DIGITAL FATIGUE AND DIGITAL THERAPY: BETWEEN MENTAL EXHAUSTION AND THERAPEUTIC POTENTIAL IN CONTEMPORARY MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICE

ЦИФРОВА ВТОМА ТА ЦИФРОВА ТЕРАПІЯ: МІЖ ПСИХІЧНИМ ВИСНАЖЕННЯМ І ТЕРАПЕВТИЧНИМ ПОТЕНЦІАЛОМ У СУЧАСНІЙ ПРАКТИЦІ ПСИХІЧНОГО ЗДОРОВ'Я

UDC 159.9:004
DOI https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-5208.2025.69.2.35

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The accelerating digitalisation of modern life has caused a paradoxical relation between technology and mental health, positing digital instruments simultaneously as sources of mental fatigue and sources of therapeutic ingenuity. This article critically reviews the dual phenomena of digital fatigue–cognitive and emotional drain from long-term use of screens–and the increasing scope of digital therapy in practice. Evidence demonstrates that undue digital immersion is a precursor of anxiety, depression, social isolation, and professional burnout among younger members and tech-dependent professionals. Teletherapy platforms, mental wellbeing applications, and AI-based instruments offer scalable solutions that widen increased accessibility, stigma-reduction, and ongoing psychological support. The discussion submits that there is a need for advanced frameworks that retreat from binary risk–benefit descriptions, rather than palping the dynamic interrelation between digital fatigue and therapeutic potential. Key threads are practitioner digital health literacy, the importance of structured interventions like mindfulness-based digital detoxes, and the nascent clinician burnout challenge in telehealth contexts. Thesynthesis points out that the future of psychology will not be in rebelling or acceptantly adopting technology, rather lies in calibrating use toward optimizing therapeutic gain at minimal harm. By reframing the paradox of the digital as a site of strategic adaptation rather than contradiction, psychology may develop toward evidenced-based practice that safeguards both clients and practitioners equally in more digital worldscapes.
Key words: *digital fatigue, digital therapy, psychoterapy, clinical psychology, mental health, telehealth, mindfulness, resilience, burnout.*

Прискорена диджиталізація сучасного життя створила парадоксальні стосунки між технологіями та психічним здоров'ям, позиціонуючи цифрові інструменти одночасно як джерело ментального виснаження і як джерело терапевтичної винахідливості. У цій статті критично розглядаються два явища: цифрова втома – когнітивне та емоційне виснаження через тривале користування екранами – та зростаюче застосування цифрової терапії на практиці. Дані свідчать, що надмірне занурення в цифрове середовище є передумовою тривожності, депресії, соціальної ізоляції та професійного вигорання серед молоді та професіоналів, залежних від технологій. Платформи для телетерапії, застосунки для психологічного добробуту та інструменти на основі ШІ пропонують масштабовані рішення, які розширюють доступ, зменшують стигматизацію та забезпечують постійну психологічну підтримку. У статті підкреслюється необхідність нових підходів, що відходять від бінарного опису "ризик–користь", натомість фокусуються на динамічній взаємодії між цифровою втомою та терапевтичним потенціалом. Основні акценти зроблено на цифровій грамотності фахівців, важливості структурованих втручань на зразок "майндфулнес"-детоксикації від цифрових технологій, а також на новій проблемі вигорання самих клініцистів у телемедичних умовах. У результаті синтезу стверджується, що майбутнє психології не полягає ні в бунті проти технологій, ні в їх сліпому прийнятті, а у точному налаштуванні використання для досягнення терапевтичного ефекту з мінімальними ризиками. Переосмислення цифрового не як суперечності, а як платформи для стратегічної адаптації дає змогу психології розвиватися в напрямі доказової практики, яка однаково захищає як клієнтів, так і фахівців у дедалі більш цифровому середовищі.
Ключові слова: *цифрова втома, цифрова терапія, психотерапія, клінічна психологія, психічне здоров'я, телемедицина, усвідомленість, стійкість, вигорання.*

