Linking enterprise social media use, trust and knowledge sharing: paradoxical roles of communication transparency and personal blogging

(Article begins on next page)

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Linking Enterprise Social Media Use, Trust and Knowledge Sharing: Paradoxical Roles of Communication Transparency and Personal Blogging

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of enterprise social media (ESM) use on two trust dimensions—affect-based trust (ABT) and cognitive-based trust (CBT)—as mediators in the relationship between ESM use and knowledge sharing. In the first stage of the proposed model, we also consider transparent communication (TC) and personal blogging (PBC) with colleagues during work and non-work hours as moderators that reshape trust levels and subsequently promote knowledge sharing within the organisation.

Design/methodology/approach: We collected the data in three waves from employees in China, the world's largest market for social media. Five companies, including three information technology (IT) companies and two software companies, were targeted for data collection. Initially, a total of 403 ESM users were recruited, but the final sample in the final round was reduced to *N = 292*. We utilised Mplus (v8.5) to calculate direct path coefficients and indirect moderated-mediation effects.

Findings: The use of ESM promotes ABT and CBT, thereby improving knowledge sharing. ABT and CBT both fully mediate the effect of ESM use on knowledge sharing. However, our research reveals paradoxical findings regarding moderation. For example, on the one hand, TC negatively moderates the association between ESM use and ABT, thereby reducing knowledge sharing in the workplace. On the other hand, TC strengthens the relationship between the use of ESM and CBT, thereby increasing knowledge sharing. These contradictory findings indicate that TC functions as a double-edged sword; thus, the effective use of ESM in the workplace requires managers' intervention. Finally, the analysis reveals that the moderating role of PBC strengthens the association between ESM use and both ABT and CBT, thereby increasing knowledge sharing.

Originality/value: While stakeholders have expressed concern regarding the adverse impacts of workplace ESM adoption on employee performance, we provide a broad, novel perspective on the potential of ESM use to enhance knowledge sharing via trust (i.e. ABT and CBT). Ours is the

first study to offer a comparative view of trust dimensions, such as ABT and CBT, and to discuss how, why, and when TC and PBC interactions moderate the relationship of ESM to ABT and CBT and thereby lead to knowledge sharing. These interesting findings guide further research into the role of ESM in the workplace, especially research based on rational choice theory (RCT) and communication visibility theory (CVT), by illuminating the ways in which employees can use ESM to reshape social communication in the workplace and thereby enhance knowledge sharing.

Keywords: Enterprise Social Media, Affect and Cognition-Based Trust, Knowledge Sharing, Communication Visibility Theory, Personal Blogging

Paper type: Research paper

1 Introduction

Contemporary organisations have increasingly adopted enterprise social media (ESM) because it facilitates employees' internal communication and knowledge sharing while reducing duplication of information (Leidner et al., 2018; Leonardi et al., 2013; Luqman, Masood, Shahzad et al., 2020; Chin et al., 2015). Specifically, ESM is an internal web-based platform that enables employees to create profiles, send messages, view, edit and reply to other messages and share content and other information on the network (Leonardi et al., 2013). Commonly used ESM platforms include Yammer, Jive, Slack and IBM Connection. According to recent statistics, 53% of European organisations are utilising social networking via social media, and approximately eight out of ten enterprises use social media to enhance their image in the market (Eurostat, 2021).[1] All of this evidence, which the extant literature endorses, indicates that ESM produces positive outcomes, including agility performance (Cai et al., 2018), creativity (Ding et al., 2019), team coordination (Cao & Ali, 2018) and collective intelligence (Soto-Acosta & Cegarra-Navarro, 2016).

Identifying and understanding the benefits of ESM can contribute to the literature on knowledge sharing, which discusses individual employee abilities, such as knowledge self-

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[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Social_media_-_statistics_on_the_use_by_enterprises

efficacy and helping intention, as well as social factors, such as social interaction ties and norms of reciprocity (Kwahk & Park, 2016), social networking and social trust (Chow & Chan, 2008). However, the existing arguments regarding the connection between ESM use and knowledge sharing are inadequate and inconsistent (Kwahk & Park, 2016; Luqman, Talwar et al., 2021). For instance, on one side, scholars have argued that ESM is a valuable tool to enhance social capital and enable employees to learn from their colleagues (Cai et al., 2018). On the other hand, recent studies have revealed that ESM also entails potential harm. For instance, ESM usage induces psychological transition and information overload (A. Chen & Karahanna, 2018) as well as ESM-related exhaustion (Luqman et al., 2021). Importantly, despite ESM's positive outcomes, it also induces negative psychological outcomes, which hinder employees' productivity and trigger harmful behaviours, such as knowledge hiding (e.g. Ma et al., 2020; Arain et al., 2022; Arain et al., 2021). Therefore, it is not sufficient to study the positive or negative effects of ESM on employee performance in isolation. Rather, scholars must consider both predictors of and mitigators for ESM's adverse consequences. A review of the extant literature reveals various research gaps and limitations.

First, based on the above discussion, we contend that rather than focusing solely on ESM affordances and their associations with employee performance, scholars must better understand the underlying mechanism of ESM's effects on knowledge sharing. The literature has revealed that members are embedded virtually in the ESM network, and they likely engage in fewer face-to-face interactions with colleagues. On virtual platforms, colleagues may interpret shared information/cues differently, which may include misinterpreting the intent of the person sharing information (Cummings & Dennis, 2018). Such misinterpretations, in turn, may influence co-workers' trust levels (Luqman et al., 2020a). Given this complexity and uncertainty embedded in the ESM network, efforts to explore an effective trust-based mechanism are crucial. Although evidence confirms the importance of trust, scholars have devoted little attention to the ways in which it develops in online media. Therefore, we address this limitation by examining trust as an underlying mechanism with two dimensions: 1) affect-based trust and 2) cognition-based trust (hereafter, ABT and CBT, respectively). ABT is defined as the extent to which a person can freely express care and share his/her thoughts, words, actions and emotions, such as joy and sadness, in working relationships. Meanwhile, CBT refers to an individual's assessment of focal employee competence, professionalism and persistence at work (McAllister, 1995; Ng, 2020).

The prior literature has utilised ABT and CBT to examine buyer–supplier relationships in offline settings (Alghababsheh & Gallear, 2020). However, in information systems research (ISR), the use of ESM and the underlying mechanisms of ABT and CBT, which affect knowledge sharing, are rarely studied. Therefore, it is crucial to study whether ESM promotes ABT and CBT. Furthermore, understanding the role of ABT and CBT as mediating mechanisms can enhance supervisors' efforts to manage employee performance virtually. We argue that ESM use not only enhances ABT and CBT but also generates other organisational benefits, such as attaining and retaining good human capital, enhancing quality management, improving work agility, stimulating healthy work competition among employees and reducing deviant behaviour (Luqman, Masood, Shahzad, et al., 2020; Luqman, Talwar et al., 2021; Nusrat et al., 2021).

Second, the previous literature has recognised the widespread use of ESM's visibility affordance, i.e. transparent communication (hereafter, TC), which has gained strategic importance in organisations because it allows other members of the network to easily view the content exchanged and discussed in the network (Leonardi & Meyer, 2015). However, the consensus is lacking on whether TC has a positive or negative impact on employee performance, and further investigation is required (Treem et al., 2020). For example, in terms of its benefits, the communication visibility enabled by ESM promotes knowledge sharing between network members and helps them solve complex problems (Leidner et al., 2018; Leonardi et al., 2013). However, other research into organisational behaviour has shown that transparency has detrimental effects on employee engagement, thereby motivating knowledge hiding (X. Chen et al., 2020; Ma et al., 2020). For example, based on personality differences, people may regard TC positively or negatively (Wallace & Buil, 2021). Therefore, these two research streams prompt us to study why, how and when TC is positive or negative, and based on previously drawn links between ESM and TC and calls for research to explore the role of CT in the open use of ESM, we examine the moderating role of TC at the first stage of the model—in the relationships of ESM use with ABT and CBT. Investigating the role of TC is important because the use of ESM may be ill-advised in organisations with high levels of TC; in fact, in such circumstances, the use of ESM may reduce levels of ABT and CBT among employees (Ng, 2020). In addition, our review does not reveal any research examining the moderating effect of TC on the relationships of ESM with ABT and CBT in online communities. Therefore, to address this gap, the present

study investigates TC's effects on ESM use and its corresponding outcomes, such as knowledge sharing.

Third, we further extend our model by proposing personal blogging with colleagues (hereafter, PBC) as another boundary condition, which may affect the generation of ABT and CBT for knowledge sharing. In contrast to this expectation, the extant literature has suggested that personal messaging is likely to distract employees from their original tasks and can thus be a waste of time (Y. Sun et al., 2021; Zhao & Rosson, 2009). We believe, however, that PBC can promote mutual trust, friendship, support and knowledge sharing between colleagues and that these benefits may outweigh the divergent cost (Kwon et al., 2021). To the best of our knowledge, no extant studies have discussed the role of PBC in the relationship of ESM use with ABT and CBT. Specifically, we assume that PBC strengthens the indirect impact of ESM use on knowledge sharing by enhancing ABT and CBT. In other words, the use of ESM may trigger higher levels of ABT and CBT, which subsequently increase knowledge sharing. By demonstrating these relationships, the current study provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of PBC in the presence of CT, ABT and CBT to enhance knowledge sharing among colleagues.

The previous discussion emphasises the need to better understand the impact of ESM use on employees' ABT and CBT as well as the ways in which and conditions under which TC and PBC have positive and negative impacts on knowledge sharing among colleagues. The objective of the study can be specifically expressed in the following two research questions (RQs). **RQ1. Is ESM use positively associated with ABT and CBT? RQ2. Do ABT and CBT mediate the link between ESM use and knowledge sharing among colleagues? RQ3.** Do CT and PBC moderate the relationships between ESM use and ABT and CBT in the workplace? The current research proposes a conceptual model developed from ESM affordance theory (Gibson, 1977); it further explains the model via the theoretical lenses of rational choice theory (RCT; Yoshimichi, 2010) and communication visibility theory (CVT; Leonardi, 2014). The data were collected in three waves from 292 Chinese ESM users and then analysed to assess the proposed associations. We developed a moderated-mediation model to test the two-way interactions of CT and PBC.

