Shengming Liu, Ye Zhang, Lifan Chen, Li Guo, Dongling Yu

Enterprise WeChat Groups: Their Effect on Work-Life Conflict and Life-Work Enhancement

Abstract Social media technologies have made it increasingly feasible for employees to be connected to work. WeChat, a newly emerging social media platform, is widely used in daily life, yet there is still little understanding of the consequences of the use of WeChat groups in enterprise. Based on boundary theory, we suggested that the use of WeChat groups in enterprise have both pros and cons for employees. We gathered data from an online survey of 202 employees. Results show that posting work-related content in enterprise WeChat groups had a beneficial impact on work for employees but also caused work-life conflict (WLC). However, posting life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups contributes to employees’ life-work enhancement (LWE). Contributions and future study directions of these findings are discussed.

Keywords social media technology, WeChat groups, boundary theory, work-life conflict, life-work enhancement

1 Introduction

The emergence of social media technologies, along with the widespread use of communication technologies such as cell phones and personal data devices (PADs), are radically changing the ways that people connect both with their jobs and families. Currently, one of the most popular social media technologies in China is WeChat. It has more than 5.7 million daily active users in October 2015.1

with the app downloaded onto 90% of smartphones and has become the “must have” communication tool especially for young people in China. This convenient social media platform is not only used in daily life but has also become an important work tool. Many organizations use WeChat groups for work (including team leaders and employees for daily communication) because this service offers advantages in terms of greater flexibility and cost savings for completing work tasks (Adkins and Premeaux, 2014). For example, employees can use it to discuss new ideas, arrange tasks and make announcements during nonworking hours whenever and wherever.

However, compared with its wide use, we have little understanding of how this communications technology might be related to important implications for work and life. According to boundary theory, the interrelationship between work and life is determined by the interaction between the work domain and the life domain (Staines, 1980; Clark, 2000). Unlike traditional communication technologies such as E-mail, cell phones, voice mail and pagers (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007), WeChat groups provide a platform for employees to be connected with each other. They can not only talk about work-related issues but also about life-related issues in enterprise WeChat groups. As it has applications to the work domain and the life domain at the same time, the influence of enterprise WeChat groups on work and life may be complex and interesting.

On the one hand, the use of enterprise WeChat groups may contribute to work-life conflicts as the work domain encroaches on the life domain (Fonner and Roloff, 2012). For instance, in some enterprises, workers are expected to be constantly connected to work and participate in enterprise WeChat groups to discuss work-related content in the evenings, on weekends and even on vacations (Kossek, Lautsch, and Eaton, 2006). On the other hand, sharing life-related content such as information, photos, feelings and experiences improves employees’ moods and contributes to a meaningful life. Moreover, work-related content and life-related content could have an interaction effect on both work-life conflict (WLC) and life-work enhancement (LWE). Thus, the use of enterprise WeChat groups may be a double-edged sword.

Building on previous research, the purpose of this study is to investigate the influence of enterprise WeChat group use on employees’ perceptions of WLC and LWE. Toward that end, we will begin by analyzing the use of enterprise WeChat groups from the perspective of boundary theory, describing how it blurs
boundaries and becomes a mixed space for both work and life. We will then investigate the direct effect of using enterprise WeChat groups on perceived usefulness for work, WLC and LWE. Finally, we examine the interactive effect of time spent on both work-related and life-related content on WLC and LWE.

Technology revolutions often bring about a revolution in organization management as well. Focusing on the burgeoning service of WeChat, this study makes several contributions. Theoretically, we enrich the literature on boundary theory and work-life by analyzing and examining the effect of this new form of technology which breaks the boundaries between work and life. Practically, as WeChat is becoming a necessary communication tool, managers can benefit from a better understanding of the use of enterprise WeChat groups for work (Kelly, Moen, and Tranby, 2011).

2 Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The work-life relationship is one of the most important issues in organizational behavior and human resource management (Kossek, Lewis, and Hammer, 2010). Boundary theory (Clark, 2000) serves as the foundation for most work-life research to explain how conflict between and enhancement of work and life happens (Piszczek and Berg, 2014). According to boundary theory, individuals demarcate boundaries and attend to both work and life roles (Kossek, Ruderman, Braddy, and Hannum, 2012). As Figure 1, it divides the relationship between

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**Figure 1**  Segmentation, Spillover, Compensation and Mixed Conditions in Work and Life Relationships
work and life into three forms: Segmentation, Spillover and Compensation (Staines, 1980; Edwards and Rothbard, 2000).

