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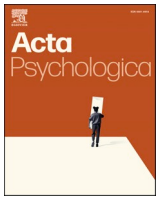

Internal branding and technostress among employees - the mediation role of employee wellbeing and moderating effects of digital internal communication

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ABSTRACT

Integrating technology with communication makes work comfortable, but it simultaneously interrupts employees' personal life. Internal branding strategies attempts to improve employee's psychological and physiological wellbeing, yet the extensive integration of technology with work and workplace activities posit serious challenges in the form of technostress. In the context of communication, digital tools and mode of work increases efficiency, yet their impact of wellbeing and technostress experienced by employees needs to be examined.

The present study aims to analyze the impact of internal branding on employee wellbeing and technostress under the influence of digital internal communication. The paper also examines if digital internal communication can moderate the impact of internal branding on employee wellbeing and also the impact of employee wellbeing on technostress experienced at workplace. The mediation effect of employee wellbeing between internal branding and technostress is also analyzed.

The conceptual model was built on the premises of job demands-resources theory, technology acceptance model, and transactional theory of stress and coping. Data collected from 401 employees from information technology sector was analyzed using Smart PLS4. Results of structural and measurement model using PLS SEM indicate that internal branding improves wellbeing and reduces technostress under the influence of digital internal communication. Employee wellbeing is found to mediate the impact of internal branding as well as digital internal communication on technostress. Findings support the moderating effects of digital internal communication in reducing technostress and improving employee wellbeing. The hypothesised research model integrates three theories making a novel contribution by analysing wellbeing and technostress and exploring internal branding and internal communication in the digital context.

1. Introduction

Internal branding (IB) is an emerging area which is gaining attention in contemporary management due to its strategic nature to ensure the brand promise delivery to customers/stakeholders. It involves the set of activities that equip the employees to internalise the explicit and implicit brand promise in order to deliver the appropriate customer experience (Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, & Rudd, 2013; Punjaisri & Wilson, 2011). IB plays a critical role in manifestation of brand image and brand identity fostering employee's brand supporting behaviours by reinforcing the brand values among them (Piehler, C., Burmann, & Xiong, 2016). It has gained much popularity among managers (Piehler, Grace, & Burmann, 2018), and also evolved as an increasingly attentive field among the research community (Barros-Arrieta & García-Cali, 2021).

IB is defined as "a management tool for ensuring that employees have a shared understanding of the desired corporate brand and that they are able and willing to reflect this image to other stakeholders through their behavior" (Ragheb, Ahmed, & Hussein, 2018: 83). Increasingly, IB strategies use human resources management processes (Saini, Lievens, & Srivastava, 2022) and enable the development of a shared understanding of brand, which reflects employee's relationships with stakeholders (Saleem & Iglesias, 2016). Organizations are now extensively investigating IB strategies for various brand-oriented benefits. Nevertheless the slightly fragmented nature, IB is conceptualised in

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various strategic forms due to its multidisciplinary nature. One such conceptualisation is based on the brand-focused human resource activities (Chiang, Chang, Han, & Mcconville, 2013), which include various practices and programs, brand oriented trainings, leadership role and internal communication. It is observed that the boundaries of IB have progressively expanded with the rapidly changing business context (Schmidt, Ind, & N. and Iglesias, O., 2021) including technology. As a result, internal communication with traditional assumptions is being challenged, leading to a paradigm shift leveraging digital internal communication (DIC) tools. The present developments in information and communication technologies have created digital workplaces. Digitalization through integrated communication tools and technology have supported smart working environment which can reinforce the internal brand. While implementing DIC during IB, real-time communication and interactive work systems provide users access to a variety of communication applications like email, chat, video, voice and desktop sharing on a single user interface. The massive impact of DIC across several functions and verticals in the organizations has made it a magnificent tool for sharing information in IB for brand promise delivery.

Being a domain of IB, DIC is significant for compelling IB outputs. Internal communication is significantly positively related with the overall attractiveness employees assign to their employers (Pološki Vokić, Tkalac Verčič, & Sinčić Ćorić, 2023). Sisko Maarit Lipiäinen, Ensio Karjaluoto, and Nevalainen (2014) illustrates the role of digital channels and benefits and difficulties associated with them. Though utilization of DIC tools is challenging, yet DIC tools like management blogs, video chats, messages, live chats, and employee communication portals make communication process fast, personal and interactive and at the same time productive to share the brand values, philosophy and create internal brand among employees. Digital tools and workspaces provide platforms for mutual information sharing and integrating applications, data, documents, processes, jobs/tasks and internet, and therefore, opportunities for improving and optimising productivity. This was significantly visible ever since organizations started adopting the new approach of smart working and virtual teams by accommodating different work styles i.e., online and/or offline/hybrid work. Integrating technology with communication makes work comfortable, but simultaneously interrupts employees' personal life. The changing nature of work and workplace demands may exert more pressure on employees thereby diminishing physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing.

IB practices including internal communication is expected to positively influence employee wellbeing (EWB) (Maunze, Abratt, & Mingione, 2020), but with increased demands of technology and employee's inability to adapt, balance and cope up with digitalization, employees' wellbeing may be compromised even after good IB mechanisms being present. Technology has become an indispensable component of workplaces inducing radical alterations in jobs through new ways of working (Ewers & Kangmennaang, 2023) which is very demanding. Generative artificial intelligence technologies shape partial job displacement and labor productivity growth (Lazaroiu & Rogalska, 2023) and bring disruption. Consistent connection with digital tools within the workplace as well as beyond that in their personal sphere and lack of techno adaptability or fit in digital context may create technostress which refers to the distress associated new digital technologies (Brod, 1984; Gaudioso, Turel, & Galimberti, 2017). Concurrently, higher levels of emotional and psychological wellbeing are expected to shrink the technostress experienced by the employee. With the ascending benefits and corresponding adverse effects of information and communication technology, technostress's detrimental effects highlight the necessity to study its origins and remedies (Mishra & Rašticová, 2024).

The prevalent scholarly articles examine employees' reactions to IB practices. Contrary to this, a better sensemaking perspective based on an organic process that reflects the emerging issues of IB from organizational and individual arena is needed in the non-traditional digital context. And, with the contemporary transformations in workplaces, a strong need is felt for reinvigorating IB in the present context. Murillo and King (2017) reflects the important of internal brand management practices for recruiting, training, leading and motivating service sector employees to deliver brand-aligned customer experiences. As suggested by them, IB research has not emphasised much on factors like EWB though they recommend its significance in IB, which exists a research gap. The present paper attempts to address the same by exploring the unmapped territory defined by acute issues such as EWB and technostress under the influence of DIC. According to previous research, there is a lack of a generalized view of DIC. Linking this with technostress is the need of the hour as it is essential to analyze how digital tools of communication during IB can influence technostress and EWB. Thus, there is a need to investigate how IB affects EWB and technostress. This also motivates the authors to examine if DIC can moderate the impact of IB on EWB and also the impact of EWB on technostress levels. Further, the gaps in literature also provide rationale to examine the mediation effect of EWB between IB and technostress as well as between DIC and technostress. Hence, the study focuses on the influence of IB practices on EWB and technostress among employees in the digital work context. Also, the study attempts to analyze the moderation effects of DIC and mediation role of EWB in digital internal communication context. The paper attempts to make a novel contribution by explaining how IB efforts, when delivered via digital platforms can directly reduce technostress considering based on models of job demands-resource and technology acceptance. By examining the framework empirically, the paper opens new avenues for both academic research and practical application, making it a significant step forward in managing digital work environments through strong internal brand communicated effectively through digital channels. The structure of paper consists of first section of introduction along with research gaps; second section with literature review and hypotheses development; third section consisting of methods including sampling, data collection and scales; fourth section of analysis and results; fifth section with discussion, sixth section with conclusion with theoretical and practical implications; and finally seventh section with limitations and future scope.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. Internal branding (IB), employee wellbeing (EWB), technostress (TS) and digital internal communication (DIC)

The theoretical and conceptual framework of the paper incorporate the interrelations among IB, EWB and technostress when DIC tools are used during IB. This demands a multi-dimensional approach that can help organizations comprehend how their IB efforts impact their employees' psychological and emotional health in the digital age. The paper acknowledges the involvement of IB in aligning and promoting a company's brand identity and values among its employees through internal communication, human resource practices/policies, brand oriented training, leadership and organizational culture which collectively creates EWB (Maunze et al., 2020). The basic premise of the current paper is built on three theories: job demands-resources theory (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989), and transactional theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, 1987).

