Social media and well-being at work, at home, and in-between: A review

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Abstract

With increasing relevance of collaborative technologies in the workplace and flexible work arrangements, concerns and hopes about associations between social media use and well-being arise. Social media can introduce content and demands from the work context into the home and vice-versa. This narrative review of $k = 39$ publications addresses work-inconsistent and home-inconsistent social media use, particularly during remote work. The reviewed studies show that social media use can be associated with negative outcomes such as stress. At the same time, many studies found associations with beneficial outcomes such as higher job satisfaction. These conclusions are limited by the predominantly cross-sectional survey designs and inconsistent conceptualization and measurement of social media use. We suggest improvements and call for more longitudinal and experimental studies to advance the understanding of social media use and well-being at the work-home interface.

Keywords: social media, ICTs, well-being, work-home interface, remote work, narrative review

Introduction

How social media affect users' well-being and mental health remains a controversial issue that currently receives much attention from the public, researchers, and technology companies. Most research in this area centers on concerns about young adults' and adolescents' health (Meier & Reinecke, 2021; Valkenburg, 2022; Valkenburg et al., 2022). Increasingly though, due to various changes in the work environment and adoption of new collaborative technologies, the effects of social and mobile media on the well-being of the working adult population are moving into focus (e.g., Marsh et al., 2022; van Zoonen et al., 2022). Employees have reported experiencing more and more "technostress", blurred boundaries, and problems with self-regulation around digital media use, particularly at the intersection of the once separate work and home domains (i.e., the *work-home interface*). This development seems to be amplified by a persistent trend towards working from home, which, for many, has become the "new normal" (Patton, 2020; Raghavan et al., 2021; Rogers, 2020). These social and technological trends, whose roots stretch back at least two to three decades, are now accelerated by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., Kniffin et al., 2021).

Against this background, the present chapter sets out to review the role that social media play for working adults' well-being, particularly at the work-home interface and considering the recent normalization of remote work. To focus our review in this complex field, we will first define our understanding of well-being, social media, and the work-home interface. For the latter, we draw particular inspiration from the framework developed by Sonnentag and Pundt (2017) in an earlier review of this literature. Based on this framework, we then present an up-to-date review of empirical research on the role social media play for well-being at work, at home, and in the increasingly prevalent moments that lie in-between. We close with a discussion of the potential advantageous and detrimental effects of social media use on the

working population in different contexts as well as conceptual and methodological advances that should clarify these relationships.

Well-Being, Social Media, and the Work-Home Interface

Defining Well-Being

Well-being is understood and operationalized in various ways (Meier & Reinecke, 2021). For this narrative review, we broadly consider indicators of adjustment and functioning, positive subjective experiences, and eudaemonic well-being (e.g., meaningfulness), as well as the absence of psychopathology (Diener et al., 2018; Ryan & Deci, 2001). In the context of the workplace and organizational psychology, such positive and negative well-being indicators can include both general (e.g., life satisfaction, affect, meaningfulness) and specific indicators. The latter include a variety of outcomes that range from exhaustion, isolation, and burnout (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2017; Oksanen et al., 2021; van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2021) to work engagement, job satisfaction, and belongingness (Fu et al., 2019; Randall et al., 2020; van Zoonen & Banghart, 2018).

Defining Social Media

Social media have received growing scholarly attention in recent years due to suspected detrimental—or beneficial—effects on well-being (e.g., Appel et al., 2020; Meier & Reinecke, 2021). They are now the dominant tools for *computer mediated communication* (CMC), that is, social interaction mediated through *information and communication technologies* (ICTs; Meier & Reinecke, 2021). What counts as social media or not has changed rapidly of late, yet Bayer and colleagues (2020) identify five fundamental characteristics: *Social media* are (a) internet-based, (b) interactive or social ICTs that include (c) user-generated content, and allow CMC with (d) both large and small audiences, in (e) both asynchronous and synchronous ways. Currently, this typically includes both social

network sites (SNS) and messengers, as well as, increasingly, applications that move in between these two archetypes (e.g., Snapchat, Telegram). In the work context, social media can be distinguished into organization-specific or enterprise social media (ESM) and privately used or public social media (PSM), both of which may enhance or impair well-being, especially at the work-home interface (van Zoonen et al., 2022).

The Work-Home Interface

The well-being of employees that fall under the broad umbrella of office, information, and knowledge workers appears to be increasingly impacted by multiple changes in the work environment, such as constant availability outside working hours or changes in productivity due to ICTs (e.g., Grant et al., 2013; Vorderer et al., 2016). ICTs such as social media and smartphones now regularly introduce communication from the home-life into work activities, and vice versa. This could increase strain, interfere with productivity, and introduce conflicts between different roles, leading to negative outcomes such as fatigue (Wu et al., 2020). In this so-called *work-home interface*—the boundary between the work and home domains—social media might play a multifaceted role for well-being.

According to theories on boundaries between work and home or private life domains, people separate domain-specific roles by physical, temporal, emotional, or cognitive borders (Sonnentag & Pundt, 2017). Transitions between different domains can increase strain and conflicts (Delanoeije et al., 2021). In recent years, scholars have expressed worry that constant availability and technologically mediated intrusions from one domain into the other increasingly blur boundaries, with detrimental consequences for well-being (e.g., Felstead & Henseke, 2017).

