






# “Factors affecting bridge employment behavior: Surveying Chinese older adults as anchors in social media”

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# FACTORS AFFECTING BRIDGE EMPLOYMENT BEHAVIOR: SURVEYING CHINESE OLDER ADULTS AS ANCHORS IN SOCIAL MEDIA

## Abstract

Social media has brought new opportunities to bridge employment and has become an essential channel for addressing the issue of an aging society. This study aims to explore the factors influencing bridge employment behavior among older adults on social media platforms. This analysis collected 757 older adults from China who continue to work as anchors in social media after retiring. Data collection was conducted over ten days via structured questionnaires divided into eight sections. Furthermore, this study conducts structural equation modeling (SEM) to process the data. The results indicate that social capital ( $\beta = 0.183, p = 0.004$ ) and bridge employment policies ( $\beta = 0.123, p = 0.031$ ) have a significant positive impact on intention to bridge employment. Subjective norms ( $\beta = 0.197, p < 0.001$ ), attitudes ( $\beta = 0.204, p < 0.001$ ), and perceived behavioral control ( $\beta = 0.147, p = 0.004$ ) also positively and significantly influence intention to bridge employment. Subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control serve as crucial mediators in the relationship between social capital, bridge employment policies, and intention to bridge employment. Finally, intention ( $\beta = 0.480, p = 0.001$ ) is a strong predictor of bridge employment behavior and acts as a mediator within the model. The findings suggest that enhancing social capital and well-structured employment policies can significantly influence older adults' acceptance and sustained participation in bridge employment on social media platforms.

## Keywords

bridge employment, older adults, social media, bridge employment policies, digital engagement

## JEL Classification

J14, J22, J26, C31, L86

## INTRODUCTION

Bridge employment refers to the work undertaken by individual's post-retirement, serving as a transitional phase between ending a primary career and ultimately withdrawing from the workforce (Hoogendoorn et al., 2024). This type of employment, which can include part-time, temporary, or self-employed roles, often occurs in the same or a different field than the retiree's previous career (Auguste et al., 2023). In the context of a globally aging population, the official retirement age in China is 55 for women and 60 for men. Many individuals aged 60 and above do not perceive themselves as old following retirement (Ma et al., 2024). Some possess high expertise or advanced technical skills and believe they should continue contributing to society. Additionally, due to the insufficiency of retirement pensions, some seek to generate wealth to alleviate financial burdens for themselves and their offspring (Shan & Park, 2023).

The role of social media in facilitating bridge employment for older adults has become increasingly prominent. Douyin, Facebook, LinkedIn, and TikTok, holding a predominant market share, serve as pivotal platforms for these activities, making them an ideal focus for

understanding the integration of elderly individuals into the digital economy (Jiang & Ke, 2024; Wang et al., 2023). Despite the opportunities presented by social media, significant challenges hinder the full integration of older adults into the digital economy (Yu et al., 2023). The digital divide poses a significant barrier, with a notable gap in digital literacy and access among older adults, especially those from less urbanized and economically disadvantaged backgrounds (Hoyos Muñoz & Cardona Valencia, 2023).

Modern research should address the growing significance of bridge employment in the context of an aging population, particularly in China, where many retirees seek continued engagement in the workforce. It can highlight the role of social media platforms in facilitating these employment opportunities while also acknowledging the significant challenges posed by the digital divide.

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## 1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Social capital theory serves as a sociological framework analyzing the impact of social networks and relationships on individual and group success. Key variables identified within this theory include bonding, bridging, and linking social capital. Linking social capital, detailed by Soundararajan et al. (2024), involves connections across different social strata, enabling access to more comprehensive resources and opportunities. It is essential to delineate social capital into structural, relational, and cognitive dimensions, encompassing the network's structure, the quality of interpersonal relationships, and shared values within the network (Dahiyat et al., 2023). A conceptual framework illustrates that social capital, entrepreneurial orientation, and psychological capital collectively influence entrepreneurial intentions, thereby highlighting the dynamic interrelations among social resources, entrepreneurial mindsets, and psychological assets in fostering entrepreneurial activities.