Job demands-resources theory explains how the organizational environment impacts EWB and performance. Fundamental proposition is that job demands and available resources activate different repercussions among employees (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). In wellbeing context, it can lead to a health-impairment. High job demands such as extreme workload/effort required for brand promise delivery during IB in digital mode might be overtaxing and result in burnout which reduces wellbeing and reflecting high stress.

Information and communication technology has compelled employees to continuously adjust to changing work requirements and

expectations (Urukovičová, Rošková, Schraggeová, & Smoroň, 2023), to work longer hours and manage heavier workloads, causing them to feel incapable of effectively managing their routine life (Pansini, Buonomo, De Vincenzi, Ferrara, & Benevene, 2023). Davis's technology acceptance model (Davis, 1989) supports DIC and suggests that individuals are more likely to adopt and use new technologies if they perceive them as useful and easy to use. Hence, new technologies and tools that are intuitive, user-friendly, and provide value to employees would be preferred at workplace. This is applicable to digital tools used in DIC too. Though these tools facilitate output during IB, yet the challenges faced by employees during adaptation, learning and usage of these tools and their interference in one's personal life reduces EWB. Similarly, if the perceived usefulness and ease of using technology (core dimensions of technology acceptance model) during DIC is high among the employees, there is high likelihood of employees getting engaged with DIC which may increase their wellbeing and lower the probability of stress and burnout contributing to technostress. Hence, though technology acceptance model doesn't explicitly address wellbeing, but its core elements indirectly affect EWB, further resulting in stress among employees. Gabbiadini, Paganin, and Simbula (2023) integrate the technology acceptance model by exploring the effects of factors that influence the willingness to adopt digital tools and technostress was found to be one among them. The influence of transactional theory of stress and coping (Lazarus, 1996; Potts, Didymus, & Kaiseler, 2021) is remarkable in this setting. Being the cornerstone of psychological stress and coping research in multidisciplinary fields, it explains how stress emerges due to interaction of individuals and technology (Jan, Asha, & Subramani, 2022; Rademaker et al., 2023) and how individuals experience wellbeing and cope with stress. Considering the above rationale and insights from the direct role of job demands-resources theory as well as transactional theory of stress and coping, and indirect role of technology acceptance, the following hypothesis is proposed in DIC context.

H1. IB negatively influences technostress among employees in presence of DIC.

Further, in the wellbeing and stress backdrop, it is noticeable that techno adaptability and usage (technology acceptance model by Davis, 1989) can mould employee's behaviours. Considering the aforesaid theories, this paper explores EWB and technostress as pressing issues which demands attention in digital workplaces. Organizational practices relevant for IB are correlated to organizational resilience (Biedenbach, Biedenbach, & Hultén, 2022) and determine EWB (Salas-Vallina, Alegre, & López-Cabrales, 2021). Considering the digital fatigue and exhaustion in digital mode which is well explained by job demands-resources model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007), IB strategies may influence overall EWB. With such an understanding, DIC may support brand consistency and effective communication and adaptation with work. But if employees are unable to fit in the digital space as well as unable to manage excessive job demands, they may experience higher technostress and low wellbeing even in presence of better IB strategies and practices. Few studies that have integrated the scholarly literature from internal communication and the transactional theory of stress and coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) demonstrate problem-focused coping strategies among employees which help in better EWB. Salanova (2014) address the strategies for prevention and intervention of technostress in social and technical organizational systems. Digital workplace is now essential for organizations and a well-informed employee is a productive employee (Cowan, 2014) and an effective DIC system may reduce communication barriers and technostress, increase productivity and strengthen company culture.

The conceptual framework investigates the implementation of DIC tools during effective IB process to understand how it affects technostress and EWB. Following hypotheses are thus proposed.

H2a. IB positively influences EWB among employees during DIC.

H2b. EWB negatively influences technostress among employees during DIC.

H2c. DIC positively influences EWB among employees.

H2d. DIC negatively influences technostress among employees.

2.2. Internal branding (IB) and digital internal communication (DIC)

Internal and external branding have now expanded in presence and importance as organizations experience workplace transitions. IB is vital in the digital mode of work and DIC helps maintain brand consistency, wellbeing, and alignment with the brand in a digital environment (Wuersch, Neher, & Peter, 2022). Researches indicate that employer's efforts to meet employee's expectations shape the perception of employer brands by internal public (employees) during IB (Tkalac Verčič, Galić, & Žnidar, 2021; Tkalac Verčič, Sinčić Ćorić, & Pološki Vokić, 2021). Internal communication is crucial for organizational results (Murray, 2013; Ruck & Men, 2021) and is considered essential to understand organization's vision, mission and values, exchange information, establish workplace relationships, create a value based system, form an organizational culture, harmonize workplace activities, collaborate and develop informal as well as formal networks. Literature already indicates association between internal communication and employee's brand supporting behaviours (Chikazhe & Nyakunuwa, 2022). Despite being considered as a strategic management function, internal communication demands extensive research and analysis (Klewes, Popp, & Rost-Hein, 2017) in contemporary IB. It is still a flourishing field of young disciplines with limited literature (Lee & Yue, 2020). It encompasses multi-level as well as top-down and bottom up approaches including informal and formal communication, as well as formal corporate communication (Sebastiao, Zulato, & Trindade, 2017) which aligns with the company's brand voice and values (Okkonen, Bordi, Mäkiniemi, & Heikkilä-Tammi, 2018) and facilitates job performance (Cowan, 2014). Considering the managerial perspective and strategic nature of internal communication in IB, DIC can be contemplated as a strategic management tool that contributes to achievement of organizational goals and creation of internal brand.

Scholarly interest in DIC has grown due to the increased number of people working in digital workplaces in remote mode (Tigre, Curado, & Henriques, 2023) in the present day. This has pushed communication during IB towards digitization. Digital transformation which was fundamentally conceptualised as ‘digitization’ includes fundamental changes in business models and processes involving digitization initiatives (Peter & Dalla Vecchia, 2021; Peter, Kraft, & Lindeque, 2020). Management and communication literature already elaborates several dimensions of DIC, such as digital leadership, digital tools and media (Vial, 2019) which are needed for IB. Digital tools have elevated the employee-stakeholders interactions which contribute to brand's meaning (Vallaster & Von Wallpach, 2013) but it has equally contributed to low wellbeing due to psycho-physical disorders and high technostress (Zito et al., 2021). DIC has reduced the real time communication gap between functions, teams and departments, making the work easier and quicker, though its integration into individual workday schedules may be challenging.

2.3. Mediation effects of employee wellbeing (EWB)

IB research focuses mainly on how employees perceive and react to a variety of brand-oriented practices in organizations which lead to various brand supporting behaviours. Though IB is found to be an antecedent of workplace benefits such as EWB (Maunze et al., 2020), yet there are negligible studies which empirically establish the linkage between internal communication during IB and EWB with emphasis on digital context. Accessibility through multiple devices at work and beyond work hours help employees to integrate their work timing with personal life. This provides task flexibility, but integrating workspace with personal space may result in TS among employees who find it

difficult to manage work related interactions (Vuori, Helander, & Okkonen, 2019). Heini, Heikki, and Marjo (2014) examine how digital communication tools are used in multinational corporations, and the benefits they bring and the challenges involved in using them. As observed, one of these challenges deal with elevated levels of techno-stress which may result in job burnout (Gaudioso et al., 2017). Alkhayyal and Bajaba (2024) integrate insights from the Job Demands-Resources theory to explore the relation between TS and wellbeing in the digital context. It stems from various factors such as techno-invasion (mixing work and private time due to technology-supported connectivity), techno-overload (demands on working more and faster when using technology), techno-complexity (steeper learning curve due to continuously changing technology), techno-insecurity (nervousness and insecurity in using and interacting with technologies due to lack of experience and training) and techno-uncertainty (technology adoption in an organization) (Tarafdar, Tu, Ragu-Nathan, & Ragu-Nathan, 2007). Techno-stressors have adverse effect on health and work outcomes, but a positive impact on work engagement (Borle, Reichel, Niebuhr, & Voelter-Mahlknecht, 2021). Therefore, the associations between occupational exposure to technostress and health or EWB or work outcomes are evident (Nastjuk, Trang, Grummeck-Braamt, Adam, & Tarafdar, 2024). A systematic review of literature by Yang et al. (2025) focus on technostress creators and the consequences of technological risk associated with wellbeing and job performance. They identified techno invasion and techno overload as major techno stressors.

