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## The Impact Mechanism of Different Social Media Use Purposes on Employee Work Performance

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### Abstract

Based on the Job Demands-Resources theory, this study explores the internal mechanisms through which two purposes of social media use influence employee job performance, and further analyzes their effects. Using 369 matched leader-subordinate dyadic data, the findings reveal: (1) both work-based and social-based social media use enhance employee job performance; (2) both work-based and social-based social media use affect job performance through work engagement, while social-based social media use also influences job performance through relationship conflict; (3) the effects of work-oriented and social-oriented social media use on employee job performance exhibit a substitutive relationship. These results not only theoretically broaden the research perspective on social media use and provide a new theoretical framework for subsequent studies, but also offer novel insights for organizational management of social media use through comparative analysis.

### Full Text

## The Influence Mechanisms of Different Social Media Usage Purposes on Employee Job Performance

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### Abstract

Based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, this study examines the internal mechanisms through which two distinct purposes of social media usage influence employee job performance. Using matched leader-subordinate data from

369 dyads, the findings reveal that: (1) both work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage enhance employee job performance; (2) both types of usage affect job performance through work engagement, with social-oriented usage also influencing performance via relationship conflict; and (3) work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage exhibit a substitutive relationship in their effects on job performance. These results not only expand theoretical perspectives on social media usage by providing a new framework for future research, but also offer novel insights for organizational management of social media through comparative analysis.

**Keywords:** social media usage, working state, interpersonal relationship, job performance

## 1 Introduction

Statistics indicate that over two-thirds of Fortune 500 companies widely use social media, making corporate social media adoption a global phenomenon (Schlagwein & Prasarnphanich, 2014). Both researchers and practitioners increasingly focus on how workplace social media transforms organizational and employee work (Wu et al., 2021). Social media refers to a set of internet-based applications built on Web 2.0 principles and technologies that support user-generated content and exchange, enabling people to write, share, evaluate, discuss, and communicate with one another (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Typical applications include Facebook, Twitter, WeChat, and Weibo. Organizations initially introduced social media to enhance performance, a goal-oriented approach that has led most research to focus on work-related usage while neglecting or even negatively viewing social-related usage behaviors (Brooks, 2015; Demircioglu & Chen, 2019). Notably, social media had already been widely accepted for leisure purposes before entering organizational contexts, making complete prohibition impossible. Even when organizations implement measures to monitor, restrict, or block social usage, such actions may trigger negative consequences, such as reduced employee motivation and well-being (Leonardi & Vaast, 2017). Furthermore, research demonstrates that the impact of social media usage on job performance varies across different usage patterns (Ding et al., 2019). From this perspective, clarifying different social media usage purposes constitutes a critical foundation for relevant research. According to Uses and Gratifications Theory, social media usage purposes can be categorized as work-oriented and social-oriented (Zhang et al., 2018). Work-oriented social media usage refers to employees leveraging social media for information transmission and knowledge sharing to facilitate resource generation, team collaboration, and exchange of core work information (Benitez et al., 2018). Social-oriented social media usage refers to employees using social media to maintain and build interpersonal relationships, effectively exchanging social and personal information while providing social and emotional support (Song et al., 2019).

Building on this foundation, our study further explores the relationship between these distinct social media usage purposes and employee job performance. Un-

Understanding and deconstructing the mechanisms through which social media usage purposes affect performance is key to comprehensively understanding social media usage, yet current research faces several unresolved issues. First, scholars have tended to focus on work mechanisms such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Chu, 2020), neglecting the important domain of “interpersonal mechanisms.” Therefore, this paper integrates both work and interpersonal mechanisms to explain the influence mechanisms of social media usage purposes. Second, compared to traditional work environments, social media creates a richer and more diverse digital environment that reshapes employee work and communication patterns, generating more complex impacts on work states and interpersonal relationships. Correspondingly, scholars have long debated workplace social media usage: some advocate leveraging social media to enhance employee motivation and positivity (Bizzi, 2017), while others argue that social media usage poses significant risks and challenges, such as inadvertently increasing employee stress (Bucher et al., 2013). Consequently, we select variables from both interpersonal and work domains from positive and negative perspectives to explain social media’s impacts, aiming to address this controversy.