The main contributions of this research are as follows. First, it promotes the ongoing debate regarding the potential of ESM use to enhance knowledge sharing. The current research emphasises the role of ESM as a potential predictor of ABT and CBT and, subsequently, of knowledge sharing among colleagues. Second, as the debate over the dark side of social media increases, there is an urgent need to consider the potentially negative impacts of workplace ESM use on employee performance (Cai et al., 2018; Luqman et al., 2021). By drawing attention to the thus far neglected negative effects of ESM use, the current study may help stakeholders to understand the ways in which ESM use can inhibit knowledge sharing when TC levels are higher. Third, by examining the impact of PBC's boundary effects on the outcomes of ESM use, the current research suggests new ways to reduce the negative impact of CT by linking team members via personal messages/blogging, on the one hand, and by improving the effectiveness of ESM in knowledge sharing on the other. The results also reveal the potential of PBC to strengthen the impact of ESM use on knowledge sharing via ABT and CBT. Fourth, the current research improves the existing ESM literature's limited theoretical understanding by integrating affordances theory, RCT and CVT. Finally, this study identifies the factors that promote and inhibit knowledge sharing within organisations and provides valuable suggestions for managers to reduce knowledge hiding.

2 Theoretical Background

2.1 Theory of Affordances and ESM

Gibson (1977) proposed the affordance theory to explain the influence of technology affordance on social exchange relationships in organisations. Scholars have held that the theory of affordances provides a broader framework to understand the underlying tripartite intersections of technology, people and organisations. The theory further explains the consistency effect within and between organisations based on the characteristics of new technologies (e.g. Zheng & Yu, 2016). Specifically, the theory conceptualises a goal-oriented view of an actor's perceptions of an object in his or her environment, how to use it and the utility that it can 'afford' the actor to achieve the goal. It is worth noting that this theory does not seek to explain the inherent characteristics of the object, nor does it require any cognitive analysis to understand those characteristics; rather, it focuses on the ways in which actors perceive the object directly and

6

independently (Leonardi, 2014). In addition, the theory acknowledges that any affordances can exist independently of users' perceptions.

In the current context, affordances can be described as a combination of system attributes, user capabilities and the possibility of action in the presence of human–computer interaction (HCI; Gibson, 1977; I Jsselsteijn et al., 2003). HCI via ESM enables people to easily connect through content shared. ESM is an organisationally bounded social media platform offering various affordances—for example, enabling employees to (1) 'exchange…messages with anyone embedded in the network,' (2) 'tag or mention specific colleagues in the shared content/message as on private social media (e.g. Facebook)' (3), 'post, edit and sort texts and files in exchange with others' and (4) 'view the communication, connections, texts and files communicated, published, edited and stored and retrieve these contents at any time' (Leonardi, 2014). Hence, given its nature, ESM not only builds human capital but also enables employees to connect socially with co-workers who have similar interests (Luqman et al., 2020b; Luqman, Talwar et al., 2021; Cai et al., 2018). On the one hand, scholars have asserted the potential of ESM use to enhance social and interpersonal communication goals and entertainment; on the other hand, ESM is used to achieve work-related goals and maintain professional contact (Ellison et al., 2015).

In recent studies, scholars have emphasised that organisational performance largely depends on the quality and efficiency of interpersonal communications (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Luqman et al., 2021). Scholars use the affordance lens to conceptualise ESM adoption and explore many different outcomes (Leidner et al., 2018). For example, Leonardi et al. (2014) described the role of workplace ESM use in promoting social interaction, information sharing and the exercise of power. Similarly, Cai et al. (2018) proposed various ESM affordances, such as association, visibility, editability, and persistence, from a generic perspective. Luqman et al. (2021) suggested that the use of ESM in organisations can induce interruption overload and psychological transition, which negatively affect employees' creativity. Hoover (2007) asserted that an organisation's implementation of ESM is a waste of resources and time because it does not allow users to adjust organisational goals. Ding et al. (2019) claimed that excessive ESM use in organisations increases stress and severely diminishes employee creativity. Similarly, Turban et al. (2011) asserted that the use of ESM may produce deviant behaviour and Internet abuse.

This research indicates that organisations' intentions to use social media as a communication tool have aroused the interest of IS scholars (Cao et al., 2018; Khalid et al., 2021; Luqman, Masood, Weng et al., 2020; Luqman, Talwar et al., 2021). Others have claimed that social media use is likely to promote corporate innovations and competitiveness (Sukumar et al., 2020; Aslam et al., 2022), networking capability (Mokhtarzadeh et al., 2021), and social capital (Rezaei et al., 2020). The question remains, however, whether ESM use positively affects employees and knowledge sharing.

We believe that the use of the ESM affordances perspective is relevant to the current research because it directs the focus to communication behaviours and transcends technical peculiarities and characteristics (e.g. Leonardi et al., 2014). In addition, the ESM affordances perspective illuminates how, why and when ESM can trigger organisational changes and influence social exchange relationships (e.g. Leonardi et al., 2015). Therefore, we aim to examine the potential of ESM use to enhance employees' ABT and CBT, which subsequently motivate them to share knowledge. Furthermore, based on visibility affordances, we examine the moderating role of TC on the association of ESM use with ABT and CBT and thereby with knowledge sharing.

2.2 Affect, Cognition-based Trust and Knowledge Sharing

McAllister (1995) defined trust as 'the extent to which a person is confident in and willing to act based on the words, actions and decisions of others.' Prior literature on knowledge management has widely discussed the role of interpersonal trust in knowledge sharing. Knowledge sharing is defined as "the extent to which one engages in an exchange of tactic and explicit knowledge with other people in the social network" (Nonaka, 1994). Existing research has shown that people who lack trust generally do not share knowledge with others (Lee et al., 2020). For example, increasing trustworthiness may reduce the uncertainty of shared knowledge and the fear of losing the value of knowledge (Nguyen et al., 2021; Awan et al., 2020). This means that unless people do understand the competence and reliability of others, they are less likely to share knowledge and collaborate with others. Others have also provided empirical evidence to support the role of interpersonal trust in knowledge sharing (Kwon et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Ng, 2020; Issac et al., 2022).

However, the prior literature has described trust as a multifaceted concept and viewed it as interpersonal (or dual) trust, which exists between two people (Lankton et al., 2015; Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). For example, trust is a combination of two key concepts: "one's confidence in the goodwill of others" (Zucker, 1986) and "onfidence or predictability in one's expectation" (Friedman, 1991). Further, Lewis and Weigert (2012) noted that interpersonal trust has a cognitive and emotional basis. We likewise utilise both concepts—ABT and CBT—in our study. In ABT, individuals can emotionally choose those they trust and respect, those to whom they feel emotionally attached, those for whom they care and those with whom they experience reciprocity in relationships (Lee et al., 2020; Ng, 2020). ABT is essential to determine behavioural outcomes, including voluntary knowledge sharing (Swart & Harvey, 2011). Individuals who have strong perceptions of ABT with colleagues are likely to have low levels of vulnerability, fear of opportunism and dishonesty (Reychav et al., 2019). Hence, we believe that an increased level of ABT enables employees to share information informally and freely discuss ideas and problems with others (Punyatoya, 2019).

According to McAllister (1995), CBT is always grounded in some observations or experiences that support trust in others, such as a person's expertise, skill, talent, abilities and competencies. For example, Lewis and Weigert (1985) suggested that 'we cognitively choose whom we will trust in which respects and under which circumstances, and we base the choice on what we take to be "good reasons". Increased levels of CBT mitigate the fear of losing one's job or a position offered by an organisation (Vasin et al., 2020). Both trust dimensions are uniquely distinguished bases of interaction between people. For example, Lewis and Weigert (2012, p. 972) noted that "if all cognitive content were removed from the emotional trust, we would be left with blind faith or fixed hope, the true believer or the pious faithful. On the other hand, if all emotional content were removed from the cognitive trust, we would be left with nothing more than a cold-blooded prediction or rationally calculated risk."

In the existing literature, CBT primarily manifests in the context of working groups, such as those involved in collaborating and sharing innovative ideas, while ABT focuses on close interpersonal relationships, such as familial and romantic relationships as well as emotional attachments and friendships (Huynh et al., 2020). However, McAllister (1995) observed that trust can exist simultaneously and affect third parties (e.g. observers). This subsequently affects

employees' extra-role behaviours, performance and welfare. Therefore, we believe that the use of ESM promotes ABT and CBT between people embedded in the network and thereby promotes knowledge sharing.

We further support our logic by using rational choice theory (RCT), which explains the perceived subjective evaluation of ESM affordances in developing ABT and CBT. Specifically, RCT reflects the social behaviours in which an actor chooses an alternative that he/she believes will optimise the social outcome of his/her preferences within the context of limited and imperfect information (Sato, 2002). RCT roots individuals' trust levels primarily in their past experiences in similar situations that reflect their future decisions. If individuals have a higher level of interest in the parties sharing the information, they may be able to come to an agreement and participate in future communications. For example, if the actor believes the other party's sincerity in fulfilling the agreements and provisions, it may demonstrate a propensity to fulfil commitments and competency for the job. Additionally, trust appears correlated with the length, depth and recency of past collaborations (Yoshimichi, 2010; Burns & Roszkowska, 2016).

