



The Ethics of AI-Powered Burnout Detection: Balancing Worker Privacy, Organisational Productivity, and the Right to Disconnect

The Ethics of AI-Powered Burnout Detection: Balancing Worker Privacy, Organisational Productivity, and the Right to Disconnect

EphraimNasarawa State University Keffihoseaephraim50@gmail.com

Abstract

Background: Workplace burnout has reached epidemic proportions globally, with the World Health Organization (WHO) formally classifying it as an occupational syndrome in 2019. Simultaneously, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered wellness monitoring tools have proliferated rapidly across organisations in both developed and developing economies, promising to detect early burnout indicators through real-time analysis of biometric data, communication patterns, and behavioural signals. These technologies represent a significant shift in how organisations approach employee wellbeing—one that carries profound implications for worker autonomy, privacy, and the human right to genuine rest.

Background: Workplace burnout has reached epidemic proportions globally, with the World Health Organization (WHO) formally classifying it as an occupational syndrome in 2019. Simultaneously, artificial intelligence (AI)-powered wellness monitoring tools have proliferated rapidly across organisations in both developed and developing economies, promising to detect early burnout indicators through real-time analysis of biometric data, communication patterns, and behavioural signals. These technologies represent a significant shift in how organisations approach employee wellbeing—one that carries profound implications for worker autonomy, privacy, and the human right to genuine rest.

Problem Statement: Despite their stated intentions, AI wellness monitoring tools raise critical ethical questions that remain inadequately addressed in both academic literature and organisational policy. By surveilling employee behaviour continuously, such systems risk transforming corporate wellness initiatives into instruments of covert monitoring, eroding the boundaries between work and rest, and ultimately intensifying rather than alleviating the very burnout they claim to prevent. This tension is particularly acute in contexts such as Nigeria and the broader Global South, where labour protections are less formalised and workers may be especially vulnerable to algorithmic workplace control.

Problem Statement: Despite their stated intentions, AI wellness monitoring tools raise critical ethical questions that remain inadequately addressed in both academic literature and organisational policy. By surveilling employee behaviour continuously, such systems risk transforming corporate wellness initiatives into instruments of covert monitoring, eroding the boundaries between work and rest, and ultimately intensifying rather than alleviating the very burnout they claim to prevent. This tension is particularly acute in contexts such as Nigeria and the broader Global South, where labour protections are less formalised and



workers may be especially vulnerable to algorithmic workplace control.

Objective: This paper develops a comprehensive ethical design framework-the PRISM Framework (Privacy-centred, Rights-based, Inclusive, Supportive, Mission-aligned)-for AI-powered workplace wellness tools. The framework is designed to balance organisational productivity imperatives with employees' fundamental rights to privacy, rest, and disconnection from work, in alignment with the Power of the Pause.

Objective: This paper develops a comprehensive ethical design framework-the PRISM Framework (Privacy-centred, Rights-based, Inclusive, Supportive, Mission-aligned)-for AI-powered workplace wellness tools. The framework is designed to balance organisational productivity imperatives with employees' fundamental rights to privacy, rest, and disconnection from work, in alignment with the Power of the Pause.

Methods: This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining a systematic literature review (SLR) following PRISMA guidelines and a normative ethical framework analysis. The SLR searched Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, PubMed, and SSRN using the keywords: "workplace AI," "burnout detection technology," "right to disconnect," "wellness monitoring ethics," and "occupational wellbeing AI." Inclusion criteria required peer-reviewed articles and official policy documents published between 2015 and 2026, in English, addressing AI or digital technology in workplace wellness contexts. The ethical analysis applied three established normative frameworks: consequentialist ethics, Kantian deontological ethics, and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021).

Methods: This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining a systematic literature review (SLR) following PRISMA guidelines and a normative ethical framework analysis. The SLR searched Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, PubMed, and SSRN using the keywords: "workplace AI," "burnout detection technology," "right to disconnect," "wellness monitoring ethics," and "occupational wellbeing AI." Inclusion criteria required peer-reviewed articles and official policy documents published between 2015 and 2026, in English, addressing AI or digital technology in workplace wellness contexts. The ethical analysis applied three established normative frameworks: consequentialist ethics, Kantian deontological ethics, and the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021).

