



Personal demands and job stress through workaholism in the era of digital business

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the role of personal demands in shaping job stress through workaholism within a digital business ecosystem. The transformation of organizational systems toward platform-based work, real-time performance monitoring, and application-based targets had restructured job demands and intensified performance pressures on employees. In this context, perfectionism and narcissistic tendencies were expected to influence compulsive work behavior and psychological strain. A quantitative approach was employed using survey data collected from employees working in digitally managed organizational environments. The constructs of self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, narcissistic tendencies, workaholism, and job stress were measured using standardized instruments, and the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling to test both direct and indirect relationships among the variables. The results indicated that personal demands had significant positive effects on workaholism, which in turn had a significant positive effect on job stress. Workaholism mediated the relationships between personal demands and job stress. The findings suggested that job stress in digital business contexts resulted from the interaction between personal demands and digitally designed work systems.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Platform-based workflows, real-time performance monitoring, application-driven targets, and transparent productivity dashboards have enhanced organizational efficiency but simultaneously intensified job demands by increasing performance visibility, time pressure, and expectations of constant connectivity (Allen et al., 2015; Wolf et al., 2019). Empirical evidence indicates that digitally mediated work environments intensify psychological strain through continuous connectivity, work intensification, and heightened evaluative pressure (Derks et al., 2015; Domalewska et al., 2025; Harahap et al., 2023; Inikpi & Adewale, 2024; Lubis, 2025; Mazmanian et al., 2013; Muthmainah & Fauzianazwa, 2025; Sedera & Lokuge, 2020; Smith et al., 2024; Sommantico et al.,

2024). Within the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, these conditions increase the risk of job stress when job demands exceed individuals' available resources for coping and recovery (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Contemporary extensions of the model further emphasize the role of personal demands—internal psychological characteristics that consume self-regulatory resources and heighten vulnerability to strain—particularly in digitally structured work environments characterized by continuous evaluation and performance visibility (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Lepine et al., 2005; Büge et al., 2025; Gillet et al., 2023; Marsh et al., 2024; Molino et al., 2016)

Among the most relevant personal demands are perfectionism and narcissistic tendencies. Multidimensional models of perfectionism distinguish self-oriented perfectionism (SOP), characterized by internalized high standards, and socially prescribed perfectionism (SPP), defined by the belief that others demand flawless performance (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Both dimensions have been linked to heightened distress and work-related stress, particularly in high-pressure environments (Bellam & Curran, 2025; Flett & Hewitt, 2004, 2015; Gao et al., 2025; Harari et al., 2018; Molnar, 2010; Zheng et al., 2025). Digitally structured performance systems intensify these dynamics by making performance metrics transparent and continuously comparable, thereby reinforcing self-criticism and social evaluative pressure (Ahmed & Cerkez, 2022; Büge et al., 2025; Gavrichencko & Kim, 2024; Rozentel et al., 2024; Sedera & Lokuge, 2020).

Narcissistic tendencies, conceptualized here as a non-clinical personality disposition, involve strong needs for recognition, sensitivity to evaluation, and motivation to maintain a superior self-image (Ronningstam, 2011). In digital business environments where performance outcomes are publicly visible and instantly quantifiable, such tendencies increase ego involvement in work and vulnerability to psychological strain (Grijalva & Zhang, 2016; Miller & Campbell, 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Pledger et al., 2025).

Personal demands also shape behavioral responses to job demands. One prominent manifestation is workaholism, defined as a compulsive pattern of excessive work driven by internal pressure rather than external necessity (Aziz & Zickar, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2008; Spence & Robbins, 1992; Vieriu & Hainagiu, 2025). Workaholism has been associated with impaired recovery and long-term job stress, and digital business systems further reinforce workaholic tendencies by enabling constant access to work platforms and fostering expectations of rapid responsiveness (Damayanti et al., 2026; Gao et al., 2025; Komp et al., 2022; Molino et al., 2016; Schaufeli et al., 2008; Trasca & Spulbar, 2025; Vieriu & Hainagiu, 2025; Zheng et al., 2025). Moreover, a recent systematic review and meta-analysis estimated the global prevalence of workaholism at approximately 14–15%, indicating that compulsive overworking represents a widespread occupational health issue rather than a marginal phenomenon (Andersen et al., 2023).

Although prior studies have extensively examined perfectionism, narcissistic tendencies, and workaholism, these constructs are predominantly treated as independent predictors of work-related stress rather than as interrelated components of a unified stress-generating mechanism. Research on perfectionism has largely focused on its direct emotional consequences, while studies on narcissistic tendencies have emphasized motivational or self-regulatory processes without sufficiently considering their behavioral translation into excessive work patterns. Similarly, workaholism is often positioned as an outcome of job demands or organizational culture, with limited attention to the personal demand configurations that activate compulsive overworking. As a result, existing literature remains conceptually fragmented and provides limited explanation of how internal performance standards, external evaluative pressure, and ego-related validation needs jointly shape behavioral intensification and psychological strain.