As organizational management philosophies and structures continuously evolve, managers have developed more accurate understandings of social media, shifting from questioning “whether to use” to exploring “how to effectively leverage value.” Scholars have begun examining social media usage from more comprehensive perspectives, recognizing that leisure and social usage are not exclusively negative but can improve employee mental health and enhance affective commitment when applied appropriately (Wu et al., 2020; Luo et al., 2018). However, most research on positive and negative effects has examined work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage in isolation, ignoring potential joint effects. Sun and Shang (2014) noted that social-related usage can facilitate work-related usage, while other scholars’ qualitative research found that DingTalk (work-oriented) and WeChat (social-oriented) can generate positive synergistic effects that enhance team and employee performance (Song et al., 2019). In other words, different purposes of social media usage are not isolated but jointly shape employee behavior; thus, considering only one type provides an incomplete understanding of its effects. Based on this analysis, our study investigates the interactive effects between work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage on employee job performance.

According to JD-R theory, work characteristics can be classified as job demands and job resources. Job resources refer to “positive factors” related to physical, psychological, social, or organizational aspects of work that not only positively influence employee motivation processes but also buffer the negative impacts of job demands (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). This study examines social media’s motivational enhancement effects through its influence on work engagement and interpersonal trust, and its buffering effects on job demands through its impact on work interference and relationship conflict (Van Zoonen et al., 2017; Saxton & Guo, 2020). Specifically, workplace social media usage provides em-

employees with motivational resources that maintain positive work states while simultaneously buffering negative impacts from job demands to prevent burnout, ultimately manifesting in enhanced performance. This study demonstrates social media's positive effects from both perspectives and further elucidates the work and interpersonal mechanisms through which social media operates by introducing variables related to work states and interpersonal relationships. This comprehensive research approach not only enriches theoretical research on social media but also advances organizational understanding and management of social media, helping guide employees toward reasonable usage—holding significant theoretical and practical value for improving organizational performance and promoting sustainable development.

### 1.1 Social Media Usage and Job Performance

Some scholars argue that employees can accumulate and mobilize intangible and tangible resources through social media usage, terming these social resources generated through social media usage as “social media capital” (Saxton & Guo, 2020). During social media usage, employees primarily build social media capital through information communication and formal/informal connections. First, social media breaks temporal and spatial constraints, accelerating internal organizational information and knowledge sharing (Van Zoonen et al., 2016). Work information helps employees better acquire job and task knowledge, improving work efficiency (Yang et al., 2021), while social information helps employees form expressive networks that yield emotional benefits (Luo et al., 2018). Second, distinct from traditional interaction patterns, social media breaks hierarchical boundaries, facilitating social interaction and relationship building among superiors, subordinates, and colleagues, making employees feel supported and trusted. Through effective social interaction, employees gain sufficient energy to enhance individual psychological resources, generating positive psychological experiences that improve job satisfaction and performance (Zhu et al., 2017; Wu et al., 2021). According to JD-R theory, job resources are “positive factors” in work that facilitate goal achievement. Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 1:** Both work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage significantly and positively influence employee job performance.

### 1.2 The Mechanism of Social Media Usage on Job Performance: The Gain Path

According to JD-R theory, job resources possess inherent motivational properties that can stimulate employee motivation and increase work engagement, thereby generating positive outcomes. On one hand, workplace social media assists employees with work and information sharing, reducing communication barriers and enabling easy, effective resource and information exchange (Parveen et al., 2015). Simultaneously, professional knowledge sharing represents a reciprocal behavior that facilitates knowledge accumulation and capability enhancement for both sharers and receivers (Yang et al., 2021), thereby increasing em-

ployees' job resources. On the other hand, compared to traditional media, social media strengthens internal organizational communication and positive employee interactions, helping employees build relationships with similar others in the organization and obtain support from colleagues and superiors (Yoganathan et al., 2021). Resources obtained in the work environment influence employees' work engagement states; thus, we believe social media usage helps employees acquire more resources that subsequently affect their work engagement (Men et al., 2020). Work engagement, as a positive work state, is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Employees with high work engagement experience more positive emotions, maintain good interpersonal relationships with colleagues, and ensure efficient communication and collaboration. Moreover, such employees typically demonstrate strong responsibility and dedication to their tasks, fulfilling in-role task performance and overall improving job performance (Nie et al., 2020).

Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 2:** Work engagement mediates the relationship between (a) work-oriented and (b) social-oriented social media usage and job performance.