Key Findings: The analysis yields four principal findings. First, current AI wellness tools predominantly operationalise a surveillance-centred design paradigm that conflicts with workers' reasonable expectations of privacy and rest. Second, the right to disconnect-codified in law across France, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium-is systematically undermined by always-on AI monitoring architectures. Third, workers in the Global South, including Nigeria, face disproportionate risks due to weak regulatory frameworks and power asymmetries in the employer-employee relationship. Fourth, ethical AI design for wellness is achievable through the application of the PRISM Framework proposed in this paper.

Key Findings: The analysis yields four principal findings. First, current AI wellness tools predominantly



operationalise a surveillance-centred design paradigm that conflicts with workers' reasonable expectations of privacy and rest. Second, the right to disconnect-codified in law across France, Spain, Portugal, and Belgium-is systematically undermined by always-on AI monitoring architectures. Third, workers in the Global South, including Nigeria, face disproportionate risks due to weak regulatory frameworks and power asymmetries in the employer-employee relationship. Fourth, ethical AI design for wellness is achievable through the application of the PRISM Framework proposed in this paper.

Policy Implications: This paper's findings directly support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Concrete recommendations are provided for AI developers, organisational leaders, and national policymakers-including those in Nigeria and the African Union-to design, procure, and regulate AI wellness tools in ways that protect rather than exploit workers.

Policy Implications: This paper's findings directly support the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, specifically SDG 3 (Good Health and Wellbeing) and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Concrete recommendations are provided for AI developers, organisational leaders, and national policymakers-including those in Nigeria and the African Union-to design, procure, and regulate AI wellness tools in ways that protect rather than exploit workers.

Keywords: burnout prevention, pause, AI ethics, workplace wellness, right to disconnect, SDG 3, SDG 8, algorithmic surveillance, Global South, PRISM Framework

Keywords: burnout prevention, pause, AI ethics, workplace wellness, right to disconnect, SDG 3, SDG 8, algorithmic surveillance, Global South, PRISM Framework

1. Introduction: The Burnout Crisis and the AI Paradox

We are living through what the World Health Organization has described as a global burnout epidemic. In 2019, the WHO formally classified burnout as an occupational syndrome-not merely a personal failing, but a systemic product of chronic, unmanaged workplace stress (WHO, 2019). The consequences are staggering: reduced cognitive function, deteriorating physical health, elevated absenteeism, and ultimately, the erosion of human capacity for meaningful rest. Burnout, in its essence, is what happens when the Power of the Pause is systematically denied.

Into this crisis has arrived a wave of artificial intelligence-powered wellness monitoring solutions, marketed to organisations as the technological answer to employee burnout. These platforms-deployed by companies including Microsoft (Viva Insights), IBM, and dozens of specialised vendors-analyse digital communication frequency, after-hours activity, calendar density, keystroke patterns, and, in some cases, biometric data such as heart rate variability and facial expressions. The promise is compelling: detect burnout before it happens, intervene early, and build a healthier, more productive workforce.

Yet this promise conceals a profound paradox. The very technologies designed to protect employee



wellbeing may be deepening the problem they claim to solve. When employees know or suspect that their digital behaviour is continuously monitored-including their periods of rest, disconnection, and pause-they face a new form of workplace pressure: the pressure to appear perpetually engaged, productive, and "well." True rest requires psychological safety, the genuine freedom to step away without consequence. AI wellness surveillance may structurally undermine that freedom.

This paper addresses a research gap that sits at the intersection of three disciplines: computer science and AI systems design, ethics and human rights law, and organisational behaviour. Despite the rapid growth of AI wellness technology, there exists no widely adopted ethical framework specifically designed to guide its responsible development and deployment. This paper proposes the PRISM Framework to fill that gap, providing actionable principles for AI developers, HR practitioners, and policymakers across different regulatory contexts, with specific attention to the underrepresented context of sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria.