Individual perceived trust levels pave the way for assessing the benefits of collaborating (or not) in the future (Ng, 2020). In a similar vein, we argue that the ESM network provides a platform for developing trustworthiness among embedded users and promotes social and collaborative opportunities (Luqman et al., 2021). The strength of interpersonal ties depends upon the frequency and quality of information exchange over the ESM network, which can increase social capital (Berraies et al., 2020; Sukumar et al., 2021) and knowledge sharing (Punyatoya, 2019; Sun, Zhou et al., 2019). Hence, ESM affordances are likely to promote trustworthy relationships among colleagues (Kwon et al., 2021) as well as ABT and CBT, which thereby stimulate knowledge sharing behaviour.

2.3 The Theory of Communication Visibility

Workplace communication in an organisation may be specifically directed to certain people embedded in the network (Leonardi, 2015). However, ESM has enabled a wider organisational audience to view workplace communication (Leonardi, 2014; Leonardi & Meyer, 2015). ESM provides visibility affordances such that third parties (i.e. those who are not directly involved in the communication) can also view communication exchanges (i.e. transparent

communication). Employees can clearly explore their social networks, tagged images or content shared by other employees, which makes it visible to everyone in the social network. A large number of ESM-focused research has supported the positive effects of TC. For example, scholars have demonstrated that TC facilitates knowledge sharing and offers employees information about their colleagues' expertise (Leonardi & Meyer, 2015). TC can also help employees utilise shared information to solve complex problems, enhance their creativity, organise their ideas and promote innovation (Leonardi, 2014). For example, CVT suggests that once content is shared via an ESM, everyone in the network can see it, which may enhance the network members' understanding of "who knows what" and "who knows who" (Leonardi, 2014).

The core argument of CVT is that employees may share information strategically, which makes their communication more or less visible and allows them to influence one another's communication and interact with a particular socio-material context (Treem et al., 2020). Communication visibility can develop in both a relational and a strategical manner—for example, by "seeing and being seen" (Brighenti, 2007). A strong interdependence exists between the effort to see something and to make others see something and the extent to which these activities impact the environment. For example, in theatrical performance, actors may walk around the stage in bold costumes to enhance their visibility, despite being blocked by the building's pillars, and thereby secure positive evaluations from their performance.

Despite the burgeoning scholarship regarding TC in ESM interactions between two parties, scholars have largely overlooked its influence—both implicit and explicit—on third parties (Brighenti, 2007). For example, humans have a natural tendency to compare themselves with others, especially those occupying positions that are higher than their own (Vogel et al., 2014). Scholars have observed that such contrast-oriented comparisons with those who perform better and are more knowledgeable can trigger unintended psychological consequences, such as envy (Wu & Srite, 2021). Similarly, one person might share news of his/her achievements, skills, rewards or position on ESM via a news feed on the wall of a third-party account (Kim & Glomb, 2014). When a person lacks such achievements, information, knowledge and skills, however, they are driven to engage in upward social comparison and experience adverse psychological consequences (e.g. rooted in social comparisons theory, SCT; Suls & Wheeler, 2012). Prior research has acknowledged social comparison as the basis on which employees perceive

organisational rewards (Vogel et al., 2014). The outcome of comparisons, moreover, may vary according to the vividness of the information underlying them (Uhlir, 2016). Furthermore, members are embedded virtually in their ESM networks, and they likely have fewer face-to-face interactions with colleagues. Colleagues may have different interpretations—including misinterpretations—of information shared on social media (Cummings & Dennis, 2018; Tondon et al., 2021; Tondon et al., 2022). Such inaccurate interpretations, in turn, are likely to inform future interactions, which may influence team cohesiveness and interpersonal relationships (Cummings & Dennis, 2018; Ivcevic & Ambady, 2012). Likewise, we believe that CT in the ESM network prevents employees from rationalising relative deprivation caused by information exchanged with their colleagues on ESM. Therefore, we propose that CT in the ESM network adversely influences employees' ABT and CBT and thereby hinders knowledge sharing.

3 Research Model and Hypotheses Development

3.1 ESM Use and ABT and CBT

ESM enables employees to engage in relationship-oriented communication, which may increase ABT among colleagues. For example, ESM allows employees to establish connections with other colleagues, thereby promoting a sense of belonging and socialisation (Luqman et al., 2020). Via ESM, members can view the personal profiles of other members embedded in the network and identify people with similar interests, backgrounds and activities (Leonardi, 2015). Previous research has noted that when people have similar backgrounds, interests, values and common experiences, they share more information, develop trustworthy relationships and sympathise with one another (Kwon et al., 2021). When employees have similar interests, feelings and understandings, moreover, they tend to develop emotional attachments and greater trust in one another (Cai et al., 2018). Pee (2018) has also endorsed the development of interpersonal relationships through similar interests, habits and values. Thus, scholars believe that ESM may help employees establish new connections, nurture existing relationships and encourage social interdependence, thereby promoting ABT among employees.

H1a: ESM use is positively associated with ABT in the workplace.

ESM also promotes instrumental relationships among employees. For example, ESM visibility allows everyone in the network to understand "who knows what" and "who knows who". Such knowledge in the workplace helps employees identify skilled individuals and experts, thereby facilitating instrumental connections (Leonardi, 2014; Luqman et al., 2021). In addition, ESM allows employees to remain abreast of work-related resources and colleagues' activities and to communicate task-related information in a timely manner (Ellison et al., 2015); subsequently, ESM promotes collaboration and trust among colleagues (Luqman et al., 2020). ESM can also help employees to identify colleagues with reliable job performance (Mettler & Winter, 2016). We expect that if employees trust their colleagues professional abilities, ESM use will promote CBT, which may be related to the tasks those employees undertake. Thus we propose the following hypothesis:

H1b: ESM use is positively associated with CBT in the workplace.

3.2 The Mediating role of ABT and CBT

In virtual communities, such as ESM, employees rarely interact face-to-face, and trust plays an important role in transferring knowledge among people in the network (Luqman et al., 2020). ESM can promote mutual trust among employees and encourage offline interpersonal interactions. For example, ESM provides a platform for employees to easily learn about and understand other employees, including their interests, backgrounds, hobbies and abilities; in this way, it enhances employees' trust in one another and promotes their interaction in offline environments (Leonardi, 2014, p. 15). For example, Luqman, Masood and Ali (2018) observed that online interactions on social media promote close connections among students, which encourage them to establish offline networks and share information. Mutual understanding can reduce feelings of uncertainty, which is also a prerequisite for trust (Nusrat et al., 2021). The more we know others, the more likely we are to know whether we should trust or distrust them (Ng, 2020). Likewise, when ESM encourages relational and cognitive social capital (Berraies et al., 2020), collaboration (Li, 2015), interpersonal trust and social and emotional bonds among employees (Luqman et al., 2020a), it may facilitate knowledge sharing.

Given the nature of ESM, we expect it to facilitate ABT among employees, which is important for sharing knowledge. Knowledge sharing requires certain insights, beliefs and

intuitions about colleagues' behaviour, which ESM can facilitate and are closely related to knowledge holders' past experiences. Scholars have observed that ABT can promote social collaboration between knowledge seekers and knowledge contributors by facilitating the shared experiences required for effective knowledge exchange (Aboelmaged, 2018; Tønnessen et al., 2021). Rhee and Choi (2017) reported that knowledge sharing is a multifaceted phenomenon, which is primarily affected by an individual's degree of trust in others. For example, knowledge holders may share knowledge with those who have higher levels of ABT. ABT is an important factor in knowledge holders' willingness to share knowledge (Lee et al., 2020). When two parties have close interpersonal relationships and are willing to cooperate, tactic knowledge also increases (Kwon et al., 2021; Okazaki, Andreu & Campo, 2017). Significant anecdotal evidence supports the notion that trust actively fosters knowledge sharing among colleagues (Luqman, Masood, Shahzad, et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2021; Punyatoya, 2019). Therefore, we propose that ESM enhances ABT and that ABT mediates the indirect impact of ESM use on knowledge sharing.

H2: ABT mediates the relationship between ESM use and knowledge sharing in the workplace.

CBT refers to a rational assessment of a person's abilities, personal characteristics, reputation, professionalism and trustworthiness (Huynh et al., 2020; Punyatoya, 2019). Past research has shown that a person's ability to deal with contemporary issues and day-to-day problems as well as his or her willingness to collaborate is likely to promote CBT among colleagues (Reychav et al., 2019). By facilitating work-related discussions via a common platform, ESM may cultivate CBT among colleagues. Thus, by allowing employees to seek advice on work-related issues from members embedded in the network, ESM may reduce job insecurity caused by task complexity (Ding et al., 2019). In a virtual team, employees with higher CBT levels help their teammates, treating others' work problems as their own problems to solve (Nusrat et al., 2021). In other words, working in teams not only enables employees to solve their own problems but also to address other work-related problems in the team (McAllister, 1995).

We expect ESM to promote interpersonal interactions between 'knowledge seekers' and 'knowledge bearers', thereby creating the common experiences necessary for effective knowledge sharing. People with close work relationships are more willing to share knowledge.

For example, when knowledge seekers and knowledge contributors trust one another's abilities, they develop shared professional experiences and high CBT, which promotes knowledge sharing (Lee et al., 2020). To share knowledge, knowledge seekers must recognise that knowledge holders can spread knowledge. In addition, the knowledge holder must believe that the knowledge seeker has the ability and absorptive capacity to understand complex knowledge. If the parties trust one another's capabilities in these ways, they are more likely to engage in knowledge sharing (Pee, 2018). Punyatoya (2019) studied the knowledge-sharing mechanism between company employees and their colleagues and noted that CBT is a key factor in fostering knowledge sharing. Evidence based research supports the positive impact of CBT on knowledge sharing (Chang et al., 2021; Ellison et al., 2015; Kwahk & Park, 2016). Therefore, we recommend using ESM to promote CBT and thereby regulate the impact of ESM on knowledge sharing.

H3: CBT mediates the relationship between ESM use and knowledge sharing in the workplace.