In particular, social media use at the work-home interface could be associated with so called work-life and life-work conflicts (e.g., Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2019). Originally dubbed work-home or work-family conflict, work-life (or life-work) conflicts capture the private,

non-work-related aspects of daily life more holistically (van Zoonen et al., 2016). *Work-life conflict* thus refers to pressures of the work domain interfering with the private life, whereas *life-work conflict* addresses the interference of the private life with one's role at work (e.g., Sonnentag & Pundt, 2017), sometimes also referred to as spillover effects (e.g., Farivar & Richardson, 2021).

ICTs often allow users to bridge the temporal and spatial boundaries of work. With current technical and societal developments, employees, employers, gig-workers, and the self-employed increasingly engage at least partially in forms of *remote work* (e.g., Kniffin et al., 2021). We therefore argue that to understand the effects of social media at the work-home interface, the role of work-from-home (or remote work, telecommuting, telework; see Blount, 2015) needs to move into focus.

Working from home likely comes with new challenges and benefits for well-being, which may be particularly exacerbated or mitigated by social media use (Delanoeije et al., 2021). For instance, remote work has been viewed as a potential threat to workers' well-being and happiness (Tandon et al., 2021), specifically by challenging the ability to disengage from work (e.g., Derks & Bakker, 2014). However, a recent review finds mostly positive effects of working remotely on well-being (Charalampous et al., 2019) and (some) remote workers may experience improved well-being over those working in an office (e.g., Fonner & Roloff, 2010). Still, not every group of workers is able to utilize the same degree of remote work: Kossek and Lautsch (2017) find that occupations associated with lower income and skills have a low degree of flexibility to choose their working time and location, whereas those with middle or higher wages and skills tend to have more work flexibility.

Whereas earlier reviews synthesized literature on ICT effects at the work-home interface based on spatial boundaries (e.g., Sonnentag & Pundt, 2017), we argue that due to increased adoption of remote work and rapidly adopted remote work technologies (e.g., video chatting

and collaborative tools), a new look at the role digital technologies play at the work-home interface is warranted. To review research on social media use and well-being, we follow the framework by Sonnentag and Pundt (2017) and distinguish setting-consistent vs. setting-inconsistent use of ICTs at the work-home interface. Like Sonnentag and Pundt (2017), we interpret “home” broadly and use it to describe mainly one’s place of living but also, increasingly, one’s (secondary or primary) place of work outside a traditional workplace. Thus, due to the ongoing development towards work-from-home, we apply the framework to *when* social media are used (i.e., during work hours vs. outside of work hours), rather than *where* (i.e., at work vs. at home). Accordingly, social media use can be differentiated along two axes: (1) The *temporal setting* of usage, i.e., if social media use happens when one is supposed to work or not, and (2) the *content* of usage, i.e., if using social media is related to one’s work or not (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Social media use at the work-home interface, adapted from Sonnentag and Pundt (2017).

		Content of Social Media Activity	
		work-related	not work-related
Setting of Social Media Activity	work hours	Social media use for work while working (work-consistent)	Social media use for non-work while working (work-inconsistent)
	leisure time	Social media use for work during leisure time (home-inconsistent)	Social media use for non-work during leisure time (home-consistent)

Note. *Work-consistent* use refers to social media use that (i) is related to work tasks, e.g., sharing information about a project, and (ii) takes place during regular working hours. In contrast, *home-consistent* social media use means (i) usage for non-work-related purposes such as scrolling through Instagram or Facebook for relaxation which (ii) happens outside of regular working hours. In this review, we will focus on usage during inconsistent settings due to their propensity for conflicts and potential threats to well-being: First, we will address *work-inconsistent* social media use that (i) is not related to work and (ii) happens during working hours. Second, we will review *home-inconsistent* use that (i) is for work-related purposes but (ii) happens outside of regular working hours.

Prior Reviews and The Present Research

To situate our review within the broader research context, we briefly summarize the state of knowledge on ICTs, social media, and well-being at the work-home interface so far. A first review by Sonnentag and Pundt (2017) finds some negative impacts of ICTs at the work-home interface, such as increased work-family conflicts, but no substantial impairment of well-being. Further, they find that individual characteristics, e.g., boundary preferences play an important role in determining these outcomes and that setting inconsistent use in one domain may also increase the likelihood to use ICTs inconsistently in others. Cecchinato and Cox (2020) further conclude that ICTs such as WhatsApp and Facebook can increase the frequency of transitioning between work- and life roles which could increase strains. Yet, such ICTs may also boost workers' autonomy by enabling them to arrange their borders between work and home as desired, hence promoting well-being.

Beyond ICTs more generally, a closer look at social media specifically appears central to understand the effects of today's technological environment on well-being (Laumer & Maier, 2021; Valkenburg, 2022). A recent review by van Zoonen et al. (2022) on the use of social media in the work context focusses mainly on the theoretical underpinnings of potential well-being effects. The present review, in contrast, aims to summarize empirical evidence on how social media use may influence well-being at the work-home interface, especially vis-à-vis current developments toward remote work (Carroll & Conboy, 2020). Since Sonnentag and Pundt (2017) synthesized studies on ICTs and well-being until 2016, we will include studies from 2016 onwards in this review. The search was conducted via Google Scholar and other publication databases, e.g., PsycInfo, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, utilizing a combination of keywords related to work/leisure time and social media. We excluded qualitative studies and those that did not measure social media use or well-being, e.g., those that only dealt with ICT use at the workplace in general. We only included English

language and peer-reviewed journal publications. Our review fills an important gap by summarizing recent (2016-2021, $n = 39$) empirical studies on the effects of social media use on well-being at work, at home, and particularly in the moments that cross these boundaries (i.e., work- and home- inconsistent uses). For an overview of the reviewed studies see Table A1 (Appendix of this chapter).

