Research Article

Exploring positive impact of social media on employee mental health: A Delphi method

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study investigates the positive effect of social media on employee mental health, a critical factor affecting both individual well-being and organizational performance. Addressing a gap in empirical research, particularly in Malaysian context, this study utilizes a two-round Delphi method to gather expert opinions from diverse fields, sectors, industries, and generations. The research identified 41 themes, subsequently categorized into five key dimensions. The study found that interpersonal connection was the most important dimension, followed by psychological well-being, performance and satisfaction, growth and development, and working culture. This research elucidates the multifaceted benefits of social media in enhancing employee mental health and offers comprehensive insights into its constructive role in the workplace. Contributing to the literature, it provides practical implications and strategic recommendations for organizations to leverage social media effectively to bolster employee mental health. **Keywords:** employee, mental health, social media, Delphi method, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Employee mental health is a crucial determinant of both individual well-being and organizational performance. It impacts not only the psychological state of the employees but also influences productivity, creativity, and innovation within organizations (Chen et al., 2022; Lu et al., 2022). With the rise of social media and educational technology, employees can now access a wider network of colleagues, learning resources, and professional development opportunities online. As workplaces become increasingly reliant on

technology, digital fluency, and online collaboration, a significant number of employees worldwide continue to face mental health challenges that impair their well-being and professional efficiency. Common issues include stress, anxiety, burnout, and depression, often resulting from factors such as excessive workloads, poor communication, inadequate support, and workplace conflicts (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022).

WHO (2022) reports that while approximately 60.0% of the global population is employed, about 15.0% of the working-age population suffered from mental disorders in 2019, a figure that has notably increased from 2019 to 2021. Depression and anxiety disorders, affecting over 300 million and 260 million individuals, respectively, pose a substantial economic burden, leading to an annual loss of approximately US$ one trillion in global productivity.

In Malaysia, the mental health scenario presents a concerning picture (Kaur et al., 2022). Data from the Ministry of Health Malaysia reveals a rising trend in mental health issues, escalating from 10.5% in 1996 to 29.2% in 2015 (Bakar et al., 2022). In 2018, it was reported that 4.57 million working adults were grappling with mental health issues, with 29.0% acknowledging their struggles (Chua, 2020). Furthermore, surveys like Malaysia's healthiest workplace by AIA vitality underscore the prevalence of work-related stress and sleep deprivation among Malaysian employees, which can adversely impact their physical and mental health, as well as their work performance (The Star, 2022). Additionally, a report by Employment Hero indicates that a significant portion of Malaysian employees' experience burnout and poor work-life balance (Ignatius, 2022).

The government and employers in Malaysia have yet to adequately address this critical issue. As highlighted by WHO (2022), factors such as poor work-life balance and ineffective communication are major contributors to the deteriorating mental health of employees. For instance, long or inflexible working hours, excessive workloads, lack of flexibility, and work-family conflicts can lead to work-related stress and mental health issues, impacting their physical and mental health, work performance, and satisfaction (Gautam & Jain, 2018). In addition, poor communication practices can lead to feelings of confusion, frustration, anxiety, low self-esteem, resentment, or anger, further impairing employee morale and performance (Gamil & Abd Rahman, 2022).

The advent of educational technology has revolutionized teaching and learning, but it has also introduced new dynamics that influence employee mental health. Social media plays a complex role. In a world, where technology integration, digital literacy, and online collaboration are essential components of work, social media presents unique challenges and opportunities for employees. While platforms like Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Microsoft Team, Twitter, WeChat, WhatsApp, and Zoom facilitate global connectivity and information exchange (Greenhow et al., 2017), they also contribute to decreased social interaction, physical activity, and increased exposure to harmful online content (Kolhar et al., 2021; Naslund et al., 2020; Pandya & Lodha, 2021). Furthermore, social media use has been linked to heightened levels of depression, anxiety, and reduced self-esteem among employees (Bozzola et al., 2022).

Conversely, social media can serve as a powerful tool for enhancing organizational and employee performance. Businesses utilize these platforms for external stakeholder engagement and internal workplace improvement, thereby fostering employee social interaction, reducing uncertainty and stress, and enhancing workplace thriving (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Liang et al., 2020). Digital 2022 global overview report indicates that nearly half of the global population aged 13 and above uses social media for work, highlighting its ubiquity in professional contexts (Kemp, 2022). Employees use social media for various work-related purposes, which can also contribute to improved mental health and workplace interaction (Bodhi et al., 2022). According to social capital theory, social media can enhance employees' mental health by expanding their social networks and resources (Kasim et al., 2022). Studies show that a significant portion of employees find social media use at work beneficial for their happiness, connectedness, and productivity (Verduyn et al., 2017).