Segmentation (a): It is a natural division between work and life in terms of time and space and the different functions they serve. Work and life domains are separated and there is no interaction between the two (Staines, 1980; Lambert, 1990).

Spillover (b): Spillover is based on the similarities between work and life such as affect, values, skills, and overt behaviors (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). These similarities may permeate asymmetrically from one domain to the other (Frone, Russell, and Cooper, 1992). The spillover can be divided into positive spillover (e.g. satisfaction, inspiration) and negative spillover (e.g., stress, worry) (Higgins and Duxbury, 1992). Negative spillover often contributes to conflict between work and life while positive spillover often leads to enhancement of work and life (Fisher, Bulger, and Smith, 2009).

Compensation (c): Compensation represents efforts to offset dissatisfaction in one domain through seeking satisfaction in the other domain (Zedeck, 1992). Individuals achieve compensation in two ways. The first way is to increase involvement in the domain that brings more reward and decrease involvement in the one that is dissatisfying. The second way is to pursue rewards in one domain when there is dissatisfaction in the other.

Mixed (d): As opposed to traditional boundary theory which suggests that work and life have boundaries whether they are “thick” or “thin” (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000), enterprise WeChat groups seem to break boundaries by creating a new domain where employees can discuss both work-related and life-related content. According to prior research, boundaries have three forms: physical, temporal and mental (Clark, 2000). Physical boundaries refer to the space dimension of work and life boundaries such as the office or factory and the house. Temporal boundaries refer to the time dimension where the end and start of the working day are compartmentalized. Mental boundaries refer to the rules which individuals set in order to guide their thoughts and behavior.

However, enterprise WeChat groups provide a virtual platform where team members in the group can be involved in work-related and life-related content whenever and wherever they are. It brings about a greater level of work-life integration and thus results in the blurring of the line between work and life. Therefore, enterprise WeChat groups are not constrained by physical and
temporal boundaries (Fenner and Renn, 2009; Valcour and Hunter, 2005). In addition, recent evidence suggests that social norms and perceived usefulness can influence individuals to use communication technologies (Mazmanian, Orlikowski, and Yates, 2013). With the rapid tempo of modern life, more and more employees are accustomed to being connected even after regular working hours. The wide use of WeChat groups is becoming a norm among employees which probably also blur mental boundaries. In other words, WeChat groups to some extent break and mix the boundaries of work and life. Since WeChat is broadly used, it is both theoretically and practically significant to explore this phenomenon.

2.1 The Use of Enterprise Wechat Groups and Work Usefulness

Since we have entered a new era of workplace connectivity through the advent of portable wireless technologies (Francine, 2002), employees may discuss work-related issues even after working hours. Prior studies have discussed the benefits of using work extending technologies. For example, Towers, Duxbury, Higgins and Thomas (2006) argue that increased productivity and greater work-location flexibility are work-related benefits associated with work extending technologies.

WeChat groups are a kind of work extending technology with a lot of benefits for work. Firstly, work-related WeChat groups are an efficient way for leaders to monitor projects and for employees to get timely feedback. Secondly, enterprise WeChat groups can speed up the transformation of information, making employees aware of current problems and help them find proper solutions. It is more costly to have to formally discuss projects face-to-face. But with enterprise WeChat groups, work-related problems can be discussed at any time in an efficient way. Thirdly, enterprise WeChat groups can provide social support, usually from peers and supervisors, to create a more positive work environment and reduce the negative effects of stressors for employees (Dawn and Pamela, 1999).

Therefore, we predict that:

**Hypothesis 1.** Discussing work-related content in enterprise WeChat group is positively related to employees’ perception of usefulness for work.
2.2 The Use of Enterprise WeChat Groups and Life-Work Enrichment (LWE)

Work-life enrichment has garnered significant attention since it describes the extent to which an individual’s engagement in one domain (i.e., work/family) provides gains (i.e., developmental, affective, capital or efficiency) which contribute to enhanced functioning of another domain (i.e., family/work) (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006; Wayne, Musisca, and Fleeson, 2004). Following the boundary theory concept of positive spillover in terms of work–life enrichment, we focus our attention on life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups which can provide gains for work.

Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, and Grzywacz (2006) conceptually identified and empirically validated four broad categories describing the major individual gains acquired in the life domain: (1) developmental gains, or the acquisition of skills, knowledge, values, or perspectives, (2) affective gains, or alteration in moods, attitudes, confidence, or other aspects of emotion, (3) capital gains, or the acquisition of economic, social, or health assets, and (4) efficiency gains, or enhanced focus or attention induced by multiple role responsibilities. In terms of enterprise WeChat groups, employees may not always talk about work-related issues. Instead, they may also post life-related content. Employees will post tips or news (developmental category), express concerns (affective category) and share their own experiences such as how to balance work and life (efficiency) in the enterprise WeChat group. Why are gains from life beneficial for work? From the perspective of boundary theory, the experiences in one domain can spill over to the other (Frone, Russell and Cooper, 1992). The spillover effect has two forms, namely, positive spillover effect and negative spillover effect. Individuals are drawn to positive experiences and are inclined to utilize and develop strengths within their environments, which in turn benefit the systems in which they operate (Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson and Kacmar, 2007). In enterprise WeChat groups, the life-related content contributes to individuals’ positive experiences. It may spill over to the domain of work and thus be beneficial for employees’ life-work enrichment.

Therefore, we predict that:

**Hypothesis 2.** Discussing life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups is positively related to employees’ LWE.
2.3 The Use of Enterprise Wechat Groups and Work-Life Conflict (WLC)

Work-life conflict is a form of inter-role conflict whereby the demands of one domain interfere with meeting the demands of a role in the other domain (e.g., Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Work-life conflict occurs when the demands of the workplace interfere with the worker’s ability to respond to the demands of life. Work-life conflict occurs in two directions—work interference with life and life interference with work (Carlson et al., 2006; Greenhaus and Beutell, 1985). Since we focus on the use of enterprise WeChat groups for work, we refer to the construct work-life conflict (WLC). It reflects that the use of enterprise WeChat groups may interfere with one’s personal life.

In the literature on boundary theory, it has been demonstrated that the work domain is more prone to have a negative spillover effect on the life domain (Staines, 1980; Evans and Bartolomé, 1984). Several studies suggest that a greater integration of roles (e.g., work and family), or permeable boundaries, have adverse consequences. For example, one study argues that the permeability of roles allows for unannounced interruptions, and increases confusion about what role to enact at a given time (Ashforth, Kreiner and Fugate, 2000). Hall and Richter (1988) argue that “boundary permeability epitomizes role conflict” in that individuals are attending to two domains, with their separate norms and expectations, simultaneously. Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner and Wan’s (1991) diary study of working mothers found empirical support for the negative effect associated with attending to two roles at once. Role permeability might be associated with resource drain. It may create time-based as well as strain-based conflict for the individual. For example, devoting time to work when one is in the non-work domain makes it difficult to fulfill the requirements of the non-work role.

In sum, prior research suggest that role integration tends to result in “boundary blurring” and conflict between different roles. The use of enterprise WeChat groups is possibly associated with WLC because WeChat holds the potential to interrupt or distract employees whenever and wherever they are. Individuals may be forced to discuss work-related issues during non-working hours, which may serve as an intrusion into their personal lives.

Therefore, we predict that:
Hypothesis 3. Discussing work-related content in enterprise WeChat group is positively related to employees’ work-life conflict (WLC).

2.4 Potential Interactive Effects

As discussed above, both work-related and life-related content will vary in percentage when using enterprise WeChat groups. For example, there may be two WeChat groups, named A and B. In group A, employees are restricted to sharing work-related information but no life-related content. In group B, life-related and work-related content are both permitted. If we assume that resources can be transferred from one domain to another (Carlson et al., 2006), we thus reckon that people in group B will experience lower levels of WLC. Evidence is shown as follows.

First, the conservation of resources theory (Hobfoll, 1989) suggests that people tend to conserve and protect resources to minimize stress. In a work WeChat group, sharing life-related content is a kind of gain of resources. The positive attributes of life can be conserved by employees to lessen their job stress. Second, although we have argued that discussing life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups is positively related to employees’ LWE, the degree of enrichment depends on the amount of work-related content. That is, if an enterprise WeChat group is largely life-oriented, it will decrease its efficiency (e.g., frequent life-related discussions might overwhelm important work notices) for work.