Despite growing research on digital performance monitoring and employee well-being, empirical studies continue to examine perfectionism, narcissism, and workaholism

in isolation, with limited attention to their integrated dynamics in digitally structured business ecosystems (Andersen et al., 2023; Gao et al., 2025; Malik & Chakraborty, 2025; Mat-Artun & Küskü, 2025; Podolchak et al., 2024; Ramos-Vera et al., 2025; Smith et al., 2024; Trasca & Spulbar, 2025)

Positioning personal demands as a central trigger of job stress shifts the JD-R perspective from viewing digital work systems as inherently stressful toward understanding stress as an outcome of interaction between digitally intensified job demands and employees' internal performance-related dispositions. In this view, digital performance systems function less as direct stressors and more as activating contexts that amplify self-imposed standards, external evaluative pressure, and ego-related validation needs. This perspective suggests that digitalization selectively intensifies job stress rather than producing uniform strain across individuals.

Addressing this gap, the present study adopts the JD-R framework to examine the direct and indirect effects of self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and narcissistic tendencies on job stress, with workaholism as a mediating mechanism, within a digitally managed organizational context. The study contributes theoretically by extending the JD-R model to incorporate digitally induced job demands and personal demands as jointly shaping workaholic behavior and psychological strain, and practically by informing digital performance management and organizational well-being strategies.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Research Design

This study employed an explanatory quantitative research design to examine the relationships between personal demands, workaholism, and job stress in a digital work context. Structural Equation Modeling using Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) was applied to test direct and indirect effects among latent variables with multiple indicators and mediation paths, as this approach is suitable for relatively small samples and does not require strict normality assumptions.

2.2. Research Site, Population, and Sample

This study was conducted at FIF POS Wangon, located in Ajibarang, Banyumas Regency, Central Java, Indonesia, which was selected based on its theoretical relevance as a digitally structured work environment. Daily operations at this site rely on application-based performance targets, digital reporting, and real-time monitoring systems, creating a work context characterized by continuous performance visibility, evaluative pressure, and accelerated work rhythms. The population comprised all individuals involved in operational activities at FIF POS Wangon, including internal employees and freelance partners, all of whom were subject to the same digital performance systems and evaluation mechanisms. These characteristics make FIF POS Wangon an empirically suitable setting for examining how personal demands interact with digitally mediated performance systems to shape workaholic behavior and job stress. A census approach was adopted due to the relatively limited population size, and all eligible individuals were included in the sample, with the final number of respondents reported in the results section.

2.3. Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was applied by selecting respondents who were actively involved in digitally structured operational activities at FIF POS Wangon, utilized application-based performance systems, and were exposed to work pressures relevant to the study variables. Both internal employees and freelance partners were included, as all participants operated under similar digital performance evaluation conditions.

2.4. Variables and Measurement Instruments

Self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism were measured using the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, narcissistic tendencies using the Brief Pathological Narcissism Inventory, job stress using an adapted Perceived Stress Scale, and workaholism using selected dimensions of the Workaholism Battery. All constructs were measured on a seven-point Likert scale and contextualized to digitally structured work environments.

2.5. Data Collection Methods

Data were collected using three methods. First, non-participant observation was conducted to obtain an initial overview of work behavior, performance responses, and daily work dynamics in the digital work environment. Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain supporting qualitative information regarding work experiences, psychological pressure, personal characteristics, and digital performance systems. Third, a structured questionnaire was used as the primary quantitative data collection instrument and was distributed to all individuals working in the operational environment of FIF POS Wangon in Ajibarang.

2.6. Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was conducted using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). The analysis consisted of several stages. First, descriptive analysis was performed to describe respondent characteristics and general response tendencies. Second, the measurement model was evaluated by testing convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability using indicator loadings, Average Variance Extracted, Composite Reliability, and Cronbach's alpha. Third, the structural model was evaluated using R-square, effect size, predictive relevance, and bootstrapping procedures to test the significance of hypothesized relationships. Mediation analysis was conducted using bootstrapped indirect effects to examine the mediating role of workaholism.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Respondent Characteristics

The respondents consisted of 42 employees working at FIF POS Wangon, Banyumas Regency, Central Java. Most respondents were male (64.3%), and the largest age group was 25–30 years (47.6%), followed by 31–35 years (28.6%). In terms of employment status, 45.2% were outsourced workers, 31.0% were internal employees, and 23.8% were freelance partners. All respondents operated within a digitally structured performance system involving application-based reporting, real-time target monitoring, and continuous performance evaluation.