Despite these advantages, many employers and policymakers have yet to fully recognize or leverage the positive impact of social media on employee mental health, often implementing restrictive policies that limit or prohibit its use at work. There is a pressing need for comprehensive research to understand the benefits and risks of social media usage in professional settings. This study aims to investigate how social media can foster better mental health outcomes for employees in Malaysia, contributing to healthier and more productive workplaces. It will examine the effects of employees' social media use at work on their mental health and well-being and explore the factors that may influence this relationship.

Given the increasing prevalence of mental health issues among employees, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, this research is timely and significant. Employee mental health affects various dimensions of their lives, including emotional expression, job performance, and physical health (Hennekam et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021). The pandemic has intensified work demands and blurred the boundaries between professional and personal life, leading to heightened levels of stress and exhaustion (Giorgi et al., 2020). In Malaysia, the economic cost of poor mental health in the workplace is substantial, with an estimated loss of 1.0% of the GDP (CodeBlue, 2023). Therefore, this study aims to investigate how social media can foster better mental health outcomes for employees in Malaysia, contributing to healthier and more productive workplaces. It will specifically focus on:

1. Collecting expert views on the positive impacts of social media on employee mental health.
2. Prioritizing the recognized positive impacts of social media on employee mental health according to the perceived importance or impact of these experts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The well-being of employees is pivotal for fostering positive workplace interactions and job satisfaction. Among the key determinants of employee well-being is mental health, which is as crucial as physical health. Mental health encompasses the experience of positive emotions, effective stress management, and maintaining a hopeful outlook. Recent research suggests that integrating social media into the workplace can aid organizations in creating dynamic, productive environments conducive to supporting employee mental health and well-being (Zhou et al., 2022). Social media enhances work processes, fosters social and informational interactions among employees, reduces uncertainty and stress, and increases their thriving at work (Liang et al., 2020; Song et al., 2019). These factors subsequently promote engagement, innovation, and effective knowledge management, essential for achieving team goals and task completion (Demircioglu, 2018; Powers et al., 2021).

Mental health is a state of well-being that enables optimal functioning, productivity, and the realization of one's potential (Bergefurt et al., 2022). It involves coping with normal life stresses, working productively, contributing to the community, and maintaining a balance in feelings, thoughts, and behaviors (Coronel-Santos & Rodríguez-Macías, 2022; Nebhinani & Jain, 2019). Psychological well-being, a fundamental aspect of mental health, encompasses both hedonic and eudemonic happiness, as well as resilience (Tang et al., 2019).

Employee mental health, referring to the emotional and psychological well-being of individuals in the workplace, influences their happiness, productivity, and ability to cope with stress and challenges (Singh & Ramdeo, 2023). It encompasses not only the absence of mental disorders but also the presence of positive mental states like satisfaction, engagement, resilience, and optimism (Hennekam et al., 2021). Factors influencing employee mental health include individual traits like personality, self-esteem, coping skills, and social support, as well as workplace aspects like job stress, workload, job control, work-life balance, organizational culture, leadership style, and interpersonal relationships (Rapisarda et al., 2022; Zhenjing et al., 2022). WHO (2022) emphasizes that decent work promotes mental health, providing a sense of purpose and community.

Despite these challenges, the positive influence of social media on employee mental health is significant. Platforms like LinkedIn offer opportunities for professional growth, networking, and learning, boosting self-esteem and job satisfaction (Liang et al., 2020). Social media also serves as a source of inspiration, motivation, and entertainment for employees, contributing to improved morale, mindset, and mental health (Janicke-Bowles et al., 2022; Shahbaznezhad et al., 2022; Zhao et al., 2021). It provides a platform for building social relationships, reducing isolation, improving mood, and offering peer support (Clark et al., 2017; Zsila & Reyes, 2023). Such engagement can buffer employees from workplace stressors, enhancing well-being and psychological health.

While social media integration offers potential benefits for employee well-being, it is crucial to acknowledge the inherent challenges and risks associated with its implementation within the workplace environment. Privacy concerns arise as the line between personal and professional online presences blur, potentially leading to the inadvertent disclosure of sensitive information (Bhandari et al., 2022). Employees

might share work-related details, confidential data, or express personal opinions that could damage their professional reputation or the organization's image (Amin & Khan, 2021). Social media platforms can, unfortunately, become breeding grounds for cyberbullying within a work context, creating a hostile work environment with severe psychological consequences (Hamm et al., 2015). Finally, social media's inherently engaging nature presents a significant distraction during work hours, potentially leading to decreased focus and productivity decline (Walden, 2016). Overall, social media presents a double-edged sword with potential risks and benefits. Its positive impacts, including fostering social connections, professional development, and providing a source of motivation and relaxation, are crucial for enhancing employee mental health in the modern workplace. This literature review underscores the need for a balanced approach in leveraging social media's positive potential for employee well-being.

Theoretical Underpinning

The positive impact of social media on employee mental health can be analyzed and understood through multiple theoretical frameworks. These theories collectively offer a comprehensive understanding of how social media can fulfill employees' psychological and social needs, aiding them in coping with challenges and enhancing their sense of happiness and connection.