Jaiswal et al. (2022) explore the role of technostress in the trust-wellbeing-performance relationship in digital work mode. Their study investigates the moderated-mediation effect of psychological wellbeing in the trust-performance relationship which was stronger when technostress was low and weaker when technostress was high. Also, according to Nimrod (2017), technostress induced by technology can be measured based on overload, invasion, complexity, privacy and inclusion of technology. Camarena and Fusi (2022) claim that use of technology increases technostress and impacts EWB (Andrulli & Gerards, 2022), but organizations can reduce technostress by providing policies and guidelines on its use during DIC. This provides a rationale to examine how EWB mediates the effect of DIC on technostress. Literature provides sufficient evidence to indicate that technostress results from techno-invasion, techno-insecurity and techno-uncertainty (Zainun et al., 2019). Therefore, organizations and individuals need to implement mechanisms for reducing technostress-creating conditions (Nastjuk et al., 2024 and Tarafdar, & Tu andmo, Q. and Ragu-Nathan, T. S., 2010). As IB is already established as a consequence of EWB (Raj, 2020), which has direct correlation with technostress (Nastjuk et al., 2024), the present study attempts to examine the mediation effect of EWB in the relation between IB and technostress. It is observed that practically, at organizational level, use of DIC in an environment with high technological job demands may affect EWB and at individual level, low wellbeing may be the result of lack of individual stress coping mechanisms. Both these theories provide a rationale to study mediation role of EWB. But organizational IB strategies are expected to positively or negatively influence EWB and technostress depending on the techno-stressors and other IB practices. To analyze these propositions, the following mediation hypotheses are formulated.

H3a. EWB mediates the impact of IB on technostress among employees in the DIC context.

H3b. EWB mediates the impact of DIC on technostress among employees in the DIC context.

2.4. Moderation effects of digital internal communication (DIC)

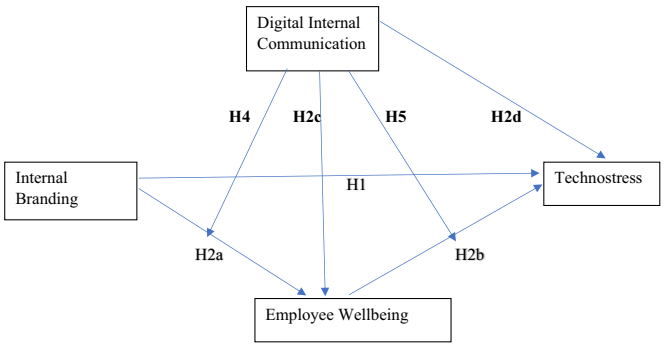
Identified as the internal customer/crucial stakeholder for any organization, employees can be the organization's strongest supporter or the worst critic if expectations are not met (Kang & Sung, 2017). Ecklebe and Löffler (2021) study DIC during online mode by investigating the frequency of communication, dissemination of substantial information, and participative communication which can positively influence employees' perceptions of the quality of their internal communication and IB. Lipiäinen, Ensio Karjaluoto, and Nevalainen (2014) state that DIC tools are able to facilitate IB and highlight the importance of face-to-face channels. Brockhaus, Buhmann, and Zerfass (2022) show relevance of different technology, tasks, structure and people dimension of digitalization strategies. They also examine the influence of such strategies on the digital maturity of communications. As discussed earlier, the implementation of DIC is challenging but it has the potential to create an environment of satisfaction and motivation at work (Martínez Sánchez & Armengol, 2021).

Discussing the dimensions of DIC, Guenzi and Nijssen (2021) analyze the direct, mediated, and moderated effects of uncertainty reduction initiatives (which refers to the resources provided by the company) and also, and excessive workload (which refers to the workplace demands) on the perceived usefulness DIC. The study also investigates the effect of DIC on stress generated due to employee's psychological reactions to digital transformation through technology. Constant use of technology and online availability at work interrupts personal life of employees. Furthermore, DIC may integrate work life with personal life which may reduce the time for personal commitments. This further creates excessive demands and challenges which may reduce the quality of IB because employees may miss out on important information needed for work (MacCormick, Dery, & Kolb, 2012). In this regard, Kukovec, Milfelner, Mulej, and Šarotar-Žižek (2021) discuss a new holistic model of organizational culture, internal communication, stress management, and work satisfaction which highlights the relation between internal communication and stress. In this context, technology acceptance model and job demands-resources theory demonstrate the relation between DIC and EWB (Shamsi, Iakovleva, Olsen, & Bagozzi, 2021) as well as technostress.

EWB is associated with overload and pressure from digitization (Zeike, Choi, Lindert, & Pfaff, 2019). Based on theories of relationship management and job demands-resources, Dhanesh and Picherit-Duthler (2021) suggest a framework for internal crisis communication with new ways of working that can affect EWB and predict employee's behaviours. Technology integration has given rise to stressors that cause burnout (Chen, Wang, & Gao, 2024). Stress and burnout resulting from consistent use of DIC (Ter Hoeven, van Zoonen, & Fonner, 2016) is becoming one of the main challenges among employees in the increasingly digital work context. This provides the rationale to propose that DIC can moderate the influence of IB on EWB in the digital workspace It is also proposed that technostress (due to techno-overload, techno-complexity, techno-insecurity and techno-uncertainty) decreases when employees experience high levels of wellbeing. This provides a rationale to study the moderating effects of DIC.

H4. DIC moderates the influence of IB on EWB among employees such that employees experience greater wellbeing due to IB practices when they are supported by DIC tools.

H5. DIC moderates the influence of EWB on technostress among employees such that employees experience lesser technostress when wellbeing initiatives are supported by DIC tools.



Proposed research framework.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

The study was conducted among employees working in IT companies in the city of Hyderabad in India. Employees from IT sector were chosen due to two reasons – firstly, due to critical role of IB in services sector. As IB translates the brand elements into brand supporting employee behaviours, the role of employees in defining brand experience in customer touchpoints (Iglesias & Saleem, 2015) is synonymous with client-relationship management in IT. Managing technostress and EWB in the digital work content and context through appropriate IB strategies and DIC would help IT companies to translate their vision and brand values to desired employee behaviour and attract and engage employees who are brand ambassadors, whose behaviours will shape the perceptions of business partners, customers and potential employees. Secondly, high use of technological/digital tools in processes like internal communication as well as jobs in IT companies is necessary to create an appealing brand for competitive advantage through clients and potential hires. Due to the complex workforce which mainly depend on technology and digital transformation, innovation culture, remote work and collaboration and client centric focus in IT companies, IB is particularly important among the various technological transformations to attract, engage and retain the top talent, which is visible in this sector.

Also, IT sector inherently has a data driven approach and studying IT companies will offer a unique perspective on how tech-driven organizations navigate and integrate the challenges arising due to use of technology in processes and jobs amidst the IB practices implemented by them. Workplaces today are witnessing a drastic transformation of work style, skill sets and work mode through digital communication tools to enable real time collaboration and information sharing among IT employees. As these companies are the forefront of digital transformation, usage of remote work and distributed teams, DIC is highly significant in these companies as it creates an atmosphere of collaboration, learning and engagement. In such an environment, the wellbeing of employees is a major concern. Hence, the sample is chosen from IT companies to understand IB in technology driven service organizations, and the impact of same on stress and wellbeing of their employees in digital atmosphere.

