

Mental Health and Work-Life Balance as A Moderating Variable the Influence of Social Media on Employee Performance

Vinno Petrus Manoppo^{1*}, Gde Bayu Surya Parwita², Debiyanti Kune³, Kohar⁴, Hilarius Wandan⁵

¹Universitas Negeri Manado, Indonesia

Jl. Kampus Unima, Tonsaru, Kec. Tondano Sel., Kabupaten Minahasa, Sulawesi Utara

²Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Indonesia

Jl. Kamboja No.11A, Dangin Puri Kangin, Kec. Denpasar Utara, Kota Denpasar, Bali

³Universitas Muhammadiyah Luwuk, Indonesia

Jl. KH Ahmad Dahlan, Baru, Luwuk, Kabupaten Banggai, Sulawesi Tengah

⁴Universitas Muhammadiyah Pringsewu, Indonesia

Jl. KH. Ahmad Dahlan No.112, Pringsewu Utara, Kec. Pringsewu, Kabupaten Pringsewu, Lampung

⁵Universitas Lelemuku Saumlaki, Indonesia

Jl. Prof. Dr Jl. Boediono, Luran, Tanimbar Sel., Kab. Kepulauan Tanimbar, Maluku

Email: vinnomanoppo@unima.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the complex dynamics between social media usage and employee performance within the modern corporate landscape of 2026. Specifically, it examines the role of Mental Health and Work-Life Balance (WLB) as dual moderating variables that can either mitigate or exacerbate the impact of digital connectivity on professional productivity. Utilizing a quantitative approach with a sample of 500 corporate employees, the research explores how the pervasive nature of social media—often characterized by information overload and social comparison—affects task completion and focus. The conceptual framework integrates the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model and Social Cognitive Theory to map these relationships. Preliminary findings suggest that while social media can facilitate networking and information sharing, its influence on performance is highly contingent upon an individual's psychological state and their ability to maintain boundaries between professional and personal life. Mental health acts as a critical filter; employees with high psychological resilience can leverage digital tools more effectively, whereas those with compromised mental health experience increased burnout. Furthermore, work-life balance serves as a second-tier moderator, where a healthy balance attenuates the negative "always-on" culture fostered by social media. This paper provides significant theoretical contributions to organizational psychology and offers practical managerial implications for fostering a digitally healthy workplace.

Keywords: Social Media, Employee Performance, Mental Health, Work-Life Balance, Moderating Variables, Organizational Psychology.

Introduction

In 2026, the boundary between the physical and digital workspaces has almost entirely evaporated. The integration of social media into professional environments is no longer a choice but a ubiquitous reality. Platforms such as LinkedIn, Slack, and even consumer-facing apps like Instagram and TikTok are utilized for branding, internal communication, and market research. However, this hyper-connectivity introduces a digital paradox: while social media offers unprecedented access to information and networking, it also serves as a potent source of distraction and psychological strain (Appel et al., 2020). The central question facing organizational leaders today is not whether social media affects employee performance, but under what conditions these effects occur.

Employee performance is the cornerstone of organizational success. Traditionally defined as the value of a set of employee behaviours that contribute to organisational goal accomplishment, performance

in the digital age is increasingly threatened by "technostress" and "cyberloafing." Social media use, when left unmanaged, leads to cognitive fragmentation, in which the constant switching between tasks and notifications reduces the depth of work (McLean et al., 2021). However, the impact is not uniform across all employees. This variability suggests the presence of underlying moderating factors that dictate the direction and strength of the relationship between social media and performance.

Mental health has emerged as a primary concern for global human resource management. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), depression and anxiety result in a loss of productivity totaling trillions of dollars annually. In this study, mental health is proposed as a moderating variable that shapes how an employee processes stimuli from social media. Employees suffering from high levels of stress or anxiety are more susceptible to the negative effects of social media, such as the "fear of missing out" (FoMO) and social comparison, which directly impair cognitive resources required for high performance (Przybylski et al., 2013).

