic variables, suggesting consistent awareness levels across groups.

The study found no significant link between emotional fatigue, invisible burnout, or policy awareness and gender, age, current role, or work model. These issues affect individuals equally across all demographic and professional groups. This suggests the need for organization-wide strategies rather than targeting specific populations.

Qualitative Analysis

The interviews show that employees in AI-monitored hybrid work settings often hide their stress to meet performance goals, mainly out of fear of being judged. Many do not know about wellness policies, likely because they are not shared clearly or properly. Constant monitoring also makes employees feel they have less control over their work, which adds to their stress. There is also a lack of trust in HR wellness programs, as many feel these are not genuinely helpful. These findings highlight the need for better communication, more freedom at work, and reliable support systems.

Discussion

This study explored the psychological effects of AI-driven monitoring systems in hybrid IT work environments, with a focus on emotional fatigue, invisible burnout, and the role of organisational emotional wellness policy awareness. By employing a mixed-methods approach, the research provides nuanced insights into how technology-mediated management structures influence employee emotional well-being.

Interpretation of the Results

The findings confirm that AI-driven surveillance in hybrid IT work settings contributes significantly to emotional fatigue and invisible burnout. High positive correlations between emotional strain and influencing factors ($r = 0.706$ for emotional fatigue, $r = 0.734$ for burnout) suggest that technological pressures and emotional demands intensify psychological distress. Simultaneously, the strong negative correlations with policy awareness ($r = -0.897$ for emotional fatigue, $r = -0.856$ for burnout) validate that awareness and accessibility of wellness frameworks play a critical buffering role against burnout.

These results directly answer the two research questions:

1. **Key factors** contributing to emotional fatigue and burnout include emotional suppression, lack of autonomy, digital overload, and poor emotional support.
2. **Policy awareness** remains critically low and correlates inversely with burnout, underscoring a major gap in emotional governance.

Comparison with Prior Studies

The study reinforces conclusions from Zacher and Meier (2023) and Klietk et al. (2024), who found that persistent AI surveillance correlates with emotional exhaustion. Consistent with Zhang et al. (2024), this study confirms that technostress without emotional safeguards reduces employee resilience. However, unlike prior studies, this research provides strong empirical validation in the Indian IT sector context, which has often been underrepresented in global AI burnout research. Furthermore, it complements the



theoretical insights of Chavan et al. (2025) by demonstrating that “emotional conformity” is not just a conceptual threat but a measurable psychological outcome in AI-monitored workplaces.

Implications

This research contributes significantly to the fields of organisational psychology and technology management by empirically validating the concept of “invisible burnout” within hybrid IT environments. It extends existing burnout theory by establishing a link between emotional fatigue and factors such as AI governance quality and policy invisibility. Practically, the findings underscore the need for HR managers and IT employers to implement emotion-aware governance tools, enhance policy communication, and establish trust-building support systems to alleviate employee concerns. From a policy perspective, the study urges regulatory bodies and corporate policymakers to expand current AI ethics frameworks to address psychological and emotional well-being alongside data privacy and algorithmic fairness. Emotional health should be recognized as a core metric in AI management audits and ESG compliance efforts.

Justification for Unexpected Results

Although it was anticipated that burnout and fatigue levels would differ based on roles or age groups, the Chi-square analysis revealed no significant association with any demographic variables. This surprising uniformity indicates that emotional strain linked to AI systems is not confined to specific age brackets, job roles, genders, or work modes. Instead, it appears to be a widespread experience, likely driven by shared exposure to low policy awareness and emotional demands within the workplace. These findings highlight the need for organisation-wide strategies rather than demographically focused interventions to effectively address AI-induced emotional fatigue.

Conclusion

This study explored the psychological implications of AI-driven management in hybrid IT work environments, with a focus on emotional fatigue and invisible burnout. It also adds to burnout research by showing that invisible burnout can be measured as a real emotional problem faced by employees in AI-controlled hybrid work environments.

The findings revealed high levels of emotional strain among employees, driven by constant digital surveillance, limited emotional autonomy, and high-performance expectations. Notably, the study found strong positive correlations between burnout and factors such as emotional demand and lack of emotional support. Conversely, policy awareness emerged as a critical moderating factor, showing strong negative correlations with both emotional fatigue and invisible burnout. These results indicate that employees who are aware of and trust emotional wellness policies are less likely to experience hidden burnout.

Contributions to Knowledge

The study contributes to academic literature in several important ways. First, it provides empirical validation for the concept of “invisible burnout,” a psychological condition often discussed but rarely quantified in the context of AI-supervised work. Second, it contextualises this phenomenon within the Indian IT sector—a rapidly growing but underrepresented domain in global AI governance research. Third, the mixed-method approach combining surveys with qualitative interviews adds depth to the analysis, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how AI affects employee well-being beyond surface-level metrics.

Restatement of Significance

The significance of this study lies in its timely examination of emotional sustainability in the digital workplace. As organisations increasingly rely on AI tools for employee monitoring and management, understanding the emotional consequences of such technologies becomes critical. The research underscores the urgent need for organisations to integrate emotional governance into AI policy frameworks. Recognising and addressing invisible burnout is not only essential for employee health but also for sustaining long-term organisational performance and trust in AI systems.

Limitations of the Study

While the findings are insightful, the study has certain limitations. The sample size was confined to 150 IT professionals, which, although statistically adequate, may not represent all demographics or industries. The use of self-reported measures could have introduced biases, particularly in the responses relating to emotional well-being and policy awareness. Moreover, the study adopted a cross-sectional design, which limits the ability to track changes in emotional states over time or establish causality between AI exposure and burnout outcomes.

Suggestions for Future Research

To advance scholarly and practical understanding of emotional well-being in AI-monitored hybrid workplaces, further research is necessary. The following five directions are proposed as high-priority areas to strengthen both theoretical frameworks and evidence-based practices in this evolving field.

- **Longitudinal Studies on Burnout Development**-Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to examine how emotional fatigue and invisible burnout evolve over time in AI-driven environments. This will help distinguish between temporary stress responses and persistent emotional strain resulting from sustained digital monitoring.



- **Experimental Evaluation of Support Interventions**-Controlled experiments can assess the effectiveness of organisational interventions, such as emotion-aware AI tools, policy orientation sessions, or embedded counselling platforms. Empirical testing of these initiatives can provide actionable strategies for reducing burnout in real-world settings.
- **Cross-Sectoral Investigations**-Expanding research to include sectors such as healthcare, education, retail, and manufacturing will offer a broader understanding of how AI monitoring affects different professional groups. Each sector may exhibit unique stressors and coping mechanisms, enriching the generalisability of findings.
- **Cross-Cultural Comparative Research**-Given cultural variations in emotional expression and workplace dynamics, comparative studies across regions or countries can uncover how AI-related emotional challenges manifest differently. This can guide the creation of culturally sensitive emotional governance frameworks.
- **Organisational Culture and Leadership Dynamics**-Further studies should explore how leadership styles and organisational culture mediate the impact of AI surveillance. Supportive leadership and emotionally inclusive cultures may reduce the psychological burden, while rigid or impersonal cultures may exacerbate it.

By focusing on these areas, future research can contribute to the development of emotionally intelligent AI governance models that prioritise psychological safety. Such efforts are essential for building more resilient, ethical, and sustainable work environments in the digital age.

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