Social capital theory, as proposed by Bourdieu (1985), explains how social relationships provide various benefits for individuals and groups. It suggests that individuals with stronger social connections can access greater resources and opportunities than those with fewer and weaker ties. Social media acts as a tool to enhance social capital by facilitating the creation, maintenance, and improvement of social networks online (Poecze & Strauss, 2020). For instance, it enables individuals to form valuable connections with colleagues, friends, family members, and experts, who can offer emotional support, instrumental assistance, or valuable insights (Winstone et al., 2021). These connections aid in coping with work-related stress, solving problems, and acquiring new skills. Additionally, social media allows employees to connect with diverse individuals from different backgrounds, locations, and industries, broadening their perspectives and exposing them to a variety of ideas and opportunities (Ostic et al., 2021). Regular communication, sharing of information, and expressions of gratitude and trust strengthen network ties and foster a sense of rapport, allegiance, and reciprocity among network members (Spottswood & Wohn, 2020). Consequently, employees can enhance their social capital, feeling more supported, connected, and empowered within their professional environment.

Social support theory, proposed by Cullen (1994), highlights the significant impact of strong social relationships on individuals' stress management and overall well-being. This theory categorizes social support into three types: emotional, informational, and instrumental. Emotional support offers comfort and empathy to those under stress or in distress, informational support provides guidance and advice for problem-solving, and instrumental support extends practical assistance or resources as needed (Drageset, 2021). The theory posits that social support mitigates the adverse effects of stress on physical and mental health by lowering blood pressure, enhancing the immune system, and preventing depression. It also bolsters coping skills and resilience, fostering self-esteem, confidence, and optimism (Bjørlykhaug et al., 2022). Moreover, social support facilitates personal and professional growth by encouraging learning, creativity, and innovation. The theory emphasizes the importance of robust social networks in promoting individual and collective well-being and highlights the reciprocal nature of support within communities. This theoretical approach has been extensively explored in psychological and sociological studies due to its significant implications for mental health and overall life satisfaction.

Furthermore, educational technology frameworks shed light on how social media can empower employee learning and development. Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice (CoP) theory emphasizes social interaction as a cornerstone of knowledge acquisition. Social media platforms function as ideal tools for fostering virtual CoPs structured around employees' expertise, shared project objectives, or specific challenges (Kothari et al., 2015). Within these online communities, employees can engage in a multitude of knowledge-sharing activities (Alsiö et al., 2019). For instance, senior employees can share best practices and industry insights through threaded discussions or document repositories. Junior colleagues can pose questions to seasoned professionals, receiving real-time feedback and guidance. Brainstorming sessions using social media can lead to innovative solutions for tackling departmental hurdles (Goodyear et al., 2014).

Furthermore, social media groups can act as a platform for ongoing peer support and encouragement, fostering a sense of camaraderie and belonging within the organization. This collaborative learning environment demonstrably enhances employee professional development, improves problem-solving abilities, and contributes to a more positive and engaged workforce (Yarris et al., 2019).

These theoretical frameworks provide related yet distinct perspectives and concepts explaining the positive impact of social media on employee mental health. Integrating these frameworks offers a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which social media positively affects employee mental health.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a two-round Delphi method to investigate the positive effects of social media on employee mental health. Delphi method is a well-established approach involving the collection and analysis of expert opinions through rounds of anonymous communication until consensus is reached (Martin et al., 2021). It is particularly valuable in scenarios involving forecasting future events, exploring complex topics, or developing guidelines and recommendations (Schmalz et al., 2021).

The research involved 40 experienced employees from Malaysia, providing practical insights from their extensive knowledge of social media in the workplace. The process included selecting experts, designing, and sending questionnaires, analyzing responses, and repeating the process until consensus was reached (Mohd Noor et al., 2022).

Delphi first-round design

The first round involved engaging experts with extensive knowledge of social networking sites in workplace settings in Malaysia. The objective was to understand the potential positive impact of social media on employee mental health in Malaysian context. Experts from various fields contributed insights and recommendations based on their experiences (Niederberger & Spranger, 2020).

Delphi second-round design

The second round aimed to assess consensus and prioritize the positive impacts of social media identified in the first round. A structured questionnaire with a ranking methodology was used, allowing experts to assign importance to each dimension. A numerical value was assigned to each dimension for subsequent statistical analysis.

Sampling

To gain a rich and nuanced understanding of social media implementation within Malaysian organizations, a purposive sampling technique was employed. This involved strategically selecting 40 participants with diverse professional backgrounds and roles. The target population comprised employees directly involved in developing and managing social media strategies across various Malaysian organizations.

The selection process focused on identifying individuals with extensive professional experience in social media management. This entailed contacting relevant organizations, professional bodies, and social media communities in Malaysia to recruit qualified participants. To ensure a well-rounded and highly knowledgeable sample, rigorous selection criteria were implemented. These included a minimum of five years' experience in professional social media management, representation from government, private, and non-profit sectors, and demonstrably strong leadership skills in key social media functions like content creation, community management, or strategic analytics.