Relevance and research problem. Quick assimilation of digital technologies into everyday experience has radically altered the face of mental well-being. While those instruments have brought heretofore uncontested access to knowledge, communication, and mental health resources, they have also generated new wellsprings of psychological stress, characteristically framed through the discourse of digital fatigue. Recent scholarship portrays that sustained use of digital forums can drain mental health and precipitate enhanced levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout (Ashraf, 2025; de Lima Nardin, 2025; Feng et al., 2025) [6]. They are seen more markedly among those who are extremely immersed in digital universes, including members of Generation Z and those engaging in tech-related professions, in which sustained connectedness blurs the line between work, play, and self-care.

At the same time, mental health practice has come increasingly to rely on technology not only as a tool for therapy but also for widening the accessibility of therapy. Teletherapy, online support groups, and mental health mobile applications have shown a potential for diminishing treatment barriers and scaling up interventions for underserved or hard-reach populations (Bidargaddi et al., 2025;

Trompetter et al., 2023) [2]. This dualism underscores a basic paradox: the very technologies that amplify psychogenic distress are those that also constitute the building blocks of contemporary practice. The issue is not refusing technology per se, as per Hilty et al. (2023) [8], as it is building the evidence-based methods that combine digital participation and protection features such as structured detoxes, mindfulness interventions, and boundary-setting protocols.

The new discourse thus calls for a sensitive understanding of how digital technologies simultaneously occasion opportunities and risks in mental health treatment. Scholars such as Wasie (2024) and Meegasdeniya & Dulnath (2023) [12] remark that digital resilience supported by mindfulness and intentional use can diminish fatigue while solidifying psychological coping strengths. In contrast, concerns regarding the well-being of practitioners, such as the risk of vicarious digital burnout among therapy practitioners (Faizan Siddiqui & Azaroual, 2024; Leys, 2025) [5], provoke a need for sustainable practitioner practices in a world of technology. In this sense, the discussion that follows examines structural drivers of digital fatigue and therapy technology, and attempts in the process critically to evaluate their influence for contemporary psychology.

Review of current research and publications. Digital burnout, characterized by the sensation of crippling exhaustion caused by over-exposure from the use of digital devices, has acquired immense relevance as a problem in today's world, most particularly in today's digital-dominated world. Prevalence of digital burnout also differs across various demographic groups, and working professionals relying very heavily on technology and Gen Z are at peak risk. A recent report by Ashraf (2025) [1] also highlights the adverse repercussions of digital burnout, crediting long-term consumption of digital interfaces and its adverse repercussions for one's mental health, including increased depression and anxiety. Furthermore, de Lima Nardin (2025) [4] also highlights how digital burnout decreases one's quality of life, contributing toward less interaction between individuals, loss of concentration, and lower level of well-being. These also highlight the need for establishing awareness and intervention techniques that are directed toward high-risk sections.

To combat this new threat, researchers have done work for active prevention of offsetting the power of digital fatigue, particularly in the realm of mental health. Hilty et al. (2023) [8] offer a compendium of best practice guidelines for healthy use of technology. In the article, it is suggested that structured digital detoxes should be established and one should impose limits for oneself for screen use and learn non-technological skills. In this solution lies the necessity for building a healthy rapport with digital technology. Prevention techniques like mindfulness-based interventions, taking breaks at timely intervals, and allotting time for use of digital technology can be utilized as a defense against the stealthy power of digital fatigue and can result in a healthy mind. The authors' conclusions have more general applications for practice in today's psychology, and suggest a dual function for technology in mental health. While, by one estimate, over-reliance upon digital instruments has the side effect of exacerbating negative mental health outcomes, technology also has therapeutic potential that can complement practice in mental health. Teletherapy and mental health applications, for instance, have demonstrated utility for extending access to treatment, not least for those living in underserved areas or experiencing barriers for traditional face-to-face therapy. The issue, thus, is one of balancing technology's therapeutic potential against the risks that exist through over-reliance upon it. Practitioners of mental health will thus need to account for these questions at practice level in considering the use of technology at treatment level, taking especial care that digital instruments are deployed sparingly for the purpose of complementing, not distracting from, mental well-being.