As an information platform, social media enables the display of personal information such as social networks and identity cues. Identity transparency allows employees to understand others' relevant information, creating conditions for trust development (Liang et al., 2020). Specifically, using social media for work-related activities enables employees to understand colleagues' knowledge, promoting knowledge sharing (Kipkosgei et al., 2020). Consequently, employees can identify experts in relevant fields and acquire work-related knowledge from colleagues, fostering confidence in colleagues' competence. According to trust research, competence-based trust constitutes an important factor influencing interpersonal trust (Mayer et al., 1995). Understanding others' capabilities through social media further promotes mutual trust. Additionally, employees can quickly find common ground with colleagues, and shared interests and visions further enhance trust (Sun et al., 2019). Social-oriented usage emphasizes social connections and interactions; employees cultivate informal relationships through frequent and visible social activities, thereby developing friendship and trust (Fu et al., 2019). Social media-generated job resources help employees build trust-based professional and interpersonal relationships that make individuals feel secure and confident, strengthening social exchange relationships (Kipkosgei et al., 2020). These exchange relationships facilitate bidirectional circulation of work resources such as information and experience, gradually transforming into dedication to work goals and ultimately enhancing job performance (Chen & Wei, 2020).

Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 3:** Interpersonal trust mediates the relationship between (a) work-oriented and (b) social-oriented social media usage and job performance.

### 1.3 The Mechanism of Social Media Usage on Job Performance: The Buffering Path

In increasingly dynamic work environments, work interference has become a common and unavoidable phenomenon, making it crucial to address workplace interruptions (Puranik et al., 2020). The negative effects of work interference partly stem from employees lacking sufficient resources to cope, leading to fatigue and negative emotions (Keller et al., 2019). According to JD-R theory's "buffering" hypothesis, when employees acquire adequate job and personal resources through social media usage, they can effectively reduce work interference and its associated negative impacts. Specifically, abundant resources increase employees' control over work interference, enabling them to decide whether to direct attention to interrupting events (Bakker et al., 2007). Keller et al. (2019) interpret this phenomenon from another perspective: when employees possess sufficient resources to handle work interference, they perceive less interference. Social media visibility enhances employees' meta-knowledge about "who knows what, who knows whom," enabling them to directly locate organizational experts and obtain needed knowledge (Sun et al., 2020), avoiding disruptions from irrelevant information. Moreover, social activities conducted through social media represent a positive rest mechanism that helps employees restore resources (Wu et al., 2020). Therefore, continuously replenishing resources at work not only reduces employees' perceived work interference but also helps them effectively cope with interruptions and minimize negative consequences. Lower work interference enables employees to concentrate better on current tasks while reducing dissatisfaction and complaints (Keller et al., 2019), fostering a positive work atmosphere. Under these conditions, employees can both complete assigned tasks and, due to higher job satisfaction, build more connections within the organization and dedicate more time and energy (Liang et al., 2020).

Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 4:** Work interference mediates the relationship between (a) work-oriented and (b) social-oriented social media usage and job performance.

Relationship conflict leads to negative emotions, anger, tension, and divisive behaviors, requiring employees to expend substantial time and energy that likely results in resource depletion (Brocklee & Spector, 2006). In such situations, employees not only invest less energy in work and demonstrate poor performance but also engage in negative interactions with colleagues (Mulki et al., 2015). Conversely, when employees possess abundant personal and job resources, the cognitive pressure and tension from relationship conflict are alleviated, and employees gain capacity to reasonably address and manage relationship conflict, thereby avoiding severe negative impacts. First, frequent interaction provides conditions for obtaining social and emotional support; close relationships and sense of belonging among employees facilitate mutual understanding, preventing relationship conflict while offsetting negative effects (Jiang et al., 2019). Second, social media creates a friendly virtual environment where employees can

exchange work-related information, effectively avoiding and reducing communication barriers and thereby decreasing relationship conflict caused by insufficient information exchange (Cao & Ali, 2018). Finally, using social media for breaks after task completion serves as a recovery mechanism that helps restore resources (Cheng & Cho, 2021).

Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 5:** Relationship conflict mediates the relationship between (a) work-oriented and (b) social-oriented social media usage and job performance.