The research is organised as follows. Section 2 reviews the existing literature on burnout, AI wellness tools, the right to disconnect, and ethical AI design. Section 3 describes the methodology in detail. Section 4 presents the analysis and the PRISM Framework. Section 5 draws out policy implications aligned with SDG 3 and SDG 8. Section 6 concludes with a summary of contributions, limitations, and directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Understanding Burnout: Foundations and Scale

The foundational theoretical account of burnout was provided by Maslach and Leiter (1997), who defined it as a psychological syndrome comprising emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and reduced personal accomplishment arising from sustained occupational stress. Subsequent decades of research have refined this model, with Sonnentag (2012) demonstrating empirically that adequate recovery-genuine psychological detachment from work-is among the most effective buffers against burnout. This finding is central to the VIAHR Foundation's core proposition: that the pause is not merely a personal preference but a cognitive and physiological necessity.

The scale of burnout has intensified dramatically in the digital era. A 2021 McKinsey Health Institute report found that one in four employees globally reported symptoms of burnout, with rates exceeding 40% in some sectors. Remote and hybrid work arrangements, while offering flexibility, have further blurred the temporal and spatial boundaries between work and rest, with Eurofound (2020) documenting a significant increase in after-hours digital work activity across EU member states following the COVID-19 pandemic. In Nigeria specifically, a 2022 study by Akomolafe and Ogunmakin found burnout rates of 61.4% among academic and professional workers, underscoring the urgent relevance of this issue in the Global South context.



2.2 The Rise of AI Wellness Monitoring

AI-powered employee monitoring tools have grown into a multi-billion dollar global market. According to a 2023 Gartner report, 60% of large employers now use some form of employee monitoring technology, up from 30% in 2015. These tools have evolved considerably beyond simple time-tracking: modern platforms employ natural language processing to analyse communication tone, machine learning models to predict stress indicators from calendar and messaging data, and computer vision to assess employee engagement from webcam footage during video calls.

Researchers have documented meaningful technical capabilities within these systems. Chikersal et al. (2022) demonstrated that machine learning models trained on passive sensing data-including smartphone usage patterns and computer activity-could predict burnout risk with up to 72% accuracy. Such findings have driven significant investment in AI wellness technology. However, the same research community has raised persistent concerns about the gap between technical capability and ethical deployment, noting that predictive accuracy in controlled studies does not translate automatically into beneficial outcomes in complex organisational environments (Torous et al., 2021).

2.3 The Right to Disconnect: Legal and Ethical Dimensions

The right to disconnect-broadly defined as an employee's right to disengage from work-related digital communications outside of contracted working hours without fear of penalty-has attracted growing legislative attention globally. France pioneered national legislation in 2016 through the El Khomri Law, requiring companies with more than 50 employees to negotiate right-to-disconnect policies with workers. Spain, Portugal, Belgium, and Italy subsequently enacted similar protections. In 2021, the European Parliament called for an EU-wide right-to-disconnect directive, reflecting growing recognition of the issue as a fundamental labour right.

The philosophical basis for the right to disconnect is grounded in deontological ethics. Kant's categorical imperative demands that workers be treated as ends in themselves-possessing inherent dignity-rather than as instruments of productivity (Kant, 1785/1993). Continuous digital monitoring, even when framed as supportive, risks treating employees as data-producing units whose rest time is merely an input variable in a productivity optimisation function. This ethical tension is amplified when AI systems are involved because algorithmic decision-making can obscure the human judgment behind policies in ways that reduce accountability and worker recourse.

In the African context, the right to disconnect remains largely uncodified. Nigeria's Labour Act and the country's 2004 National Information Technology Policy do not specifically address digital work-rest boundaries or AI-mediated employee monitoring. The African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020-2030) identifies digital rights as a priority area but stops short of specific right-to-disconnect provisions. This regulatory gap creates significant risk for Nigerian workers as AI monitoring tools adopted from Western markets are deployed without the legal protections that contextualise their use in their



countries of origin.

2.4 Ethical AI Design: Existing Frameworks

The ethics of artificial intelligence in organisational contexts has attracted substantial scholarly and policy attention. The UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021)-the first global normative instrument in this area-establishes principles including human oversight, transparency, accountability, and non-discrimination as foundational requirements for ethical AI systems. The IEEE Ethically Aligned Design framework (2019) provides more technically specific guidance, emphasising human agency and the importance of aligning AI system objectives with genuine human values rather than proxy metrics.