In sum, as the amount of personal time allocated to enterprise WeChat groups is limited, the different content generated simultaneously will have an effect on both WLC and LWE.

Therefore, we predict that:

Hypothesis 4a. Discussing life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups will moderate the positive relationship between discussing work-related content and WLC in such a way that the positive relationship will be weakened when time spent on life-related content is high.

Hypothesis 4b. Discussing work-related content in enterprise WeChat groups will moderate the positive relationship between discussing life-related content
and LWE in such a way that the positive relationship will be weaken when time spent on work-related content is high.

3 Method

3.1 Sample

Our questionnaire was edited by a professional internet question editing service “Wen Juan Xing” and published online. The target population were employees who use WeChat groups in work. We introduced the definition of enterprise WeChat group in the first part of the questionnaire. We define enterprise WeChat group as a long-term and stable WeChat group associated with a workplace that connects team members with the aim of better communication between each other especially for job tasks. If an employee was involved in this kind of enterprise WeChat group, he or she would be invited to finish the following questions. We received 202 employee responses from 23 companies in 13 provinces. Among the employees, 55.4% were male, the mean age was 31 years old (s.d. = 6.77), 52% were in managerial positions, and 51% were married.

3.2 Measures

Time spent on work /life-related content on an enterprise WeChat group. We adopted Richardson and Benbunan-Fich’s (2011) objective measure of work connected behavior after-hours (WCBA) to measure the time spent on WeChat groups for work. Respondents were asked to estimate how much time they spend every day on work/life-related content via WeChat groups with supervisors, coworkers, or performing work-related tasks. Respondents indicated their responses in a range of minutes (none, 1–30 minutes, 31–60 minutes, 61–90 minutes, 91–120 minutes, > 2 hours) (Adkins and Premeaux, 2014).

Work-life conflict and life-work enhancement. We measured work life conflict and life work enhancement using an adaptation of Fisher, Bulger and Smith’s (2009) scale for assessing work or non-work interference and enhancement. The Work-life-conflict scale has five items ($\alpha = .95$), for example, “talking about work-related content on WeChat makes me feel too tired to do things I would like to do.” The Life–work-enhancement scale has three items ($\alpha = .94$) and a sampled
item is “talking about life-related content on enterprise WeChat groups helps me relax and feel ready for the next day’s work.” All the items were rated on a seven-point scale with 1=strongly disagree and 7=strongly agree.

**Perceived usefulness of using enterprise WeChat groups for work.** This variable was measured by the Davis (1989) perceived usefulness scale. The scale includes six items with seven response options ranging from “likely” to “unlikely” ($\alpha=.93$). We adjusted the items to suit enterprise WeChat groups (Fenner and Renn, 2009). The sampled items drawn from this measure include “using enterprise WeChat groups in my job increases my productivity.”

**Control variables.** We collected the following demographic variables as control variables: age, gender, marital status, number of children, education and job level. We controlled for age and gender because previous research has shown that the use and acceptance of technology can be affected by age and gender (Venkatesh and Morris, 2000). As well, we controlled for marital status and children because family structure and demands may influence WeChat use after hours (Boswell and Olson-Buchanan, 2007; Standen, Daniels, and Lamond, 1999). We also controlled for education and job level which may influence technology use.

### 3.3 Results

Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations, correlations, and reliability for the control variables, time spent on work-related content, time spent on life-related content, perceived usefulness of using WeChat groups, work-life conflict and life-work enhancement.