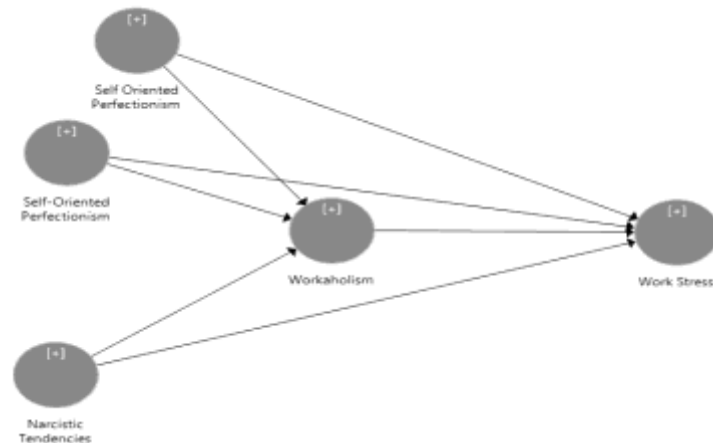
3.2 Measurement Model Evaluation

All indicators exhibited outer loadings above 0.70, and all constructs demonstrated AVE values exceeding 0.50, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was supported as all HTMT values were below 0.90, with the highest value being 0.73. Construct reliability was excellent, with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.96 to 0.98 and composite reliability values ranging from 0.97 to 0.99. These results indicate that the measurement model was valid and reliable.

3.3 Structural Model Evaluation

The R-square value for workaholism was 0.65 and for job stress was 0.84, indicating strong explanatory power of the structural model. Effect size and predictive relevance results revealed that not all paths contributed equally, with workaholism functioning as a

key behavioral mechanism ($Q^2 = 0.42$ for workaholism; $Q^2 = 0.59$ for job stress). The high R-square value for job stress indicates that stress in digitally structured work environments is largely driven by personal demands and compulsive work behavior, highlighting that stress emerges through structured psychological and behavioral processes rather than uncontrollable external factors.



3.4 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using bootstrapping. The results showed that self-oriented perfectionism did not significantly affect workaholism ($T = 0.02$; $P = 0.98$) but had a significant positive effect on job stress ($T = 5.71$; $P = 0.00$). Socially prescribed perfectionism significantly affected workaholism ($T = 6.25$; $P = 0.00$) and job stress ($T = 4.61$; $P = 0.00$). Narcissistic tendencies significantly affected workaholism ($T = 9.58$; $P = 0.00$) but did not significantly affect job stress directly ($T = 0.18$; $P = 0.86$). Workaholism had a significant positive effect on job stress ($T = 5.29$; $P = 0.00$).

These findings indicate that workaholism played a central role in explaining job stress. Socially prescribed perfectionism and narcissistic tendencies contributed to job stress primarily through workaholism, whereas self-oriented perfectionism affected job stress directly without operating through workaholism.

3.5 Mediation Analysis

Mediation analysis revealed that workaholism did not mediate the relationship between self-oriented perfectionism and job stress (coefficient = -0.001 ; $T = 0.025$; $P = 0.980$). However, workaholism significantly mediated the relationship between socially prescribed perfectionism and job stress (coefficient = 0.219 ; $T = 4.453$; $P = 0.000$) and between narcissistic tendencies and job stress (coefficient = 0.291 ; $T = 4.748$; $P = 0.000$).

These results indicate that the effects of socially prescribed perfectionism and narcissistic tendencies on job stress operated primarily through the behavioral mechanism of compulsive work behavior. In contrast, self-oriented perfectionism increased job stress directly without being mediated by workaholism.

3.6 Goodness of Fit

Goodness of fit was evaluated using the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual. The SRMR value for both the saturated and estimated models was 0.097. Although the recommended threshold is below 0.08, values up to 0.10 are considered acceptable for complex PLS-SEM models involving psychological constructs. The identical SRMR values for both models indicate that the structural specification did not substantially reduce model fit.

3.7 Discussion

The findings showed that self-oriented perfectionism did not significantly predict workaholism but had a significant positive effect on job stress. This supports the view that self-oriented perfectionism reflects a relatively adaptive form of perfectionism that increases internal pressure and self-evaluation without necessarily producing compulsive work behavior in digitally structured work systems (Bellam & Curran, 2025; Harari et al., 2018; Molnar, 2010).