3.3 The Moderating role of TC

The adoption of ESM increases the visibility of workplace communication and promotes employees' awareness regarding their co-workers' activities. The visibility affordance of ESM provides the opportunity for all members in the network—to observe communication exchanges even though they are not directly involved in those exchanges (Leonardi & Meyer, 2014). Nevertheless, transparency does not always produce desirable results. For example, scholars have noted that when employees hold contrast-oriented views toward those colleagues they deem to be superior in performance, the former is likely to experience negative emotional reactions (e.g. envy). In a recent study, Chen et al. (2020) observed that information transparency regarding pay is likely to encourage social comparison and negative emotional reactions. Scholars have demonstrated that social comparisons are a key element triggering negative emotions and, thereby, adverse behavioural outcomes, such as reduced helping behaviour (Wu & Srite, 2021).

We expect such comparisons—facilitated by TC on ESM—to reduce ABT and CBT among colleagues for two reasons. First, people are accustomed to sharing specific facts and

goals on social media; these facts and goals provoke realistic comparisons and are based on a high degree of vividness. Because individuals weigh vivid information more heavily, that information is likely to elicit stronger negative emotional responses (Kim & Glomb, 2014). Likewise, realistic comparisons involving information on rewards, achievements and expertise shared via ESM will not only increase the intensity of relative deprivation but also generate stronger negative emotions, such as envy (Sun et al., 2021). Second, more certain comparisons about another's superiority may increase feelings of relative deprivation. This is consistent with the certainty effect—i.e. 'the overweighting of outcomes that are certain relative to those that are probable' (Tversky & Kahneman, 1983). Such feelings may promote the feeling of relative deprivation among people embedded in the network and thus lead to negative psychological outcomes.

Based on the above arguments, we expect high TC to increase employees' anxiety about their own incompetence and deficiencies (Arazy et al., 2016), which may encourage lurking behaviour in the context of information sharing via ESM (Nguyen et al., 2021). When CT is high, employees may refrain from sharing information on social media to avoid potential embarrassment and sabotage by colleagues (Treem et al., 2020; Yousaf et al., 2022). In addition, TC on ESM requires more socio-instrumental-related activities and thus demands a significant amount of time and energy, which increases employees' perceptions of overload (Luqman et al., 2021). In other words, when TC is high, the impact of socio-instrumental-related ESM use on interpersonal trust should also be amplified, which may reduce interpersonal trust among colleagues (Vasin et al., 2020). Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H4: CT moderates the direct relationships between ESM use and 1) ABT and 2) CBT among co-workers such that those relationships are weaker when perceptions of CT are high vs low.

H5. CT moderates the indirect relationships between ESM use and knowledge sharing behaviour through 1) ABT and 2) CBT among co-workers such that the mediated relationships are weaker when perceptions of CT are high vs low.

3.4 The Moderating Role of PBC

Although open social networking sites (SNSs) provide increased opportunities for interpersonal interaction, they offer individuals limited opportunities to exchange personal feelings or opinions with others. Scholars believe that people typically distinguish between the content they are willing to share publicly and the content they are willing to share in a closed network (Liu et al., 2014). For example, people cannot publicly post their creativity and intellectual skills on social media because in such a context, it may lose its importance due to the sheer volume of content sharing, posts and information shared by other members of the public network (Ebner & Schiefner, 2008). In contrast, personal blogging may allow individuals to share deep feelings and accurate disclosures with others (Zhang et al., 2010). PBC refers to the extent to which an individual privately expresses his or her deep emotions and opinions with select others. PBC allows employees to express their true feelings without fear of being undermined and misled by colleagues and supervisors (Zhao & Rosson, 2009). When individuals share information privately, they win others' trust and social support and develop the motivation to work in their current organisation (Ebner & Schiefner, 2008).

We expect PBC among colleagues to foster collective identity and socio-instrumental attachment in organisations (Luqman, Masood, Shahzad, et al., 2020; Nusrat et al., 2021) and thereby increase the effectiveness of social media use therein. For example, private conversations among colleagues may increase work engagement and motivation to achieve goals without exposing employees to the possibility of attack and annoyance from peers in open networks (Gong et al., 2020). Personal text messages may foster a sense of intimacy and strengthen friendships and social support, thereby increasing individuals' retention behaviour with their current organisation (De Liu et al., 2015). Scholars have found that when employees have the opportunity to share personal experiences and feelings, they tend to be more committed to their work and organisations (Cai et al., 2018). Because it allows employees to share opportunities and problems and seek social support, which they cannot request publicly on social media, PBC triggers the intrinsic motivation for work (Ebner & Schiefner, 2008).

Despite these benefits, some scholars argue that PBC may distract employees and encourage them to procrastinate by criticising organisational activities (Zhao, 2012). However, when employees interact privately with colleagues (e.g., PBC), they can avoid distraction and disappointment stemming from misinformation and refrain from unnecessary criticism about the

organisation (Zhang et al., 2010). Colleagues may provide support and thereby reduce employees' intentions to engage in negative behaviour against their organisations. While we agree that, to some extent, PBC induces distraction, the key premise of social networking is that the benefits of time used to foster relationships among co-workers exceed the costs because such interactions promote social and instrumental support, increase trust levels and thereby increase employees' willingness to share knowledge with their colleagues (Ebner & Schiefner, 2008). For these reasons, we propose the following hypotheses:

H6. PBC moderates the direct relationships between ESM use and 1) ABT and 2) CBT among co-workers such that these relationships are stronger when employees have high PBC with co-workers.

H7. PBC moderates the indirect relationships between ESM use and knowledge sharing behaviour through 1) ABT and 2) CBT among co-workers such that the mediated relationships are stronger when employees have high PBC with co-workers.
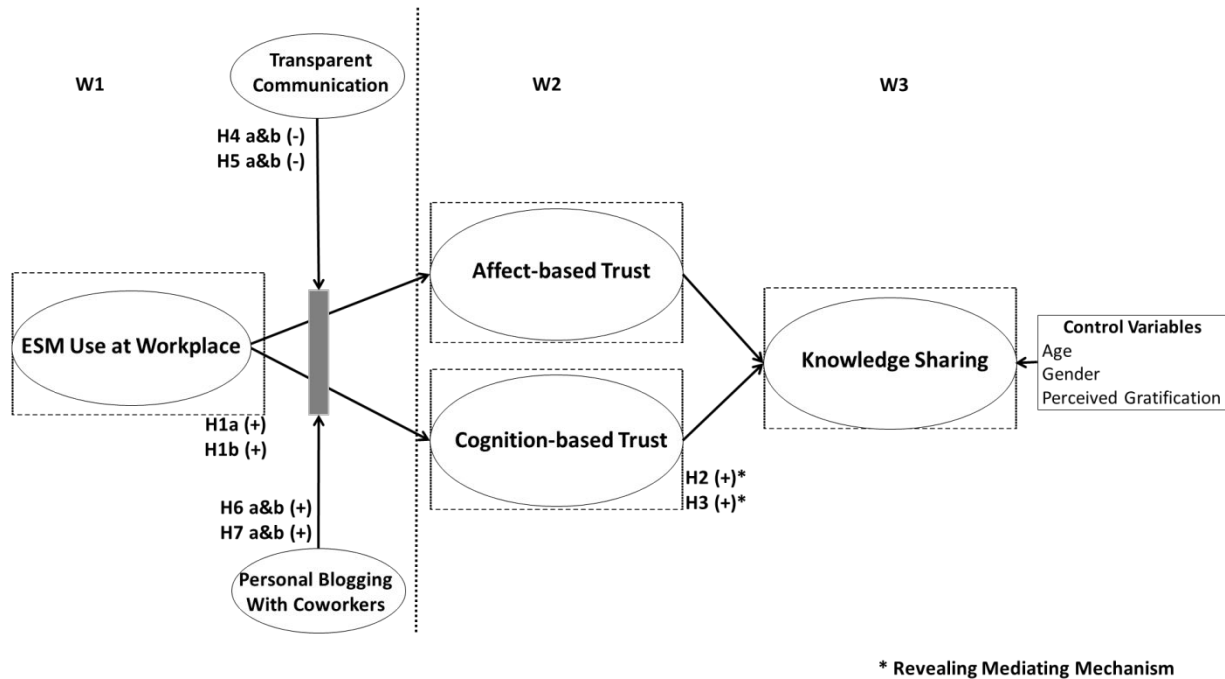

Figure 1. Proposed research model

4 Methodology

The study was conducted in China, where organisations have increasingly adopted ESM technology. According to a Statista (2021) survey report, China is the largest market for social media, and user engagement in China is the highest in the world.[2] We targeted five companies operating in East China—three information technology (IT) companies and two software companies, which have utilised ESM for at least three years. We collected data from employees working in various IT units. To address the threat of common method bias (CMB; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012), we collected data in three rounds. We asked a Chinese doctoral student to provide relevant guidance, and he was responsible for the entire data collection and monitoring process. To establish better communication, the employees were contacted via the department heads. The department heads sent emails and messages via WeChat (a mobile phone-based wallet and social media application commonly used in China) to gain their employees' consent to participate in the study. To ensure maximum participation, we offered participants gift options, including coffee coupons, souvenirs and cash equivalent to 5 USD (approximately 30 CNY).

The sample was suitable for our study for various reasons. First, IT-related companies are knowledge-intensive companies, which hire knowledge workers to complete complex tasks in the agile market such as hardware design, installation and maintenance of computer network systems for companies worldwide servicing and managing servers, testing, creating, developing, and delivering software programs for other businesses or customers. Second, the participants worked in different IT departments, which increased the generalisability of our research. Third, organisations allow a certain degree of mutual dependence among team members when implementing plans and discussing and sharing information with colleagues via mobile phones. Fourth, since the employees of both companies work in a small team, so their interdependence enables them to share information on organizationally bounded ESM to seek technical and social support. Furthermore, the interdependence and interaction of teams through ESM and mobile phones allows us to better examine their trust levels and knowledge sharing motivations.

