How Newcomers' Work-Related Use of Enterprise Social Media Affects Their Thriving at Work—The Swift Guanxi Perspective

Yuan Sun [1,2,*], Mengyi Zhu [1] and Zuopeng (Justin) Zhang [3]

[1] School of Business Administration, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou 310018, China; xszmygg@gmail.com
[2] Zheshang Research Institute, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Hangzhou 310018, China
[3] Coggin College of Business, University of North Florida, Jacksonville, FL 32224, USA; justin.zhang@unf.edu
[*] Correspondence: sunyuan@zjgsu.edu.cn; Tel.: +86-571-28008005

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Abstract: This study aims to explore the relationship between newcomers' use of enterprise social media (ESM) and their thriving at work. Adopting the conception of swift guanxi, we propose a model to examine how newcomers' work-related use of ESM influences their thriving at work through promoting swift guanxi (i.e., mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony) between newcomers and veterans. A valid sample consisted of 77 new employee-veteran dyads in a large telecom company was used in Smart-PLS to test our research model. The results show that newcomers' work-related use of ESM positively affects mutual understanding, reciprocal favor, and relationship harmony. Reciprocal favor and relationship harmony exert positive effects on learning and vitality. However, mutual understanding only has a positive effect on learning. Furthermore, swift guanxi mediates the relationships between newcomers' work-related ESM usage and the two dimensions of thriving. The findings provide new insights for organizations to better manage the use of ESM to improve newcomers' thriving at work.

Keywords: enterprise social media; work-related use; newcomer; thriving at work; swift guanxi

1. Introduction

Enterprise social media (ESM) is a special type of electronic media based on the Internet and the technological foundations of Web 2.0 [1,2]. Recent research by McKinsey Global Institute found that workers' productivity can increase 20–25% by using social media technologies within and across organizations, which could contribute 900 billion to 1.3 trillion dollars in annual value to the U.S. economy [3]. Aware of the benefits that ESM brings to their companies and employees, more and more organizations have implemented ESM platforms [4]. The widespread use of ESM has piqued the interests of many researchers. For instance, recent studies find that these platforms promote communication [5,6] and organizational knowledge sharing [4,7,8] among employees. Further exploring the advantages of ESM, scholars in related fields consider that ESM is conducive to enhancing the social network [9–11] and social capital [7,12,13] of employees.

Thriving at work is considered as an employee's perception of learning and vitality [14]. Prior studies have revealed the significant correlation between thriving at work and various desirable individual and organizational outcomes, such as job performance, employee sustainability, and organizational citizenship behavior [15–17], considering the increasingly fast-paced, complex, and competitive environment in organizations [18]. However, very little research has been conducted with respect to effectively developing employees' thriving at work [17], particularly in the context of social

media. Reviewing previous research, we find that the relationship between ESM usage (particularly its use for work-related purposes) and thriving at work is still unclear and full of controversies. On the one hand, numerous studies show that the use of ESM promotes communication and helps employees gain knowledge [8,19–21], contributing to their learning [14]. The broad information resource shared in ESM [11,19] can enhance the vitality of employees [14] by establishing trust among employees [12]. One the other hand, some studies have also found that the use of ESM may also lead to information and communication overload, hindering the exchange of knowledge [5,8], which is not conducive to knowledge acquisition. Some studies have argued that using social media may lead to social overload and even task overload, which will induce emotional exhaustion and strain [22–24] and negatively affect vitality [25]. The divergence in prior studies demonstrates a need for further investigating the underlying mechanisms of the influence of ESM on thriving in different contexts.

Guanxi is an important factor affecting the relationship between ESM's use and thriving at work, particularly due to the special environment in China. Some studies indicate that the relationship among employees is a key factor influencing their thriving at work [14]. Individuals with good guanxi with colleagues have the access to more knowledge [26], which facilitates their learning [14]. Individuals who maintain good relational resources always possess higher energy than those without [14,17]. Especially, ESM enables employees to connect with more people and build relationships with them [11,19], developing a basis for forming a good relationship.

Newcomers in an organization are typically not well acquainted with the entire company and colleagues when they start their new positions. Therefore, we introduce "swift guanxi", which is referred to as newcomer's perception of an interpersonal relationship established quickly with veterans [27] to study the relationship between ESM usage and thriving at work. In particular, focusing on newcomers in our research, we attempt to explore how their work-related use of ESM affects their thriving at work through the swift-guanxi perspective.

Our study makes several significant contributions to the existing literature about ESM. Firstly, we examine the influence of work-related use of ESM on newcomers' thriving at work from the perspective of swift guanxi, and our findings help manager better understand the impact of ESM on newcomers' thriving at work, either as a facilitator or as an inhibitor. Second, our study enriches the existing research of thriving in the workplace by analyzing the role of work-related ESM usage. Although the value of thriving at work is widely acknowledged, there is limited effort to improve this line of research, especially in terms of its linkage to ESM with a focus on newcomers. Third, introducing and extending the concept of swift guanxi from its primary field in social commerce, our research proposes an innovative perspective to study the relationship between the thriving of newcomers and their use of ESM in workplaces and tests its mediating effect.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews prior literature on ESM, thriving at work, and swift guanxi. Section 3 demonstrates our hypotheses and research model. Section 4 presents our research method, the sample and data collection, and sample demographic information. Section 5 summarizes the analysis and results of our research. Section 6 discusses results and highlights the theoretical and managerial implications of our research. The last section concludes the paper with limitations and future research direction.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Enterprise Social Media

Enterprise social media, an emerging social media platform, has been increasingly implemented by organizations to promote communication and information exchange [4,11]. Although ESM is essentially derived from Web 2.0 technologies, there are still some differences between ESM and traditional social media. Leonardi, Huysman, and Steinfield [4] conceptualizes ESM as "platforms based on Web 2.0, which allow employees to send messages to everyone or a specific person in the organization; and explicitly indicate or implicitly reveal particular colleagues as communication object; post, edit, and

sort text and files related to themselves or others; and view the messages, connections, text, and files communicated, posted, edited and sorted by anyone else". ESM can afford users four essential abilities: visibility, persistence, editability, and association. Activating one or more of these affordances has altered many of the processes commonly studied by the scholars in the field of organizational behavior and organizational communication, such as socialization, knowledge exchange, and power processes in organizations [28].