Evidence Review

Work-Inconsistent Social Media Use: Socializing or Slacking?

We start with evidence on how work-inconsistent use of social media relates to well-being. First, similarities and differences of using social media for work-consistent versus work-inconsistent purposes will be discussed, followed by a discussion of “cyberslacking”—social media use for non-work purposes while working.

Work-Consistent vs. Work-Inconsistent Use

A number of studies differentiate between using social media while working for work purposes (e.g., coordinative tasks) vs. social purposes (e.g., casual chats with colleagues). In our framework (see Figure 1), the former would be classified as work-consistent use and the latter as work-inconsistent. This distinction is particularly prominent in studies analysing enterprise social media (Leonardi et al., 2013; see van Zoonen et al., 2022). Work-inconsistent use can be completely removed from the work context (e.g., using public social media for private matters during work hours) or have some overlaps with the workplace (e.g., messaging with co-workers). We therefore define work-inconsistent use by the content of the social media activity, meaning any mediated communication while working that is unrelated to one’s work (see Figure 1). While work-inconsistent use may serve important functions such as strengthening ties or making knowledge visible in organizations, it is, by definition, unrelated to the content of work (Berraies et al., 2020; Song et al., 2019).

We note that some studies find diverging associations between using ESM for work-consistent vs. inconsistent or social purposes and well-being (Labban & Bizzi, 2021; Liang et al., 2020; Randall et al., 2020). For example, work-inconsistent ESM use is associated with higher job satisfaction, but work-consistent ESM use is not (Liang et al., 2020). However, many studies find clear positive direct and indirect effects on well-being for both work-consistent and inconsistent use, e.g., on work engagement and job satisfaction (Fu et al., 2019; Robertson & Kee, 2017; Zhang et al., 2019). Investigating social media use logs and turnover behaviour, Yingjie et al. (2019) further found that two kinds of work-inconsistent use are differentially associated with turnover: Posts related to entertainment and leisure were associated with more turnover, whereas interacting with others on a company's social media platform was associated with lower turnover. This could mean that the further removed mediated communication is from the work context (e.g., from colleagues), the less happy and more likely to switch jobs employees are, or that being unhappy with a job leads to posting about content that is unrelated to one's work.

Cyberslacking and “Addictive” Uses

Media use is oftentimes viewed as an inherently negative influence on well-being or productivity (e.g., Saleem et al., 2021). The two most important research strands in the context of the work-home interface understand social media use as expressions of (1) cyberslacking or (2) “addiction”.

Cyberslacking typically refers to work-unrelated, procrastinatory ICT or social media use during working hours. Surprisingly, some studies find positive associations between using social media for work-unrelated purposes during work hours and well-being indicators such as meaningfulness (Nusrat et al., 2021). An ambulatory assessment study found that using personal social media while working is associated with improved work-life balance (Kühnel et al., 2020). However, Kühnel et al., (2020) also found a small but significant negative effect

on creativity. This highlights the potential of increased demands through home-related social media use while working, which could be associated with negative work outcomes. Similarly, more intense use of social media use while working was associated with emotional exhaustion (Charoensukmongkol, 2016). These increased demands due to social media use may require increased self-regulatory resources. Indeed, an experience sampling study over ten workdays by B. Wang et al. (2021) found that social media use was associated with less work engagement through increased procrastination. The study also found more guilt for social media users, which was mediated through increased interruptions and procrastination.

Further, research on “addictive” or problematic uses of social media typically finds associations with negative outcomes, such as “technostress”, life invasion, burnout, or fatigue (Brooks et al., 2017; Han et al., 2020; Saleem et al., 2021; Tandon et al., 2021; Xiao & Mou, 2019; Yao & Cao, 2017; Zivnuska et al., 2019). However, this perspective is frequently criticized for ignoring potential adaptive or neutral uses of social media (cf. Brooks et al., 2017) and assuming social media use to be a relatively immutable maladaptive trait, without considering social media’s various useful applications in work and home contexts, or changes in use over time (cf. Zivnuska et al., 2019).

Degrees and Mechanisms of Work-Inconsistent Use

The studies addressed in the previous subsections highlight the paradoxical potential of social media for simultaneously improving and decreasing well-being (Leonardi et al., 2010; Vanden Abeele, 2021). This effect heterogeneity is highly common in the social media and well-being literature (Meier & Reinecke, 2021; Valkenburg, 2022) and may be explained by varying degrees of usage and competing mechanisms.