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[2] https://www.statista.com/topics/1170/social-networks-in-china/

In the first wave, we recruited a total of 403 ESM users from five companies. We shared the survey items via their WeChat accounts and emails. In the first wave, we received a total of 356 complete responses, for a response rate of 88.5%. In the second stage, approximately one month later, we again contacted these 356 members and requested that they complete the survey. This time, we received complete responses from 302 respondents, for a response rate of 84.8%. In the third wave of data collection, approximately one month later, we requested the participation of the previous 302 sample members. We ultimately received 296 responses (response rate = 98%) but discarded four of these responses because they were incomplete. Thus, the final sample for our study was $N = 292$. Table 1 presents the demographics of the respondents.

Table 1. Demographics of respondents

Category		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	144	49.3
	Female	148	50.7
Age (years)	21–30	124	43.5
	31–40	108	37.0
	41 > Older	60	20.5
Education	Undergraduate degree	109	37.3
	Master degree	170	58.6
	Doctoral degree	12	4.1
Designation	Non-managerial employees	157	49.4
	Manager	127	39.9
	Senior/executive manager	34	10.7
Job tenure/experience	< 5 years	20	6.8
	5–10 years	181	62.2
	>10 years	91	31.2

4.1 Measurement

First, we used an adapted English-language questionnaire based on previously verified measurement items—with the exception of the items for PBC, which we developed and validated ourselves. With the help of bilingual experts, we employed the method suggested by Brislin et al. (1973) to translate the English items into Chinese. All responses were captured using a five-point Likert scale (unless otherwise mentioned), which ranged from 1 for "strongly disagree" to 5 for "strongly agree".

4.1.1 ESM Use

We assessed ESM usage behaviour using the six-item scale adopted from Luqman, Masood, Shahzad et al. (2020). A sample item read as follows: "I regularly use ESM to communicate with colleagues or customers in my daily work." The value of Cronbach's alpha was .86.

4.1.2 Affect-Based Trust

ESM users rated ABT based on their perceptions of other colleagues. We adapted the five items of the ABT construct from McAllister (1995) and thus made slight modifications to align it with the ESM context. A sample item read as follows: "I have a sharing relationship with the members of my work team. We can all freely share our ideas." The value of Cronbach's alpha was .91.

4.1.3 Cognition-Based Trust

Each employee assessed the quality of their CBT in other co-workers. We used CBT constructs based on a five-item scale developed by McAllister (1995). We slightly modified these CBT items to fit the ESM context. A sample item read as follows: "I believe that my colleagues are well prepared and competent to do their work." The value of Cronbach's alpha was .95

4.1.4 Knowledge Sharing

Following previous research, we captured 'knowledge sharing' with four items from Rhee and Choi (2016). A sample item read as follows: "To what degree do you agree that you make an effort to share knowledge with your colleagues?" The value of Cronbach's alpha was .92

4.1.5 Transparent Communication

We captured TC using a four-item scale adapted from Leonardi (2015). A sample item read as follows: "Enterprise social media enables me to notice the things other co-workers say to one another when they exchange messages on enterprise social media". The value of Cronbach's alpha was .85

4.1.6 Personal Blogging with Co-Workers

We captured PBC using a three-item scale we developed based on our literature review and interviews with employees. To increase the instrument's validity and capture finer-grained aspects of PBC, we pilot tested the PBC scale. The factor loading with the oblimin rotation revealed that all items represented the same construct, with an eigenvalue of 4.81 and an explained variance of 71%. A sample item read as follows: "To what extent do you agree that you emotionally support others when they need it for their work." The participants responded to all survey items on a scale from 1 for "very little" to 5 for "very much". The Cronbach's alpha was .94.

In addition, we asked the respondents to identify other social media platforms (besides ESM), which they had utilised to write personal blogs. We provided the respondents with a list of popular social media, including WeChat and Tencent-QQ. Both of these example platforms are widely used instant messaging tools for chat, shopping, games and video calls.[3]

4.2 Control Variables

Prior research has highlighted the influence of age, gender, education and tenure on knowledge sharing behaviours (Cao et al., 2018). Against this backdrop, we controlled for the aforementioned demographic factors to mitigate their confounding effects on our results. Further, several studies have found that negative affect negatively influences knowledge sharing behaviours (Luqman, Masood, Shahzad, et al., 2020; Luqman, Talwar et al., 2021; Nusrat et al., 2021). Hence, we also controlled for negative affect to eliminate its confounding effect.

4.3 Common Method Bias (CMB)

Although we collected time-lagged multi-wave data to avoid CMB, the self-reported nature of the data also made our analysis vulnerable to CMB threats. To eliminate this risk, we employed Harman's single-factor test and latent factor marker variable techniques. First, we used Harman's single-factor test to evaluate six conceptual variables in the proposed model (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). The results revealed that the first single-factor

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[3] https://www.statista.com/statistics/250546/leading-social-network-sites-in-china/

accounted for only 20.1% of the variance, which is significantly below the threshold limit of 50%. Moreover, the six constructs together accounted for 69.8% of the total variance with an eigenvalue that exceeded 1. Hence, the evidence indicated no issue of CMB in our data. Nevertheless, we proceeded to employ marker variable techniques to further confirm the absence of CMB in the data (William et al., 2010). Table 2 presents the result of the marker variable tests, which indicated no issue of CMB.

Table 2. Model fit indices and model comparison for CFA model with marker variable

Model	χ^2 (df)	CFI	EMSEA (90% CI)	LR of $\Delta \chi^2$	Model Comparison
CFA Marker	422.6 (309)	0.976	.036 (.027–.044)		
Baseline	457.3 (320)	0.971	.139 (.134–.145)		
Method-C	434.2 (319)	0.929	.040 (.032–.048)	23.1, $df = 1$, p= .01**	vs Baseline
Method-U	457.3 (295)	0.971	.038 (.030–.046)	23.15, $df = 23$, p= .032*	vs Method-C
Method-R	332.2 (305)	0.973	.038 (.029–.046)	125.137, $df = 14$, p= .133[ns]	vs Method-U

Note: CFA = confirmatory factor analysis, CFA = comparative fit index, RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation, LR = likelihood ratio test, U = unconstrained, C = constrained, R = restricted

5 Analysis and Results Interpretation

5.1 Means and Correlations

We examined the descriptive statistics and inter-correlations among the constructs (see Table 3). The correlation analysis revealed that the correlations of the constructs were significant and in the expected direction. For example, ESM use was positively related to ABT (r = 0.20, p < 0.01) and CBT (r = 0.23, p < 0.01). Also as predicted, both mediating variables—i.e. ABT (r = 0.31, p < 0.01) and CBT r = 0.38, p < 0.01)—were positively correlated with knowledge sharing. Likewise, TC was positively related to ESM use (r = 0.19, p < 0.01).

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations [a]

Constructs	Means	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	2.77	.78	-									
2. Gender	1.51	.50	.07	-								
3. Education	3.50	.78	.06	.00	-							
4. Tenure	2.77	.80	.09	-.03	-.02	-						
5. Negative affect	2.71	1.25	-.08	-.02	-.02	.00	-					
6. Enterprise social media use	2.94	1.01	.04	.00	-.10	.10	-.02	-				
7. Affect-based trust	3.03	1.05	-.06	-.03	.02	.00	-.03	.20**	-			
8. Cognition-based trust	2.91	1.07	.01	-.05	-.07	.06	.00	.23**	.25**	-		
9. Knowledge sharing	2.96	1.05	.04	-.08	-.05	-.01	-.16**	.15**	.31**	.38**	-	
10. Transparent communication	3.12	1.35	-.09	-.11	-.09	-.03	.11	.19**	.10	.08	.10	-
11. Personal blogging with co-workers	3.29	1.24	-.09	-.08	-.08	.01	-.07	-.17**	-.05	-.01	-.01	-.04

[a]*n = 292. Gender was coded 1 = male, 2 = female. *p < .05, **p < .01; two-tailed.*

5.2 Measurement Model

We conducted a series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFAs) in Mplus (v8.5) to establish the distinctiveness of our study. The six variables were ESM use, ABT, CBT, knowledge sharing, TC and PBC. The six-factor model demonstrated a satisfactory fit with the data ($\chi 2$ = 426.59, df = 309, p < .01, CFI = .98, SRMR = .0.04). The appendix presents the CFA values along with the construct items. Further, we tested four-factor, two-factor and single-factor models. The results presented in Table 4 reveal that our proposed six-factor model exhibited a better fit than the alternative models.

Table 4. Confirmatory factor analysis of discriminant validity

Models	Factors	$\chi 2$	df	$\chi 2$/df	$\Delta\chi 2$	RMSEA	SRMR	CFI	TLI
Model 1	6 factors: ESM, ABT, CBT, KS, CT, PBC	426.59	309	1.38	----	.04	.04	.98	.97
Model 2	4 factors: ESM, ABT+CBT, KS, CT+PBC	1755.28	318	5.51	1328.	.12	.12	.70	.67
Model 3	2 factors: ESM+ABT+CBT+KS, CT+PBC	2877.25	323	8.90	1121.	.17	.16	.46	.41
Model 3	1 factor: ESM+ABT+CBT+KS+CT+PBC	3778.02	324	11.66	900.7	.19	.18	.27	.21

ESM = employee social media use, ABT = affect-based trust, CBT = cognition based trust, CT = transparent communication, PBC = personal blogging with co-workers

5.3 Hypotheses Testing

Following recent studies, we measured all of the variables at the individual level (Luqman et al., 2020b; Luqman, Talwar et al., 2021; Dhir et al., 2021). We evaluated the path

significance of our proposed mode with Mplus. Table 5 presents the results. We calculated the pseudo-R^2 following the guidelines of Snijders and Bosker (1994). The predictors in our model explained 15.1% of the total variance in ABT, 16.3% of the total variance in CBT and 32.2% of the total variance in knowledge sharing.