Socially prescribed perfectionism significantly predicted both workaholism and job stress. The dominance of socially prescribed perfectionism over self-oriented perfectionism highlights the central role of external evaluative pressure in digitally structured performance systems. Unlike self-oriented standards, which are internally regulated, socially prescribed perfectionism reflects the internalization of perceived expectations imposed by supervisors, systems, and performance metrics. In digital work environments characterized by constant visibility, comparative dashboards, and real-time monitoring, performance is rarely experienced as a private or self-referenced process. Instead, employees are continuously exposed to cues of social evaluation, which amplify sensitivity to external judgment and reinforce compulsive efforts to meet perceived expectations. This finding suggests that digital performance evaluation intensifies stress not by encouraging personal excellence per se, but by transforming performance into a socially monitored and externally validated activity, thereby increasing vulnerability to workaholic behavior and psychological strain. This finding reinforces prior research emphasizing external pressure and social evaluation as key drivers of compulsive work behavior, particularly in digital work environments characterized by performance transparency and continuous monitoring (Büge et al., 2025; Gao et al., 2025; Hewitt & Flett, 1991).

Narcissistic tendencies significantly predicted workaholism but did not directly predict job stress. This suggests that narcissistic traits increase psychological strain only when translated into compulsive work behavior. In digitally structured performance systems emphasizing visibility and competition, narcissistic individuals appear to intensify work involvement as a strategy for self-validation (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Stoeber, 2015).

Workaholism significantly predicted job stress, confirming that compulsive overworking is a maladaptive response that increases emotional exhaustion and psychological strain under digitally mediated job demands (Schaufeli et al., 2008; Vieriu & Hainagiu, 2025; Zheng et al., 2025).

Mediation analysis confirmed that workaholism mediated the effects of socially prescribed perfectionism and narcissistic tendencies on job stress, but not the effect of self-oriented perfectionism. This pattern indicates that external and ego-driven personal demands operate primarily through behavioral intensification, whereas internal perfectionistic standards increase strain directly (Harari et al., 2018; Molnar, 2010).

Overall, these findings extend the Job Demands–Resources framework by demonstrating that digitally induced job demands interact with personal demands to shape compulsive work behavior and job stress. The results contribute to the literature by differentiating adaptive and maladaptive forms of perfectionism and by identifying workaholism as a key behavioral mechanism linking personal demands to psychological strain in digital business contexts (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli et al., 2008).

4. CONCLUSION

This study examined how personal demands—self-oriented perfectionism, socially prescribed perfectionism, and narcissistic tendencies—shape job stress in a digitally structured work environment, with workaholism positioned as a mediating behavioral mechanism. Drawing on the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework and a PLS-SEM

approach, the findings demonstrate that personal demands interact with digitally induced performance pressures in differentiated ways to produce psychological strain.

The results indicate that self-oriented perfectionism increases job stress directly without translating into compulsive work behavior, suggesting that internally driven perfectionistic standards function primarily as a cognitive–emotional burden. In contrast, socially prescribed perfectionism and narcissistic tendencies increase job stress mainly through workaholism, highlighting that externally driven perfection pressure and ego-related validation needs are more likely to be transformed into compulsive overworking under conditions of performance transparency and continuous digital evaluation.

Workaholism emerged as a central behavioral conduit linking personal demands to psychological strain. Compulsive overworking prolongs exposure to digital job demands, weakens recovery capacity, and amplifies emotional exhaustion, thereby strengthening the stress-generating process.

To strengthen causal inferences between personal demands, workaholism, and job stress, future research should adopt research designs that capture temporal and process-based dynamics. Longitudinal studies would allow examination of how perfectionistic standards and narcissistic tendencies evolve into compulsive work behavior over time, particularly under sustained digital performance pressure. Experience sampling or diary-based approaches could further illuminate short-term fluctuations in workaholism and stress in response to daily performance monitoring and evaluative feedback. In addition, multi-method designs combining self-reports with objective digital performance indicators or supervisor assessments may reduce common method bias and provide a more robust understanding of causal mechanisms. Such approaches would extend the present findings by clarifying the directionality and developmental pathways linking personal demands to job stress in digital work environments.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that managing job stress in digital organizations requires more than controlling workload intensity or technological demands. Organizations need to critically evaluate how digital performance systems amplify social evaluation pressure through constant visibility, real-time monitoring, and comparative performance metrics. Excessive transparency and uninterrupted availability norms may unintentionally legitimize overworking behavior, particularly among employees who are highly sensitive to external expectations. Therefore, digital organizations should complement performance monitoring with clear boundaries around availability, explicit norms that discourage compulsive overworking, and performance indicators that value sustainable work patterns rather than constant intensity. Addressing job stress in digital contexts thus involves redesigning not only task structures but also the evaluative logic embedded within digital performance management systems.

In conclusion, job stress in digital work environments is shaped not only by workload intensity but by the interaction between personal demands and digitally induced performance pressures. Workaholism plays a pivotal mediating role, particularly for socially driven perfectionism and narcissistic tendencies.

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