Data Collection

Delphi method employed a two-round process with structured questionnaires distributed via email to a panel of experts. The first round aimed to gather in-depth insights on the potential positive impacts of social media on employee mental health. Key questions explored included: *How does social media facilitate*

connection, support, and a sense of belonging among employees, and how does this contribute to positive mental health outcomes?

The second round then involved ranking the importance and likelihood of the identified positive impacts that emerged from the first round's responses.

Data Analysis

In the first round of Delphi method, thematic analysis was used to analyze responses from the expert panel. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organizes and describes the data set in rich detail and interprets various aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Initially, data reduction was undertaken, involving the transcription and systematic coding of the responses. Codes were generated iteratively, reflecting emerging themes and patterns relevant to the positive impacts of social media on employee mental health. Following this, the coded data was organized into potential themes. This process included combining and cataloging related codes into theme clusters, ensuring each theme accurately represented the underlying data (Nowell et al., 2017). The subsequent phase involved reviewing and refining these themes. This step ensured the coherence of each theme, and that the overall thematic map accurately reflected the data set. Dimensions were then defined and named, capturing the essence of what each theme represented about the data. This thematic analysis in the first round laid the groundwork for the following stage of Delphi method, enabling an in-depth exploration of the positive impact of social media on employee mental health.

The second round of Delphi method involved a more comprehensive analysis of the factors identified in the first round. After the initial thematic analysis, a refined list of factors impacting employee mental health through social media use was established. This second round aimed to deepen the understanding of these factors and evaluate their relative importance and interrelationships. In this phase, the experts were provided with the consolidated list of factors derived from the first round. They were then asked to engage in a more detailed assessment, involving ranking or rating each factor based on its perceived importance or impact on employee mental health. Kendall's coefficient of concordance (W) was used to assess the level of consensus among experts regarding the ranking or importance of each factor. This statistical measure provided a clear indication of which factors were deemed most critical by the panel, based on their collective expertise.

RESULTS

First Round of Delphi Method

On 1 October 2023, invitation letters were sent out via email and WhatsApp to 40 experts from various fields and backgrounds, inviting them to participate in Delphi method. Out of the 40 experts who were contacted, 24 provided favorable responses. The response rate was 60.0%, which is considered satisfactory for this type of research. This rate indicates a good level of interest and engagement from the experts, a crucial factor for the success of Delphi method (Nasa et al., 2021). **Table 1** displays the profiles of the 24 experts who participated in Delphi method.

The experts in this research are professionals from various fields, including psychology, medicine, information technology, engineering, economics, and human resource management. They represent different generations (X, Y, and Z) and work across diverse sectors and industries. Although most of the experts have a technical background, they offer insights into the relationships between mental health and their field identity; they also discuss the psychological effects of stress, depression, and anxiety in areas such as technology, engineering, production, business, and economics. According to Meule et al. (2022), mental health is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon that requires diverse perspectives and insights from different fields. Therefore, the experts include not only traditional disciplines associated with mental health but also related fields to reflect the varied populations and diversity of Malaysian workforce.

The thematic analysis yielded 41 themes on the positive impact of social media on employee mental health. These themes were further categorized into five dimensions based on their similarity and relevance. Each dimension consisted of a different number of themes, with performance and satisfaction encompassing 12 themes, working culture nine themes, interpersonal connection eight themes, growth and development

Table 1. Expert who participated in Delphi method

No	Age	WE	Position in organization	Background of organization
E1	33	8	Clinical psychologist	**Pantai Hospital Penang** is a private hospital & medical facility in Bayan Baru,
E2	32	8	Medical doctor	Penang, Malaysia.
E3	32	3	Customer care executive	
E4	40	20	HR manager	**Western Digital (Sandisk Storage Malaysia Sdn Bhd)** located at Batu Kawan,
E5	31	8	Staff engineer	Penang, Malaysia, is a company that provides data storage solutions, including
E6	24	2	Facility engineer	systems, HDD, Flash SSD, memory, & personal data solutions to help customers
E7	27	3	Manufacturing engineer	capture & preserve their most valued data.
E8	41	16	IT section manager	**YTL Communications Sdn Bhd** located at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is a mobile
E9	33	10	Product manager	network operator in Malaysia. It is a subsidiary of YTL Power International
E10	31	8	Project executive	Berhad & serves as communications arm of YTL Corporation Berhad, a leading
				infrastructure conglomerate in Malaysia.
E11	25	2	HR service specialist	**Intel Corporation Penang** is a multinational technology company that
E12	43	20	Senior business analyst	produces microprocessors, chipsets, & systems on a chip product. It is one of
E13	36	18	Engineering manager	the world's largest & most influential companies in field of computer hardware
E14	33	10	EHS engineer	& software.
E15	47	24	HR manager	**Pentamaster Cooperation Berhad** is a company that provides automation
E16	31	7	Optics engineer	manufacturing & technology solutions for various industries. It was established
				in 1991 & is in Bayan Lepas, Penang, Malaysia.
E17	32	8	Project manager	**Gasmec Engineering Services** located at Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia, is a
E18	32	6	Project engineer	company that provides engineering services, export & import of a variety of
				goods, & other service activities in Malaysia.
E19	33	9	Executive	**Aramco Trading Malaysia** located at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia is a subsidiary of
E20	32	6	R&D	Saudi Aramco, the world's largest oil company.
E21	30	6	Project engineer	**CCM Chemicals** located at Pasir Gudang, Johor Bahru, Johor, Malaysia, is a
E22	28	5	Product engineer	leading manufacturer & supplier of chlor-alkali & polymer chemicals in Malaysia.
E23	29	5	Senior executive	
E24	50	29	Director	**CIMB Group** is a global leader in banking, one of the world's largest Islamic
				banks in ASEAN, its headquarters are in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, & offer
				consumer banking, commercial banking, wholesale banking, Islamic banking, &
				asset management products & services.