SEM allowed us to calculate the bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence intervals (CIs) and conduct the normal theory test of the indirect effects. According to our results, ESM use positively predicted higher levels of ABT (H1a, $\gamma = .21$, *SE*, .06, $t = 3.5$, $p < .001$) and CBT (H1a, $\gamma = .22$, *SE*, .06, $t = 3.6$, p $< .001$), thus supporting both H1a and H1b. We then examined the mediating effect of ESM use on knowledge sharing via ABT and CBT. The results revealed a positive significant indirect effect of ESM use through ABT (indirect effect = .05, 95% CI = [.01, .09]) and CBT (indirect effect = .06, 95%CI = [.02, .10]); hence, H2 and H3 received full support. In addition, we found that ABT ($\gamma = .24$, *SE*, .06, $t = 4.0$, $p < .001$) and CBT ($\gamma = .27$, *SE*, .06, $t = 4.5$, $p < .001$) were both positively associated with knowledge sharing. Table 5 presents the results of the direct and indirect analyses.

Table 5. Unstandardised regression coefficients

Variables	Affect-based trust			Cognition-based trust			Knowledge sharing		
	B (se)	p	CI (95%)	B (se)	p	CI (95%)	B (se)	p	CI (95%)
Age							.05(.06)	.44	-.08, .18
Gender							-.12(.10)	.25	-.31, .08
Education							-.03(.06)	.61	-.16, .09
Tenure							-.05(.06)	.47	-.17, .08
Negative affect							-.12(.04)	.00	-.20, -.04
Employee social media use	.21(.06)	.00	.10, .32	.22 (.06)	.00	.10, .34	.04(.05)	.49	-.06, .14
Affect-based trust							.24(.06)	.00	.11, .37
Cognition-based trust							.27(.06)	.00	.15, .38
Knowledge sharing									
R^2	.151			.163			.322		

	B (se)	p	CI (95%)
Indirect effects			
The indirect effect of employee social media use on knowledge sharing via affect-based trust	.05(.02)	.00	.01, .09
The indirect effect of employee social media use on knowledge sharing via cognition-based trust	.06(.02)	.00	.02, .10
Moderated effects			
Enterprise social media use * Transparent communication on affect-based trust	-.15(.05)	.00	-.26, -.03
Enterprise social media use * Transparent communication on knowledge sharing via affect-based trust	-.03(.02)	.04	-.08, -.01
Enterprise social media use * Transparent communication on cognition-based trust	.13(.05)	.00	.03, .23
Enterprise social media use * Transparent communication on knowledge sharing via cognition-based trust	.03(.02)	.03	.01, .07
Enterprise social media use * Personal blogging with co-workers on affect-based trust	.21(.06)	.00	.09, .31
Enterprise social media use * Personal blogging with co-workers on knowledge sharing via affect-based trust	.05(.02)	.01	.02, .09
Enterprise social media use * Personal blogging with co-workers on cognition-based trust	.16(.06)	.00	.05, .27
Enterprise social media use * Personal blogging with co-workers on knowledge sharing via cognition-based trust	.04(.02)	.03	.01, .09

Sample size (N) = 292

5.4 The Moderating Roles of TC and PBC

We followed Edwards and Lambert's (2007) approach to clarify the nature of the interactions and plotted the first-stage moderating effect of ESM use on ABT and CBT under high and low values (-1 standard deviation [SD], mean and +1 SD) of TC. The moderation analysis indicated that the interaction between ESM use and TC was negatively associated with ABT (β = -.15, SE = .05, p < .01). Thus, H4a received supported. We plotted the interaction at +1/-1 SD from the mean of TC. The simple slope test indicated that the positive influence of ESM use on ABT was significant when TC was low (β = .41, SE = .09, p < . 01); however, this effect was insignificant when TC was high *(β = .02, ns, p > .05)*. Figure 1 illustrates the nature of the interaction effect. Proceeding further, the interaction between ESM use and TC was positively associated with CBT *(β = .13, SE = .05, p < .01)*. The simple slope test demonstrated that the positive influence of ESM use on CBT was significant when TC was high *(β = .37, SE = .08, p < . 01)*; however, this effect was insignificant when TC was low *(β = .01, ns, p > .05)*. Figure 3 illustrates the nature of the interaction effect. The index of moderated mediation was significant for the hypothesised indirect relationship between ESM use and knowledge sharing *(index = -.03, SE = .02, CI = [-.08, -.01])* via ABT. The conditional indirect effect of ESM use on knowledge sharing *(β = .10, SE = .04, p < . 05)* via ABT was significant when TC was low while insignificant when TC was high *(β = -.002, ns, p > .05)*. Similarly, the index of moderated mediation was significant for the hypothesised indirect relationship between ESM use and knowledge sharing *(index = .03, SE = .02, CI = [.01, .07])* via CBT. The conditional indirect effect of ESM use on knowledge sharing *(β = .09, SE = .04, p < . 01)* via CBT was significant when TC was high but insignificant when TC was low *(β = .002, ns, p >.05)*

The moderation analysis showed that the interaction between ESM use and PBC was positively associated with ABT *(β = .21, SE = .05, p < .01)*. Thus, H3 received support. We plotted the interaction at +1/-1 SD from the mean of PBC. The simple slope test revealed that the positive influence of ESM use on ABT was significant when PBC was high *(β = .43, SE = .08, p <. 01)* but insignificant when PBC was low *(β = -.07, ns, p>.05)*. Figure 4 illustrates the nature of the interaction effect. Proceeding further, the interaction between ESM use and PBC was significantly and positively associated with CBT *(β = .16, SE = .06, p < .01)*.

The simple slope test demonstrated that the positive influence of ESM use on CBT was significant when PBC was high *(β = .40, SE = .08, p < .01)* but insignificant when PBC was low *(β = .01, ns, p > .05)*. Figure 5 illustrates the nature of the interaction effect. The index of moderated mediation was significant for the hypothesised indirect relationship between ESM use and KS (*index = .05, SE = .02, CI = [.02, .09]*) via ABT. The conditional indirect effect of ESM use on KS via ABT was significant when PBC was high *(β = .10, SE = .04, p < . 01)* but insignificant when PBC was low *(β = -.02, ns, p > .05)*. Similarly, the index of moderated mediation was significant for the hypothesised indirect relationship between ESM use and KS (*index = .04, SE = .02, CI = [.01, .09]*) via CBT. The conditional indirect effect of ESM use on KS *(β = .10, SE = .04, p < . 05)* via CBT was significant when PBC was high but insignificant when PBC low *(β = .003, ns, p > .05)*.
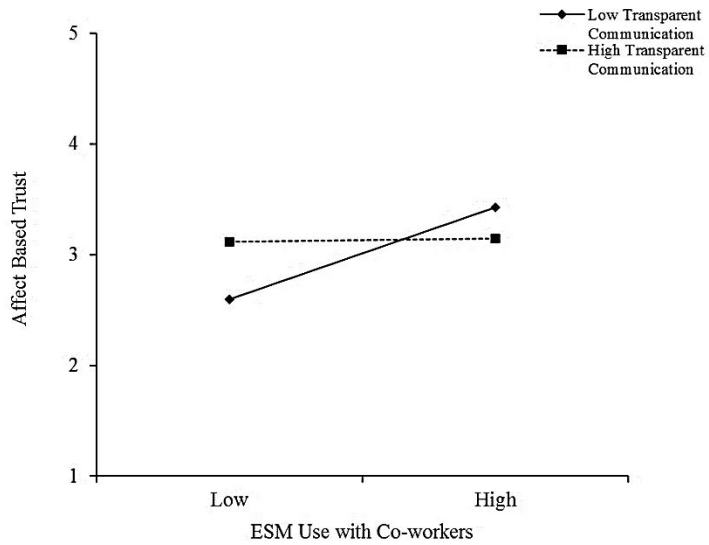
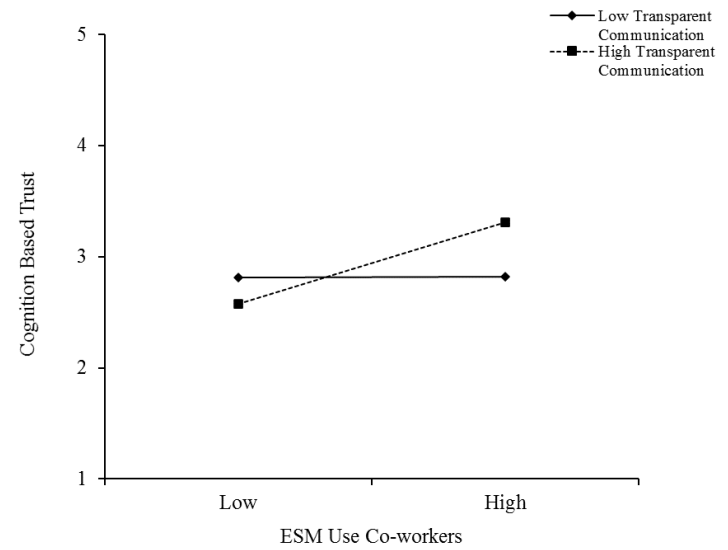**Figure 2. Interaction effect of TC between ESM use and ABT**

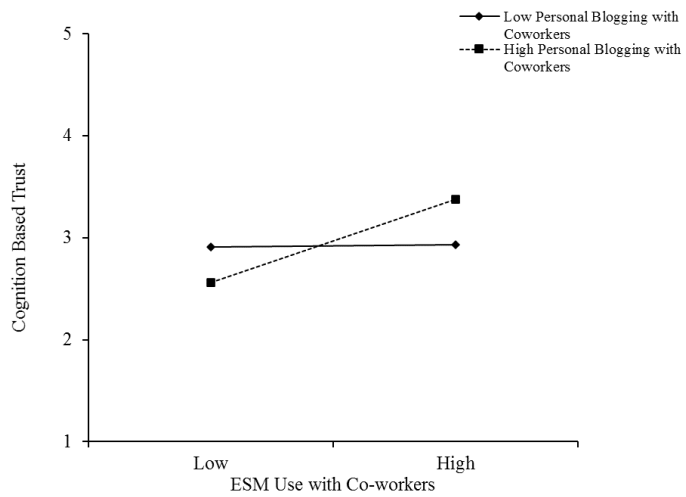**Figure 3. Interaction effect of TC between ESM use and CBT**