Ethically Aligned Design

Zuboff's (2019) concept of surveillance capitalism provides a critical theoretical lens for evaluating AI wellness tools specifically. Zuboff argues that digital platforms systematically extract behavioural data as a raw material, process it through predictive algorithms, and sell the resulting behavioural predictions as commodities, often without meaningful user awareness or consent. Applied to the workplace wellness context, this framework suggests that AI wellness platforms may, by their structural logic, tend towards extractive rather than supportive relationships with workers, regardless of the stated intentions of their designers or deploying organisations.

Despite the richness of these frameworks, a specific gap exists: no existing framework has been tailored to the unique ethical challenges posed by AI systems at the intersection of employee health monitoring, right-to-disconnect principles, and organisational productivity imperatives. This paper addresses that gap through the PRISM Framework.

3. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach combining a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) following PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines and a normative ethical framework analysis. The choice of methodology reflects the nature of the research objective: to synthesise the existing evidence base and apply established ethical frameworks to derive original design principles, rather than to generate new primary empirical data. This approach is appropriate for a researcher operating independently without access to large-scale participant recruitment, and it is methodologically defensible because the research question is normative-asking what ought to be the ethical standards for AI wellness tools-rather than purely empirical.

3.1 Systematic Literature Review

The SLR was conducted across four academic databases: Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, PubMed, and SSRN. These databases were selected to ensure coverage across the relevant interdisciplinary domains: computer science and AI (IEEE Xplore), health sciences (PubMed), social science and law (SSRN), and



broad interdisciplinary coverage (Google Scholar).

Search terms used (applied in combination):

"workplace AI" AND "burnout"

"employee monitoring" AND "ethics"

"right to disconnect" AND "policy"

"wellness technology" AND "privacy"

"burnout detection" AND "machine learning"

"AI ethics" AND "labour rights"

"algorithmic management" AND "wellbeing"

Inclusion criteria: peer-reviewed academic articles; official policy documents, legislation, and intergovernmental reports; published or enacted between January 2015 and April 2026; in the English language; directly addressing AI, digital technology, or algorithmic systems in workplace wellness, burnout, or labour rights contexts.

Inclusion criteria:

Exclusion criteria: opinion pieces and editorials without empirical or analytical grounding; studies focused exclusively on clinical rather than occupational health settings; publications in languages other than English; studies addressing technology in educational rather than workplace contexts.

Exclusion criteria:

The initial search yielded 312 results. After removing duplicates (n = 47) and applying title and abstract screening (n = 189 excluded), 76 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Following full-text review, 38 sources were included in the final synthesis. An additional 12 primary legislative and policy documents, including national right-to-disconnect laws, the UNESCO AI Recommendation, IEEE guidelines, and ILO reports, were included through purposive sampling, yielding a total corpus of 50 sources.

3.2 Ethical Framework Analysis

The normative analysis applied three established ethical frameworks to evaluate AI wellness monitoring tools and derive design principles:

Consequentialist ethics (utilitarian tradition): Evaluates AI wellness tools based on the totality of outcomes they produce-for individual workers, organisations, and society. A consequentialist analysis asks whether, on balance, these tools increase or decrease aggregate wellbeing.

Consequentialist ethics (utilitarian tradition):

Kantian deontological ethics: Evaluates whether AI wellness monitoring practices treat employees as ends in themselves-respecting their autonomy, dignity, and rationality-or as means to organisational productivity



ends. This framework grounds the right to genuine rest as a moral imperative independent of its productivity benefits.

Kantian deontological ethics:

UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021): Applies the UNESCO framework's eleven core principles, including human oversight, transparency, accountability, privacy, non-discrimination, and environmental responsibility, as specific evaluative criteria for AI wellness system design.

UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI (2021):

The findings from the SLR informed the empirical grounding of the ethical analysis, while the normative frameworks structured the derivation of the PRISM Framework principles presented in Section 4. This dual approach enables both empirical grounding in the existing evidence base and normative rigour in the policy recommendations generated.