#### 1.4 Interactive Effects Between Different Social Media Usage Purposes

High performance requires close coordination between task demands and social exchange, a characteristic further reinforced in interactive environments using social media (Chen & Wei, 2020). When employees use social media for work purposes, its social functions can further strengthen the utility of work usage; the job resources generated in this process can complement and accumulate, promoting positive work attitudes and workplace relationships that subsequently improve job performance. According to JD-R theory, social media usage as a job resource strengthens employees' motivational processes, while workplace constraints give social media usage work-directed characteristics. Thus, resources obtained from both social and work-oriented usage benefit employee work attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, through work-oriented social media usage, employees can effectively communicate work information, share knowledge, help colleagues solve problems, and acquire resources that enhance work capabilities, positively influencing job performance (Lu et al., 2015). If employees subsequently strengthen colleague interactions through social-oriented usage, building diverse relationship networks (Fu et al., 2019) and obtaining support and encouragement, their positive work experiences will further improve. Abundant job resources help employees become more engaged, build harmonious interpersonal relationships, and demonstrate higher performance levels. Moreover, because different social media orientations generate different types of job resources—work-oriented media having work value and social-oriented media having expressive value (Song et al., 2019)—when work-oriented social media usage is low, the positive effects of social-oriented usage may weaken. In other words, single-purpose social media usage only limitedly realizes social media's value. Integrating these hypotheses, we propose that work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage have a synergistic relationship in the workplace, with their interaction positively influencing work engagement, work interference, interpersonal trust, and relationship conflict, thereby affecting job performance.

Therefore, we propose:

**Hypothesis 6:** The positive interaction between work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage influences (a) work engagement, (b) work interference, (c) interpersonal trust, and (d) relationship conflict, thereby affecting

employee job performance.

## 2 Method

### 2.1 Participants and Procedure

This study targeted middle- and lower-level employees in Chinese internet companies, conducting surveys in enterprises located in Shanghai, Henan, and other regions. We collected matched leader-subordinate questionnaires through both paper-based (primary) and electronic formats. The administration process combined researcher participation with authorized agents. All participants were informed that the survey was anonymous, with data used strictly for scientific research and kept strictly confidential. After completion, leaders and subordinates were matched one-to-one according to coded sequences to ensure authenticity and validity while avoiding personal information omission. Leaders reported their own demographic information and evaluated subordinates' job performance, while employees reported their social media usage, work engagement, work interference, interpersonal trust, relationship conflict, and demographic information. With assistance from company administrative staff, we distributed 519 questionnaires and obtained 369 valid matched pairs, yielding a 71.1% valid response rate.

### 2.2 Measures

All measures were selected from established domestic and international scales and translated into Chinese using standard back-translation procedures. All scales used a 7-point Likert format (1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree").

**Social Media Usage:** We adopted the social media usage scale developed by Gonzalez and revised by Zhang et al. (2018), comprising two dimensions (work-oriented and social-oriented usage) with nine items (e.g., "I use social media for leisure during work breaks"). In this study, Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients were 0.80 for the work dimension and 0.75 for the social dimension.

**Work Engagement:** We used the 9-item work engagement scale developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006) (e.g., "At work, I feel bursting with energy"). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.93.

**Work Interference:** We adopted the 3-item work interference scale by Ou and Davison (2011) (e.g., "Using social media greatly affects my ability to concentrate on work"). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.69.

**Interpersonal Trust:** We used the 11-item interpersonal trust scale developed by McAllister (1995) (e.g., "I have invested a great deal of emotion in my relationships with colleagues"). Cronbach's  $\alpha$  was 0.84.

**Relationship Conflict:** We adopted the 3-item relationship conflict scale by

Jehn and Bendersky (2003) (e.g., “There is considerable emotional conflict between my supervisor [colleagues] and me” ). Cronbach’ s  $\alpha$  was 0.79.

**Job Performance:** We used the 15-item job performance scale by Van Scotter and Motowidlo (1996), with five items each for task performance, interpersonal facilitation, and job dedication. To minimize social desirability bias, we used supervisor ratings. Cronbach’ s  $\alpha$  was 0.91.

**Control Variables:** Following previous research, we controlled for employee gender, age, education level, and tenure (Liang et al., 2020).

### 3 Results

#### 3.1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

We conducted confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to examine the discriminant validity of the seven latent variables: work-oriented social media usage, social-oriented social media usage, work engagement, work interference, interpersonal trust, relationship conflict, and job performance. As shown in Table 1 , the seven-factor model demonstrated acceptable fit indices (RMSEA/SRMR < 0.08, CFI/TLI > 0.90) and represented the best fit, indicating good discriminant validity among the seven variables.

Given that six of the seven variables (excluding job performance) were self-reported, common method bias might be a concern. Following Podsakoff et al. (2003) and Dulac et al. (2008), we employed Harman’ s single-factor test and the unmeasured common method factor approach. Harman’ s test showed that the first unrotated factor explained only 28.78% of total variance. The common method factor analysis yielded an AVE of 0.02, far below the critical value of 0.5, indicating that common method bias was not a significant issue.