Prior studies have documented the benefits that ESM can bring to employees and organizations. For instance, ESM provides additional opportunities for employees to connect to each other and promotes open communication [8,19,20]. ESM not only enables employees to quickly access digital content [19], facilitating knowledge acquisition [5], but also makes it easy for them to share information due to enhanced communication visibility and openness [20,29].

ESM also allows individuals to build and manage their social networks in novel ways [19]; therefore, many sociological factors are involved and play important roles. For instance, ESM can promote the frequency of interactions among employees to further develop their mutual trust [30] and significantly improve their social capital [12,31]. Many scholars also claim that the size of individuals' online social networks will increase through using ESM [9,10]. Gonzalez [32] divides ESM use into two types—work-related and social-related use—and finds that both types of use can accelerate newcomers' organizational socialization through building and developing relationships and acquiring information relevant to tasks and organization. However, prior studies have not explored the use of ESM in helping newcomers thrive at work, which is the focus of our research.

2.2. Thriving at Work

Thriving is a positive subjective experience that helps individual guide and adjust their work contexts to achieve continued progress [14]. Thus, thriving is frequently considered as an important internal factor to evaluate individual growth and progress [25]. Employees who possess higher levels of thriving at work will typically achieve higher job performance than those with lower levels of thriving [15,25].

Thriving at work can be conceptualized as a psychological experience including two senses: learning and vitality [14]. Learning belongs to cognitive dimension, indicating a feeling of adding, and enables one to apply new knowledge and skills [14,33,34]. In contrast, vitality belongs to the affective dimension, denoting a positive feeling related to possessing enough energy [14,35]. To thrive at work, one must be both successful in achieving learning and vitality [14,36]. In other words, if employees think that they are gaining knowledge or skills, but do not feel alive, they are not thriving at work. Similarly, employees are not thriving when they only feel energized but do not engage in learning at work.

In their seminal work, Spreitzer et al. [14] developed a socially embedded model to further study thriving at work. The model focuses on two types factors: unit work contextual features and resources produced in individuals work, which both boost the thriving of employees by affecting agentic work behaviors. Based on their research [14], more researchers have started to explore the antecedent of thriving at work. For instance, Paterson, Luthans, and Jeung [18] considered that supervisor support and psychological capital have a positive impact on thriving at work. Spreitzer and Porath [25] built an integrative model to explain how self-determination facilitates their thriving at work. Abid, et al. [37] investigated how to promote employees' thriving at work and reduce turnover intentions. Carmeli and Spreitzer [16] found that thriving at work is positively affected by trust and connectivity. Furthermore, thriving at work is also associated with some important individual and organization outcomes such as self-development, performance, health, adaptability, innovative behaviors, turnover intention, and even for home life [16,18,25,36,38–41]. However, prior research has not explicitly investigated how the use of ESM facilitates thriving at work, which we study in this paper.

2.3. Swift Guanxi

It is necessary to understand the notion of guanxi before we introduce swift guanxi. In China, guanxi is everywhere, and the whole society is built around various relationships [42]. Guanxi, in a Chinese context, is different from the similar term of "relationship" in the west. In general, guanxi consists of many factors: ganqing (affection), mianzi (face), renqing (harmony), huibao (reciprocal), and xinren (trust) [26,43–45]. Guanxi is summarized by Davison, Ou, and Martinsons [26] as a closely connected network that focuses on obligatory reciprocity, trust, harmonious relationship, and face preservation.

The theory of swift guanxi proposed by Ou, Pavlou, and Davison [27] is based on traditional guanxi in the context of social commerce. It refers to an online buyer's perception of a swiftly formed interpersonal relationship with a seller which incorporates three dimensions: mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony [27]. Mutual understanding involves buyers' and sellers' appreciation of each other's needs and opinions which is considered as the key foundation for forming swift guanxi. Reciprocal favors describe positive benefits from communications and interactions between buyers and sellers; Relationship harmony implies respecting each other and avoiding conflicts between buyers and sellers, which is a crucial element to building swift guanxi [27,46–48]. Many studies on social commerce have found that effective use of computer-mediated communication technologies promotes the formation of swift guanxi and trust between buyers and sellers, which further facilitates the completion of transactions [27,49]. For instance, a recent research by Lin, et al. [50] shows that swift guanxi is easier to be formed and developed when users receive strong informational and emotional support from social websites.

The concept of swift guanxi is extended from the social commerce to the organizational field in our study. We consider that newcomers have not yet established a formal, close relationship with the veterans when they join a new organization. Prior research suggests that guanxi has to be built and developed through IT applications, such as social media, because of the fragmented workplaces [26,51]. Similar to that between buyers and sellers in online marketplaces, an informal, interpersonal relationship between newcomers and veterans is more likely to be formed swiftly through interactions based on social media rather than face-to-face meeting. In particular, mutual understanding in our study equates the appreciation of each other's needs and opinions between newcomers and veterans. As a crucial element of swift guanxi, developing mutual understanding requires both parties to understand and follow the implicit rules of a guanxi-based relationship or network [46,48]. Reciprocal favors represent the positive benefits resulted from the communications and interactions between newcomers and veterans, which can be shown in many ways, such as providing resources or information to newcomers or making friends with veterans to develop their social networks. Social exchange theory suggests that reciprocity is the basic premise of social exchange completion [52]. Such reciprocal behavior facilitates the bonding relationships among employees and can further produce positive outcomes [26,53]. Relationship harmony denotes the mutual respect and conflict avoidance between newcomers and veterans [27,46], which is vital to the development of guanxi because harmonious relationships help to overcome the contracting costs associated with potential opportunism [27].