We use hierarchical multiple regression to test Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 (Kemp, 1975). To test H1, we first regressed perceived WeChat usefulness on the control variables and the variable of time spent on life-related content (Model 1). In the second step, the variable of time spent on work-related content was added (Model 2). Following the above steps, we tested H2 (Model 3, Model 4) controlling for the variable of time spent on work-related content and H3 (Model 5, Model 6) controlling for the variable of time spent on life-related content. Table 2 shows the outcomes of the hierarchical multiple regressions.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
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<td>.25**</td>
<td>.79**</td>
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<td>6. Job level</td>
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<td>-3.1**</td>
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<td>7. Time spent on work-related content</td>
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<td>.17</td>
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<td>8. Time spent on life-related content</td>
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<td>.39**</td>
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<td>9. Perceived usefulness</td>
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<td>1.57</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>-.01</td>
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<td>.06</td>
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<td>10. Work-life conflict</td>
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<td>-.06</td>
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<td>.07</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.47**</td>
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Notes. * p<.05 (two-tailed) ** p<.01 (two-tailed).
Table 2: The Multiple Regression Modeling Results of Direct Effect of Time Spent on Work-related Content and Time Spent on Life-related Content in Enterprise WeChat Groups on Perceived Usefulness for Work, WLC and LWE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictors</th>
<th>Perceived Usefulness</th>
<th>LWE</th>
<th>WLC</th>
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<td>Model 2</td>
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<td>content</td>
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<td>.02</td>
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As seen from Model 2 in Table 2, we find that time spent on work-related content in enterprise WeChat groups was positively related to the perceived usefulness of enterprise WeChat groups \( (b=.23, p<.01) \). Model 4 shows that time spent on life-related content was positively related to LWE \( (b=.29, p<.05) \). Model 6 shows that time spent on work-related content was significantly positively associated with work-life conflict \( (b=.30, p<.01) \). The beta coefficients indicate that time spent on work-related content was positively related to both perceived usefulness of enterprise WeChat groups and WLC. Time spent on life-related content was positively related to LWE. Thus, H1, H2 and H3 are supported.

H4a and H4b predicted that time spent on work-related content and time spent on life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups would have an interaction effect on WLC and LWE. We also adopted hierarchical regression analysis to examine our hypothesis. Control variables were entered in the first step. In the second step, the main effect of time spent on work-related content and time spent on life-related content was tested. In the last step, the interaction effect of time spent on work-related content and time spent on life-related content was examined (Kemp, 1975).
Results shown in Table 3 provide support for H4b, which predicted that time spent on work-related content moderates the relationship between time spent on life-related content and LWE ($b=-.14$, $p<.05$). Furthermore, we performed a simple slope analysis (Aiken, West and Reno, 1991) to probe the moderating effect of time spent on work-related content. When time spent on work-related content was high (1 SD above the mean), time spent on life-related content was not significant for LWE ($t=.05$ ns). In contrast, when time spent on work-related content was low (1 SD below the mean), time spent on life-related content generated a significant positive effect on LWE ($t=.30$, $p<.05$). Figure 2 describes the interaction effect of time spent on life-related content and time spent on work-related content on LWE. However, the interaction effect generated by time spent on work-related content and life-related content on WLC was not significant. Thus, H4a was not supported.

Table 3  The Multiple Regression Modeling Results of Interaction Effect of Time Spent on Work-related Content and Time Spent on Life-related Content in Enterprise WeChat Groups on WLC and LWE

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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Step 2: Main effects</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time spent on work-related content</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent on life-related content</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3: Interaction</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Time spent on work-related content $\times$ Time spent on life-related content</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
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</table>
4 Discussion

As noted by Boswell and Olson-Buchanan (2007), technological advances have led to an increased use of communication technology for work and non-work purposes, during the workday and long after the end of the traditional workday. In this study, from a new perspective of mixed work-life boundaries, we focus on a broadly used communication tool, WeChat. We examine how the use of work-related and life-related content is associated with employees’ work and life. Results suggest that when work-related content is discussed in enterprise WeChat groups, employees feel it beneficial to their work since work-related problems can be discussed in a more efficient way.

Accordingly, discussing life-related content is shown to support employees’ LWE because relaxed content can increase individuals’ positive experience of work. However, when work-related discussions happened whenever and wherever the employees are, the high demands of work will interfere with the worker’s ability to respond to the demands of life, thus generating WLC.

In the current study, we further examine the interactive effect of work-related and life-related content on both WLC and LWE. Results reveal that when time spent on discussing work-related content increases, the positive relationship between life-related content and LWE will be weakened. The main reason is that the role of lessening stress played by life-related content is limited due to more
time allocated to work-related issues. Interestingly, we found no significant interactive effect on WLC. The possible reason is as follows. Since employees might treat enterprise WeChat groups as another workplace, so the work-related content is what they are most focused on. Once work-related content are positively related to WLC, the effect of lessening stress that is generated by life-related content may be limited and weak.