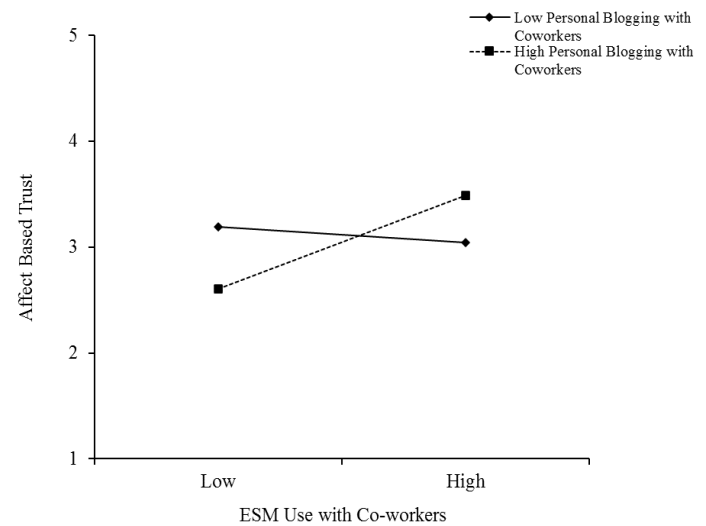**Figure 4. Interaction effect of PBC between ESM use and ABT**

Figure 5. Interaction effect of PBC between ESM use and CBT

29

6 Discussion

The current research examined the ways in which ESM promotes ABT and CBT among employees and thereby motivates them to share knowledge with colleagues. Drawing on the theories of affordances, CVT and SCT, we studied the boundary role of TC in the use of ESM and determined the ways in which it limits ABT and CBT's role in promoting knowledge sharing in organisations. We then explored the moderating role of PBC in the association between ESM use and ABT and CBT to determine the ways in which it mitigates the adverse influence of CT on ABT and CBT and thereby promotes knowledge sharing.

The **RQ1** investigated the potential of ESM use to enhance the levels of ABT and CBT among employees in an organisation. To address this question, we empirically tested the direct effect of ESM use on both ABT and CBT and found the results to be in the anticipated direction. Statistically, the results revealed that ESM use during working hours cultivates both ABT and CBT among employees. We found that virtual platforms, such as ESM, exert a stronger influence on CBT ($\beta = 0.54$) than on ABT ($\beta = 0.31$). This suggests that ESM use in the workplace enhances employees' social, emotional and instrumental support (i.e. ABT and CBT). This finding is consistent with the existing literature in other context—for example, that a transformational supervisory role may promote ABT and CBT among employees (Von Krogh et al., 2012). Scholars have also suggested interaction frequency among peers and citizenship behaviour as predictors of both ABT and CBT in the workplace (McAllister, 1995). Consistent with these arguments, we report that ESM enables frequent virtual interactions among members of the network, which fosters ABT and CBT (Luqman et al., 2020a). Furthermore, ESM promotes psychological meaningfulness, energy and physiological resources at the workplace for employees' job-related tasks (Nusrat et al., 2021).

In **RQ2**, we examined the mediating role of ABT and CBT on the association between ESM and knowledge sharing. ABT and CBT both fully mediate the influence of ESM on knowledge sharing in the expected directions. More specifically, ABT and CBT positively mediate the influence of ESM ($\beta = 0.54$) and ($\beta = 0.36$) on knowledge sharing but with different magnitudes. ESM use has a stronger mediating influence on knowledge sharing. This implies that the use of ESM in the workplace promotes both ABT and CBT during working hours and

thereby encourages interpersonal relationships and collaboration, although work-related ties are strengthened more than are relational ties; these effects subsequently encourage employees to share knowledge. The results support the intermediary role of trust, which is consistent with the findings of McAllister (1995), who reported that ABT and CBT function in unique ways and have unique patterns of association with the determinants of trust and its consequences. In addition, we tested the direct effect of ABT and CBT on knowledge sharing. The results indicate that both ABT and CBT promote knowledge sharing among colleagues, although the effect of CBT is stronger than that of ABT ($\beta = 0.54$). We did not, however, observe a direct relationship between ESM use and knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.54$). Therefore, we assert that ABT and CBT developed via ESM use promotes knowledge sharing. However, CBT is more important than ABT in the workplace.

In the first part of **RQ3**, given the nature of ESM, we examined the boundary role of TC, postulating that TC moderates the associations between ESM use and ABT and CBT, such that these associations are weaker when TC is higher rather than lower. In **H5a** and **H6a**, we confirmed that TC negatively influences the association between ESM use and ABT ($\beta = 0.31$) and thereby also weakens the mediating role of ABT on knowledge sharing ($\beta = 0.31$). This finding indicates that when employees perceive a higher level of TC among their colleagues and leaders on ESM, they may consider shared information to be misleading and interpret it differently based on individual differences; thus, TC on ESM is likely to promote negative emotional reactions towards colleagues. This may be due to the nature of visibility, which has both relational and strategic qualities that are enacted in the process of "seeing and being seen" (Brighenti, 2007, p. 325). In other words, communication visibility in computer-mediated communications offers a multi-directional view that can be observed from different perspectives. This is inconsistent with the existing body of research, which states that communication visibility on ESM promotes social ties and emotional attachment among employees, which, in turn, promotes knowledge sharing (e.g. Leornardi, 2014).

Contrary to our expectations (i.e. **H5b** and **H6b**), TC strengthened rather than weakened the relationship between ESM use and CBT ($\beta = 0.31$). Furthermore (and also contrary to our expectations), high TC strengthened rather than weakened the mediating effect of CBT ($\beta = 0.31$). One possible reason may be that open communication in a virtual environment, such as

ESM, enables employees to gather knowledge and reasons to trust others—for example, beliefs about their competency and responsibility (Cao & Ali, 2018); as a result, employees tend to share knowledge in the network. Given its nature as an open forum for exchanging and sharing ideas, ESM may lead to different understandings of shared content among colleagues, thereby promoting trust in their relationships (Luqman et al., 2020a); subsequently, these effects foster knowledge sharing (Leonardi, 2015). A second reason could be that the data were collected from China, and our results may be culture-specific. Because China is the foundation of Confucianism (i.e. collectivism, rooted in personal ethics), transparency is more likely to affect ABT (than CBT) and is relatively more important because harmony and interpersonal relationships are crucial in Chinese society (Tan & Chee, 2005).

The second half of *RQ2* examined the moderating role of PBC (**H7a** and **H7b**) and moderated-mediation (**H8a** and **H8b**) in the relationships of ESM with ABT and CBT. Our results supported all proposed hypotheses, showing that personal blogging during working hours improves the effectiveness of ESM and promotes ABT ($\beta = 0.31$) and CBT ($\beta = 0.31$) among colleagues. The finding also confirmed our expectation that higher PBC encourages employees to develop more trustworthy workplace relationships (i.e. ABT [$\beta = 0.31$] and CBT [$\beta = 0.31$]), which subsequently enhances knowledge sharing in the workplace. While acknowledging PBC's potentially divergent effects on employees, we assert that the benefits of ABT and CBT outweigh their adverse effects by enhancing knowledge sharing among colleagues.

In sum, our findings imply that the use of ESM promotes ABT and CBT among employees, thereby enhancing knowledge sharing in the workplace. Given the nature of ESM, however, TC affects the association of ESM with ABT and CBT in different ways. For example, increased TC reduces the association between the use of ESM and ABT, which is likely to reduce knowledge sharing in the workplace. Meanwhile, increased TC strengthens the association between ESM use and CBT, thereby promoting knowledge sharing in the workplace. Therefore, TC does not always entail positive results in virtual environments, such as ESM. However, PBC may offer solutions to overcome the negative effects of TC in ESM. Indeed, PBC plays a moderating role between the use of ESM and ABT and CBT to promote knowledge sharing in the workplace.

7 Implications

7.1 Theoretical Implications

First, the current study responds to calls for research to examine the paradoxically positive and negative impacts of ESM use in the workplace (Luqman, Talwar et al., 2021). We thus make a novel contribution to the knowledge management literature by empirically examining trust dimensions (i.e. ABT and CBT) as mechanisms through which ESM promotes knowledge sharing in the workplace. While the limited extant literature has revealed the potential of ESM to induce feelings of interruption overload and psychological transition (Luqman et al., 2020b; Ding et al., 2019), we provide much needed insights into the positive influence of ESM on trust dimensions and, subsequently, knowledge sharing. Hence, we offer a fresh perspective in the ongoing debate regarding the efficacy of EMS use in the workplace.

Second, we empirically tested novel and little-known moderators of the association between ESM use and trust dimensions. Computer mediated Communication (CMC) is an important source of interaction for employees; given the nature of ESM, however, TC induces adverse psychological consequences—for example, reduced levels of ABT among colleagues, and these negative effects have rarely been explored in the extant literature. For example, our study indicates that TC in a virtual context does not always entail positive outcomes. By employing CVT, we thus present a different understanding than that of previous research, which has emphasised the positive influence of TC on knowledge sharing, trust and social bonding (Leonardi, 2014). We provide a differentiated view of trust dimensions such that TC decreases ABT while increasing CBT among colleagues. TC triggers negative emotions in employees embedded in the network, which may cause greater harm than benefits to employees' social experiences in the workplace. However, TC is beneficial for CBT, which enhances knowledge sharing in the workplace. We thus identify TC via ESM as a double-edged sword in terms of the two trust dimensions. ESM may not promote knowledge sharing until trust is developed among all members of the network. Such paradoxical findings provide important insights for future researchers to explore and expand our model.