Note. WE: Work experience in years

Table 2. Consolidation of round one Delphi findings

No	Dimensions	Themes
1	Performance & satisfaction	Job productivity, job efficiency, job effectiveness, motivation & engagement, creativity & innovation, quality of work, problem-solving skills, goal attainment, job contentment, sense of valued, commitment to organization, & recognition & rewards
2	Working culture	Harmonious & positive working environment, diversity & inclusion, employee morale, love & belongingness workplace, healthy workplace relationship, peer support, team collaboration, psychological safety, & flexibility & autonomy
3	Interpersonal connection	Information sharing, interconnection with colleagues, friends, & families, enhance relationship, sense of community, networking, social support, stay updated, & social influence
4	Growth & development	Personal development, professional development, extra side income, skill development, career advancement, learning opportunity, competence development, & knowledge enhancement
5	Psychological well-being	Self-confidence, stress relief & relaxation, entertainment, & work life balance

eight themes, and psychological well-being four themes. **Table 2** shows the detailed classification and the number of themes under each dimension.

Second Round of Delphi Method

The second round of Delphi process was conducted on 28 October 2023, with the aim of identifying the most significant factors of social media's positive impact on employee mental health in Malaysia. To achieve this, a ranking technique was employed to measure relative importance of each factor on expert judgment (Kim & Yeo, 2018). The participants who had engaged in the first round were instructed to rank the five factors derived from the initial responses. They were reminded that their rankings should reflect their professional opinions and experiences, and that there were no right or wrong answers. Additionally, they were asked to use a numerical range from one to five, where one represented the most important factor and five the least

Table 3. Second round of Delphi method

Experts	Performance & satisfaction	Working culture	Interpersonal connection	Growth & development	Psychological well-being
E1	3	2	1	4	5
E2	3	4	1	2	5
E3	3	2	5	4	1
E4	2	4	5	3	1
E5	3	5	2	4	1
E6	1	3	4	2	5
E7	3	5	4	2	1
E8	3	5	1	4	2
E9	4	3	2	5	1
E10	2	4	1	3	5
E11	2	4	3	5	1
E12	4	5	2	1	3
E13	1	3	4	5	2
E14	4	5	1	3	2
E15	4	3	2	5	1
E16	1	5	3	4	2
E17	3	5	1	2	4
E18	4	5	1	2	3
E19	4	2	1	3	5
E20	3	5	1	4	2
E21	3	4	2	1	5
E22	3	5	1	2	4
E23	3	4	1	5	2
E24	4	5	1	2	3
Means	3.00	4.31	1.63	3.19	2.88
Group ranking	3	5	1	4	2

important. Each factor was to be assigned a unique number without repetition or omission. The ranking results are presented in **Table 3** displaying frequency and percentage of each ranking assigned to each factor.

Delphi technique is a widely recognized method for eliciting expert opinions and reaching consensus on complex issues. However, it can face challenges such as participant attrition and engagement, which might affect the validity and reliability of the results. After the first round, regular feedback and reminders were provided to participants, along with recognition and appreciation for their contributions. These strategies proved effective in retaining all the experts for the second round, with no dropouts occurring. The panel size of 24 experts fell within the recommended range by Clayton (1997), who suggested that 10 to 30 experts are sufficient for a Delphi study. Kendall's W test revealed a significant but moderate consensus among the experts on the topic of social media and employee mental health and well-being, with a W value of 0.240 and a p-value of 0.001. The lower level of agreement could be attributed to the heterogeneity of the experts, who differed in their fields, generations, perspectives, experiences, and preferences regarding the research topic. They also varied in their levels of familiarity and comfort with social media and its potential benefits for employee mental health and well-being. These factors may have influenced their ratings and rankings of the factors related to the topic, resulting in reduced concordance among them (Ju & Jin, 2013). The analysis indicated that 'interpersonal connection' was perceived as the most important dimension for social media's positive impact on employee mental health, while 'working culture' was deemed the least important.