The target population consisted of employees with minimum two years of experience in the IT companies. The rationale for selecting employees with minimum two years of experience is that it would facilitate data collection from those employees specifically who worked during Covid-19 period, which witnessed high degree of usage of technology in digital workspace and DIC in IT sector and hence could provide better results related to EWB and technostress.

3.2. Procedure for data collection

The primary data was collected through structured questionnaires from respondents from IT jobs in IT companies in India through snowball sampling. 800 questionnaires were distributed and only 401 filled questionnaires were suitable for analysis. The response rate was 50.1 %. A pilot study was conducted to curtail the response bias and the survey questionnaires were refined.

3.2.1. Scales

Internal Branding - The IB scale was adapted from Soleimani, Dana, Salamzadeh, Bouzari, and Ebrahimi (2022). It consists of 7 items on a 5 point likert scale. Some items are 'The company I work for communicates its brand promise well to its employees' and 'New employees are oriented towards the company's vision, mission and values'.

Employee Wellbeing - The present study has adopted two sub constructs, i.e., workplace wellbeing and psychological wellbeing from Zheng et al. (2015) which measure EWB. The present scale consists of 6 items (3 items for emotional wellbeing and 3 items for psychological wellbeing) on a 5 point likert scale. An example of an item for emotional wellbeing is 'Work is a meaningful experience for me' and an item for psychological wellbeing is 'I generally feel good about myself, and I'm confident'.

Technostress - The scale for technostress has 6 items adapted from Ragu-Nathan, Tarafdar, Ragu-Nathan, and Tu (2008) whose 'Technostress Creators Inventory' measures the factors that create stress due to the use of ICT in a workplace context. An example an item is 'I am forced to change my work habits to adapt to new technologies', which measures techno overload.

Digital Internal Communication - The 5-item scale adapted from Tkalac Verčič, Sinčić Ćorić, and Pološki Vokić (2021) was used to measure DIC. Communication climate and Communication in meetings through DIC were measured through a 5 point likert scale. As the present study aims to measure DIC, the items were stated in the digital context. Based on the Cronbach's alpha value, one item was deleted and final scale consisted of 4 items. Items include 'The digital channels of internal communication within the organisation help me to identify with my organization' and 'I receive relevant information to get the job done on time with the help of digital channels' etc.

3.3. Data validation

3.3.1. Common method variance, normality, and multicollinearity

Common method variance of all scales was checked by Harman's single factor test. <50 % of the variance was explained by the single factor which confirms the absence of common method bias and indicates high reliability of results. Another method - Common Latent Factor (CLF) test was also used to analyze CMB. The measurement model and confirmatory factor analysis with maximum likelihood method analyzed regression weights which indicated that the data is free from CMB. The Standardized Regression Weights (Default model) with estimates calculated with and without common factor was used to calculate the difference (delta) between both estimates. Value taken for analysing delta value is 0.2. As all estimates are found to be <0.2, it is concluded there is no or negligible CMB. Normal distribution of data was tested through Mardia's coefficient of the data which was found to be 1.035 (i.e. <1.96). As the variance inflation factor (VIF) values (in regression) vary between 1.225 and 2.983 (below 3.0), and the tolerance value range between 0.323 and 0.900 (<1.0), it indicates absence of multicollinearity.

3.3.2. Control variables

In empirical researches, it is essential to control some suspected variables which can alter the results (Kraemer & Thiemann, 1987). It is expected that employee's perceptions about the variables under study might vary according to their age, gender, qualification and experience as these demographic variables may influence their willingness to use digital tools, their ability to use digital tools and their adaptability towards technology. Hence, these variables were controlled in the study.

3.3.3. Demographic distribution

The sample consists of 59.5 % male respondents and 40.5 % female respondents. 29.3 % of the sample comprises of respondents belonging to below 30 years age group. 50.7 % of respondents belong to age group of 31 to 40 years. 20.0 % respondents belong to age group of above 40 years. The educational qualification of the sample indicates that 55.3 % are graduates, 36.6 % are post graduates and 8.1 % of respondents belong to other category with professional certifications/other degrees. 28.3 % of respondents have 1–2 years of work experience, 49.9 % of respondents with 3–5 years' experience and 21.8 % of respondents with above 5 years work experience.

4. Data analysis and interpretation

The present study used Smart PLS4 with PLS-SEM algorithm and bootstrapping to analyze the model and test hypotheses. Confirmatory Tetrad Analysis was first done to determine the formative or reflective nature of the four constructs. As >80 % of the *p* values were found to be significant (<0.05) for all constructs, they were proven to be reflective in nature. Reliability of the constructs are verified using Cronbach Alpha (>0.7), and Composite Reliability Index (>0.7) values were found to lie within the recommended threshold values. Both convergent and discriminant validity were tested. Convergent validity was analyzed through Cronbach alpha, Composite Reliability Index and Average Variance Extracted value (AVE). Discriminant validity was tested through correlation coefficients of constructs. From Table I, it is observed that the AVE values of all the constructs are greater than the recommended value of >0.5, Cronbach alpha coefficients are >0.7, and Composite reliability values are higher than 0.70 which confirm convergent validity.

The HTMT criterion was used to assess discriminant validity. HTMT values are found to be below 0.90, which indicates the presence of discriminant validity between the reflective constructs (Table II).

Table I
Construct validity, reliability and AVE.

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
IB	0.934	0.943	0.947	0.718
IB1	0.894			
IB2	0.901			
IB3	0.881			
IB4	0.802			
IB5	0.825			
IB6	0.822			
IB7	0.799			
EWB	0.907	0.908	0.927	0.681
EWB1	0.793			
EWB2	0.821			
EWB3	0.822			
EWB4	0.835			
EWB5	0.855			
EWB6	0.823			
TS	0.935	0.941	0.949	0.758
TS1	0.865			
TS2	0.893			
TS3	0.911			
TS4	0.914			
TS5	0.872			
TS6	0.76			
DIC	0.919	0.924	0.943	0.805
DIC1	0.908			
DIC2	0.915			
DIC4	0.911			
DIC5	0.855			

Note: IB - internal branding, EWB- employee wellbeing, TS- technostress, DIC- digital internal communication.
Source: Author's analysis.

Table II
Discriminant Validity – Herterotrait -Monotrait ratio (HTMT) Matrix.

	DIC	EWB	IB	TS	DIC x IB
DIC					
EWB	0.67				
IB	0.807	0.623			
TS	0.526	0.784	0.491		
DIC x IB	0.567	0.548	0.523	0.484	
DIC x EWB	0.513	0.613	0.492	0.581	0.697

Note: DIC- digital internal communication, EWB - employee wellbeing, IB - internal branding,
TS - technostress.
Source: Author's analysis.

4.1. Structural and measurement model

The internal structure of the model (Fig. 1) is verified through PLS-SEM algorithm using path coefficients. The model shows hypothesised relations between IB, EWB, DIC and technostress including the mediation effects and moderation effects.

PLS-SEM algorithm and bootstrapping method were used to analyze the data. The tables for the hypothetical relations in the structural model show significant values. AVE values (Fig. 1, table 1) are found to be 0.718 for IB, 0.681 for EWB, 0.805 for DIC and 0.758 for technostress. All values are significant indicating model strength. Path coefficients denote the degree of association between the constructs as given in Fig. 1.

4.2. Mediation analysis

Bootstrapping through PLS SEM with 5000 iterations was performed to examine the mediation effects of EWB. Table III shows path coefficients, t values and *p* values for the direct effects between variables. For the direct effects, $p < 0.05$ suggests that there is a significant direct effect between IB and EWB; and EWB and technostress, IB and technostress, DIC and EWB; and DIC and technostress. The negative path coefficients for DIC - > technostress (−0.014), EWB - > technostress (−0.599) and IB - > technostress (−0.016) indicate that technostress among employees decreases as organizations implement IB, use DIC tools and improve the wellbeing.

Hence H1, H2b, H2c and H2d are supported.