3. Hypothesis Development and Model

Mutual understanding means understanding each other's needs or views [27]. Publicly presenting the information that users share on the platform is considered one of the most basic capabilities of social media, that is to say, any content posted by employees on the platform can be easily viewed and searched by other colleagues in the organization [28]. Newcomers may encounter various difficulties with their jobs in the new environment. They can use ESM to express their concerns, which helps veterans understand their needs so they can provide guidance timely. At the same time, the accuracy of newcomers' meta-knowledge (knowledge of "who knows what" and "who knows whom") can be

increased through the use of ESM at work [11], which enables newcomers to better understand their new organizations and colleagues. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. *Newcomers' work-related use of ESM positively affects the mutual understanding between newcomers and colleagues.*

Reciprocal favors refer to the positive benefits that can be derived from the interactions between newcomers and veterans [46,54–56]. When newcomers use ESM for work-related purposes, such as sharing their expertise in a particular area through ESM, colleagues may ask for relevant help when they face problems at work. Generally speaking, newcomers who share useful knowledge with their colleagues not only help them solve work problems but also impress their co-workers with the expertise and skills they possess, so newcomers' use of ESM for knowledge sharing can bring reciprocal favors [57]. Moreover, as organizational entry is a special period full of uncertainty for newcomers, they always tend to seek various useful information and resource in the organization for accelerating socialization [28]. Hence, the process of socialization will be facilitated when newcomers use ESM to connect with colleagues with specific competencies or to obtain key resources in the organization. Such a type of socialization is beneficial for organizations, colleagues, as well as newcomers. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2. *Newcomers' work-related use of ESM positively affects reciprocal favors between newcomers and colleagues.*

Relationship harmony is commonly referred to as mutual respect and conflict avoidance [27]. Newcomers have to take much time to adapt to their new organization and their own work. When newcomers are not certain about their tasks, they can use the ESM's feature of "tasks" to check their work. When newcomers understand their roles, they will experience a higher level of clarity to minimize conflicts with colleagues [58]. Moreover, the work today in an organization usually requires cooperation between different colleagues or different departments. In order to complete the task successfully, employees need to know their co-workers' work progress in a timely manner. ESM enables employees to improve the visibility organizational activities [28]; when newcomers post updates on work projects by using ESM, their work progress can be easily and timely recognized by their colleagues, helping to avoid work inconsistencies and reduce conflicts between newcomers and co-workers. Some studies, such as Dimicco et al. [59], also mention that the use of social media at work can increase employees' attachment to the organization by allowing them to make and maintain friendships at work, facilitating the formation of harmonious relationships. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. *Newcomers' work-related use of ESM positively affects relationship harmony between newcomers and colleagues.*

The concept of learning belongs to the cognitive dimension of psychological experience, conceptualized as the feeling that a person is getting and also able to apply knowledge and skills [14]. When individuals capture this feeling of learning, they are more likely to be physically healthy. In contrast, vitality belongs to the affective dimension of psychological experience, measuring the positive feeling of individuals when they are energetic [14]. A sense of vitality helps individual maintain mental health, so depression will be less likely [60]. At the beginning of entry, newcomers may find it hard to adapt to their new organizations and work because of their unfamiliarity. The use of ESM can promote mutual understanding (e.g., understanding each other's needs or views) between newcomers and colleagues. When newcomers encounter issues at work, veterans can provide effective help (e.g., information or skills) to foster their learning as veterans understand the needs of newcomers. In addition, the timely and effective support provided by the veterans also allows newcomers to

focus more on their work because they will need less time and energy to find solutions to address the issues with the help from veterans. Spreitzer et al. [14] find that employees, who immersed in their work are more likely to finish tasks efficiently and effectively, which contributes to learning. When employees concentrate on their own works, they will be absorbed in their work and become energized [61] and, thus, complete their tasks successfully. Consequently, they will tend to possess a sense of accomplishment, full of energy [14]. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. *The mutual understanding between newcomers and colleagues positively affects newcomers' learning.*

Hypothesis 5. *The mutual understanding between newcomers and colleagues positively affects newcomers' vitality.*

Social exchange theory believes that reciprocal favors are the premise of exchange behavior; once the exchange parties do not perceive the benefits of the exchanges to each other, these exchanges will stop immediately [62]. Based on the social exchange theory, when newcomers and veterans perceive reciprocal favors at work, they are more likely to exchange resources, such as information, knowledge, or reputation, with each other. These resources often help newcomers complete their tasks better, further facilitating their learning and vitality. In other words, when newcomers and their colleagues both recognize the benefits of newcomers' use of ESM, they will be willing to use ESM more actively at work and engage in social interactions or cooperation to gain more benefits from each other. In this way, newcomers will receive more resources from organizations, including knowledge, information, positive emotional resources, and relationship resources [28], which helps their desire to learn. Prior studies [14] show that social interactions with colleagues at work arouse employees' feeling of learning. Resources, such as knowledge and skills, also enable newcomers to perceive vitality and accomplishment by helping them better cope with their tasks [14,25]. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 6. *The reciprocal favors between newcomers and colleagues positively affect newcomers' learning.*

Hypothesis 7. *The reciprocal favors between newcomers and colleagues positively affect newcomers' vitality.*

The concept of relationship harmony means the respect and conflict avoidance between each other [27]. Harmonious relationships enable colleagues to cooperate or help each other at work, so newcomers can acquire skills, knowledge, and experience from veterans to successfully complete their work. Additionally, effective work handing increases energy of newcomers by empowering their sense of accomplishment [14]. Moreover, relationship harmony means mutual respect between newcomers and veterans. Many studies have shown that mutual respect among employees helps promote thriving. Learning and experimentation with new behavior will be facilitated when employees feel safe in an environment with mutual respect [25,63,64]. In addition, when individuals and colleagues respect each other, they are more likely to believe that they are worthy and valued organizational members [14], which facilitates a sense of relatedness as individuals feel more connected to others [65]. This sense of relatedness may further increase vitality and openness to learning because such sense may spark feelings of positive emotion and unleash the broaden-and-build model [25,66]. Therefore, we propose Hypotheses 8 and 9. The theoretical model is exhibited in Figure 1.