DISCUSSION

Based on the results, the experts identified the following key dimensions of social media use as most beneficial for employee mental health:

(1) interpersonal connection,

(2) psychological well-being,

(3) performance and satisfaction,

(4) growth and development, and

(5) working culture.

This prioritization underscores that experts place importance on social and emotional benefits of social media use, rather than its organizational and professional aspects, for enhancing employee mental health.

Interpersonal Connection

Interpersonal connection dimension explores how social media facilitates communication, interaction, and relationship-building among users (Gull & Jha, 2019). In the first round of Delphi method, experts identified eight themes related to this dimension. These themes include:

(1) information sharing, or the ability to access and exchange information with others through social media platforms,

(2) interconnection with colleagues, friends, and family involving maintaining and strengthening ties,

(3) enhanced relationships, or improving the quality and intimacy of relationships,

(4) sense of community, which fosters a feeling of belonging and identification with a group sharing similar interests or goals,

(5) networking, or the ability to expand one's social circle,

(6) social support, which entails emotional, informational, or instrumental assistance,

(7) staying updated with the latest news and trends, and

(8) social influence, or the ability to affect or be affected by others' opinions and behaviors.

The experts agreed that social media could facilitate and enhance interpersonal connections, which in turn could improve psychological well-being, self-esteem, and social capital. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2023) state that social connectivity and stable, supportive relationships lead to healthier choices and better mental and physical health outcomes. Interpersonal connections enhance mental health by providing various forms of psychological support, such as coping strategies, positive feedback, security, and comfort. These can help reduce stress, alleviate anxiety, and prevent depression, which are common issues impacting cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being, and can lead to serious consequences like chronic diseases or mental disorders (Pietromonaco & Collins, 2017). Social media enriches communication and interaction with multimedia features, helping employees maintain contact with family and friends, especially those who live far away or have limited mobility (Franca, 2023). For instance, an employee working abroad can use video calls, instant messages, or social networks to keep in touch with loved ones. Moreover, social media aids employees in maintaining and expanding their social networks, both within and outside the organization. It creates a sense of social presence, reducing loneliness and isolation, especially in remote work settings or during stressful times (Ostic et al., 2021). Discovering new friends and communities that share similar interests can boost belonging and self-esteem (Pradhan & Singh, 2023; Zhou et al., 2022). Additionally, social media provides access to emotional support and online resources during tough times, and the ability to connect with professionals like therapists or counsellors for confidential services. These opportunities strengthen social bonds, increase social resources, and enhance social recognition, making interpersonal connection a crucial positive impact of social media on employee mental health. However, it's important to be mindful of potential negative effects, such as addiction or cyberbullying, and to adopt strategies that optimize the positive impact while minimizing the negative (Ostic et al., 2021).

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was ranked second in importance in the second round of Delphi method, following interpersonal connection, underscoring the significant role social media plays in promoting employees' psychological well-being. Four themes were identified under this dimension: self-confidence, stress relief and relaxation, entertainment, and work-life balance. These themes demonstrate the various ways social media can enhance employees' psychological well-being by offering self-expression opportunities, boosting self-worth, providing social support, leisure, and coping mechanisms.

Social media can improve employees' psychological well-being in several ways. It boosts self-esteem and self-efficacy by allowing employees to showcase their achievements, talents, and skills, and to receive positive feedback and recognition from others. This recognition can increase confidence, motivation, and a sense of

accomplishment (Ancis, 2020; Zsila & Reyes, 2023). For instance, employees can use platforms like Instagram and YouTube to display creative and artistic abilities, receiving likes, comments, and subscriptions, which validate their skills and enhance self-expression. Moreover, social media provides a platform for employees to vent emotions, seek support and advice, and access resources and information to cope with stress and anxiety, thereby reducing negative feelings, enhancing coping skills, and improving resilience (Naslund et al., 2020). It also offers a source of fun and enjoyment, with activities like watching videos, playing games, listening to music, and browsing memes, which can uplift mood and promote relaxation (Ostic et al., 2021). Social media also facilitates work-life balance by enabling employees to stay connected with family, friends, and colleagues, and manage personal and professional responsibilities (Jong et al., 2021). For example, platforms like Skype and WhatsApp allow for efficient communication and coordination, helping maintain relationships and balance work and life demands. Psychological well-being is a crucial dimension of social media's positive impact on employee mental health, enhancing positive emotions and life satisfaction. It ranks second to interpersonal connection because experts in Delphi method might view interpersonal connection as more fundamental for employee mental health. The interrelation between interpersonal connection and psychological well-being is notable, as positive relationships can bolster psychological functioning and life satisfaction, and vice versa. Employees with strong social ties and support tend to cope better with stress, leading to higher levels of happiness and well-being.