Third, the current research disentangles PBC's positive and negative effects. To the best of our knowledge, no studies have yet explored the efficacy of PBC in the context of bounded

organisational platforms, such as ESM. Previous research has largely focused on the negative effects of social media blogging, such as time-wasting, procrastination, cyber-slacking and deviant behaviour (Sun et al., 2021; Zhao & Rosson, 2009; Luqman et al., 2020b; Nusrat et al., 2021). However, we offer novel evidence for PBC's crucial role in enhancing the levels of ABT and CBT and thereby promoting knowledge sharing within organisations. We thus provide a broader theoretical perspective on the role of ABT and CBT and explain its influence on network members' behaviour and willingness to share knowledge in the workplace. In addition, our results support the effectiveness of PBC in promoting both trust dimensions i.e., ABT and CBT and provide a fine-grained understanding of the role of PBC in the ESM environment.

Finally, we contribute to RCT by adopting novel narratives regarding ESM affordances and their social outcomes, such as knowledge sharing. We provide insights into the ways in which ESM motivates employees' rational choice behaviour, induces social consequences, such as trust, and thereby increases employees' intentions to share knowledge. The current study also adds to the extant knowledge regarding the subjective evaluations of third parties who share content via the ESM network. Drawing on RCT, our research shows that past experiences are more likely to reflect participants' future decisions about knowledge sharing.

7.2 Practical Implications

The current research also provides important insights for managers. First, our findings indicate that high levels of trust between employees in virtual environments, such as ESM, can promote knowledge sharing. Specifically, organisations can foster trust elements, such as ABT and CBT, by encouraging employees to utilise ESM in the workplace; in doing so, they can enhance knowledge sharing. As an initial step, organisations should implement ESM platforms because ESM facilitates the sharing of knowledge among employees and prepares employees for future challenges by giving them access to up-to-date information. Managers in organisations that have already implemented ESM platforms should remain vigilant and ensure that employees regularly utilise the relevant affordances in the workplace.

Second, organisations should consider the significant influence of TC on the association between ESM and the two trust dimension (i.e. ABT and CBT). Our findings reveal that in the presence of TC, the use of ESM is not sufficient to promote ABT and CBT; thus, organisations

should adopt additional measures to enhance knowledge sharing. We found that TC reduces ABT in the workplace and increases CBT. Such paradoxical findings require managerial intervention. Based on individual differences, employees tend to share different content—for example, regarding their rewards and achievements, which, when visible to third parties who lack social and emotional support, may trigger feelings of envy. The lack of face-to-face interaction on ESM platforms means that clarification of such content may be delayed, which may also provoke negative emotional reactions towards the posters. Such behavioural outcomes may seriously damage interpersonal workplace relationships and knowledge sharing intentions. We thus recommend that managers carefully review any content employees share via ESM. If the nature of content shared on ESM is affiliative or expressive, managers should intervene and explain to other employees to avoid misleading explanations. We further suggest that organisations, managers and employees work to overcome the potentially negative consequences of TC while ensuring that ESM use produces positive social consequences, such as ABT. Recognising the negative relationships of ESM with ABT and knowledge sharing, organisations should consciously formulate norms for sharing—and, if necessary, clarifying—information on ESM.

Third, we suggest that managers leverage employees' use of PBC to improve ABT and CBT. Our results indicate that PBC can improve employees' ABT and CBT levels and thereby increase knowledge sharing in the workplace. Previous research did not reflect the expansion of PBC's role in organisationally bounded social media. We recommend that managers create a work environment that promotes the use of PBC. While recognising that employees have different inclinations to use private social media, managers should work to motivate them to include their colleagues in their blogs. This implies that organisations should take advantage of blogs to promote informal and formal interactions during working hours. Employees' use of private social media increases the possibility that they may engage with other colleagues via blogging. If employees are embedded in an organisation's bounded network where they can observe others' interactions, they may be more likely to engage in PBC and enjoy its benefits, such as knowledge sharing. In addition, managers can use personal media to promote formal or informal interactions outside of ESM. Such efforts may also encourage employees to engage in PBC and thereby increase informal relationships as well as ABT and CBT.

7.3 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although our study provides thoughtful contributions to the knowledge management and ESM literature, we must acknowledge its limitations, which provide opportunities for future research. First, we introduced PBC as an important tool for overcoming the negative impact of TC on the relationship between ESM use and trust dimensions. Although we validated the PBC construct and recommend that managers promote its use during working hours, the literature has suggested its potentially negative effects on employees. While our work provides reasonable evidence that the benefits of PBC—i.e. enhancing ABT, CBT and knowledge sharing—outweigh its detriments, we recommend that future research continue to explore PBC's negative effects, including its effects on the levels of trust among people outside the organisation and related outcomes (such as levels of trust among suppliers and customers). Second, we deliberately collected multiple waves of data from Chinese knowledge workers to rule out potential problems of mixed culture (e.g., cross-cultural) investigation, and we rooted our hypotheses in theory-based explanations. Given the nature of ESM and TC, however, individual interpretations of shared content may vary from culture to culture; therefore, our results may not be generalised to other contexts (e.g. individualistic cultures; Hofstede, 1980). Therefore, we suggest that future research consider diverse cultures when examining TC, trust elements and knowledge sharing.

Third, our findings support the hypothesis that ESM use enhances ABT and CBT and thus knowledge sharing. However, the results also show that TC has the opposite relationship with ESM and CBT—perhaps due to individual differences in employees' ability to interpret shared content. Therefore, we encourage future scholars to include certain boundary conditions, such as individual personality traits. In addition, future research should consider organisational-level variables, such as policy, climate and employee- and team-level structures, which may further expand stakeholders' understanding of knowledge sharing in virtual workplace contexts, such as ESM. Fourth, we controlled for age and gender (Luqman et al., 2021). However, the literature has shown that these factors may affect knowledge sharing in the workplace. Therefore, we suggest that future research include age and gender as moderator variables to test their overall impact on knowledge sharing. Finally, although we sought to address CMB by collecting data in multiple waves, the data were self-reported and derived from a single source, which may have left our analysis vulnerable to CMB. We thus recommend that future research

collect data from multiple sources and utilise experimental designs to confirm the effectiveness of ESM use in increasing trust levels and knowledge sharing.

7.4 Conclusion

Recently, stakeholders have expressed concerns about the adoption of ESM in the workplace. Acknowledging these concerns, we provide a broader perspective regarding the ability of ESM use to build trust (i.e. ABT and CBT) and thereby enhance knowledge sharing. We offer a comparative view of two trust dimensions—i.e. ABT and CBT—and discuss how, why and when TC and PBC interactions in the relationships of ESM with ABT and CBT lead to negative and positive extra-role behaviours at work, such as knowledge sharing. Our research reveals paradoxical findings. On the one hand, the use of ESM promotes ABT and CBT and thereby improves knowledge sharing. On the other hand, TC—as a moderator (i.e. a visibility affordance of ESM)—plays a dual role, exacting a negative impact on the association between ESM use and ABT and thereby reducing knowledge sharing in the workplace, while strengthening the relationship between ESM use and CBT and thereby increasing knowledge sharing. These contradictory findings suggest that TC is a double-edged sword, which requires managerial intervention to ensure the effective use of ESM in the workplace. We further demonstrate that employees' participation in PBC with TC strengthens ESM's positive effects on ABT and CBT. In sum, these findings encourage research into the role of ESM in the workplace, especially based on CVT. We expect our study to pave the way for research illuminating employees' use of ESM to reshape social communication in the workplace and thereby increase knowledge sharing.

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Appendix. Values of CFA and construct items

Enterprise social media (ESM) use from Ou and Davison (2011)	CFA
1. I often use ESM to contact other people for my work.	.843
2. I regularly use ESM to communicate with colleagues or customers in my daily work.	.749
3. The frequency of usage of ESM to do the following things in my daily work is ask questions.	.785
4. The frequency of usage of ESM to do the following things in my daily work is answer questions.	.730
5. The frequency of usage of ESM to do the following things in my daily work is share files	.787
6. The frequency of usage of ESM to do the following things in my daily work is work-related socialization.	.714
Affect-based trust from McAllister (1995)	
1. I have a sharing relationship with the members of my work team. We can all freely share our ideas.	.751
2. I can talk freely with my colleagues about difficulties I am having with my work.	.761
3. If one of the members of my colleagues was transferred to work in a different team, I would feel unhappy because I enjoy working with them all.	.827
4. If I share my problems with my colleagues, I know that they will respond constructively and caringly.	.804
5. I believe that the members of my work team have made considerable emotional investments in our working relationship.	.792
Cognition-based trust from McAllister (1995)	
1. My colleagues approach their work with professionalism and dedication.	.840
2. I believe that my colleagues are well prepared and competent to do their work.	.844
3. I can rely on my colleagues not to make my job more difficult by careless work.	.814
4. I trust and respect my colleagues.	.735
5. I consider my colleagues to be trustworthy.	.848
Knowledge Sharing from Rhee and Choi (2016)	
1. I make an effort to share knowledge with my colleagues.	.710
2. I explained everything very thoroughly.	.825
3. I answered all their questions immediately whenever my colleagues ask.	.735
4. I told my coworker exactly what he/she needed to know.	.829
Transparent communication from Leonardi (2015)	
Enterprise social media enables me to …	
1. notice the things other coworkers say to one another when they exchange messages on enterprise social media.	.877
2. notice the titles of documents other coworkers post in enterprise social media.	.894
3. carefully read the messages exchanged between my coworkers on enterprise social media.	.915
4. read the documents others post on enterprise social media in detail.	.810
Personal blogging with co-workers (self-developed)	
Using private social media:	
1. I emotionally support others when they need it for their work.	.845
2. I exchange ideas with colleagues, which supports and motivates my work.	.875
3. I talk about my relationships with my colleagues and/or my supervisor.	.813

CFA= confirmatory factor analysis.