Specifically, researchers argue that varying intensities of work-inconsistent use yields different well-being effects: Sun et al. (2022) find that the association between social media use and employee engagement is smallest or most negative at intermediate levels for some

types of use and for certain stressors, but smallest at low use for other stressors. Furthermore, using social media for relationship management can moderate, for example, the relationship between role conflict and job satisfaction (Y. Wang et al., 2021): When use was low, the effect of social media was positive, and when it was high, the effect was negative. Another study found a U-shaped association between work-inconsistent use and information overload and communication overload, in that moderate use was associated with low levels of overload and low or high use with higher levels of overload (Chen & Wei, 2019). Depersonalization, one aspect of burnout, was also found to have a curvilinear relationship with the number of checks and minutes spent on social media while working, indicating that depersonalization is lowest at intermediate levels of use (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2017).

Concerning mechanisms, Wu et al. (2020) assessed potential mediators between cyberslacking and well-being. They found the effect of social media use on well-being was negative through fatigue, whereas it was positive through psychological detachment. A cross-sectional study by Labban and Bizzi (2021) further found that communicating with non-work friends while working was associated with more happiness but also more fatigue. These results suggest that increased well-being may result from positive interpersonal experiences and connections to the home domain via social media. This may be especially important in settings where work and home domain are separated by large physical distances, e.g., in the transportation sector, seasonal work, or on business trips. One study found that for cruise ship employees, social media can have positive effects, as participants were better able to meet social demands from the home domain (Radic et al., 2020). At the same time, these connections require resources and effort and may distract from work, thus potentially increasing fatigue and reducing well-being.

More than Just Slacking

Overall, the heterogeneous findings on social media use during working hours reflect that studies differ widely in design, measurement, and theoretical perspective (see van Zoonen et al., 2022). The findings suggest that personal social media use while working may afford (some) users the ability to better balance the work-life domains, which can be related to beneficial outcomes, e.g., higher job satisfaction. While several studies provide support for such beneficial effects of work-inconsistent social media use on well-being, such use has also been found to strain psychological resources and impair well-being (e.g., through negative emotions; B. Wang et al., 2021). Further, using social media not just for social interaction with friends but for completely unrelated tasks (i.e., cyberslacking), or engaging in poorly self-regulated “addiction-like” forms of use while working, may decrease well-being.

Home-Inconsistent Social Media Use: Always on Duty?

Moving on to home-inconsistent social media use, we note a relative dearth of studies that focus on social media specifically. Rather, scholars have investigated the effects of “taking work home” through ICTs in general (Andrade & Matias, 2021; Derks & Bakker, 2014; for an earlier review see: Sonnentag & Pundt, 2017). An important factor determining whether well-being is affected by ICT use after hours appears to be individuals’ personal *preference for work-home boundary blurring* (Bauwens et al., 2020; Delanoeije & Verbruggen, 2019; Gadeyne et al., 2018). This preference can mitigate the perception that work-related communication encroaches on employees’ private life and, thus, influences how well-being is affected by ICT use outside the workplace. We can assume that the interplay between this preference about general ICT use and well-being extends to how/when social media are used at the work-home interface. For instance, the preference for integrating work and home life has been associated with more work-related posts on public social media, which also relates to increased employee engagement (van Zoonen & Banghart, 2018).

Those using communication technologies for work purposes, especially when working in large teams and across time zones, likely experience that social media “never sleep”. For instance, a study by Jiang et al. (2017) finds that communication professionals engaging in crisis management are more likely to experience aggravating effects such as working longer hours or higher stress, and thus more work-life conflicts. Further, a study by van Zoonen et al. (2016) finds a positive relationship between using personal social media for work purposes and work-home conflict, which in turn was associated with exhaustion. However, professionals using social media to communicate with employees in their organization experienced positive outcomes, e.g., perceived flexibility and better relationships (Jiang et al., 2017). Similarly, using public social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) for work has been associated with better perceived accessibility and more efficient communication, which both showed a positive relationship to employee engagement (van Zoonen et al., 2017). On the other hand, using private social media channels for work-related communication has been associated with experiencing interruptions and work-life conflict and, thus, exhaustion (van Zoonen et al., 2017). Finally, using social media after waking up, before going to sleep, or while having meals was found to be correlated with work-related negative emotions and cognitions (Budnick et al., 2020).

Overall, the potentially intrusive nature of mobile and social media has been debated for long (e.g., Vorderer et al., 2016), yet how work-related social media use after hours and during leisure time affects well-being is still empirically rather unexplored. A few initial studies, however, show there is a potential to increase work-home conflicts, interruptions, and exhaustion, but also positive effects through connectedness to co-workers and improved work-related communication.

Locating Remote Work and Social Media Use in the Work-Home Interface

ICTs, Social Media, and Well-Being During Remote Work

Well-being can vary considerably between those working at the office versus at home (Grant et al., 2013; Morganson et al., 2010). Remote work further appears to both boost and impede well-being, depending, inter alia, on the outcomes investigated: it may, for instance, increase job satisfaction, feelings of personal control, and decrease burnout; but it has also been associated with more isolation and loneliness (Allen et al., 2015; Charalampous et al., 2019; Hollet-Haudebert et al., 2011; Iqbal et al., 2020).

Social media may play a particular role in the interplay between remote work and well-being, as they provide ample opportunities for both adaptive and maladaptive boundary transitions (see Delanoëje et al., 2021). These transitions can induce additional stressors and demands, such as higher technostress due to work-related social media use at home (Leung & Zhang, 2017; Oksa et al., 2021). At the same time, social media have the potential to induce connectedness with others, serve as a coping tool for problems with social isolation, but can also impede productivity or overwhelm users (e.g., Oksa et al., 2021). In the following, we synthesize the evidence on ICTs, social media, and well-being during remote work, to derive key impulses for future research in this area.