Hypothesis 8. *The relationship harmony between newcomers and colleagues positively affects newcomers' learning.*

Hypothesis 9. *The relationship harmony between newcomers and colleagues positively affects newcomers' vitality.*
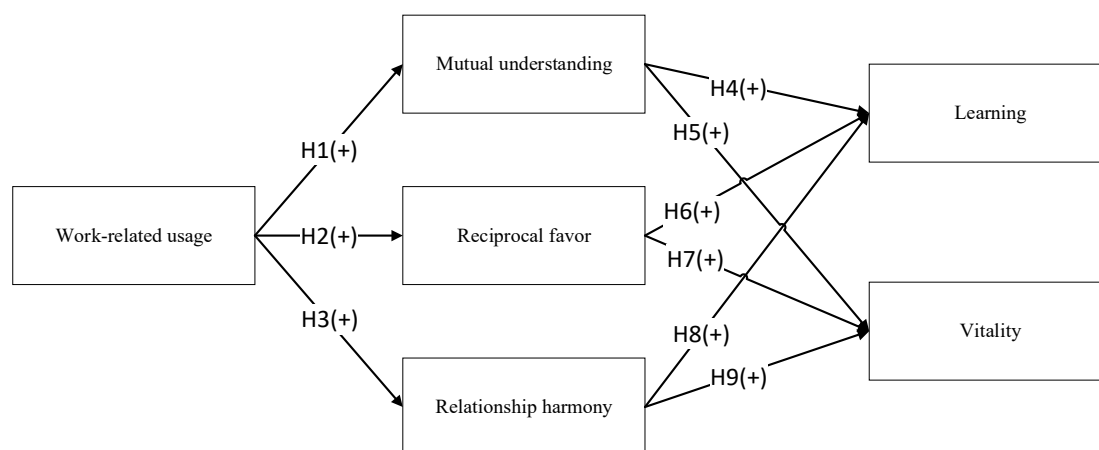
Figure 1. The theoretical model.

4. Methodology

4.1. Sample and Data Collection

In order to test our research model and proposed hypothesizes, we collected data from newcomers at a large telecom company in HangZhou, China via a professional online survey platform. Those participants were informed at the beginning of the questionnaire that the result they provided would be seen only by the research team. Consistent with prior research about newcomers [67,68], we distributed surveys to newcomers whose job tenure less than six months. In order to mitigate common method bias [69] and obtain help form temporal precedence of our variables, data collection was completed in three phases. In phase one (Time 1), newcomers reported their demographic information and work-related use of ESM. In this phase, we asked participants to nominate 3–5 veterans who were closely related to them at work. A total of 132 newcomers completed their surveys. A month after we completed the first phase, we started the second phase (Time 2) of the questionnaire survey. We sent matching questionnaires to the veterans who were nominated by newcomers at Time 1 and requested these veterans to rate the newcomers' swift guanxi with veterans. Veterans generally provided ratings for three newcomers. One week later we started third phase (Time 3) and sent questionnaires to newcomers again. Given that the perception of the "swift guanxi" among newcomers and veterans should be mutual, the newcomers were asked not only to report their thriving at work, but also their swift guanxi with veterans. Excluding newcomers who did not complete the entire phase of the questionnaire and who did not get rated by veterans, our final valid sample consisted of 77 new employee-veteran dyads, resulting in a response rate of 58.33%. Considering the small number of variables in our research model and the difficulty of collecting the special type of dyadic data, we believe that sample size of the research is acceptable, in comparison to that in existing studies such as Jokisaari and Vuori [70] and Liang, et al. [71].

As shown in Table 1, 49.4% of newcomers were less than 25 years old and most newcomers were younger than 30 years old (i.e., up to 85.7%). Additionally, the majority of (71.4%) the newcomers in the sample graduated from junior college. Regarding the job tenure, nearly half (48.1%) of the newcomers' tenure was less than three months. Since we conducted this questionnaire survey only within a technology department, we can understand why most of (98.7%) the participants were male.

Table 1. Descriptions of the sample.

Attributes	Values	N	Percent (%)
Gender	Male	76	98.7
	Female	1	1.3
Age	20–25	38	49.4
	26–30	28	36.3
	31–35	8	10.4
	>36	3	3.9
Education	High school or below	5	6.5
	College	55	71.4
	University or above	17	22.1
Job tenure (months)	<3	37	48.1
	3–6	40	51.9

4.2. Measurement Development

We measured all constructs in our model by developing items from existing literature. Considering that all the respondents are Chinese, we translated the questionnaire from English to Chinese with the help of two experts to make sure that there were no semantic discrepancies between the translated version and the original. Moreover, we provided some brief descriptions about constructs for participants in the questionnaire.

The items used to measure work-related use were developed from Gonzalez [32]. The items used to measure the three dimensions of swift guanxi were developed from Ou, Pavlou, and Davison [27]. The measurement items for thriving at work—namely, learning and vitality were all developed from Porath et al. [15]. Additionally, all of the measures in our study used a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) and the specific items and related literature were provided in Appendix A. Before examining the measurement model and structure model, we tested the normal distribution of the sample and the result shows that our sample contains non-normal data. In addition, the sample size we possessed is relatively small ($N = 77$). Thus, partial least squares (PLS) modeling was chosen for our analysis [71]. Specifically, we utilized the software package Smart PLS 3.2 (a software program provided by the Institute of Operations Management and Organizations, University of Hamburg, Bönningstedt, Germany [72]) to test our model and hypotheses.

As we already noted, swift guanxi between newcomers and veterans is measured by newcomers' self-ratings and the nominated veterans' ratings. That is, the final ratings of the mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony were formed by aggregating the newcomers' self- ratings and the nominated veterans' ratings.

Before we aggregated the newcomers' self-ratings and the nominated veterans' ratings, we tested the agreement within-group. For mutual understanding, the mean Rwg(ij) was 0.941. For reciprocal favors, the mean Rwg(ij) was 0.944. For relationship harmony, the mean Rwg(ij) was 0.939. These Rwg(ij) values were all higher than the benchmark value of 0.7, which suggested that the within-group agreement in our sample were sufficient to aggregate [73,74].

5. Analysis Results

5.1. Measurement Model

We tested reliability, convergent, and discriminant validity though using Smart PLS to assess measurement model. The measures are considered reliable when Cronbach's alphas and composite reliabilities are all up to 0.7 or higher [75]. We assessed convergent validity by testing both the AVEs and factor loadings. Convergent validity was assured when the following two criteria are met: (1) the AVEs exceed 0.5, and (2) all factor loadings were higher than 0.6 to become practically significant. Moreover, we assessed discriminant validity through testing AVEs and we deemed discriminant

validity was adequate when all constructs of AVEs were higher than the correlations between the constructs [76].

We evaluated reliability and validity of measurement model through conducting a confirmatory factor analysis; the test results are shown in the Table 2. As per the common rule-of-thumb, an item will be accepted when its loadings exceed the recommended threshold of 0.60 [77,78]. Thus, the item of learning "I am not learning at work (its standardized factor loading is 0.27)" and the item of social-related use of ESM "I use the ESM to chat with others while at work (its standardized factor loading is 0.43)", and the item of vitality "I do not feel very energetic at work (its standardized factor loading is 0.37)" were all deleted. The items with factor loadings exceeded 0.60 could be retained for further analysis. Before we tested structural model, we assessed the measurement model with retained items one more time.