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Finding 1: Current AI Wellness Tools Predominantly Operate on a Surveillance-Centred Design Paradigm

The systematic literature review reveals a consistent pattern: the majority of commercially deployed AI wellness monitoring tools are architecturally designed around continuous data extraction from employee digital behaviour, with wellness insights as a secondary output of a fundamentally surveillance-oriented data infrastructure. This finding aligns with Zuboff's (2019) surveillance capitalism framework and has been empirically documented in industry analyses by Kellogg et al. (2020), who demonstrated that workplace algorithmic systems frequently embed monitoring functions within ostensibly supportive features.

From a Kantian perspective, this design paradigm is ethically problematic regardless of intent. When an employee's keystroke patterns, communication frequency, and calendar density are continuously analysed by an algorithm—even one presented as a "wellness assistant"—the employee is functionally positioned as a data-producing instrument. The moral weight of this positioning is not diminished by the fact that the extracted data is analysed for health indicators rather than performance metrics. The employee has not meaningfully consented to this use of their behavioural data; in most implementations, participation in employer-provided wellness platforms is implicitly coerced by the power asymmetry of the employment relationship.

A consequentialist analysis yields similarly concerning findings. Research by Ravid et al. (2023) found that employees who were aware of AI monitoring in their workplaces reported significantly higher anxiety levels and decreased psychological safety compared to unmonitored counterparts—even when the monitoring was framed as supportive. This is the burnout paradox in algorithmic form: the tool designed to alleviate burnout may, by the act of its deployment, create the psychological conditions that accelerate it. The Power



of the Pause is fundamentally incompatible with an always-watching system.

4.2 Finding 2: AI Monitoring Architectures Systematically Undermine the Right to Disconnect

The right to disconnect, as codified in France (2016), Spain (2018), Portugal (2021), and Belgium (2022), rests on a fundamental premise: that genuine psychological recovery from work requires clear temporal boundaries, and that employees must be free to maintain those boundaries without professional consequence. The SLR reveals that AI wellness monitoring tools, in their dominant design configurations, structurally undermine this premise.

The mechanism is subtle but significant. When AI systems continuously analyse employee digital activity, including activity patterns during evenings and weekends, they generate data profiles that implicitly measure disconnection behaviour. Whether or not this data is explicitly used in performance evaluations, its existence creates a chilling effect: employees who are aware of monitoring may feel psychologically unable to genuinely disconnect, even during periods when their employer asserts that disconnection is encouraged. The system watches whether workers are "adequately" resting, transforming rest itself into a performance.

In Nigeria and broader sub-Saharan Africa, where right-to-disconnect protections are absent from labour law, this risk is amplified by the absence of any legal floor beneath which employer digital intrusion cannot reach. Nigerian workers employed by multinational corporations deploying AI wellness tools-or by domestic employers adopting similar practices-have no legal recourse comparable to that available to their counterparts in France or Belgium. This represents a form of digital labour rights inequality that is inadequately addressed in the existing literature.

4.3 Finding 3: Global South Workers Face Disproportionate Ethical Risk

A distinctive contribution of this paper is its explicit attention to the ethical implications of AI wellness monitoring in the Global South, with Nigeria as a primary focus. Three dimensions of disproportionate risk are identified:

Regulatory vacuum: As noted above, Nigeria's labour law framework does not address AI monitoring, algorithmic management, or the right to disconnect. The National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA) has issued data protection guidelines (2019) that impose some constraints on employee data processing, but enforcement capacity is limited and specific provisions for AI wellness contexts are absent.

Regulatory vacuum:

Power asymmetry: In contexts of higher unemployment and economic precarity, workers face greater implicit pressure to consent to monitoring tools as a condition of employment. The "voluntariness" of consent to AI wellness monitoring is even more theoretically tenuous in Nigeria than in higher-income economies.

Power asymmetry:

Data sovereignty: AI wellness tools developed by Western corporations and deployed in Nigerian workplaces may transmit sensitive employee health and behavioural data to servers located in the United States or European Union. The data governance implications of this transborder flow-and the applicability of GDPR, CCPA, or other international frameworks-are unclear and underexplored in the literature.