Positive Effects During Remote Work

Some studies find positive effects of ICT and social media use on well-being during remote work: There are a few qualitative interview studies in which participants report some positive effects such as increased autonomy (e.g., Daniel et al., 2018; Oksa et al., 2021). We identified two quantitative studies that address positive effects of social media in remote work: A longitudinal study found that using ICTs, including enterprise social media and messengers, was associated with less loneliness over time (van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2021). Similarly, a study by van Zoonen et al. (2021) found that ICTs, including social media, influenced how

well employees adapted to remote work. In employees with high ICT use, trust was not associated with worse adaption to remote work, whereas trust was associated with worse adaption in those with low ICT use. The authors argue that using ICTs such as social media more frequently can dampen the negative effects of adjusting to work from home.

Negative Effects During Remote Work

In contrast, several studies suggest social media use may increase negative outcomes during remote work, particularly technostress: A cross sectional survey by Leung and Zhang (2017) finds that ICT use, including SNSs and messengers, was associated with more techno-invasion (i.e., permanent availability and impaired home activities due to ICTs). Additionally, those working remotely used ICTs more and experienced the boundaries between work and non-work-related activities to be more permeable. Oksanen et al. (2021) found that frequent use of social media for work-related communication (several times a day) was associated with increased technostress after transitioning to remote work due to COVID-19. Those who did not use social media for work-related purposes before switching to remote work had higher levels of technostress, whereas those who used social media frequently before the change to remote work reported lower levels of technostress and work exhaustion. Similarly, Schmitt et al. (2021) address whether increased use of technologies due to switching to remote work is associated with overload and found that increased use of chat-based applications predicts more cognitive overload and in turn less well-being. Finally, Oksa et al. (2021) found associations between using social media for work-related purposes and technostress and between working remotely and technostress.

Research on “addictive” or problematic uses of social media has also started to investigate the role of remote work: In a diary study, being exposed to misinformation on social media was found to be directly associated with more anxiety at the day level, which in turn was related to lower work engagement in teachers working from home (Khan, 2021). When at home,

problematic social media use has been associated with diminished well-being (Lee et al., 2016; Majeed et al., 2020). For instance, using social media in a way that impairs one's home life (i.e., work-home-conflict), such as working at home after regular working hours, has been associated with more exhaustion (Lee et al., 2016).

Overall, while both positive and negative effects of ICTs can be observed, it remains unclear whether social media play any unique role in the complex association between remote work and well-being. Based on the related research on well-being at the work-home interface (see previous sections), it is likely that social media use frequently crosses the borders between work and home domains and thereby introduces both valuable connections and problematic stressors to the remote workplace. The direction of these effects likely depends on how social media are used, e.g., positive when they help maintain beneficial connections (van Zoonen et al., 2021).

Discussion

Summary

What role do ICTs, particularly social media, play for working adults' well-being at the work-home interface? Against the background of recent developments towards increased work-from-home, this review summarized empirical studies (see Table A1 in the appendix) on the effects of social media use inconsistent to one's current work (i.e., work-inconsistent use) or home/leisure activities (i.e., home-inconsistent use, see Figure 1).

Our findings underline the paradoxical nature of using digital media and communication technologies at the work-home interface: Social media offer increased opportunities to stay connected to colleagues, friends, and family while working from home—a typically rather isolated activity—which can improve social and affective well-being (e.g., van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2021). Yet, at the same time, such work-inconsistent use may frequently distract

from, disrupt, or delay important work tasks (e.g., B. Wang et al., 2021), which some users seem to experience as an “addictive”, poorly self-regulated usage behaviour that has gotten “out of hand” (e.g., Chen & Wei, 2019; Zivnuska et al., 2019). While the validity of such a “social media addiction” is questionable (Meier, 2021; Vanden Abeele, 2021), the findings from this and earlier reviews (Marsh et al., 2022; van Zoonen et al., 2022) still clearly document that some knowledge and office workers associate certain stresses and strains with ICT and social media use (Laumer & Maier, 2021).

While the evidence from recent research (2016-2021) is severely limited and should be considered preliminary (see limitations below), it suggests both positive and negative social media effects on well-being, consistent with prior reviews (e.g., Sonnentag & Pundt, 2017). These differential effects are transmitted via separate mechanisms and, among other factors, conditional on whether usage is work- or home-inconsistent (see Figure 1): Evidence overall suggests that (i) *work-inconsistent* (i.e., personal or private) social media use during working hours might increase well-being by providing means for (compensatory) social connection and improving work-life balance. In contrast, (ii) *work-inconsistent* use might decrease well-being by providing more opportunities for cyberslacking and procrastination. Notably, (iii) *work-consistent* ICT and social media use (e.g., digital collaboration with colleagues) during work hours has been found to mostly increase job engagement and satisfaction, suggesting social media can enhance well-being at work, e.g., through more regular co-worker contact and more efficient task-related coordination.