Table 2. Measurement items and validity assessment.

Constructs	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's A	C.R.	AVE
Work-related Use				
1. I use the ESM to post updates on work projects.	0.82			
2. I use the ESM to arrange meetings with colleagues about work projects.	0.82			
3. I use the ESM to share information with colleagues about organizational objectives.	0.70	0.90	0.92	0.59
4. I use the ESM to share information about organizational policies and procedures with colleagues.	0.66			
5. I use the ESM to organize my work files.	0.83			
6. I use ESM to upload credible information for future use.	0.80			
7. I use ESM to share my expertise in a particular area.	0.76			
8. I use the ESM to gain access to others with expertise in a particular area.	0.73			
Social-related Use				
1. I use the ESM to arrange social events with coworkers after work hours.	0.88			
2. I use ESM to make friends within the organization.	0.86			
3. I use the ESM when I need a break from work.	0.86	0.85	0.89	0.64
4. I use the ESM to chat with others while at work.	0.43			
5. I use the ESM to find people with similar interests.	0.87			
Mutual Understanding				
1. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can understand each other's needs at work.	0.81			
2. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can understand the point of view of each other at work	0.74			
3. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can make ourselves views be understood at work.	0.87	0.88	0.91	0.68
4. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can follow the flow of conversation at work.	0.86			
5. These veterans (the newcomer) and I show interest in each other's opinions at work.	0.84			
Reciprocal Favors				
1. If these veterans (the newcomer) helped me at work, I would praise them.	0.90			
2. These veterans (the newcomer) and I provide a positive rating or comment to each other at work.	0.85	0.90	0.93	0.77
3. These veterans (the newcomer) and I help each other at work.	0.88			
4. These veterans (the newcomer) and I proved to be friends by doing a favor for each other at work.	0.87			

Table 2. *Cont.*

Constructs	Factor Loadings	Cronbach's A	C.R.	AVE
Relationship Harmony				
1. These veterans (the newcomer) and I maintain harmony with each other at work.	0.86			
2. These veterans (the newcomer) and I avoid conflict with each other at work.	0.83	0.81	0.89	0.73
3. These veterans (the newcomer) and I respect each other at work.	0.88			
Learning				
1. I find myself learning often at work.	0.87			
2. I continue to learn more as time goes by at work.	0.85			
3. I see myself continually improving at work.	0.88	0.82	0.88	0.62
4. I am not learning at work. (R)	0.27			
5. I am developing a lot at work.	0.87			
Vitality				
1. I feel alive and vital at work.	0.82			
2. I have energy and spirit at work.	0.80			
3. I do not feel very energetic at work. (R)	0.37	0.75	0.83	0.52
4. I feel alert and awake when I was working.	0.65			
5. I am looking forward to each new day.	0.85			

Before testing model with retained items, we also checked for common-method bias although some scholars believe that its impacts are not critical [79]. We performed Harman's one-factor test and considered that common method bias is nonexistent if a one single factor accounts for less than 50% of the variance [80]. The test results suggested that there are no common method bias problems in our study.

Table 3 shows the results of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and AVE's after we deleted 3 items. The Cronbach's alphas were all higher than the benchmark value of 0.70 (ranging from 0.80–0.90) and the values of composite reliability all exceeded the benchmark value 0.70 (ranging from 0.87–0.93). At the same time, the AVE's values were all higher than the benchmark value of 0.50 (ranging from 0.59–0.77). The above results mean that the convergent validity in our study was acceptable.

Table 3. Results of convergent validity tests.

Constructs	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Work-related use	8	0.90	0.92	0.59
Social-related use	4	0.90	0.93	0.76
Mutual understanding	5	0.88	0.91	0.68
Reciprocal favors	4	0.90	0.93	0.77
Relationship harmony	3	0.81	0.89	0.73
Learning	4	0.90	0.93	0.76
Vitality	4	0.80	0.87	0.63

Table 4 shows the results of inter-construct correlations. The square root of the AVE's for each construct was all higher than the correlations between that construct and other constructs. According to Table 5, all items loaded on its own construct were higher than 0.60 [77,78] and also greater than those on any other construct. These results indicate that the discriminant validity in our study was acceptable.

Table 4. Inter-construct correlations.

Construct	WRU	SRU	MU	RF	RH	LEA	VIT
WRU	**0.77**						
SRU	0.53	**0.87**					
MU	0.42	0.29	**0.83**				
RF	0.39	0.12	0.64	**0.88**			
RH	0.35	0.29	0.57	0.48	**0.85**		
LEA	0.34	0.26	0.65	0.58	0.62	**0.87**	
VIT	0.33	0.35	0.61	0.60	0.60	0.59	**0.79**

Note: The diagonal elements bolded are the square roots of the AVEs. WRU: work-related use; SRU: social-related use; MU: mutual understanding; RF: reciprocal favors; LEA: learning; VIT: vitality.

Table 5. Cross-loadings.