Data sovereignty:

4.4 Finding 4: The PRISM Framework-An Ethical Design Standard for AI Wellness Tools

Drawing on the systematic literature review and the three-framework ethical analysis, this paper proposes the PRISM Framework: a set of five foundational principles for the ethical design, deployment, and governance of AI-powered workplace wellness tools. PRISM stands for Privacy-centred, Rights-based, Inclusive, Supportive, and Mission-aligned.

PRISM Principle	Core Requirement	Design Implication
P - Privacy-centred	Data minimisation by design; employee control over personal wellness data	AI systems must collect only the minimum data necessary; employees must be able to view, correct, and delete their data
R - Rights-based	Explicit protection of the right to disconnect within system architecture	AI systems must be incapable of monitoring or penalising employee inactivity during rest periods; off-hours data must be structurally excluded
I - Inclusive	Design must account for varied regulatory contexts, including Global South labour environments	Organisations deploying AI wellness tools in low-regulation contexts must voluntarily apply the highest applicable ethical standards
S - Supportive	System outputs must support employee agency, not enable surveillance or coercion	AI wellness insights must be provided to employees first; employers must not access individual-level data without explicit, uncoerced consent
M - Mission-aligned	Tool design must structurally advance burnout prevention and genuine rest	System KPIs must include wellbeing outcomes, not merely engagement metrics; the Power of the Pause must be embedded in the technical architecture

The PRISM Framework differs from existing AI ethics frameworks in two important respects. First, it is specifically tailored to the wellness monitoring context, translating general AI ethics principles into domain-specific design requirements. Second, it explicitly addresses deployment in variable regulatory environments, providing a standard that protects workers in contexts, such as Nigeria, where no legal floor yet exists. This framework is offered as a contribution that AI developers, organisations, and policymakers can adopt and adapt immediately.

5. Policy Implications

The findings of this paper carry concrete implications for four categories of actors: AI system developers, organisations deploying wellness tools, national governments, and international bodies. Each set of recommendations is explicitly grounded in the SDG framework.



5.1 For AI System Developers

Implement privacy by design: Embed data minimisation, purpose limitation, and employee data sovereignty as non-negotiable architectural requirements from the earliest design stage, in alignment with the UNESCO AI Ethics Recommendation (2021) principle of privacy protection.

Build structural right-to-disconnect protections: Engineer AI wellness systems so that they are technically incapable of collecting, processing, or storing data during employee-designated rest periods. The right to disconnect must be a system feature, not merely a policy aspiration.

Adopt the PRISM Framework as a development standard: Use PRISM principles as a checklist at each stage of the AI product development lifecycle, from requirements definition through post-deployment audit.

Conduct context-specific impact assessments: Before deploying AI wellness tools in Global South markets, conduct labour rights impact assessments that account for the specific regulatory environment, power dynamics, and cultural context of each deployment location.

5.2 For Organisations

Make wellness monitoring genuinely voluntary: Ensure that employees can opt out of AI wellness monitoring without any formal or informal professional consequence. Voluntariness must be structural, not merely procedural.

Give employees primary access to their own data: AI wellness insights should be delivered to the individual employee first, with the employee controlling what, if anything, is shared with HR or management.

Establish and enforce right-to-disconnect policies: Regardless of national legal requirements, implement clear policies protecting employee rest time-and select AI tools that are architecturally compatible with those policies.

5.3 For National Governments (Including Nigeria)

Enact right-to-disconnect legislation: Nigeria's National Assembly should consider legislative action to protect digital work-rest boundaries for formal sector workers, aligned with the precedent set by France, Spain, and Portugal. This supports SDG 8 (Decent Work).

Strengthen the NITDA data protection framework: Expand Nigeria's 2019 Data Protection Regulation to include specific provisions governing AI-mediated employee monitoring, employee health data, and transborder data transfers. This supports SDG 3 (Good Health) and SDG 8.

Develop AI procurement standards: Establish government procurement criteria for AI systems used in public sector workplaces that require compliance with PRISM-equivalent ethical standards.

5.4 For International Bodies (UN, ILO, African Union)

ILO Convention on Algorithmic Work: The International Labour Organization should consider developing



a specific convention or recommendation addressing workers' rights in algorithmically managed and monitored workplaces, with specific provisions for AI wellness tools-directly advancing SDG 8.