Table IV shows significant total indirect effect between IB and technostress. Similarly, total indirect effect between DIC and TS is found to be significant. The negative path coefficient values for DIC - > technostress (−0.212) and EWB - > technostress (−0.599) indicate that technostress decreases with the improved EWB and DIC tools. The path coefficients and the p values ($p < 0.05$) indicates significant indirect effects between variables.

Table V shows specific indirect effects between the variables. When mediated by EWB, the effect of IB on technostress is found to be significant ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, when mediated by EWB, the effect of DIC on technostress is also found to be significant ($p < 0.05$). Table VI shows total direct effects when mediated by EWB.

Considering the indirect effects (Table IV and V), both mediation effects of EWB (H3a and H3b) are supported. Further, Sobel test analysis was done, which authorises the significance of mediating variable EWB and the test statistic was found to be 5.016 at $p < 0.001$ significant level (Hayes, 2012).

4.3. Moderation analysis

The simple slope analysis (Fig. 2) indicates moderation role of DIC between IB and EWB (H4). Hence, greater usage of DIC reduces EWB further. Wellbeing reduces when IB efforts are integrated with DIC. Fig. 3 supports the hypothesis that DIC moderates the effect of EWB on technostress in such a way that employees experience lower levels of

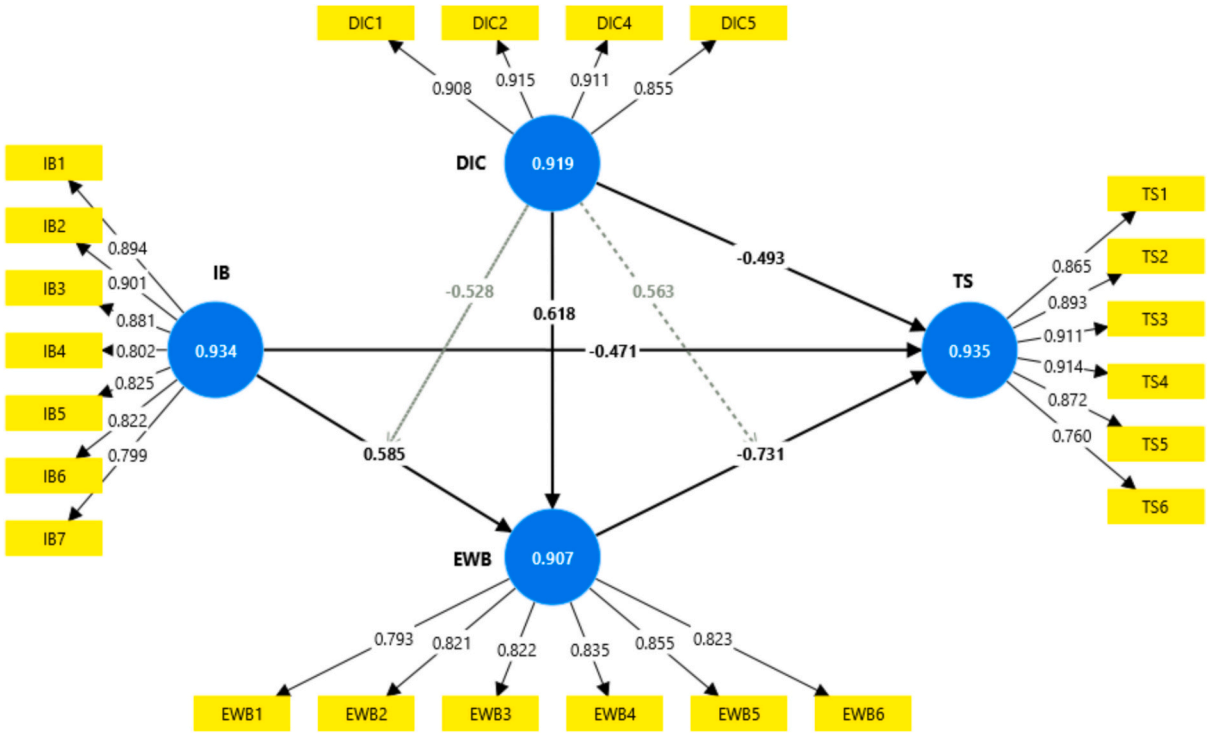


Fig. 1. Structural and measurement model (PLS SEM with bootstrapping)
Source: author's analysis
Note: Variables (IB: internal branding, EWB: employee wellbeing, TS: technostress and DIC: digital internal communication) with Cronbach's alpha values and correlation values between variables are indicated in the model.

Table III
Mediation analysis through bootstrapping method: Path coefficients, Means, Standard deviations, t values and p values.

	Original sample (O) Path coefficients	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
DIC -> EWB	0.331	0.329	0.08	4.123	0
DIC -> TS	−0.014	−0.015	0.067	0.205	0.038
EWB -> TS	−0.599	−0.599	0.05	11.867	0
IB -> EWB	0.173	0.174	0.081	2.142	0.032
IB -> TS	−0.016	−0.014	0.063	0.254	0.049
DIC x EWB -> TS	0.155	0.156	0.037	4.181	0
DIC x IB -> EWB	−0.228	−0.227	0.044	5.114	0

Note: IB - internal branding, DIC- digital internal communication, TS - technostress, EWB - employee wellbeing.
Note: $N = 401$, Significant at level $p < 0.05$.
Source: Author's analysis.

technostress when they experience higher wellbeing and this effect is stronger in the presence of DIC (H5). Findings already indicate a negative correlation between EWB and technostress.

Moderation plots (Figs. 2 and 3) indicate the slopes for variables under the influence of DIC.

Table IV
Mediation analysis through bootstrapping method: Total indirect effects.

	Original sample (O) Path coefficients	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
DIC -> TS	−0.198	−0.197	0.049	4.002	0
IB -> TS	−0.104	−0.105	0.051	2.04	0.041
DIC x IB -> TS	0.136	0.136	0.028	4.844	0

Note: IB - internal branding, DIC- digital internal communication, TS - technostress, EWB - employee wellbeing.
Note: N = 401, Significant at level $p < 0.05$.
Source: Author's analysis.

5. Discussion

IB, DIC, EWB and technostress have gained considerable interest among scholars in last few years. Due to digital workspaces, DIC has now become one of the potentially promising areas for research. IB has evolved in the human resource and marketing literature because of its implications among internal customers (employees). An internal brand communicates the brand's mission, vision and values to employees, which can be effectively achieved through DIC during IB. DIC has become unavoidable and essential with the digital transformations in work mode and approaches. Hence, there has been an inevitable need to digitize and integrate the company's internal communication during IB (Lipiäinen et al., 2014) to increase the efficiency of work and ensure delivery of brand promise by employees. Digitalization in internal communication should be prioritised from a social perspective, underlining its effects on employees concern regarding privacy, control, and

Table V
Mediation analysis through bootstrapping method: Specific Indirect effects.

	Original sample (O) Path coefficients	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
DIC - > EWB - > TS	−0.198	−0.197	0.049	4.002	0
IB - > EWB - > TS	−0.104	−0.105	0.051	2.04	0.041
DIC x IB - > EWB - > TS	0.136	0.136	0.028	4.844	0

Note: IB - internal branding, DIC- digital internal communication, TS - technostress, EWB - employee wellbeing.
Note: N = 401, Significant at level $p < 0.05$.
Source: Author's analysis.

Table VI
Mediation analysis through bootstrapping method: Total effects.