Performance & Satisfaction

The dimension of performance and satisfaction, encompassing 12 themes related to employees' work outcomes and attitudes, emerged as the third most significant positive impact of social media on employee mental health. These themes include job productivity, efficiency, effectiveness, motivation and engagement, creativity and innovation, quality of work, problem-solving skills, goal attainment, job contentment, sense of being valued, commitment to the organization, and recognition and rewards. Employee performance and satisfaction are intimately connected to mental health (Kosec et al., 2022). Positive emotions such as happiness, pride, and gratitude, typically experienced by employees who perform well and feel productive at work, can elevate energy levels, creativity, and resilience. This, in turn, enhances work quality and engagement. Conversely, employees struggling with performance and productivity are more likely to experience negative emotions like frustration, anxiety, and depression, draining their motivation, concentration, and confidence, and negatively impacting work efficiency and effectiveness (Chen et al., 2022; Khalid & Syed, 2023; Lu et al., 2022).

Social media affects mental health and work performance and satisfaction in various ways. It enables employees to build and activate social relationships and networks, enhancing social capital and support. This fosters psychological well-being, trust, commitment, and loyalty to the organization and colleagues (Wang et al., 2023). Platforms like Microsoft Team facilitate coordination and cooperation, enhancing engagement and commitment to organizational success. External networking through Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter exposes employees to diverse ideas and perspectives, stimulating creativity and innovation. Furthermore, social media use in the workplace can enhance employees' thriving, defined as a state of vitality and learning (Dantas et al., 2022). Thriving employees are more likely to be engaged, creative, and satisfied with their work and life. Conversely, challenges and unmet expectations can lead to stress, dissatisfaction, and poor mental health. Social media tools like Google Calendar aid in goal setting and pursuit, streamlining planning and coordination. Additionally, social media platforms offer recognition and rewards, enabling organizations to immediately appreciate employee contributions. This recognition can boost self-esteem, confidence, motivation, loyalty, and retention (Wang et al., 2023).

Growth & Development

Growth and development, as a dimension, addresses the positive impact of social media on enhancing employees' personal and professional skills, knowledge, and opportunities. This dimension includes eight themes: personal development, professional development, extra side income, skill development, career advancement, learning opportunities, competence development, and knowledge enhancement. These themes illustrate various aspects of growth and development that employees can experience through social

media usage. In the second round of Delphi method, this dimension was ranked fourth in importance for its positive impact on employee mental health.

Social media platforms facilitate personal development by providing empowerment, self-awareness, confidence, exposure to success stories, motivational content, and resources for personal growth. Professional development, involving skill enhancement and staying current in one's career, is crucial in a rapidly evolving work environment (Karim et al., 2019). Social media platforms offer access to a wealth of learning resources, such as online courses, videos, and webinars, helping employees update their professional competencies and career prospects. Skill, competence, and knowledge development are important for personal and professional enhancement, positively affecting mental well-being. These aspects foster a growth mindset, self-efficacy, and intellectual curiosity. Social media provides access to information, resources, and opportunities, enabling employees to learn new skills, acquire knowledge, and update themselves on the latest trends (Shujaat et al., 2021). Moreover, social media allows employees to showcase their achievements and talents, building personal and professional brands. This visibility helps employees stand out, attracting attention from employers and partners, and contributes to career development (Oksa et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023).

Working Culture

Working culture was identified as the fifth most significant positive impact of social media on employee mental health, encompassing themes such as a harmonious working environment, diversity and inclusion, employee morale, love and belongingness in the workplace, healthy workplace relationships, peer support, team collaboration, psychological safety, and flexibility and autonomy.

Working culture refers to the collective values, beliefs, norms, and practices that influence behavior in the workplace. A positive working culture can enhance employee engagement, satisfaction, loyalty, and productivity, while a negative one can contribute to stress, conflict, and turnover (Rasool et al., 2021). Social media platforms can strengthen workplace connections, fostering a sense of community and supporting a more harmonious working culture. This leads to stronger relationships, improved communication, and a supportive environment, making employees feel more connected, valued, and part of a team, irrespective of their diverse backgrounds. Social media also facilitates peer collaboration, providing a platform for group discussions, project cooperation, idea exchange, and progress monitoring. This collaboration enhances learning, development, creativity, and innovation, contributing to a positive working culture that promotes teamwork and morale (Oksa et al., 2022). Additionally, social media can cultivate a culture of psychological safety in the workplace. It encourages open communication, risk-taking, and learning from failures. Employees can share their opinions and experiences on various platforms, engage in constructive discussions, and receive feedback, which fosters openness, honesty, and trust among colleagues (Wouters-Soomers et al., 2022). Moreover, social media enhances flexibility and autonomy by allowing employees to work in a manner that suits their preferences and needs. This flexibility can lead to increased work-life balance, satisfaction, and productivity, catering to individual working styles and preferences (Oksa et al., 2021). While working culture was ranked fifth, its importance in fostering a positive environment and influencing employee mental health is undeniable. The dimension highlights how social media can play a pivotal role in shaping a supportive, inclusive, and collaborative workplace culture, contributing significantly to employee well-being.