**Table 1** Results of Discriminant Validity and Common Method Bias Analyses

*Note: N = 369; I1 = work-oriented social media usage, I2 = social-oriented social media usage, I3 = work engagement, I4 = work interference, I5 = interpersonal trust, I6 = relationship conflict, D7 = job performance, CMV = common method variance, “+” indicates merging of two factors.*

#### 3.2 Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

Table 2 presents means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations for all study variables. Results show that both work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage significantly correlate with mediators and outcome variables, providing preliminary support for our theoretical model.

**Table 2** Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations Among Main Variables

*Note: N = 369; p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01 (two-tailed). Cronbach’ s  $\alpha$  coefficients are shown in parentheses on the diagonal.\**

### 3.3 Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses 1a and 1b proposed positive effects of work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage on job performance from a JD-R perspective. As shown in Table 3, both work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage significantly and positively predicted job performance, supporting Hypothesis 1.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b proposed that work engagement mediates the relationship between social media usage and job performance. Table 3 shows that the indirect effect of work-oriented social media usage on job performance through work engagement was significant ( $\beta = 0.063$ ,  $p = 0.082$ ), with a bootstrap 95% confidence interval of [0.003, 0.146] that excluded zero. For social-oriented usage, the indirect effect through work engagement was also significant ( $\beta = 0.088$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ), with a 95% CI of [0.027, 0.159]. Hypotheses 3a and 3b proposed interpersonal trust as a mediator. Table 3 shows that indirect effects through interpersonal trust were non-significant for both usage types. Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported while Hypothesis 3 was rejected.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b proposed work interference as a mediator. Table 3 shows non-significant indirect effects through work interference for both usage types. Hypotheses 5a and 5b proposed relationship conflict as a mediator. Consistent with the hypothesized buffering effect, the indirect effect of social-oriented social media usage on job performance through relationship conflict was significant ( $\beta = 0.088$ ,  $p = 0.022$ ), with a 95% CI of [0.027, 0.182]. However, the indirect effect for work-oriented usage was non-significant. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was rejected while Hypothesis 5 received partial support.

**Table 3** Main Effects and Mediation Analysis of Work-Oriented and Social-Oriented Social Media Usage

*Note:*  $N = 369$ ;  $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ .\*

To more directly illustrate social media's effects on job performance and its mechanisms, results are summarized in Figure [FIGURE:N].

### 3.4 Relationships Between Different Social Media Usage Purposes

Since both types of social media usage can influence job performance through work engagement, we examined their interactive effects to explore potential relationships. As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the interaction term negatively predicted work engagement ( $\beta = -0.11$ ,  $p = 0.046$ ), which in turn positively predicted job performance ( $\beta = 0.15$ ,  $p = 0.008$ ). The indirect effect was  $-0.016$  (95% CI = [-0.045, -0.001]). Although Hypothesis 6 was not supported, the results revealed an alternative interaction pattern: substitution. Specifically, building on the mediation mechanisms, work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage exhibit negative interaction that influences job performance through work engagement, indicating that the two usage types can substitute for one another.

**Table 4** Results of Interaction Effect Analysis

*Note:*  $N = 369$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ,  $**p < 0.01$ .\*

**Table 5** Mediation Effect Values

*Note:*  $N = 369$ .

## 4 Discussion

Based on JD-R theory, this study explored how employees' different purposes of social media usage affect job performance. Analysis of 369 dyads revealed that workplace social media usage functions as a job resource that enhances employee performance by promoting work engagement and reducing relationship conflict. Specifically, both work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage influence job performance through work engagement. Additionally, relationship conflict mediates the relationship between social-oriented usage and job performance. Previous research has typically examined social media usage from single dimensions, yielding inconsistent findings and limited understanding of underlying mechanisms (Demircioglu & Chen, 2019; Luo et al., 2018). Our study addresses these gaps by applying JD-R theory to verify social media' s effects through both gain and buffering paths, and by uncovering the substitutive relationship between different usage purposes, thereby complementing and extending existing research.

### 4.1 Theoretical Contributions

First, this study introduces JD-R theory to social media research to reveal its effects as a job resource, exploring impacts through both gain and buffering paths and providing new theoretical perspectives. Results indicate that social media can be viewed as a job resource that positively influences job performance (Nie et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2021). On one hand, employees build extensive social networks through social media to acquire information and resources, while also learning by observing colleagues' interactions as third-party observers, thereby improving work capabilities and efficiency (Liang et al., 2020). On the other hand, social media usage ameliorates traditional workplace issues such as communication barriers, knowledge hiding, and relationship conflict (Wang et al., 2019), reducing resource loss. Thus, workplace social media usage helps employees obtain and maintain sufficient resources to achieve performance targets.