4.1 Theoretical and Practical Contributions

(1) Theoretical contribution

The findings of the present study extend boundary theory. Boundary theory describes the interaction between the work domain and the life domain. However, WeChat groups are a new platform and they break up the boundary between work and life. To some extent they provide a mixed area which combines both work and life. Our research investigates the direct effect of work-related components (posting work-related content) on life (WLC) and life-related components (posting life-related content) on work (LWE). Consistent with previous research, our study provides empirical evidence that work-related components have a negative effect on life (e.g., Fenner and Renn, 2009) while life components have a positive effect on work (e.g., Geurts, Taris, Kompier, Dikkers, Hooff, and Kinnunen, 2005).

In addition, we also explore the interaction of work-related components and life-related components. Each of these components could influence the other’s direct effects. We argue that there exists a buffering effect to the interaction since the effects of work and life on each other are often contradictory. The data shows that life-related components do not have a significant moderation effect on the positive influence of work-related components on WLC. This is because for enterprise WeChat groups, work-related issues play a primary role and life-related issues may have less influence. On the other hand, work may have more weight in influencing life. Thus, through our investigation, we found that in mixed conditions such as the virtual area created by WeChat groups: (1) Life-related components and work-related components can exist at the same time. (2) There is an interaction effect between work-related components and life-related components. (3) One of the two components may have a stronger
effect than the other.

(2) Practical contribution

WeChat serves as an important communication tool for organizations. Since it lessens communication costs, it will certainly have a great influence on human resource management in organizations in the future. Understanding how individuals will be influenced by enterprise WeChat groups, by examining content discussed and time allocated may help employees and managers structure jobs and work time more effectively. Organizations might encourage the careful planning and protection of time allocations (e.g., encouraging managers to model behavior by not asking for WeChat responses from employees after hours) so that the use of WeChat groups will not negatively impact an employee’s personal life. Indeed, if employees view the use of enterprise WeChat groups as a stressor, it is likely to eventually have an effect on that employee’s stress level, attitudes toward the job and organization, and work motivation. Additionally, enterprise WeChat groups do not always need to be a venue for serious workplace discussions. Managers or team leaders could create a relaxed atmosphere, such as posting life-related content, to help employees gain positive experiences from work.

4.2 Limitations and Future Research

There are also some limitations for to the present study. First, all the measures were self-reported and so may suffer from common method bias (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff, 2003). However, we asked employees to recall how much time they spent on posting work-related content and life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups on a typical day to reduce potential common method bias (Adkins and Premeaux, 2014). WeChat automatically records time, so employees have objective records of daily WeChat group use. Future research can extend the current study by using a within-person and longitudinal study to obtain an accurate measure of the time spent on WeChat (Liu, Wang, Chang, Shi, Zhou, and Shao, 2015).

Second, our study only focuses on the work and life component of enterprise WeChat group use. This may limit the generalizability of the findings in terms of
understanding the influence of work-life conflict and life-work enhancement. Enterprise WeChat groups are newly emerging and their characteristics are still not clearly understood. Future study can incorporate qualitative research to describe different forms of enterprise WeChat groups. For example, use could be divided into four types according to the amount of time spent on work-related and life-related content in enterprise WeChat groups. Examining the outcomes of each type may have significant implications.

Third, we perform an exploratory study by examining the direct and interaction effect of work and life on WLC and LWE. Nevertheless, other interesting issues still need to be studied such as the antecedents of participating in enterprise WeChat group discussions. For instance, the enterprise norm of using enterprise WeChat groups (Adkins and Premeaux, 2014), the team climate, the supervisor leadership (Butts, Becker, and Bosewll, 2015) and individual personality (Avery, 2003) can all influence employees’ use and participation in enterprise WeChat groups. In addition, moderators of the relationship between enterprise WeChat groups and influence on work and life are also worth investigating, such as whether the employees volunteer to participate the WeChat group discussion.

5 Conclusion

In sum, the present research investigates the important, yet not well-understood, issue of employee use of enterprise WeChat groups, exploring the correlation as well as the implications for WLC and LWE of using such technologies. The present study shows that although posting work-related content in enterprise WeChat groups may be associated positively with a perceived usefulness for work, it is also associated with heightened WLC. However, posting life-related content is positively related to WLE while posting work-related content diminish positive effects. Our research has both theoretical contributions to boundary theory and practical contributions to organizations for better use of WeChat in management.

References