	Original sample (O) Path coefficients	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values
DIC - > EWB	0.331	0.329	0.08	4.123	0
DIC - > TS	−0.212	−0.212	0.083	2.557	0.011
EWB - > TS	−0.599	−0.599	0.05	11.867	0
IB - > EWB	0.173	0.174	0.081	2.142	0.032
IB - > TS	−0.12	−0.119	0.088	1.369	0.041
DIC x EWB - > TS	0.155	0.156	0.037	4.181	0
DIC x IB - > EWB	−0.228	−0.227	0.044	5.114	0
DIC x IB - > TS	0.136	0.136	0.028	4.844	0

Note: IB - internal branding, DIC- digital internal communication, TS - technostress, EWB - employee wellbeing.
Note: N = 401, Significant at level $p < 0.05$.
Source: Author's analysis.

other ethical dilemmas due to accessibility to data (Vercic et al., 2024). According to their research, DIC is yet not empirically researched within organizations. Simultaneously, the significance of digital tools of communication in multinational organizations cannot be negated (Noonan, Richter, Durham, & Pierce, 2017) in today's contemporary IB context. Wuersch, Neher, Maley, and Peter (2024) reveal that an organization's technical (communication channels and platforms, and policy) and social (leadership, culture, and collaboration) elements in digital context are interrelated across all communication levels. This contributes to digital capability development, for which a holistic DIC strategy focusing on developing digital human resource capabilities is necessary. Past studies in IB have mostly focused on such brand related outcomes including leadership, culture, communication and human resource strategies (Binu Raj, 2022; Maunze et al., 2020; Taku, Saini, & Abratt, 2022). There is negligible scholarly literature that consider the wellbeing of employees in digital space. As mentioned above, digital workplaces can ease the work, but may create enormous technostress, hence need strategies to address it (Nkomo & Kalisz, 2025). Linking this to the job demands-resources theory, technology acceptance model, and employees' stress coping mechanism, the present paper attempts to analyze the impact of IB on technostress through mediation of EWB. Thus the contemporary areas of IB such as DIC (Dahlman & Heide, 2020) and its effect on EWB and technostress (Zito et al., 2021) were examined in this paper. High technology-work amalgamation and work-life integration have resulted in technostress among employees. As the paper investigates DIC and technostress as emerging and critical areas of research in IB, it provides novel contributions to academia, research and industry. This is achieved by investigating the moderation effects of DIC and mediation effects of EWB in the IB framework.

Many studies indicate that DIC has reduced the work related stress resulting from lack of information sharing, quick responses, teamwork, socialization etc. Viewing through the lens of job demand-resources model in the given context, the role of organization in facilitating employees to use digital tools during IB is remarkable. While this paper analyzed the linkage between IB, EWB and technostress, the results indicate that IB reduces technostress among employees. This can be directly related to effective IB through digital tools to communicate with employees in dual ways. One, by providing technological support to achieve their tasks, which is supported by integrating technology acceptance model with IB process. Secondly, it can be inferred that effective IB strategies would help the employees with open DIC, supported by human resource management processes (Salas-Vallina et al., 2021), policies, guidelines (Camarena & Fusi, 2022), effective technical and functional trainings blended with brand orientation, mission, vision and values of the organization. This would create a digital workspace of brand promise delivery, which further diminishes technostress among employees.

The results show that IB boosts EWB in the digital context. Shedding light on the managerial practices which effect EWB (Grant, Christianson, & Price, 2007), IB can be regarded as one such practice which can lead to EWB (Murillo & King, 2017). This is supported by Nemteanu and Dabija (2021) who studied influence of internal marketing during digital work mode. Internal marketing is synonymously used with IB by research community. Nemteanu and Dabija (2021) shows that well-designed, and consistent internal marketing/IB may contribute to reversal of the damaging effects engendered through technology. Hence better IB practices will minimise discomfort, generating anxiety, stress, and exhaustion resulting from technostress (Camarena & Fusi, 2022). The empirical analysis of IB and DIC framework in digital context provides additional insights in wellbeing and technostress, which adds to the literature exploring stress, burnout and mental health implications of employees' digital workplace experience based on job demands-resources model (Marsh, Perez Vallejos, & Spence, 2024).

Digital fears and questions about information/data accuracy, fairness, usage, privacy, and security increase technostress heighten anxieties (Malik, Tripathi, Kar, & Gupta, 2021), and reduces wellbeing among employees. Simba, Tajeddin, Jones, and Rambe (2025) analyzes technostress depicting how transactional benefits to digital technology has created an imbalanced literature that ignores technostress and well-being among individuals. Technostress factors cause critical mental problems such as productivity and burnout among employees (Topsakal & Irmak, 2023) and individual resilience could contribute to physical-mental well-being using the transaction model of stress, self-determination theory and job-demand resources theory (Batra & Halder, 2024). Scarce studies are seen linking these pressing issues in IB context referring to the potential solutions from organizational perspective. A systematic literature review on technostress through methodological standardization of 46 research articles published between 2007 and 2023 (Sanjeeva Kumar, 2024) using job demands-resources model explores technology's psychological and physiological effects on employees, their emotions, and overall well-being. There are inconsistencies in comprehending the effects of technostress from psychological, physiological and emotional perspective. Research suggests that this issue requires further examination (Nedeljko, Gu, & Bostan, 2024). The framework of present study has contributed to addresses

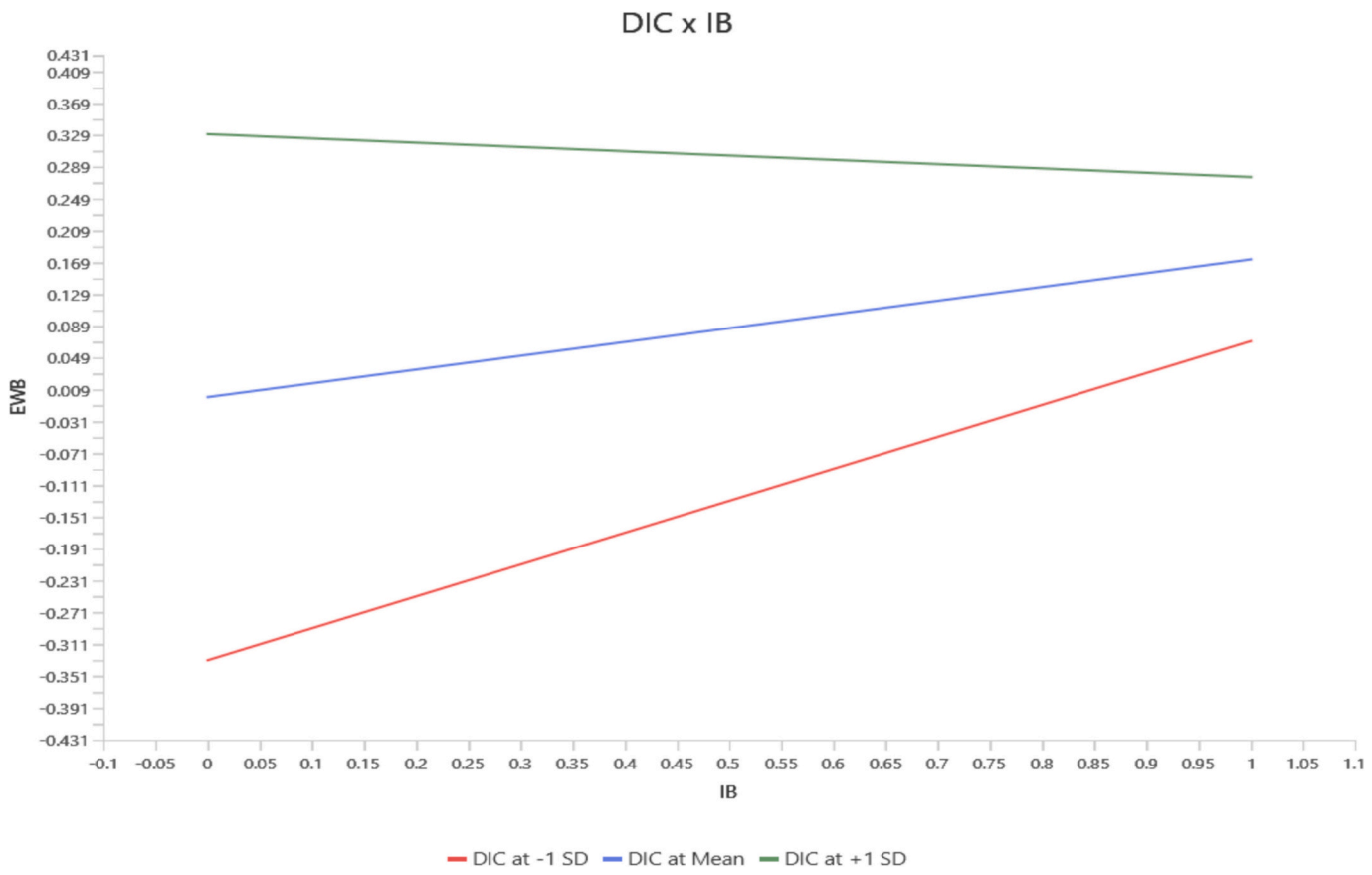


Fig. 2. Moderation effect of DIC between IB and EWB: simple slope analysis
Source: author's analysis
Note: EWB: employee wellbeing, IB: internal branding and DIC: digital internal communication.

these gaps.