Second, integrating perspectives on work states and interpersonal relationships, this study deepens understanding of the mechanisms linking social media usage and employee outcomes, opening the "black box" between usage and performance. We found that social media creates direct and effective work environments where information accessibility and timeliness ensure efficiency and allow employees to focus on work (Van Zoonen et al., 2017). Simultaneously, social-oriented social media helps employees build, maintain, and develop interpersonal relationships,

increasing positive emotions and social support, shaping favorable work atmospheres, and preventing conflict (Jiang et al., 2019; Kipkosgei et al., 2020). Consistent with previous research, although social media can promote trust and reduce interference, these did not directly impact performance (Nilasari, 2020). We speculate that trust formation may remain at the individual level, with employees focusing more on themselves, thus not directly affecting job performance. Potential mediating mechanisms or boundary conditions between interpersonal trust and job performance warrant future exploration. Additionally, although social media proficiency helps reduce work interference, the ubiquity of interference may limit this pathway's effectiveness.

Third, this study examines interactions between work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage, advancing social media research. Previous studies have typically treated different usage types as parallel, ignoring potential interactive effects. Our results show negative interaction between the two usage types on work engagement, which subsequently affects job performance. In other words, work and social usage of social media in the workplace are substitutable in the "social media  $\rightarrow$  work state  $\rightarrow$  job performance" pathway. This finding contradicts previous research suggesting synergistic complementarity (Song et al., 2019), possibly due to several reasons. First, we restricted social media usage to the workplace, limiting interaction targets to internal organizational members and making resulting effects internally oriented, thus enabling substitution between mechanisms. Second, Song et al. (2019) focused only on DingTalk and WeChat, whereas our study conceptualizes usage purposes more broadly, not limited to specific platforms, leading to different results (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015). Finally, our quantitative approach examining interaction effects (Peng et al., 2020) reveals the joint effects of different usage purposes, enriching comprehensive understanding while providing new directions for future research through contradictions with previous findings.

## 4.2 Practical Implications

This study's examination of social media usage mechanisms offers valuable guidance for optimizing organizational social media management. First, managers should adopt a comprehensive perspective, abandoning stereotypes about social activities on social media and permitting non-work activities within bounds that positively impact work. Appropriate leisure and social activities help employees temporarily disconnect from high-pressure environments, serving as effective resource recovery pathways that enhance subsequent work engagement.

Second, regarding interactive effects, work-oriented and social-oriented social media usage are substitutable in influencing job performance through work engagement. Managers should recognize that although both usage types can improve employee states and behaviors, their extensive use may limit each other's positive effects. From a practical standpoint, more work/social-related social media usage is not always better; organizations must find effective balance between the two.

### 4.3 Limitations and Future Directions

First, research design and data analysis could be improved. This study used cross-sectional data, precluding rigorous causal inferences and failing to capture dynamic influence processes among social media usage, interpersonal relationships, work states, and job performance. Future research should employ longitudinal designs with repeated measurements to deeply examine these mechanisms. Additionally, our sample treated employees as a homogeneous group, ignoring potential subgroup differences. Previous research indicates that individual traits and background factors also influence social media usage (Hruska & Maresova, 2020). Future studies could explore differential effects across gender, occupation, and culture.

Second, research content could be expanded. Our results show both usage types positively influence job performance through the gain path, but we did not consider how usage frequency and intensity affect outcomes. Research has long revealed social media's dark side, such as work interference and internet addiction, which depend on conditions like excessive usage and after-hours use (Moqbel & Kock, 2018; Nie et al., 2020). Future research could explore how increased usage frequency affects outcomes and investigate potential curvilinear relationships between social media usage and organizational outcomes to provide more comprehensive theoretical guidance. Moreover, this study only examined job performance, inadequately revealing social media's full value. Future research could incorporate additional variables such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment to enrich understanding of social media's effects on employee attitudes and behaviors. Finally, our study considered only single-level variables, ignoring team-level influences (Richard et al., 2009) such as team cultural climate. Future research could incorporate higher-level constructs and employ multilevel analysis to comprehensively examine how organizational and individual factors influence social media mechanisms.

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