The theory of planned behavior (TPB) provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of bridge employment among older adults and emphasizes how subjective norms, attitudes, and perceived behavioral control collectively influence older adults' intentions and behaviors toward bridge employment. Subjective norm involves the perceived social pressure from family and peers, affecting their decisions about employment, which is crucial in understanding the social influences impacting their engagement in bridge employment (Tang et al., 2024). Attitude reflects their positive or negative evaluations of bridge employment, influencing decisions based on their

perceptions of the benefits and challenges of using social media for employment. Perceived behavioral control captures their beliefs about the ease or difficulty of engaging in such employment, considering factors like digital literacy and accessibility (Müller & Leyer, 2023). The specific variable of bridge employment intention, derived from TPB's behavioral intention concept, underscores the motivational factors driving older adults to consider bridge employment, linking their attitudes, social pressures, and perceived capabilities to their actual employment decisions (P. Nguyen & H. Nguyen, 2024). Finally, bridge employment behavior, which represents the actual employment actions taken post-retirement, is a crucial indicator of how intentions are translated into actual actions, particularly in how they utilize social media in this transition.

The role of social capital within the context of bridge employment for older adults reveals that the psychological and material support provided by one's social network significantly influences life decisions during transitional phases such as post-retirement. A robust social network enhances self-efficacy and the perceived ability to succeed in new endeavors, thus increasing the intention to seek employment after retirement (Growiec, 2023). Positive social encouragement and resources correlate with higher employment rates among older adults, suggesting that social capital plays a crucial role in shaping both the intention and behavior related to bridge employment (Simons et al., 2022). Furthermore, the perception of social norms and expectations, heavily influenced by support from social networks, contributes to normative beliefs that encourage continued professional engagement among older adults (Quintal et al., 2023). The encouragement and validation from signifi-

cant social contacts foster favorable attitudes toward bridge employment and enhance the perceived behavioral control by providing the necessary resources and confidence to engage with new technologies and job markets (Lin et al., 2024).

Bridge employment policies serve as a crucial framework for reinforcing behaviors and shaping the social environment that encourages continued professional activity among older adults. These policies significantly bolster older adults' attitudes toward engaging in work post-retirement by providing resources, support, and regulatory benefits, which highlight the value of continued contribution and offer tangible aids such as financial incentives and professional networking support (Ranasinghe et al., 2024). These policies enhance perceived behavioral control by offering structural and practical assistance, helping older adults navigate new job markets and technologies, thus increasing their self-efficacy and reducing perceived barriers to employment (Lyndgaard et al., 2024). This comprehensive support reshapes how older adults view the feasibility and desirability of continuing work beyond traditional retirement ages, enhancing both their psychological readiness and practical capabilities to engage in new work opportunities. Moreover, effective bridge employment policies help reframe societal and cultural norms about aging and employment, fostering a normative belief that continued work is valuable and encouraged.

Subjective norms in shaping older adults' intentions toward bridge employment encapsulate the perceived social pressures and expectations from family, peers, and society regarding post-retirement work. This perception can be influenced by societal attitudes toward aging and the evolving norms in job markets, particularly with the increasing integration of digital platforms in employment (Ranasinghe et al., 2024). As older adults perceive these norms, they become more willing to engage with digital platforms to bridge employment, enhancing their intention to seek such opportunities. Similarly, attitudes play a crucial role, as they involve older adults' evaluations of engaging in bridge employment, encompassing beliefs about the outcomes and personal values associated with these actions (Ranasinghe et al., 2024). Positive attitudes about the benefits of staying ac-

tive and the utility of social media in job searching significantly affect their intentions to pursue bridge employment opportunities.

Furthermore, perceived behavioral control reflects older adults' perceptions of their capability to engage in bridge employment, influenced by internal factors like self-confidence and external factors such as access to necessary resources and opportunities (Feng et al., 2024). Subjective norm, which refers to the perception of social pressures or expectations to perform a specific behavior, serves as a crucial mediator between social capital and bridge employment intentions among older adults. This concept highlights how the support and validation from social networks contribute to the perception that continuing to work post-retirement is socially endorsed, thereby enhancing the intention to engage in such activities. Similarly, the influence of bridge employment policies significantly shapes the employment intentions of older adults through the mediation of subjective norms, which encapsulate the societal and familial expectations perceived by older individuals. This mediation is essential in linking personal experiences and policy impacts to behavioral outcomes, highlighting how social capital and employment policies, through the lens of subjective norms, drive older adults' intentions to engage in bridge employment.