Construct	Items	WRU	SRU	MU	RF	RH	LEA	VIT
WRU	WRU1	**0.82**	0.47	0.36	0.28	0.31	0.28	0.23
	WRU2	**0.82**	0.35	0.46	0.42	0.32	0.37	0.31
	WRU3	**0.70**	0.39	0.18	0.24	0.07	0.23	0.25
	WRU4	**0.66**	0.36	0.19	0.25	0.27	0.22	0.25
	WRU5	**0.83**	0.30	0.37	0.41	0.40	0.29	0.40
	WRU6	**0.80**	0.38	0.33	0.29	0.19	0.19	0.16
	WRU7	**0.76**	0.50	0.24	0.21	0.27	0.28	0.15
	WRU8	**0.73**	0.59	0.35	0.20	0.18	0.18	0.20
SRU	SRU1	0.40	**0.89**	0.21	0.11	0.23	0.28	0.27
	SRU2	0.49	**0.87**	0.28	0.05	0.26	0.21	0.25
	SRU3	0.53	**0.84**	0.29	0.14	0.31	0.22	0.34
	SRU4	0.41	**0.88**	0.23	0.12	0.21	0.20	0.36
MU	MU1	0.26	0.22	**0.81**	0.49	0.43	0.46	0.51
	MU2	0.27	0.08	**0.74**	0.49	0.34	0.54	0.33
	MU3	0.42	0.31	**0.87**	0.62	0.48	0.56	0.59
	MU4	0.39	0.29	**0.86**	0.54	0.55	0.52	0.58
	MU5	0.41	0.27	**0.84**	0.51	0.53	0.58	0.49
RF	RF1	0.37	0.08	0.62	**0.90**	0.41	0.54	0.58
	RF2	0.30	0.12	0.49	**0.85**	0.37	0.52	0.55
	RF3	0.37	0.12	0.62	**0.88**	0.44	0.49	0.47
	RF4	0.34	0.10	0.53	**0.87**	0.45	0.49	0.50
RH	RH1	0.21	0.30	0.48	0.29	**0.86**	0.56	0.46
	RH2	0.23	0.21	0.49	0.38	**0.82**	0.48	0.44
	RH3	0.43	0.24	0.49	0.53	**0.88**	0.54	0.60
LEA	LEA1	0.39	0.31	0.54	0.51	0.50	**0.87**	0.47
	LEA2	0.29	0.17	0.57	0.52	0.63	**0.87**	0.52
	LEA3	0.21	0.27	0.58	0.43	0.50	**0.89**	0.50
	LEA4	0.29	0.17	0.56	0.56	0.52	**0.87**	0.58
VIT	VIT1	0.28	0.24	0.46	0.42	0.45	0.48	**0.84**
	VIT2	0.33	0.33	0.57	0.54	0.48	0.49	**0.81**
	VIT3	0.12	0.27	0.41	0.46	0.44	0.47	**0.66**
	VIT4	0.28	0.27	0.48	0.47	0.51	0.45	**0.85**

Note: Items in bold are loadings of target factor. WRU: work-related use; SRU: social-related use; MU: mutual understanding; RF: reciprocal favors; LEA: learning; VIT: vitality.

Since there are several inter-construct correlations above 0.60 (see the Table 4), we performed a further test to evaluate the potential issue of multicollinearity. By using the variance inflation factor (VIF) to assess multicollinearity among items and the test result shows that all VIFs were not greater than the threshold of 3.33 (ranged from 1.00–2.86), which indicated that multicollinearity was not a problem in our research [81].

5.2. Structural Model

The main effects of newcomers' work-related use of ESM on the swift guanxi between newcomers and veterans and its corresponding influence on the thriving of the newcomers at work were tested through applying PLS (bootstrapping, with 5000 re-sample). Table 6 shows the result of the test. As we hypothesized, a newcomer's work-related use of ESM was positively associated with mutual understanding between her (him) and veterans (H1: $\beta = 0.424$, $p < 0.001$), and a newcomer's work-related use of ESM also shows a positive association with reciprocal favors (H2: $\beta = 0.394$, $p < 0.001$) and relationship harmony (H3: $\beta = 0.350$, $p < 0.001$). Moreover, mutual understanding between newcomers and veterans was positively associated with learning of newcomer (H4: $\beta = 0.277$, $p < 0.01$), but not with vitality of newcomer (H5: $\beta = 0.177$, $p > 0.05$). Reciprocal favors between newcomer and veterans were not only positively associated with learning of newcomer (H6: $\beta = 0.239$, $p < 0.05$) but also with vitality of newcomer (H7: $\beta = 0.314$, $p < 0.05$). Apart from that, relationship harmony between newcomers and veterans also exhibited significant positive associations with learning (H8: $\beta = 0.336$, $p < 0.01$) and vitality (H9: $\beta = 0.249$, $p < 0.01$). In other words, the majority of hypotheses were supported, but only H5 was rejected. The results also revealed that all control variables (social-related use of ESM, age, education, job tenure) had no significant effects on learning or vitality.

Table 6. Hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Path	Path Coefficient	*t*-Value	*p*-Value	Support
		Theoretical Paths			
H1	WRU→MU	0.424 ***	3.859	0.000	YES
H2	WRU→RF	0.394 ***	4.216	0.000	YES
H3	WRU→RH	0.350 ***	3.650	0.000	YES
H4	MU→LEA	0.277 **	2.982	0.003	YES
H5	MU→VIT	0.177	1.268	0.205	NO
H6	RF→LEA	0.239 *	2.190	0.029	YES
H7	RF→VIT	0.314 *	2.276	0.023	YES
H8	RH→LEA	0.336 **	2.802	0.005	YES
H9	RH→VIT	0.294 **	3.361	0.001	YES
		Control Paths			
	SRU→LEA	0.012	0.132	0.895	NO
	SRU→VIT	0.162	1.491	0.136	NO
	AGE→LEA	−0.050	0.549	0.583	NO
	AGE→VIT	0.046	0.583	0.560	NO
	JT→LEA	0.145	1.723	0.085	NO
	JT→VIT	0.081	1.036	0.300	NO
	EDU→LEA	−0.024	0.303	0.762	NO
	EDU→VIT	−0.050	0.687	0.492	NO

Note: * shows significance at the 0.05 level; ** shows significance at the 0.01 level; and *** shows significance at the 0.001 level. WRU: work-related use; SRU: social-related use; MU: mutual understanding; RF: reciprocal favors; RH: relationship harmony; LEA: learning; VIT: vitality; AGE: age; EDU: education; JT: job tenure.