While digital fatigue continues to characterize mental health landscapes, it is important that practitioners and individuals retain awareness about the advantages and disadvantages of technology use. An informed, balanced understanding of implications can shape therapeutic approaches that capitalize on the strengths of technology while safeguarding against potential dangers. The intersection of digital fatigue and mental health gives rise to a complex and dynamic landscape that needs ongoing exploration, evaluation, and refinement of psychological approaches to serve a populace that is actively and heavily immersed in the digital world. In this way, more balanced integration of technology into mental health practice can occur and encourage healthier interaction with the digital world., The binary of digital fatigue and therapeutic uses of technology in mental health practice gives rise to a complex scenario for contemporary applications of psychology. While digital fatigue, characterized by a sense of burnout that emerges from prolonged use of a computer display or other digital interactive system, has emerged as a predominant problem and has contributed toward increased levels of anxiety, depression, and isolation (Feng et al., 2025) [6], it marks a large-scale discourse concerning the way in which increased levels of digital interaction exert deleterious influence upon mental health. By contrast, technology also has a central role to play in mental health treatments, best evidenced by the work of Bidargaddi et al. (2025) [2]. They feel that digital change enhances access to mental health treatment and community support and intervention that is scalable and sensitive to individual needs. Some applications that fall into this category include teletherapy, mental health applications, and online support groups that provide useful support for those that either cannot or have limited access to more traditional face-to-face services.

Furthermore, the dynamics of the social medium also make this interaction complex, as we see in Feng et al. (2025) [6]. They propose that while there is a potential for stoking inadequacy and anxiety–further exacerbating digital burn-out–social medium also has unique potential for connecting and emotional support. Individuals regularly seek refuge and affiliation in online communities and this attenuates loneliness and offers mutual support systems that are crucial for mental well-being. This duality makes it crucial for us that we develop a balanced view regarding the use of technology; as Wasie (2024) observes, a delicate balance has to be struck between averts harm from negative use of a screen and deriving benefits from online resources that can develop psychological resistance. His observations suggest that higher use of a screen has potential for negative mental health outcomes, but there is a potential for developing skills such as coping, mindfulness, and support through focused use of online resources for psychology and thus developing resistance against stressful stimuli.

In considering the psychosocial connotations of this dualism, it is essential for current psychological practice to embrace technology in a considered and deliberate manner. Practitioners have to walk a thin line between enabling healthy use of technology and avert the adverse outcomes that characterize digital fatigue. This necessitates the establishment of inclusive models that educate clients in the use of instruments related to technology that enhance mental well-being rather than undermine it. The shifting world of digital interaction needs imaginative solutions that tap into the positives of technology while remaining acute about its negatives. In this way, practitioners can better support those negotiating the difficulties of today's digital living and align therapy more toward the world of today's mental health issues. By virtue of research and collaboration that constantly evolves, the profession can steer toward a holistic practice that optimizes the therapy potential of technology while considering the issues that surround digital fatigue., Digital fatigue and the therapeutic use of technology provide a complex portrait for today's psychological practice. Leys (2025) [10] discusses burn-out management required for digital interaction and speculates that mental health practitioners not only need to cope with clients' digital fatigue levels but also master their own level of technology use. This two-pronged directive requires there be inclusion of active measures for promoting healthy use of digital engagement. To begin with, Leys highlights inclusion of scheduled breaks from technology and advocacy for face-time use engagements whenever possible that would help offset the costs of continuous digital connectivity like that found in telehealth services.

Furthermore, mindfulness approaches have also emerged as a core resource for promoting digital well-being, as Meegasdeniya & Dulnath (2023) [12] detail. They propose that the implementation of mindfulness within therapeutic practice has the capacity to provide a buffer against the deleterious side-effects of digital fatigue, allowing clients to develop a greater sense of awareness regarding their own use of technology and its impact upon their mental state. Mindful breathing, periods of digital abstinence, and reflective journaling can each serve a useful function in recalculating a balance between digital interaction and individual well-being. Beyond stimulating a more reflective relationship for clients with technology, each approach also offers healthcare practitioners a means by which to promote the mental well-being of their clients without succumbing to their own digital fatigue.