Findings of the present study also show that in the digital context, EWB negatively influences technostress. Considering EWB as antecedent of employee performance in IB research, Murillo and King (2017) suggests that EWB must not be overlooked in IB programs. Highlighting the stress and exhaustion felt by employees at workplaces today, the present research findings reflect that emotional and psychological wellbeing can be improved by better IB strategies amidst the technology challenges. The findings indicate that EWB mediates the relation between IB and technostress. Firstly, this is supported by technology acceptance model and job demands-resource theory which may incorporate communication and information overload by excessive use of DIC which may cause stress and burnouts. The importance of the ongoing development of job demands-resource theory in evolutionary context of digital work environment is highlighted by Scholze and Hecker (2023). The present study considers other models too to analyze technostress and EWB exhibiting the detrimental impact of technostress (Sharma & Tiwari, 2023). Secondly, a lack of alignment of IB practices with the digital context during internal communication may lead to dissonance among employees reducing their wellbeing (Pace & Sciotto, 2021). Thirdly, digital communication in IB might improve wellbeing if it enhances employees' sense of freedom and control over their work in the digital context. Excessive reliance on DIC might reduce personal interactions among employees which is crucial for promoting a sense of belonging and enhancing wellbeing (Camarena & Fusi, 2022). At the same time, IB would facilitate internal communication portals through digitization to assist employees for socialization and interact personally. These findings draw support from Wang, Ding, and Kong (2023), Wang, Khan, Sajjad, Sarki, and Yaseen (2023) who also which use job demands-resources theory to highlight that digital work atmosphere can help employees to handle difficult and complex tasks. Similarly, findings also indicate that EWB mediate the impact of DIC on technostress. The transactional theory of stress and coping provides a rationale to support this association (Jan et al., 2022) as it shows how better stress coping mechanisms result in wellbeing and reduces technostress. This may be further associated with the organizational stress coping strategies as component of IB initiatives. Apart from the theories mentioned, the findings are also in synchronisation with previous studies which explore the phenomenon of DIC in a socio-technical organizational system and discuss how the emerging themes are interrelated and people-focused (Lipiäinen et al., 2014; Wuersch et al., 2022).

This study shows that DIC positively influences EWB and negatively influences technostress. Literature reinforces this finding because though DIC is perceived as demanding due to technostress factors (Zainun et al., 2019), yet some of the factors of DIC provide flexibility, which enhances EWB by increasing autonomy and control (Okkonen et al., 2018). Thus, significant inferences can be drawn in digital workplace context (Wuersch et al., 2022) by examining DIC (Tigre et al., 2023) and its effect on technostress and wellbeing (Nastjuk et al., 2024). The job demands-resource theory that employees need to adapt to the changing digital requirements of workplaces. Drawn upon the job demands-resources model, organizations consider their communication processes and tools as job resources to contribute to employees' social, psychological, and physical wellbeing (Walden, 2021). The technology acceptance model plays a critical role in facilitating employees to adapt to the changing requirements of technology and cope up with the challenges of learning, performance, wellbeing and stress and burnout; and therefore reduces technostress. This finding provides a valuable contribution to the literature. DIC provides employees with relevant information tools to adjust with the technological challenges and hence

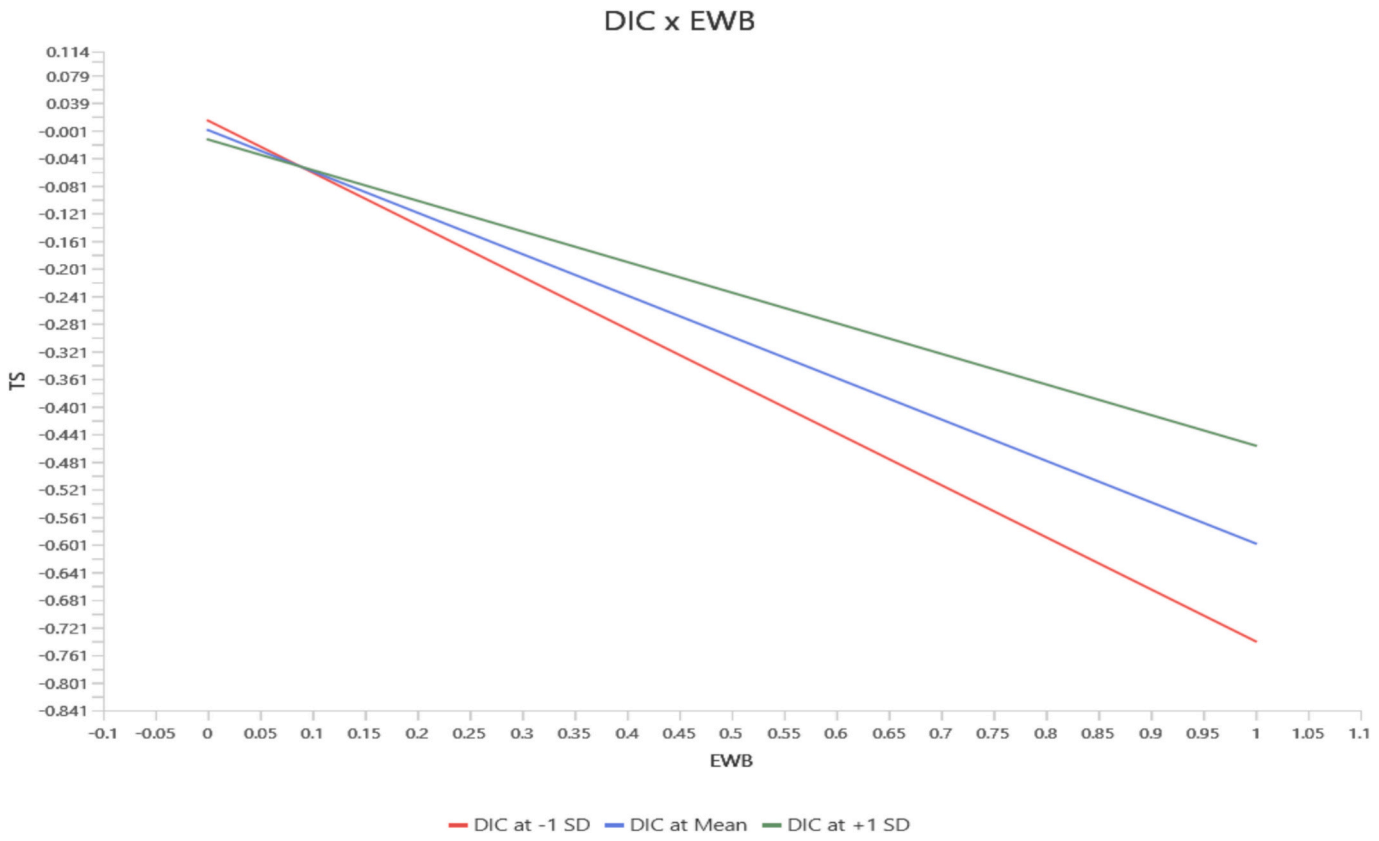


Fig. 3. Moderation effect of DIC between EWB and TS – simple slope analysis
Source: author's analysis
Note: EWB: employee wellbeing, TS: technostress and DIC: digital internal communication.

experience better wellbeing and reduces technostress reflecting the moderation effects of DIC, which is an additional contribution to the scholarly work in wellbeing. The paper also provides empirical evidence to support the moderation roles, thereby establishing that EWB reduces technostress (Nastjuk et al., 2024). in such a way that when DIC is implemented in organizations, it shows a greater decline in technostress, which indicates the moderating effect of DIC. Both moderation effects align with Okkonen et al. (2018) and Kukovec et al. (2021). As mentioned earlier, technology acceptance model and transactional theory of stress and coping provide a rationale for these linkages. All three theories used in the conceptual framework of this paper provide substantial rationale for validating the research framework, contributing significantly to the theoretical literature.