The explained variances (R^2), path-coefficient (β) and the levels of significance were also shown in following Figure 2: the proposed model explained substantial variance in learning of newcomer (55.9%) and vitality of newcomers (55.3%), 18.0% variance for mutual understanding between newcomers and veterans, 15.6% variance for reciprocal favors and 12.2% variance for relationship harmony between newcomers and veterans.
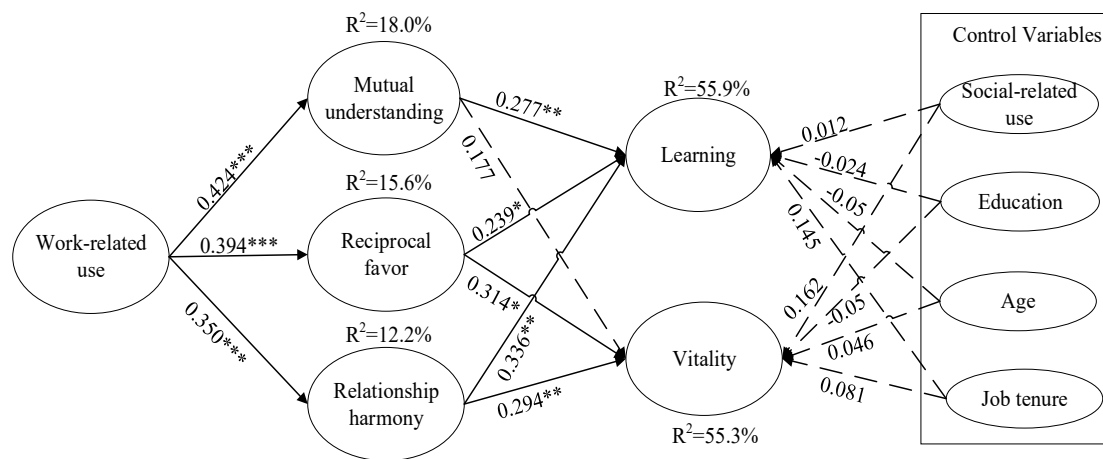
Figure 2. PLS analysis results.

5.3. Mediating Effect

To further test our model, we examined the mediating effects of mutual understanding and reciprocal favors and relationship harmony on learning and vitality, which was recommended by Baron and Kenny [82]. Results of mediation analysis are presented in Table 7. Firstly, the effects of newcomer work-related use of ESM (IV) on learning (DV) and vitality (DV) were all significant when the mediating variable (MV) mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony were not added. Secondly, the effects of newcomers' work-related use of ESM (IV) on mediating variable (MV) swift guanxi (i.e., mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony) were all significant. Thirdly, when mediating variable (MV) mutual understanding and reciprocal favors were introduced into the analysis, the direct effect of newcomers' work-related use of ESM (IV) on learning (DV) was not significant; however, when the mediating variable relationship harmony was introduced, the direct effect of newcomers' work-related use of ESM (IV) on learning (DV) was significant and the effects of mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony on learning (DV) were all significant, which means mutual understanding and reciprocal favors played a role of full mediators and relationship harmony played a role of partial mediators according to Baron and Kenny [82]. Additionally, the direct effect of newcomers' work-related use of ESM (IV) on vitality (DV) was not significant when involving these mediating variable (MV) mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony. Simultaneously, the effects of mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony on vitality were still significant, which indicates that the relationship between newcomers' work-related use of ESM and vitality was fully mediated by the three dimensions of swift guanxi according to Baron and Kenny [82].

Table 7. Results of mediating effect tests.

IV	MV	DV	IV→DV	IV→MV	IV + MV→DV		Mediating
			c	a	IV(c′)	MV(b)	
WRU	MU	LEA	0.361 ***	0.436 ***	0.094	0.611 ***	Full
WRU	RF	LEA	0.361 ***	0.399 ***	0.146	0.527 ***	Full
WRU	RH	LEA	0.361 ***	0.386 ***	0.158 *	0.571 ***	Partial
WRU	MU	VIT	0.303 **	0.436 ***	0.111	0.574 ***	Full
WRU	RF	VIT	0.303 **	0.399 ***	0.123	0.556 ***	Full
WRU	RH	VIT	0.303 **	0.386 ***	0.154	0.543 ***	Full

Notes: * shows significance at the 0.05 level; ** shows significance at the 0.01 level; and *** shows significance at the 0.001 level. IV = independent variable; MV = mediating variable; DV = dependent variable; WRU: work-related use; MU: mutual understanding; RF: reciprocal favors; RH: relationship harmony; LEA: learning; VIT: vitality.

6. Discussion

6.1. Discussions

The study explores the relationship between newcomers' work-related use of ESM and their thriving (i.e., learning, vitality) at work through adopting and extending the concept of swift guanxi. Most of our hypotheses are supported by our empirical analysis. First, the concept of newcomers' work-related use of ESM plays a positive role on mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony. Second, reciprocal favors and relationship harmony both have a positive effect on newcomer learning, as well as vitality. Furthermore, mutual understanding significantly facilitates the learning of newcomers.

However, mutual understanding between newcomers and veterans does not significantly promote the vitality of newcomers. As Spreitzer et al. [14] suggest, individuals feel vital only when they have enough energy. However, because of their unfamiliarity with new jobs, newcomers have to take a great deal of time and energy to understand the task-related views and knowledge shared in ESM by veterans. The more knowledge and skills newcomers are exposed to, the more energy they need to consume to master the new knowledge. Although the acquisition of new knowledge and skills promotes the learning of newcomers, the vitality of newcomers may decrease with energy consumption.

Among the six mediating paths, five of them were proved to be fully mediation. Specifically, the relationship between newcomers' work-related use of ESM and their vitality was mediated by mutual understanding, reciprocal favors, and relationship harmony, and the relationship between newcomers' work-related use of ESM and their learning was mediated by mutual understanding as well as reciprocal favors. The results suggest that the formation of swift guanxi between newcomers and veterans has a positive effect on newcomers' work-related use of ESM and their vitality. Furthermore, the formation of mutual understanding and reciprocal favors between newcomers and veterans also positively affects newcomers' work-related use of ESM and their learning. That is, as newcomers and veterans establish swift guanxi through using ESM for work, they will feel a sense of energy and accomplishment of acquiring and mastering knowledge and skills.

6.2. Theoretical Implications

Our research has several major implications for extant literature. First, the existing research on the thriving at work seldom considers the impact of information technology. Our research explores the effects of ESM on thriving at work from the perspective of swift guanxi, which enriches our understanding about employees' thriving, especially the impact of information technology on thriving at work. Specifically, newcomers' use of ESM for work-related purpose can effectively promote their perception of learning and vitality through establishing reciprocal favors and harmonious relationship with veterans. In addition, newcomers' perceptions of learning will increase when they establish mutual understanding with veterans through the use of ESM.

Second, this research extends the literature on the value of ESM. Previous empirical studies on ESM mainly focus on how ESM affects organizational knowledge transfer [7,83,84] and employee performance [85,86], but very few have considered an employee's psychological state. Our study addresses this research gap by adopting a guanxi perspective to explore how ESM affects employees' psychological state—thriving at work. Our results provide additional insights about the value ESM creates for organization.