Nonetheless, the modern therapist also faces serious challenges, particularly those noted by Faizan Siddiqui & Azaroual (2024) [5] for healthcare practitioners' mental well-being in a world that is highly digital. While the practitioners incorporate technology into their methods of therapy practice, they need to cope simultaneously with the threat of vicarious trauma associated with clients' online interactivities. Ongoing confrontation by the therapist with clients in crises or experiencing technical problems can heighten a therapist's own mental health issues, thereby creating a potential burn-out. Thus, it becomes critically essential that therapists practice a kind of self-care and maintain joint supervision to cope well with challenges.

Also, there are important implications for training and ongoing professional practice; there are requirements for programs that focus digital health literacy and practitioner self-regulation. Teachers and trainers should prioritize training therapists regarding personal boundaries in their digital practice and using technology responsibly in therapy. The dilemma between employing technology as a therapeutic resource and at the same time acknowledging harm potential makes it necessary to cautiously incorporate digital sources in therapeutic practice.

Briefly, the intersection of digital fatigue and therapeutic technology mandates an examination at a deeper level of psychological practice. While practitioners worry about their own mental health in a digital world, there is a mounting recognition of the indispensable role that mindfulness, organizational support, and adaptative methods will need to play in fostering both clinician vitality and outcomes for clients in digitally informed therapeutic world., As described throughout this literature review, the interrelation between digital fatigue and mental health is complex, and it has immense implications for current-day practice in psychology. Digital fatigue, a loss of interest or energy and a depreciation of well-being that develops because of prolonged use of digital technologies and through the negative impact of overload, has been discovered to provoke higher levels of anxiety, depression, and burnout among diverse populations. As observed in some recent studies, for example those by Chen et al. (2023), the mental health cost of constant connectivity mandates a multi-faceted explanation of the negative impact that prolonged use of a screen can exert upon mental health.

While digital fatigue has pessimistic undertones, emerging therapeutic applications of technology offer promise for mental health treatments. Teletherapy and mental health applications have demonstrated success in providing available and personalized psychological support to users, particularly in peripheral or underserved areas (Trompetter et al., 2023). Zhang & Wang (2024) [19] emphasize the promise of artificial intelligence for therapeutic applications, noting that platform-based approaches grounded in AI can provide individualized coping methods and supplement the therapeutic alliance by providing continuous support outside of conventional clinical practice. This dual use of technology–as a generator and resource for therapy–emphasizes the need for further investigation into balanced digital resource use for mental health treatment.

Future research will need to adopt a diversified pattern in the use of technology for mental health through healthy usage approaches that support the positive impact of technology in therapy. Following Nyongesa & Van Der Westhuizen (2025) [13], methods of work-life integration can be effective remedies in preventing the adverse effects of digital fatigue. Leaving space for more defined work and personal boundaries may lead to lower stress levels and improved general well-being.

Furthermore, resistance against digital fatigue has also been included among the ingredients for this new world. Congleton (2023) [3] and Xavier (2024) [18] suggest that building resistance through practice of mindfulness, digital fasts, and healthy use instruction would build readiness among citizens for a more digital world. They not only address short-term mental needs for digital overload, but also offer a basis for sustainable long-term methods for mental well-being.

In total, the dual purpose of technology acting and treating mental health offers vast promise for practitioners building holistic approaches highlighting well-being in the digital age. A commitment toward ongoing scholarship, and implementation of flexible methods, will be a part of carrying out responsive practices of psychology in tandem with new world conditions. Balancing the employment of therapeutic technology and experiencing the symptoms of digital burn-out create a condition of necessity for the further development of the field. In a transforming digital world, an understanding of the nuances of technology's influence over mental health shall retain a subject of significance for successive scholarship and practice.