6. Conclusion

6.1. Theoretical implications

In the traditional employer brand management outlook, IB and its results have been management-centric. This requires a paradigm shift to the employee centric approach which is perceived to be better fit among the contemporary challenges in the changing business scenario. Extant literature focuses on the traditional approach of IB. Scholars have studied various dimensions of IB, such as brand leadership, internal communication and brand-centred human resource management. The workplaces, workforce aspirations and nature and mode of work have undergone voluminous transition after adoption of digital tools of communication. Also, technostress and wellbeing among employees due to the technological challenges are pressing issues in IB research.

The present paper attempts to fill this research gap and makes an innovative contribution by adding value to the IB research by examining mediation and moderation effects-based framework of IB, EWB, DIC and technostress through the lens of job demands-resources, technology acceptance and stress coping mechanisms. The paper draws its framework from three theories. In the digital context of work, job demands-resources theory reflects that the workplace demands arising due to excessive use of information and communication technology contributes to technostress and when these job demands are not balanced by sufficient job resources or organizational practices, or individual/organizational stress coping mechanisms, it reduces EWB. Efficient IB practices with employee centric communication process and tools may reduce this technostress. The research framework based on technology acceptance model explains how employees' perceived usefulness and ease of use of technology can influence their attitude and behaviour. Similarly, the unique contribution of the present paper in the IB and EWB literature surface from building its foundation from transactional theory of stress and coping too because if IB practices involving organizational stress coping mechanisms are offered to employees, it may support their individual coping abilities. This paper thus provides a strong theoretical foundation in IB literature by integrating all these theories and models in the IB and DIC context.

IB research has focused on investigating psychological states that employees develop as a result of IB practices, thereby drawing the attention to EWB. The linkage between EWB and employee performance during brand delivery is seen in the IB literature but examination of EWB during IB programs is lacking. The present paper tries to fill this gap by considering the contemporary approach of IB in the digital context by testing an empirical framework supported by various theories. The hypothesised research model makes a novel contribution by analysing wellbeing and stress creating conditions. This explores IB from a broader organizational perspective and examine internal communication, stress as well as EWB, establishing a future pathway for related researches in

the digital context in the context of the study (Indian IT sector). Built on the universally accepted models of technology acceptance and job demands-resources, this study provides contribution to international literature related to common workplace challenges in digital era in global context. As India's IT sector is a major global IT hub with many multi-national companies, insights from this context would provide a vibrant setting for understanding how IB practices can be customised to reduce stress in digital environments. Technostress being a global phenomenon and EWB being one of the top priorities, the insights from this paper are also applicable to other countries facing similar challenges, thereby making it global benchmark. Therefore, while the study focuses on the Indian IT sector, findings involving role of digital communication in mitigating technostress and role of IB in improving overall wellbeing are applicable to various cultural and organizational contexts internationally.

6.2. Practical implication

One of the major challenges in digital workplace is technostress among employees which needs to be addressed through a brand oriented as well as employee-oriented strategy. As the study is conducted among the sample from IT industry amidst technological transformations, it provides an opportunity to analyze the impact of IB in the non-traditional work arrangements witnessing technological challenges. The IB domain also needs to evolve to provide relevant managerial implications. The shift from traditional to digital work atmosphere need strategic approach to resolve issues. A thorough examination of existing literature on technostress demands extensive research about comprehending the ramifications of technostress across multiple domains for practical solutions. The present study adopts the emerging perspective of internal brand management that focuses on organizations' increasing reliance on contemporary working style witnessing high technostress and low wellbeing. The paper provides insights to practitioners how DIC through digital tools and platforms would facilitate internal communication and collaboration within organization which can consistently reflect the brand's value and message to various stakeholders across all channels. This research would help organizations to improve their workplace culture and overall performance by leveraging their DIC platforms to promote EWB by sharing resources, information on employee health, stress management, work-life balance, and other well-being initiatives. Similarly, the paper would support organizations to design their employee engagement initiatives through tailormade DIC channels, for soliciting feedback, recognizing employee's contributions, and encouraging open and two-way communication between management and employees. This would foster a culture with sense of belonging and employee empowerment which will further reinforce their IB. At the same time, companies may focus more on training their employees for digital communication skills and also adopt a data-driven approach which will enable them to identify areas of concern and customise their interventions to support EWB effectively and reduce the enormous technostress that employees face today. By understanding employees' need for wellbeing by making sense of their work environment and brand promise delivery under the influence of DIC, this paper would help organizations develop a balance between leveraging and maintaining healthy digital levels that support EWB and reduce technostress by creating a mindful approach to IB and technological usage. The paper proposes a model for organizations to manage technostress during digital transformations, emphasizing a holistic approach that prioritises employee wellbeing alongside techno-stressors created by technological advancements.

7. Limitation and scope for future study

The paper further provides a scope for building a platform for innovative IB research ideas in the digital workplaces. The study is conducted among IT sector employees, it can be extended to other sectors as well. Though the cross-sectional nature of the data is checked, yet generalization of results might be difficult. There is further scope for studies to explore various factors associated with IB in digital context and also compare IB and DIC tools in traditional and digital workspaces. The findings may be empirically tested in non-IT companies too where there is automation and use of technology for internal communication. It must be recognised that the effectiveness of IB and DIC strategies may vary depending on the culture, structure and type of the company. Hence, a comparison of traditional and conventional work settings can also be done in this context in different industry sectors. Further research may also look at longitudinal data to provide a more comprehensive understanding of various changes in technology over a period of time. Future research should also examine the interplay between advanced technologies like artificial intelligence, machine learning, virtual reality, and internet of things etc., and technostress, delving into the distinctive stress triggers they pose and the organizational and individual coping mechanisms. This would offer insights crucial for managing technostress from organizational as well as individual perspectives.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Asha Binu Raj: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Software, Resources, Methodology, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Ashok Kumar Goute:** Investigation.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that there is no potential conflict of interest in the research.

Appendix A

Measurement scales

Internal Branding (IB) scale - adapted from Soleimani et al. (2022)

5 point likert scale

1. The company I work for communicates its brand promise well to its employees
2. The brand's mission and its promise are constantly reinforced through internal communications
3. My manager regularly meets all employees to report issues relating to the whole company
4. New employees are oriented towards the company's vision, mission and values
5. The company teaches me why things should be done, not just how to do them
6. This company has the flexibility to accommodate the different training needs of employees
7. Training programs help me better understand current and future customers' needs

Employee Wellbeing (EWB) – Adapted from Zheng et al. (2015)

5 point likert scale

1. In general, I feel fairly satisfied with my present job.
2. Work is a meaningful experience for me
3. I can always find ways to enrich my work
4. I am good at making flexible timetables for my work.
5. I generally feel good about myself, and I'm confident.
6. People think I am willing to give and to share my time with others

Technostress (TS) - adapted from Raghunathan et al. (2008) (reverse coded)

5 point likert scale

1. I have a higher workload because of increased technology complexity.
2. I spend less time with my family due to this technology
3. I have to sacrifice my vacation and weekend time to keep current on new technologies
4. I feel my personal life is being invaded by this technology.
5. I need a long time to understand and use new technologies
6. I am forced to change my work habits to adapt to new technologies

Digital Internal Communication (DIC) - adapted from Tkalac Verčič, Sinčić Ćorić, and Pološki Vokić (2021)

5 point likert scale (final scale with 4 items)

Internal communication climate using DIC

1. The digital channels of internal communication within the organisation help me to identify with my organization.
2. The digital channels of internal communication within the organisation encourage me to achieve the organisation's objectives.

Communication in meetings through DIC

3. The meetings in which I participate are well organised with the help of digital channels.
4. I receive relevant information to get the job done on time with the help of digital channels.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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