Recommendations

Social media has become a vital part of our work lives, offering myriad benefits for employees' mental health, such as enhanced communication, collaboration, learning, and innovation. From our study, we categorize these benefits into five key dimensions: interpersonal connection, psychological well-being, performance and satisfaction, growth and development, and working culture. These dimensions reflect the multifaceted impact of social media on both personal and professional outcomes for employees. Our findings highlight that experts consider interpersonal connection the most crucial aspect, followed by psychological well-being, performance and satisfaction, growth and development, and working culture. This ranking underscores the importance of the social and emotional benefits of social media over cognitive and

organizational benefits. Therefore, balanced and strategic use of social media can be an effective tool for enhancing employee mental health across these dimensions.

Organizations should develop and enforce comprehensive social media policies that clearly outline usage expectations and rules. These policies should cover acceptable behaviors, privacy and security issues, intellectual property rights, and consequences for violations, aligning with the organization's core values and legal and ethical standards. Regular updates and communication about the policy are essential to adapt to the evolving nature of social media. Further, organizations must provide targeted education and training on effective and ethical social media use. This training should address the benefits and risks associated with social media, ethical standards, potential impacts on mental health, and strategies for managing stress and burnout. It should also include practical examples and case studies. Moreover, it is crucial to monitor and regulate the frequency and duration of social media use among employees to prevent psychological distress, setting realistic limits and providing alternatives to excessive use. Additionally, organizations should give feedback and recognize employees who use social media effectively, evaluating the impact on performance and satisfaction. This process should involve data collection from social media analytics, employee surveys, performance reviews, and customer feedback to gauge the impact on work quality, engagement, creativity, and employee retention. Timely and specific feedback and recognition for achievements through social media are important for acknowledging contributions and motivating continued or improved performance. Organizations can also support continuous learning by providing learning budgets or subscriptions for online courses and industry conferences. Showcasing learning activities and achievements on social media can attract talent and demonstrate commitment to professional growth. Finally, establishing positive social media etiquette is crucial for creating a collaborative work environment. Encouraging employees to share career achievements, provide constructive feedback, express gratitude, and support colleagues fosters open communication and teamwork. Recognizing and rewarding positive behaviors on social media, while addressing negative or inappropriate actions, is vital for maintaining a respectful online community. In essence, by implementing these recommendations, organizations can leverage social media as a powerful tool for enhancing employee mental health, fostering a balanced and supportive workplace that values the holistic well-being of its employees.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, & FUTURE AVENUE

In conclusion, our research significantly advances the theoretical understanding of the positive impact of social media on employee mental health, drawing upon and enriching key theoretical frameworks. Through the lens of social capital theory, we demonstrate that social media acts as a powerful tool in enhancing social capital within the workplace. Our study shows that social media platforms facilitate not only the development and maintenance of valuable professional networks but also enable employees to extend these networks beyond conventional boundaries, leading to increased access to diverse resources, ideas, and opportunities. Additionally, aligning with social support theory, our findings illustrate how social media serves as a dynamic platform for providing various forms of support among employees. We contribute to this theory by showcasing the multifaceted role of social media in offering emotional, informational, and instrumental support. Our empirical data suggests that social media can significantly bolster resilience, self-esteem, and optimism, thus enhancing overall employee well-being in the digital era. By integrating these frameworks, our research offers a comprehensive perspective on how social media positively influences employee mental health. It bridges traditional theoretical concepts with contemporary digital practices, thereby enriching both academic and practical understanding in organizational psychology and employee wellness. Our study underscores the transformative potential of social media in the workplace, highlighting its role as a critical tool for fostering professional growth, personal development, and psychological well-being among employees.

However, this study is not without limitations. The reliance on expert opinions in Delphi method introduces subjectivity, as interpretations may vary based on experts' diverse backgrounds and experiences. The panel's small size also limits the generalizability of findings. Future studies should consider a broader range of disciplines and organizational sectors to mitigate biases and enhance representativeness. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach could enrich the research, providing a more comprehensive view of

social media's impact on mental health by exploring various dimensions and employing both quantitative and qualitative analysis methods.

Building on this study, future research should focus on diversifying expert panels and employing mixed methods approaches. Exploring other dimensions, such as types of social media use, frequency, content quality, and individual, organizational, and societal factors influencing social media's impact, will provide a more nuanced understanding. Incorporating quantitative and qualitative methods will enrich the data and offer detailed explanations, enhancing the robustness and applicability of the findings. These efforts will contribute to a more reliable and comprehensive understanding of social media's role in employee mental health, particularly in diverse contexts such as Malaysia.

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