Social capital plays a pivotal role in shaping favorable attitudes toward bridge employment among older adults, as it facilitates supportive interactions within social networks that enhance perceptions and beliefs about the value and feasibility of post-retirement employment. These policies provide essential resources, information, and support, fostering a positive evaluation of employment opportunities and influencing the intention to pursue such opportunities (Liu et al., 2023). Attitudes are a critical mediator between the experiences shaped by these employment policies and the behavioral intentions regarding bridge employment, highlighting how policies translate into actionable intentions through their influence on individual attitudes (Dhir et al., 2024). Support from social networks significantly influences older adults' intentions to engage in bridge employment by shaping their perceived behavioral control, a critical component that mediates the relationship between social influences and behavioral intentions.

Emotional, informational, and practical assistance from social networks enhance older adults' perceptions of their ability to successfully navigate the challenges associated with finding and maintaining post-retirement employment. This support, which can include encouragement to embrace new job roles or assistance in using digital job search tools, bolsters their belief in their capability to engage in bridge employment, thereby positively influencing their intentions (Jo, 2023).

Similarly, bridge employment policies provide critical resources and support that directly influence older adults' intentions to pursue bridge employment and enhance their perceived control over it (Mazumdar et al., 2024). These policies ensure that older adults feel equipped and confident to navigate modern employment environments by offering guidance, training, and resources. This mediation is critical as it highlights how personal experiences shaped by employment policies can translate into positive behavioral intentions through an enhanced belief in one's capabilities.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the factors influencing bridge employment behavior among older adults on social media platforms. Based on the theoretical framework (Figure 1) and existing literature, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- H1: *Social capital has a positive and significant effect on the intention to engage in bridge employment.*
- H2: *Social capital positively and significantly influences the subjective norm of older adults regarding bridge employment.*
- H3: *Social capital has a positive and significant effect on the attitude of older adults toward bridge employment.*
- H4: *Social capital positively and significantly affects the perceived behavioral control of older adults concerning bridge employment.*
- H5: *Bridge employment policies positively and significantly influence the subjective norm of older adults.*

H6: *Bridge employment policies have a positive and significant effect on the attitude of older adults toward bridge employment.*

H7: *Bridge employment policies positively and significantly affect the perceived behavioral control of older adults.*

H8: *Bridge employment policies have a positive and significant effect on the intention to engage in bridge employment.*

H9: *Subjective norms positively and significantly affect the intention to engage in bridge employment.*

H10: *Attitude has a positive and significant effect on the intention to engage in bridge employment.*

H11: *Perceived behavioral control positively and significantly influences the intention to engage in bridge employment.*

H12: *Intention to engage in bridge employment positively and significantly affects bridge employment behavior.*

Mediation hypotheses are:

H13: *Subjective norms mediate the relationship between social capital and bridge employment intention.*

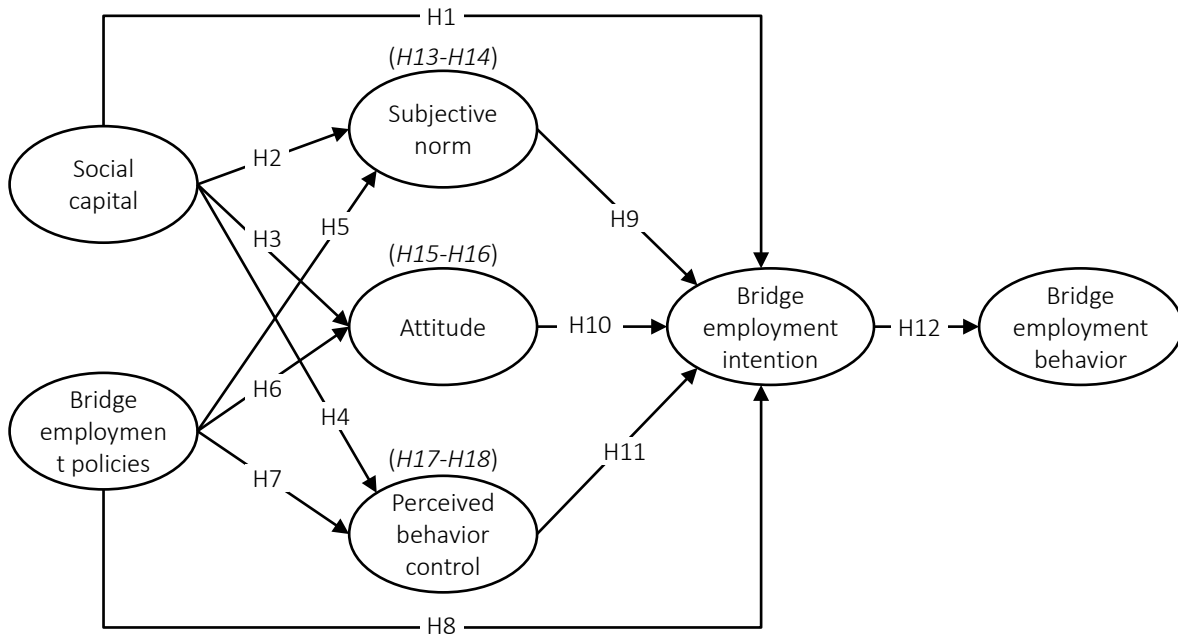
H14: *Subjective norms mediate the relationship between bridge employment policies and bridge employment intention.*