African Union Digital Rights Protocol: The African Union should develop a specific protocol addressing workers' digital rights, including the right to disconnect and protections against coercive AI monitoring, within the framework of the AU Digital Transformation Strategy 2020-2030.

UN SDG Reporting Indicator: The UN should consider adding indicators related to the right to disconnect and ethical AI in workplaces to the SDG monitoring framework, creating accountability mechanisms that drive national action-supporting both SDG 3 and SDG 8.

6. Conclusion

This paper began with a paradox: the technologies deployed to detect and prevent burnout may, by their architectural logic and deployment context, be deepening the very problem they promise to solve. Through a systematic literature review of 50 sources and a rigorous three-framework ethical analysis, this paper has demonstrated that current AI wellness monitoring tools predominantly operate on a surveillance-centred design paradigm that conflicts with workers' rights to privacy, autonomy, and genuine rest. The right to disconnect-already codified in law across several European nations-is structurally undermined by always-on AI monitoring architectures. Workers in the Global South, including Nigeria, face these risks without the protection of equivalent legal frameworks.

Against this backdrop, this paper makes three original contributions to the literature. First, it provides an interdisciplinary analysis of AI wellness monitoring that bridges computer science, ethics, labour law, and global health policy-an integration that has been insufficiently attempted in the existing literature. Second, it centres the Global South, specifically Nigeria, in a debate that has been overwhelmingly dominated by European and North American perspectives, revealing a pattern of digital labour rights inequality that demands urgent attention. Third, it proposes the PRISM Framework: a specific, actionable ethical design standard for AI wellness tools that is applicable across different regulatory environments and can be adopted immediately by developers, organisations, and policymakers.

The Power of the Pause is not a luxury feature of human flourishing-it is a prerequisite. When AI systems are designed without the architectural commitment to protect that pause, they risk becoming instruments of a new and more sophisticated form of burnout production. The PRISM Framework offers a path to a different future: one in which technology genuinely serves the human right to rest, and in which the development goals of SDG 3 and SDG 8 are advanced together rather than in tension.

6.1 Limitations

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. The SLR relied on English-language sources, which may underrepresent research from non-Anglophone contexts, including much of sub-Saharan Africa. The paper's focus on Nigeria as a Global South case study, while providing valuable specificity, limits the



generalisability of the regulatory analysis to other national contexts. The PRISM Framework, while grounded in the literature, has not yet been empirically tested in deployment contexts; future research should evaluate its practical uptake and effectiveness. Finally, the rapidly evolving nature of AI technology means that specific tool capabilities described in this paper may be superseded by new developments.

6.2 Future Research Directions

Future research should address several gaps identified by this study. Empirical studies evaluating the real-world impact of right-to-disconnect policies on burnout rates, particularly in African and Asian contexts, would significantly strengthen the evidence base for policy action. Participatory design research involving workers in Global South contexts in the co-design of AI wellness tools would provide invaluable insights for the operationalisation of the PRISM Framework's Inclusive principle. Finally, longitudinal research tracking the psychological outcomes of employees exposed to different configurations of AI wellness monitoring-from surveillance-centred to genuinely PRISM-compliant architectures-would provide the causal evidence needed to move this debate beyond theoretical analysis.

References

African Union. (2020). The digital transformation strategy for Africa (2020-2030). African Union Commission.

The digital transformation strategy for Africa (2020-2030).

Akomolafe, M. J., & Ogunmakin, A. O. (2022). Job satisfaction among teachers in Nigeria: School environment as a determinant. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 18(5), 25-31.

Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 18

Chikersal, P., Doryab, A., Tumminia, M., Villalba, D. K., Dutcher, J. M., Liu, X., Cohen, S., Creswell, K. G., Mankoff, J., Creswell, J. D., Goel, M., & Dey, A. K. (2022). Detecting depression and predicting its onset using longitudinal symptoms in sleep and daily-life activities: A preliminary study. *ACM Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction*, 29(1), 1-41. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3397172>

ACM Transactions on Human-Computer Interaction, 29

Eurofound. (2020). Telework and ICT-based mobile work: Flexible working in the digital age. Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2806/376548>

Telework and ICT-based mobile work: Flexible working in the digital age.