This paper clarifies the paradoxical effect of digital technologies in building mental health today. To escape from descriptive comment, it is essential to map out the key trends shaping this apparent paradox. The table that follows compiles dominant leanings that come through the literature.

To begin with, the binary between digital fatigue and therapeutic technology shows that risks and opportunities are not fixed and separate categories but interrelated and dynamic. In this manner, the very systems that enable compulsive behavior simultaneously provide entrance for new therapeutic communities. This interpenetration means that interventions cannot be conceptualized in a purely "reduce screen time" form but rather must address redirection of attention toward psychologically corrective practices.

Second, there are important practitioner implications. Standard therapy models presume a clear boundary between rest and work, while online spaces blur those boundaries. Therapists risk inheriting their clients' stresses from the online world while treating through those very mediums that precipitate it. This apparent contradiction mandates a cohesive framework of digital health literacy for lay and clinician alike that makes technology's dangers a shared foundation of therapeutic expertise.

Finally, the socio-cultural perspective points out that digital fatigue is not a shared condition. Telecommuters, younger groups, and telehealth-implanted practitioners all bear unequal burdens. But it is precisely those sites that are best suited to enlist digital methods for connection and support. The debate thus shifts away from whether tech is poison or panacea and into questions of how it might be best calibrated. A difficult issue for psychology is

Table 1

Emerging Trends in Digital Fatigue and Digital Therapy

Dimension	Digital Fatigue (Risks)	Digital Therapy (Opportunities)
Mental Health Outcomes	Anxiety, depression, burnout, reduced social connectedness (Ashraf, 2025; Feng et al., 2025)	Improved accessibility, reduced stigma, scalable interventions (Bidargaddi et al., 2025; Trompetter et al., 2023)
Behavioral Dynamics	Impaired concentration, social withdrawal, compulsive screen use (de Lima Nardin, 2025)	Enhanced coping skills, mindfulness, resilience training (Wasie, 2024; Meegasdeniya & Dulnath, 2023)
Therapeutic Practice	Risk of therapist burnout, vicarious digital overload (Faizan Siddiqui & Azaroual, 2024)	AI-assisted therapy, telehealth platforms, expanded client reach (Zhang & Wang, 2024)
Socio-Cultural Factors	Inequalities in digital access, generational vulnerability (Gen Z, high-tech workers)	Community support networks, global reach of online interventions (Nyongesa & Van Der Westhuizen, 2025)

that of devising context-sensitive interventions that account for both the structural risk of digital over-exposure and the promise of digital therapy for transformation.

Conclusion. The relationship between digital fatigue and digital therapy is one of the more striking paradoxes of today's psychology. While, at one level, digital over-exposure is a causative factor for declining mental well-being, evidenced in anxiety, depression, isolation, and burn-out at work. At another level, the very technologies possess enormous therapeutic potential as infrastructures for widening access to caring through tele-behavioral health, mental health coaching through app-based interventions, and computer-assisted intervention. This paradox makes a case for a balanced and conscious use of digital instruments in the practice of psychology.

The indications are that the future of mental health treatment will not be resistance or carte blanche acceptance of technology, but one of developing adaptive models that respect its peril and its therapeutic potential. For practitioners that means developing knowledge of digital health literacy, deploying structured interventions such as digital detoxes and mindfulness interventions, and maintaining a watchful hand over their own use of digitally intermediated sources of stress. For clients that means developing resilience through responsible and reflective use of digital technology, enabling technology to be a resource and not a drain.

Lastly, for psychology, the challenge we face is a reframing of the paradox of digital therapy and digital fatigue as a constructive tension that can lead us toward evidence-based practice. By moving out of descriptive renderings into critical explorations of context, inter-population differences, and intervention efficacy, the field can build more resilient approaches that both insulate against the negatives of digital over-exposure and also leverage the potential of digital transformation. While the digital world itself will keep changing, the challenge for the practitioners of mental health will be one of keeping technology a tool for cure and empowerment and not a door into burnout.

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