Outside of work hours, however, (iv) *home-inconsistent* work-related ICT and social media use has been associated with negative well-being effects, particularly via increased work-life conflicts, interruptions after work, and exhaustion (i.e., fewer opportunities for detachment from work). Finally, (v) *home-inconsistent*, work-related use outside of work hours has also been associated with positive outcomes such as better relationships at work and more

flexibility. The effects of home-inconsistent use seem to depend in part on an individual's personal preferences for separate vs. integrated work and home domains.

While evidence is still scarce, our review further suggests that *remote work* could intensify some of social media's well-being effects at the work-home interface, for better or worse. Especially during periods of rapid transition to remote work, e.g., both for pandemic-related social distancing or organizational reasons, the reviewed studies suggest that social media use to connect with co-workers mostly enhances well-being via the positive mechanisms outlined above. Still, the permanent connectedness to colleagues, customers, or superiors that is afforded by collaborative ICTs (e.g., MS Teams, Slack) or enterprise social media during remote work might make it more difficult to mentally "unplug" from work or create a desire to do so via "digital detox" (see Radtke et al., 2021; Reinecke et al., 2018; Vorderer et al., 2016). With few exceptions (Oksanen et al., 2021; van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2021) however, we note a lack of studies that rigorously investigate how social media use impacts well-being when working from home. Doing so through the lens of the updated framework outlined in this review (Figure 1) seems a worthwhile task for future research.

Limitations & Recommendations

These conclusions should be interpreted with several limitations in mind: First, the review only includes 39 studies, which were mainly cross-sectional surveys that relied on small convenience samples of mostly white-collar workers in high-earner jobs (see Table A1). Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically increased and broadened the number of people working from home (see, e.g., Hans-Böckler-Stiftung, 2021, for data on Germany), we need larger, socioeconomically diverse, and ideally representative probability samples to understand the well-being effects of digital technologies in the general population. In addition, studies will provide more definitive conclusions by leveraging state-of-the-art short-term longitudinal designs (e.g., experience sampling, B. Wang et al., 2021) or panel data

(e.g., van Zoonen & Banghart, 2018), ideally combined with social media logging data (e.g., Johannes et al., 2021; Yang et al., 2021). Field experiments that vary, e.g., the amount of remote work or personal social media use during work hours represent another important avenue to improve validity of causal conclusions (e.g., Muniswamy et al., 2021). Should researchers seek to test (competing) causal mechanisms that mediate the effects of social media use on well-being at the work-home interface, they need to move beyond the currently dominating but limited cross-sectional mediation analyses (e.g., Kline, 2015; Rohrer et al., 2021). This causal chain from social media use to well-being could also be reversed or reciprocal (see Slater, 2007), as, for instance, loneliness in the workplace might lead to more social media use to satisfy frustrated social needs, rather than social media use leading to higher loneliness (e.g., Hu et al., 2021).

Further limiting both validity and reliability of findings, we note a lack of conceptual clarity and standardized measurement, particularly for ICT and social media use at the work-home interface. While such issues plague the literature more generally (Meier & Reinecke, 2021; Parry et al., 2022), a rather unsystematic approach to ICTs and a need for validated measures was particularly apparent in the studies reviewed here. Drawing on insights from broader reviews of social media effects (Bayer et al., 2020; Meier & Reinecke, 2021), future research will achieve more valid and robust insights by studying ICTs and social media not just at the broadest level of time spent on devices or applications, but by zooming in on their most basic building blocks (i.e., individual features) and considering not just channel but also communication characteristics (i.e., mediated interactions and messages). While most literature in this area has considered ICT and social media use as almost static traits (e.g., “addictive use”), studies will gain a deeper understanding by embracing dynamic conceptualizations of use and heterogeneous, person-specific effects (Valkenburg, 2022; van Zoonen et al., 2022). Such a perspective may help understand, for whom and when remote

work truly works—and for whom and when it does not—in terms of well-being and connectedness over a distance.

Conceptually, the literature further demonstrates a particularly broad understanding of “well-being”, where outcomes are often highly relevant to organizations (e.g., employee engagement, job satisfaction) but less indicative of human well-being proper (e.g., life satisfaction, affective well-being, depressive symptoms; for extended discussion, see Meier & Reinecke, 2021; Valkenburg, 2022). Finally, most studies to date exhibit an increasingly artificial dichotomous understanding of “work” and “home” as clearly identifiable and separable places. Yet, employees increasingly work remotely in multiple places (e.g., out of the office, on the train, in a café, or in multiple living places), further complicating the boundary conditions for the well-being effects of social technologies.

Beyond these limitations of the reviewed studies, a few limitations of this review itself should be considered. Conceptually, while the framework we adopted from Sonnentag and Pundt (2017) covers important aspects of the work-home interface, not all studies—and not all daily life settings—can be neatly separated into “work-inconsistent” or “home-inconsistent”. A conversation with a co-worker via WhatsApp during work hours, which alternates between work-related and -unrelated aspects, hardly fits into this framework, nor does updating one’s *LinkedIn* page while commuting back home, nor does enterprise social media use for private matters after working hours (Sun et al., 2019; Sun & Shang, 2014). Future research may find it useful to advance our framework (Figure 1) and add nuance, for instance, by considering additional work locations outside of the regular office or home, or by differentiating social media uses and interaction partners (e.g., chatting with colleagues vs. superiors).

Methodologically, while comprehensive, we note that our review was non-systematic. Future research syntheses can update this work through more extensive and systematic literature searches and, eventually, statistical meta-analyses.

