CITY UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

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Cultivating Actual Resources on Social Media and Benefit from It: Patterns of Social Media Use, Social Capital, and Subjective Well-being

在社交媒體上培育真正的資源並從中獲益：不同種類的社交媒體使用，社會資本及主觀幸福感

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Abstract

In this study, I examine how patterns of social media use are associated with different components of social capital, and how different components of social capital lead to subjective well-being. First, I clarify the confusion over the conceptualization of social media use and social capital at an individual level. I propose that social media use has four patterns based on the uses and gratification approach: informational use, recreational use, social use, and expressive use. Social capital is also conceptualized as consisting of four components as well: the variety of affiliations or occupations embedded in one's personal social networks, the variety of organizations in which one participates, one's position in social/civil organizations, and the frequency of reciprocity one experiences with contacts of different affiliations or occupations. Next, I examine the associations between social media use and social capital theoretically and empirically. Finally, I examine the consequence of social capital on individuals' subjective well-being.

A survey using a multi-stage stratified sampling procedure was conducted in Chongqing, China (total valid N = 583). Results showed that, informational use of social media was associated with attendance to social/civil groups/organizations and experiencing reciprocity with contacts of affiliations and occupations. Recreational use was found to be associated with variety of affiliations embedded in their personal social networks, reciprocity with contacts of affiliations and occupations, and positions in social/civil organizations. Next, individuals who met strangers more frequently reported that they had greater variety of occupations and affiliations embedded in their personal social networks. Individuals who contacted existing social contacts more frequently reported that they experienced reciprocity with contacts of affiliations and occupations more often. Individuals who organized activities on social media more frequently reported that they were more likely to be the manager or leaders of both online and offline social/civil organizations/groups. Finally, individuals who
expressed themselves on social media more frequently reported that they experienced greater reciprocity with contacts.

In addition, the results demonstrated that individuals who participated in a greater variety of organizations reported that they perceived greater life satisfaction. Individuals who were leaders or managers of civil/social organizations/groups reported a higher degree of life satisfaction than non-leaders or non-managers. However, the variety of occupations or affiliations embedded in one's personal social networks and the frequency of reciprocity one experiences with contacts was not significantly associated with affect, which was another dimension of subjective well-being. The findings' theoretical and practical implications were discussed. (I don’t think you need to add the results of extra analyses in the abstract.

*Key Words:* Social media use, Social capital, Subjective well-being, China.