H15: *Attitude mediates the relationship between social capital and bridge employment intention.*

H16: *Attitude mediates the relationship between bridge employment policies and bridge employment intention.*

H17: *Perceived behavioral control mediates the relationship between social capital and bridge employment intention.*

H18: *Perceived behavioral control mediates the re-*



**Figure 1.** Empirical framework

relationship between bridge employment policies and bridge employment intention.

H19: Bridge employment intention mediates the relationship between social capital and bridge employment behavior.

H20: Bridge employment intention mediates the relationship between subjective norm and bridge employment behavior.

H21: Bridge employment intention mediates the relationship between attitude and bridge employment behavior.

H22: Bridge employment intention mediates the relationship between perceived behavior control and bridge employment behavior.

H23: Bridge employment intention mediates the relationship between Bridge employment policies and bridge employment behavior.

## 2. METHOD

This study utilized an online survey collected 757 individuals aged 60 and above active as content creators or live broadcasters on the Douyin platform across China. This study surveyed over 30 days,

employing convenient sampling method. This study chose this technique to enhance the precision of the results by ensuring that subgroups within the population are adequately represented, thereby allowing for more accurate generalizations from the sample to the population. Table 1 illustrates the essential information about the sample.

The questionnaire contains eight sections. These sections encompass basic demographic information, social capital, bridge employment policies, subjective norms, attitudes, perceived behavioral control, bridge employment intentions, and actual bridge employment behaviors. This comprehensive structure ensures a thorough understanding of the factors influencing older adults' engagement in bridge employment through social media platforms (Table A1).

The first part of the questionnaire collects demographic and background information from respondents, including gender, age (below 60, 60-65, 66-70, 71-75, and above 75), content creation status, educational level, daily social media usage time, preferred social media platforms, and geographical region (south-east, north-west, or north-central China). This section aids in analyzing the data about different demographic groups and their specific behaviors or preferences related to social media and bridge employment.

**Table 1.** Demographics

Characteristics		Frequency	Percent	
Gender	Male	372	49.1	
	Female	385	50.9	
Age	60-65 years	224	29.6	
	66-70 years	230	30.4	
	71-75 years	237	31.3	
	Above 75 years	66	8.7	
Education Level	Junior high school and below	88	11.6	
	High school	281	37.1	
	Bachelor's degree	306	40.4	
	Master's degree and above	82	10.8	
On average, how much time do you spend on social media daily?	Less than 1 hour	83	11.0	
	1-2 hours	247	32.6	
	2-4 hours	201	26.6	
	More than 4 hours	226	29.9	
Social media platforms	Douyin	Yes	622	82.2
		No	135	17.8
	Kuaishou	Yes	618	81.6
		No	139	18.4
	Bilibili	Yes	643	84.9
		No	114	15.1
	WeChat	Yes	202	26.7
		No	555	73.3
	Xiaohongshu	Yes	199	26.3
		No	558	73.7
Region	South-east China	251	33.2	
	North-west China	238	31.4	
	North-central China	268	35.4	

The second section shows how respondents' social capital – comprising the breadth and depth of their professional contacts on platforms such as Douyin – affects their ability to engage in bridge employment. It measures both the emotional and logistical support available within these networks. The third section evaluates the effectiveness of bridge employment policies offered by social media platforms, assessing areas like information dissemination and the clarity of role expectations. The fourth section assesses the influence of subjective norms, capturing perceptions of societal and familial expectations that might affect respondents' decisions regarding post-retirement employment. The fifth section explores attitudes toward bridge employment through social media, highlighting respondents' perceptions of the advantages and challenges associated with these platforms. The sixth section, perceived behavior control, gauges respondents' confidence in their abilities to utilize social media for job hunting, crucial for their active participation. The seventh section, bridge employment intention, delves into the commitment and planning stages of the respondents as they

prepare for bridge employment, linking their behavioral intentions to subjective norms and personal attitudes.