Future Directions

Beyond overcoming these limitations, several essential directions for future research emerge from this review. First, the current literature exhibits a certain negative a priori bias towards social media's well-being effects, as is particularly apparent in "addiction" studies. Yet, this as well as prior reviews (Meier & Reinecke, 2021; Sonnentag & Pundt, 2017; van Zoonen et al., 2022), find mostly mixed and conditional effects which make it implausible to assume that all or even most employees' social media use stems from some sort of pathological (i.e., severely harmful) "behavioural addiction". Instead of pathologizing social media use a priori (Vanden Abeele, 2021), researchers interested in potential negative effects can work from several more neutral and theory-driven approaches, such as self-regulation and technology habits (e.g., Meier, 2021; Reinecke et al., 2022). Similarly, the literature on cyberslacking may benefit from a more nuanced view that clearly separates the types of and motivations for social media-related slacking activities during working hours, as this behaviour may differ widely between technologies and users, and need not be detrimental (e.g., Vitak et al., 2011). For instance, social media may also be used for recovery breaks during working hours (e.g., Rhee & Kim, 2016), whose effectiveness is yet to be determined.

Beyond diversifying samples socioeconomically, research may also branch out beyond the classic desk worker. For instance, in current iterations of the "gig economy", neither traditional working hours nor office or other fixed work locations exist. This presents an interesting and increasingly common borderline case, in which social media may be particularly important to maintain a sense of connectedness to co-workers (see van Zoonen & Sivunen, 2021). At the same time, ICTs and social media could be even more intrusive for gig workers, as boundary management is complicated by the fact that "simply disconnecting" can mean a loss in gig workers' typically volatile income.

We further note that future studies can incorporate a comparative perspective that accounts for cultural norms, work ethics, and societal as well as organizational rules and regulations about working hours and remote work. How effectively and beneficially ICTs such as social media are integrated into the work and home domains may depend in large parts on these boundary conditions (Charoensukmongkol et al., 2017; Luqman et al., 2021). For instance, social media are now more commonly used in China than anywhere else in the world (*Number of Social Network Users in Selected Countries in 2021 and 2026*, n.d.) and their usage in work contexts has become increasingly common in China compared to many Western countries (e.g., Pitafi & Ren, 2021). It is therefore not surprising that many of the studies presented in this review were conducted in China.

Relatedly, the legal frameworks regulating personal ICT and social media use during remote work move into focus. These technologies can be used by organizations or other actors to introduce potentially powerful surveillance measures into the home or office. Such privacy intrusions could present another route towards increased discomfort, uncertainty, or other potential reductions in well-being due to, e.g., a loss of autonomy and personal space (e.g., Charbonneau & Doberstein, 2020; Vitak & Zimmer, 2021)

Conclusion

The reviewed studies address social media effects in the work-home interface from differing perspectives and in diverse use cases. We synthesize preliminary evidence that work-inconsistent use can be associated with increased well-being, e.g., by improving work-life balance, but simultaneously with decreased well-being, e.g., by imposing additional strains. A similar pattern emerges for home-inconsistent use: Positive correlates, e.g., improved relationships occur simultaneously to negative ones, e.g., work-home conflicts. For remote work, we identified a potential of social media to increase stresses and strains in a situation already filled with many demands. Nonetheless, social media may also mitigate common

pitfalls of remote work like isolation or deficient communication, providing an important lever for well-being in a future increasingly shaped by remote work. These conclusions are severely limited by overall scarce evidence that shows clear methodological and conceptual shortcomings. This review highlights various ways forward. For now, the preliminary evidence suggests social media have both a “good” and “bad” side for employees’ well-being: They can bridge physical distances and facilitate positive communication, but also create intrusions and strain at work, at home, and in-between. Why, when, how often, and for whom these positive and negative effects occur remain central questions for future studies.

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Appendix

Table A1

Studies included in this review (n = 39 publications)

Author(s) (year)	Method	N	Antecedent(s)	Mechanism(s) ¹	Outcome(s)
Work-inconsistent SM use²					
Brooks et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional survey	1,731	Distraction from SM (Facebook, YouTube)	SM induced technostress (complexity, insecurity, invasion, overload, uncertainty)	Internet addiction
Charoensukmongkol (2016)	Cross-sectional survey	211	SM use intensity at work	Mindfulness	Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment (burnout)
Charoensukmongkol et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional survey	356	SNS use intensity during work hours		Emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, lack of personal accomplishment (burnout)
Chen and Wei (2019)	Cross-sectional survey	282	Work- and social-related ESM use	Information overload, social overload, communication visibility	ESM-related strain

Fu et al. (2019)	Cross-sectional survey	509	Work-related ESM use, Social-relates ESM use	Social capital (bridging, bonding)	Job satisfaction
Han et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional survey	530	SM addiction (WeChat)	Social comparison	Job burnout
Kühnel et al. (2020)	Ecological momentary assessment	337	Personal SM use at work	Work-nonwork balance	creativity
Labban and Bizzi (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	286	Communication via SM	Happiness, Fatigue	Organizational citizenship behaviour, counterproductive work behaviour
Liang et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional survey	453	Work-related private SM use, social-related private SM use, work-related ESM use, social-related ESM use		Job satisfaction, work efficiency
Nusrat et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	277	ESM use	Psychological conditions (meaningfulness, safety, availability)	Cyberslacking
Radic et al. (2020).	Cross-sectional survey	532	Online communication (includes 3 SM items)	Social pressure, fear of missing out, relatedness to friends and family need satisfaction, internet multitasking, perceived social support	well-being, life satisfaction