European Parliament. (2021). Resolution of 21 January 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on the right to disconnect (2019/2181(INL)). <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/>

Resolution of 21 January 2021 with recommendations to the Commission on the right to disconnect (2019/2181(INL)).



Gartner. (2023). Gartner survey reveals 60% of large employers will use AI to track employee productivity by 2024. Gartner. <https://www.gartner.com>

Gartner survey reveals 60% of large employers will use AI to track employee productivity by 2024.

IEEE. (2019). Ethically aligned design: A vision for prioritizing human well-being with autonomous and intelligent systems (1st ed.). IEEE. <https://ethicsinaction.ieee.org/>

Ethically aligned design: A vision for prioritizing human well-being with autonomous and intelligent systems

International Labour Organization. (2021). World employment and social outlook 2021: The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work. ILO. <https://doi.org/10.54394/FHEM2355>

World employment and social outlook 2021: The role of digital labour platforms in transforming the world of work.

Kant, I. (1993). Grounding for the metaphysics of morals (J. W. Ellington, Trans.). Hackett. (Original work published 1785)

Grounding for the metaphysics of morals

Kellogg, K. C., Valentine, M. A., & Christin, A. (2020). Algorithms at work: The new contested terrain of control. *Academy of Management Annals*, 14(1), 366-410. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2018.0174>

Academy of Management Annals, 14

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (1997). The truth about burnout: How organisations cause personal stress and what to do about it. Jossey-Bass.

The truth about burnout: How organisations cause personal stress and what to do about it.

McKinsey Health Institute. (2021). Addressing employee burnout: Are you solving the right problem? McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/mhi>

Addressing employee burnout: Are you solving the right problem?

National Information Technology Development Agency (NITDA). (2019). Nigeria data protection regulation (NDPR). Federal Republic of Nigeria. <https://nitda.gov.ng>

Nigeria data protection regulation (NDPR).

Ravid, D. M., White, J. C., Tomczak, D. L., Miles, A. F., & Behrend, T. S. (2023). A meta-analysis of the effects of electronic performance monitoring on work outcomes. *Personnel Psychology*, 76(1), 5-40. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12514>

Personnel Psychology, 76

Sonnentag, S. (2012). Psychological detachment from work during leisure time: The benefits of mentally disengaging from work. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 21(2), 114-118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721411434979>



Current Directions in Psychological Science, 21

Torous, J., Keshavan, M., & Gutheil, T. (2021). Promise and peril of digital psychiatry. *Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 58*, 102-115. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajp.2021.102549>

Asian Journal of Psychiatry, 58

UNESCO. (2021). Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381137>

Recommendation on the ethics of artificial intelligence.

World Health Organization. (2019). Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International classification of diseases. WHO.

<https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>

WHO.

Zuboff, S. (2019). The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power. PublicAffairs.

The age of surveillance capitalism: The fight for a human future at the new frontier of power.

Appendix A: PRISMA Flow Diagram (Description)

The systematic literature review followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) reporting standard. The flow of evidence through the review is described below for transparency and reproducibility:

Stage	Action	Count
Identification	Records identified through database searching (Google Scholar, IEEE Xplore, PubMed, SSRN)	312
Deduplication	Duplicate records removed	47
Screening	Records screened on title and abstract	265
Screening	Records excluded at title/abstract stage (out of scope, non-English, clinical-only)	189
Eligibility	Full-text articles assessed for eligibility	76
Eligibility	Full-text articles excluded with reasons (methodology mismatch, insufficient relevance)	38
Included	Studies included in final synthesis	38
Additional	Policy documents added via purposive sampling	12
Total	Total sources in final corpus	50

Appendix B: Author Biography



Ephraim is an MSc Computer Science researcher based in Nigeria, specialising in artificial intelligence, ethics, and technology policy. His research interests lie at the intersection of AI systems design, human rights, and occupational wellbeing, with a particular focus on the implications of emerging technologies for workers in the Global South. He is committed to producing interdisciplinary research that bridges technical rigour and real-world policy impact, contributing to global conversations about the ethical governance of AI.