Lastly, the eighth section documents the actual behaviors of respondents engaged in bridge employment, from developing job search strategies to building professional networks and engaging with potential employers.

All items in the survey are structured using a 5-point Likert scale to ensure detailed data collection, enabling a nuanced exploration of the variables under study. The item-objective congruence (IOC) process confirms the validity and reliability of the questionnaire by assessing the alignment of each item with its intended objective, thereby guaranteeing the professionalism and relevance of the content.

After collecting data, this study conducted preliminary tests such as reliability and descriptive statistical analyses using statistical software. This stage is crucial for preparing the data for more complex examinations and ensuring that the foundation of the

analysis is robust. Subsequently, the data underwent structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to perform path analysis. This advanced analytical approach not only provides insights into the direct and indirect relationships between variables but also tests the hypothesized model of the study, confirming the theoretical constructs through empirical data. This comprehensive analytical process is vital for understanding the complex dynamics influencing the behavior of older adults engaging in bridge employment through social media.

### 3. RESULTS

Table 2 showcases the internal consistency of the constructs used in the study on bridge employment behavior among older adults, as indicated by alpha coefficients. Each construct demonstrated high reliability, surpassing the acceptable threshold of 0.7, which underscores the robustness of the measurement instruments. Notably, with twenty items, the social capital construct recorded an exceptionally high alpha of 0.961, reflecting solid internal consistency. Consistently capturing the various aspects of social capital within bridge employment across the sample is critical. Constructs related to bridge employment policies and behavior also exhibited high reliability, with alpha values of 0.895 and 0.897, respectively, suggesting good consistency and supporting their validity in assessing the relevant policies and behaviors. Other constructs such as subjective norm, attitude, perceived behavior control, and bridge employment intention showed alphas ranging from 0.845 to 0.886, indicating excellent reliability and affirming the effectiveness of the survey instruments in capturing the intended variables.

**Table 2.** Reliability statistics

Study variables	Number of questions	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Social capital	20	0.961
Bridge employment policies	7	0.895
Subjective norm	6	0.885
Attitude	5	0.860
Perceived behavior control	5	0.845
Bridge employment intention	6	0.866
Bridge employment behavior	7	0.897

Table 3 presents the results of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy

and Bartlett's (1950) test of sphericity, essential for validating the suitability of the data for factor analysis in the study of bridge employment behavior among older adults on social media platforms. The KMO value reached an impressive 0.973, far exceeding the 0.9 threshold, indicating excellent sampling adequacy and suggesting minimal partial correlations among variables. The high level of adequacy confirms that the data set is suitable for factor analysis, allowing this paper to extract significant common underlying factors from the variables effectively. Bartlett's test of sphericity also supports this finding with a chi-square value of 25798.399, degrees of freedom at 1540, and a significance level below 0.001. These results robustly reject the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix, indicating substantial correlations among the variables suitable for reliable factor analysis.

**Table 3.** KMO and Bartlett's test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy		.973
Bartlett's test of sphericity	Approx. chi-square	25798.399
	df	1540
	Sig.	.000

Table 4 discusses convergent validity through confirmatory factor analysis, utilizing factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) to evaluate the integrity of each latent variable. The factor loadings for all indicators within constructs, such as social capital, bridge employment policies, subjective norm, attitude, perceived behavior control, bridge employment intention, and bridge employment behavior, consistently exceed the 0.7 thresholds, illustrating solid correlations with their corresponding latent variables. The high CR values for all constructs indicate that the indicators effectively measure the intended constructs. Furthermore, CR values for all constructs exceed the 0.7 benchmarks, highlighting their reliability and internal consistency among the indicators. The AVE values surpass the 0.5 minimum, indicating that the latent constructs account for a significant portion of the variance in the indicators. This high level of explained variance confirms the constructs' convergent validity, affirming that the model successfully captures the intended phenomena.