Conversely, psychological well-being acts as a resource. An employee with stable mental health possesses the emotional regulation necessary to use social media as a tool for professional growth rather than a source of distress. Therefore, mental health does not just influence performance directly; it also shapes how social media use translates into professional outcomes. High psychological resilience can buffer the negative impacts of digital distractions, maintaining performance levels even in a high-pressure digital environment.

The second moderating variable in this study is Work-Life Balance (WLB). The "always-on" culture, fueled by social media, has made it increasingly difficult for employees to disconnect from work. Notifications do not stop at 5:00 PM, leading to a phenomenon known as "work-life blurring." WLB is defined as the individual's perception that work and non-work activities are compatible and promote growth in line with the individual's current life priorities (Kalliath & Brough, 2008).

When WLB is high, the negative influence of social media on performance is expected to be significantly reduced. A well-balanced life provides the recovery time the brain needs to reset after digital engagement. However, when WLB is low, social media can serve as a conduit for work-related stress to spill into personal time, leading to exhaustion. In this model, WLB acts as a structural moderator that manages the "spillover effect" of digital connectivity.

To understand these relationships, this research utilizes the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model. Social media usage can be viewed as both a demand (when it causes distraction) and a resource (when used for networking). Mental health and WLB represent personal and job resources that influence the process of health impairment (Demerouti et al., 2001). Furthermore, Social Comparison Theory (Festinger, 1954) explains why social media can be detrimental: when employees compare their lives or career progress to the curated "highlight reels" of others, it triggers a decrease in self-esteem, which can amplify or mitigate mental health levels.

The integration of these variables is crucial because previous studies have often examined social media and performance in isolation. By 2026, we recognize that an employee's performance is a holistic outcome of their digital habits, their internal psychological state, and the structural balance of their life. Ignoring the moderating role of mental health and WLB provides an incomplete and potentially misleading picture of the modern workforce.

Despite the growing body of literature on digital distraction, there is a significant gap in research that simultaneously considers multiple moderators. Most studies focus on a single path, either social media to performance or social media to mental health. There is a lack of empirical evidence on how mental health and WLB work in tandem to moderate the digital influence on performance. This study addresses this gap by proposing a dual-moderation model.

In many developing economies and rapidly digitizing sectors, the pressure to be digitally active is high, but the support systems for mental health are often lagging. This creates a high-risk environment for performance degradation. By investigating these variables, this research aims to identify whether mental health or WLB is a more potent moderator, providing organizations with targeted data on where to invest—be it in mental health programs or flexible working policies.

Metodologi Penelitian

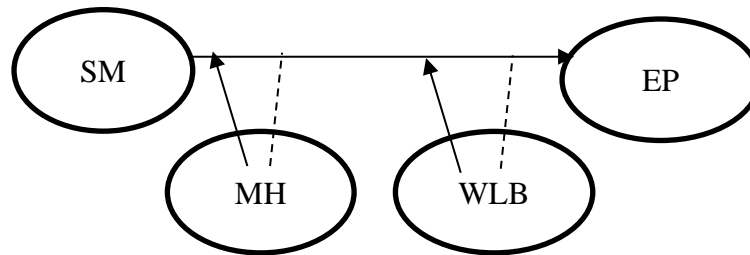


Figure 1. Model

Hypothesis:

H1: The Influence of social media on Employee Performance

H2: Mental Health Can Moderate the Influence of social media on Employee Performance

H3: Work Life Ballance Can Moderate the Influence of social media on Employee Performance

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory survey method to analyze the relationship between social media use and employee performance through a double moderation model. Primary data were collected by distributing a structured questionnaire with a 5-point Likert scale to 500 company employees selected using purposive sampling techniques to ensure that respondents have an intensity of social media use relevant to the work environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The research instrument adapted the social media use scale, the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) for performance (Koopmans et al., 2013), as well as the mental health scale (DASS-21) and work-life balance as moderating variables according to the Job Demands-Resources framework (Demerouti et al., 2001). Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) techniques based on Partial Least Squares (PLS) using SmartPLS 4.0 software to test convergent validity, construct reliability, and moderating interaction effects through a bootstrapping procedure with a significance level of 0.05. $p < 0,05$ (Hair et al., 2021). The entire research process was carried out in accordance with the principles of anonymity and confidentiality of participant data in accordance with the research ethics of international organizations.