Randall et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional survey	155	Work- and social-related ESM use		Employee belongingness
Robertson and Kee (2017)	Cross-sectional survey	512	Time spent on Facebook interacting with co-workers		Job satisfaction
Saleem et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	386	Excessive SNS use, cognitive emotional preoccupation	Task conflict, process conflicts, relationship conflicts	Work performance
Sun et al. (2022)	Cross-sectional survey	1,104	Challenge stressors, hindrance stressors	Work-related and non-work-related ESM use	Work engagement
Tandon et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	312	Fear of missing out	Compulsive SM use	Work performance decrement, procrastination due to SM use at work
Y. Wang et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	359	Role ambiguity, role conflict	SM use (task-oriented, relationship oriented)	Job satisfaction, employee creativity
B. Wang et al. (2021)	Longitudinal survey (diary for ten workdays)	155	Daily SM use	Daily interruptions and procrastination	Daily work engagement and guilt
Wu et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional survey	375	Social cyberloafing (SM use during working hours)	Psychological detachment, fatigue	Mental health
Xiao and Mou (2019)	Cross-sectional survey	426	Anonymity, flexibility, presenteeism (availability for work through SM) due to WeChat use	Privacy invasion, invasion of life	SM fatigue, neuroticism, extraversion

Yao and Cao (2017)	Cross-sectional survey	224	Invasion of work due to SM, invasion of privacy, social interaction overload	Technostress, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment	Rational usage intention
Yingjie et al. (2019)	Analysis of SM and turnover behaviour	1,791	Utilitarian, hedonic, and social use of ESM	Job type, job level	Turnover
Zhang et al. (2019)	Cross-sectional survey	298	Work-related and social-related ESM use	job engagement, organizational engagement, organizational commitment	Job satisfaction, turnover intentions
Zhang et al. (2019)	Cross-sectional survey	298	Work-related ESM use, social-related ESM use	Job engagement, organizational engagement, organizational commitment	Job satisfaction, turnover intentions
Zivnуска et al. (2019)	Cross-sectional survey	326	SM reaction, SM addiction	Work-family balance, job burnout	Job performance

Home-inconsistent SM use³

van Zoonen and Banghart (2018)	Longitudinal survey (three waves)	361	Boundary preference	Work communication on SM	Engagement
Jiang et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional survey	458	SM use in crisis management, employee communication	aggravating impact on work enhancing impact on work	Time-based work-life conflict, strain-based work-life conflict
van Zoonen et al. (2016)	Cross-sectional survey	575	Work-related SM use, work SM policies	Work-life and life-work conflict	Exhaustion

van Zoonen et al. (2017)	Cross-sectional survey	421	Public SM use for work	Accessibility, interruptions, efficient communication, work life conflict	Engagement, exhaustion
Budnick et al. (2020)	Cross-sectional survey	Study 2: 223	Study 2: SM engagement		Study 2: Several cognitive and emotional outcomes, e.g., workplace fear of missing out

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Khan (2021)	Longitudinal survey (diary for 10 consecutive work days)	56	Exposure to SM misinformation, anxiety	SM fatigue, anxiety, resilience	Work engagement
Lee et al. (2016)	Cross-sectional survey	267	Through Kakaotalk: Communication overload, social insecurity, compulsive usage, work overload, invasion of life, work-home conflict	Strain	Life satisfaction, productivity
Leung and Zhang (2017)	Cross-sectional survey	509	ICT use (incl. SM), intensity of telecommuting	Border flexibility and permeability, work-to-family and family-to-work conflict	Technostress (invasion, overload)
Majeed et al. (2020)	Time lagged survey (three waves)	267	Problematic SM use	Fear of Covid-19	Employee depression

Oksa et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	Survey 1: 563	SM use (motivation), remote vs. non-remote work, background variables		Well-being (technostress, burnout, psychological distress, 'background variables')
Oksanen et al. (2021)	Longitudinal survey (two waves)	1,081	Formal and informal SM communication at work, Active private SM use	Familiarity with SM communication	Technostress, work exhaustion
Schmitt et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	403	Video-conference tools, text-based tools	Cognitive overload, digital detox	Work performance, well-being
van Zoonen and Sivunen (2021)	Longitudinal survey (three waves)	1,164	Remote work and mediated communication frequency	Perceived isolation	Psychological distress
van Zoonen et al. (2021)	Cross-sectional survey	5,452	Structural, relational, and contextual factors	Communication technology use (incl. SM)	Adjustment to remote work

Notes. SM = Social media, ESM = Enterprise social media

¹ Corresponds to how the variable is represented in the study

² SM use that is unrelated to the content of one's work during working hours (see section: Work-Inconsistent Social Media Use: Socializing or Slacking?)

³ SM use that is related to the content of one's work outside of working hours (see section: Home-Inconsistent Social Media Use: Always on Duty?)

⁴ See section: Locating Remote Work and Social Media Use in the Work-Home Interface