Third, we study the special target group of newcomers, which is different from previous studies that focus mainly on the group of veterans, but very little on organizational newcomers and their IT usage. Our research has effectively extended current research by exploring the relationship between newcomers' work-related use of ESM and their thriving. Furthermore, applying the concept of swift guanxi from the field of social commerce to organization and management, we investigate and reveal the influencing mechanism of the use of ESM on newcomers' thriving at work. Our research provides promising directions for further research on IT use and employees' thriving.

6.3. Managerial Implications

Revealing the role of ESM in enterprises and employees, our research provides some important guidelines for both organizational managers and employees. First, we suggest managers to encourage newcomers to interact with veterans through ESM to promote mutual understanding. Similarly, organizational managers can also offer some incentives or regulations to encourage veterans to actively understand the ideas and views of newcomers, for example, encouraging veterans to pay more attention to the work status of newcomers and sharing knowledge related to newcomers in ESM to help them solve their work problem quickly. In this way, newcomers' thriving at work can be effectively enhanced, helping them better adapt to the new organization and achieve better development.

Second, we strongly recommend that managers encourage team activities or collaboration in ESM to cultivate the team awareness between newcomers and veterans, which helps promote a sense of reciprocal favors among them. Managers can promote collaboration between newcomers and veterans by assigning them some interdependent tasks based on their expertise, which will not only help the newcomers learn more skill or knowledge, but also increase their energy at work. Furthermore, we also suggest that managers encourage newcomers to post the issues they encounter in workplace by using ESM to seek advice from their colleagues. This type of interaction between newcomers and veterans is conducive to social exchanges that promote reciprocal favors and develop thriving at work.

Third, managers should consider building harmonious relationships between newcomers and veterans through the use of ESM, for example, encouraging newcomers and veterans to use some of the ESM features such as "liking" and "comments" to express gratitude after getting help from each other. A harmonious relationship will help newcomers sustain their learning and acquire more resources from veterans to boost their vitality.

In summary, current research of ESM has not adequately explored the use of ESM to facilitate newcomers' thriving at work, which we have addressed in this paper. Our findings indicate that managers need to take appropriate measures to leverage ESM to form swift guanxi between newcomers and veterans and, thus, help newcomers to learn and enhance vitality in workplace.

7. Conclusions

The rapid development of information technology and the Internet in the past decade has dramatically changed the business environment [87]. Social media, as a result of such development, is regarded as a major impetus revolutionizing the ways of communication among organizations and individuals. On the one hand, organizations use social media to improve their relationship with consumers and attract new clients [88] and also improve the company's profitability or innovation performance. On the other hand, employees within organizations also use social media to achieve positive outcomes by improving interpersonal relationships and increasing access to resources [1,4,11,19]. Our research focuses on the impact of social media on individual employees. Specifically, we explore the impact of ESM on the employees' thriving at work by focusing on the special target group of newcomers. Adopting the concept of swift guanxi, our research findings suggest that newcomers work-related use of ESM will actively promote the formation of swift guanxi between them and veterans, thus developing their thriving at work.

Although our research makes significant contributions, we would also like to acknowledge some of the limitations in our study for possible directions of future research. First, given the long track time needed and the limited number of newcomers, we have to admit that our research sample size is small. Future studies will need to test large samples to improve the statistical power. Moreover, our research samples were all collected from the technology department, which led to the majority of the subjects in our sample being male, where women only accounted for a small percentage. This test sample is likely to lead to bias in our findings. Therefore, we call for future research to involve different departments while balancing the gender of participants.

Second, we only considered the work-related use of ESM in our study but ignored the social-related use. Many studies have found the important value of social-related use of ESM [12], especially for

newcomers [32]. Therefore, we suggest that future research should also focus on the impact of social-related use of ESM on employees' thriving.

Finally, the target group of this study is newcomers, while the effect of ESM on thriving at work of veterans has not been investigated. We believe that it is necessary and valuable to further study the impact of ESM on the thriving at work of veterans, which will enable us to understand the value of ESM more clearly and to better facilitate employees' growth.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. Measurement items.

Constructs	Items	Sources
Work-related use	1. I use the ESM to post updates on work projects.	[32]
	2. I use the ESM to arrange meetings with colleagues about work projects.	
	3. I use the ESM to share information with colleagues about organizational objectives	
	4. I use the ESM to share information about organizational policies and procedures with colleagues.	
	5. I use the ESM to organize my work files.	
	6. I use ESM to upload credible information for future use.	
	7. I use ESM to share my expertise in a particular area.	
	8. I use the ESM to gain access to others with expertise in a particular area.	
Social-related use	1. I use ESM for setting up a social event with co-workers after working hours.	[32]
	2. I use ESM to make friends within the organization	
	3. I use ESM when I feel I need a break from work.	
	4. I use ESM to chat with others while at work	
	5. I use ESM to find people with similar interests.	
Mutual understanding	1. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can understand each other's needs at work	[27]
	2. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can understand the point of view of each other at work	
	3. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can make ourselves views be understood at work.	
	4. These veterans (the newcomer) and I can follow the flow of conversation at work.	
	5. These veterans (the newcomer) and I show interest in each other's opinions at work.	

Table A1. *Cont.*

Constructs	Items	Sources
Reciprocal favors	1. If these veterans (the newcomer) helped me at work, I would praise them.	[27]
	2. These veterans (the newcomer) and I provide a positive rating or comment to each other at work	
	3. These veterans (the newcomer) and I help each other at work.	
	4. These veterans (the newcomer) and I proved to be friends by doing a favor for each other at work.	
Relationship harmony	1. These veterans (the newcomer) and I maintain harmony with each other at work	[27]
	2. These veterans (the newcomer) and I avoid conflict with each other at work.	
	3. These veterans (the newcomer) and I respect each other at work.	
Learning	1. I find myself learning often at work. 2. I continue to learn more as time goes by at work. 3. I see myself continually improving at work. 4. I am not learning at work(R). 5. I am developing a lot at work.	[15]
Vitality	1. I feel alive and vital at work. 2. I have energy and spirit at work. 3. I do not feel very energetic at work(R). 4. I feel alert and awake when I was working. 5. I am looking forward to each new day.	[15]

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