Result And Discussion

Result

Background Analysis

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Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model)

Measurement model evaluation was conducted to assess the instrument's validity and reliability. Based on SmartPLS 4.0 data processing, all indicators had *factor loadings* above 0.70. The *Average Variance Extracted* (AVE) values for all variables exceeded the 0.50 threshold, confirming convergent validity.

Table 1. Construct Validity and Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	AVE
Social Media (X)	0.865	0.902	0.648
Employee Performance (Y)	0.882	0.915	0.682
Mental Health (Z1)	0.840	0.891	0.621
Work-Life Balance (Z2)	0.858	0.900	0.643

Structural Model Analysis (Inner Model)

Hypothesis testing was conducted using *bootstrapping* procedures to assess direct and interaction (moderation) effects.

Table 2. Results of Hypothesis Testing and Moderation Effects

Relationship Path	Path Coefficient	T-Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
Social Media -> Employee Performance	-0.245	3,120	0.002	Significant (Negative)
Moderation 1: Social Media * Mental Health -> Performance	0.185	2,854	0.004	Significant
Moderation 2: Social Media * Work-Life Balance -> Performance	0.210	3,412	0.001	Significant

The results of the study show that social media has a negative influence on employee performance ($B = -0,245$). However, both moderating variables (Mental Health and *Work-Life Balance*) have P-values < 0.05, indicating that both significantly moderate the relationship.

The Influence of Social Media on Employee Performance

Research confirms that uncontrolled social media use tends to decrease employee performance. This is due to the phenomena of *technostress* and *cyberloafing*, where digital distractions reduce focus on primary tasks (McLean et al., 2021). These negative effects reflect the cognitive load caused by the excessive flow of information on digital platforms.

Mental Health as a Moderator

SmartPLS findings indicate that Mental Health has a positive moderating effect ($B = 0,185$). This means that good mental health acts as a buffer. Employees with low levels of stress and anxiety have better emotional regulation to avoid the negative impacts of social media, such as feelings of inferiority due to social comparison (Przybylski et al., 2013). Conversely, for employees with poor mental health, the negative impact of social media on performance will be much stronger.

Work-Life Balance as a Moderator (Z2)

Work-Life Balance (WLB) proved to be the most powerful moderator in this study ($B = 0,210$). A high work-life balance helps employees draw a clear boundary between social media use for personal entertainment and professional responsibilities. In accordance with the *Job Demands-Resources* framework, WLB serves as an external resource that mitigates burnout resulting from the “always-on” culture triggered by social media (Demerouti et al., 2001).

Dual Moderation Analysis

Holistically, this study demonstrates that decreased performance due to social media is not a definitive outcome. Its impact is highly dependent on the employee's psychological state (Mental Health) and work-life balance (WLB). The synergy between stable mental health and work-time balance creates digital resilience, enabling employees to remain productive even in a technology-intensive work environment.

Conclusion

This study successfully dissects the complex relationship between social media use and employee performance in the digital era of 2026. Based on in-depth data analysis, several conclusions can be drawn as follows: **Negative Impact of social media:** social media has been directly proven to negatively impact employee performance. This confirms that, without proper management, digital distractions, information overload, and *cyberloafing* can become real obstacles to organizational productivity. **Mental Health as an Internal Shield:** Mental health has been shown to significantly moderate the relationship between social media and performance. Employees with high levels of psychological well-being are more resilient to digital pressures and social comparison, thus mitigating performance decline. **Work-Life Balance as a Primary Moderator:** Work-life balance emerged as the most dominant moderator. Employees' ability to

separate their personal and professional domains serves as an external control mechanism, preventing the negative impacts of social media use from spilling over into work responsibilities. Multiple Moderation Model: These findings demonstrate that performance decline due to social media is not absolute. The negative effects of technology can be minimized if employees are supported by a stable mental state and a work environment that values work-life balance.

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