Table 5 delves into discriminant validity, which ensures that distinct constructs within the struc-



**Table 4.** Convergence validity

Latent variables	Observation indicators	Factor loading	CR	AVE
Social capital	SC1	0.768	0.961	0.576
	SC2	0.771		
	SC3	0.724		
	SC4	0.749		
	SC5	0.767		
	SC6	0.770		
	SC7	0.755		
	SC8	0.780		
	SC9	0.782		
	SC10	0.777		
	SC11	0.751		
	SC12	0.766		
	SC13	0.769		
	SC14	0.780		
	SC15	0.737		
	SC16	0.742		
	SC17	0.719		
	SC18	0.741		
	SC19	0.787		
	Bridge employment policies	SC20		
BEP1		0.770		
BEP2		0.782		
BEP3		0.797		
BEP4		0.772		
BEP5		0.785		
BEP6		0.774		
BEP7		0.806		
Subjective norm	SN1	0.791	0.885	0.636
	SN2	0.784		
	SN3	0.799		
	SN4	0.811		
	SN5	0.788		
	SN6	0.810		
Attitude	AT1	0.801	0.860	0.642
	AT2	0.778		
	AT3	0.843		
	AT4	0.809		
	AT5	0.772		
Perceived behavior control	PC1	0.800	0.845	0.618
	PC2	0.790		
	PC3	0.777		
	PC4	0.799		
	PC5	0.762		
Bridge employment intention	BI1	0.792	0.867	0.600
	BI2	0.754		
	BI3	0.781		
	BI4	0.792		
	BI5	0.770		
	BI6	0.758		
Bridge employment behavior	BB1	0.799	0.897	0.617
	BB2	0.786		
	BB3	0.779		
	BB4	0.783		
	BB5	0.773		
	BB6	0.798		
	BB7	0.782		

**Table 5.** Discriminant validity test

Latent variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Social capital	0.759						
Bridge employment policies	0.697	0.784					
Subjective norm	0.609	0.632	0.797				
Attitude	0.585	0.572	0.533	0.801			
Perceived behavior control	0.632	0.63	0.555	0.572	0.786		
Bridge employment intention	0.619	0.608	0.61	0.607	0.599	0.775	
Bridge employment behavior	0.557	0.544	0.569	0.535	0.557	0.542	0.785

Note: The diagonal is the square root of the corresponding dimension AVE.

tural equation model are uniquely defined and not merely reflections of one another. This study establishes discriminant validity by ensuring that the square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct, shown along the diagonal of the validity matrix, exceeds the correlations between constructs, which appear off-diagonal. This condition is met across all constructs, indicating discriminant solid validity. For example, the diagonal values such as 0.759 for social capital, 0.784 for bridge employment policies, and 0.785 for bridge employment behavior significantly surpass the inter-construct correlation coefficients, confirming that each construct uniquely captures more variance with its indicators than it shares with other constructs. This clear differentiation, mainly seen in constructs like a subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavior control – with high AVEs indicating robust correlations with their respective indicators – validates the theoretical relationships posited in the model.

Table 6 evaluates the explanatory and predictive capabilities of the structural model through  $R^2$  and  $Q^2$  values for each construct. The  $R^2$  values measure the proportion of variance in the dependent variables explained by the independent variables, indicating the model's explanatory power. Bridge employment intention demonstrates the highest explanatory power with an  $R^2$  value of 0.458, signifying that the model well-captured a significant portion of the variance in this construct. Perceived behavior control and subjective norm closely follow, with  $R^2$  values of 0.381 and 0.386, respectively, confirming their substantial explanatory relevance within the model's framework. This study calculates  $Q^2$  values using the Stone-Geisser test criterion through a blindfolding procedure to assess the model's predictive relevance. All constructs

display positive  $Q^2$  values, affirming that the model successfully predicts the observed data. Notably, perceived behavior control and bridge employment intention exhibit satisfactory predictive power with  $Q^2$  values of 0.375 and 0.363, respectively.

**Table 6.** Reliability statistics

Study variables	$R^2$	$Q^2$
Subjective norm	0.386	0.379
Attitude	0.327	0.320
Perceived behavior control	0.381	0.375
Bridge employment intention	0.458	0.363
Bridge employment behavior	0.230	0.237

Table 7 and Figure 2 detail the path analysis outcomes from the structural equation modeling used to assess the direct effects within the model concerning bridge employment behavior among older adults on social media. The analysis effectively confirms all hypothesized paths, demonstrating robust and statistically significant relationships across the constructs. Social capital significantly affects bridge employment intention, subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavior control, with path coefficients ranging from 0.183 to 0.370, all statistically significant, validating the influence of social capital on perceptions and intentions associated with bridge employment. Additionally, bridge employment policies exert marked positive effects on subjective norms, attitude, perceived behavior control, and directly on bridge employment intention, with coefficients ranging from 0.123 to 0.344. The finding that effectively structured policies significantly influence the psychological framework underpinning employment intentions among older adults indicates their importance in shaping these intentions.

Moreover, the path analysis shows direct solid effects of subjective norm, attitude, and perceived

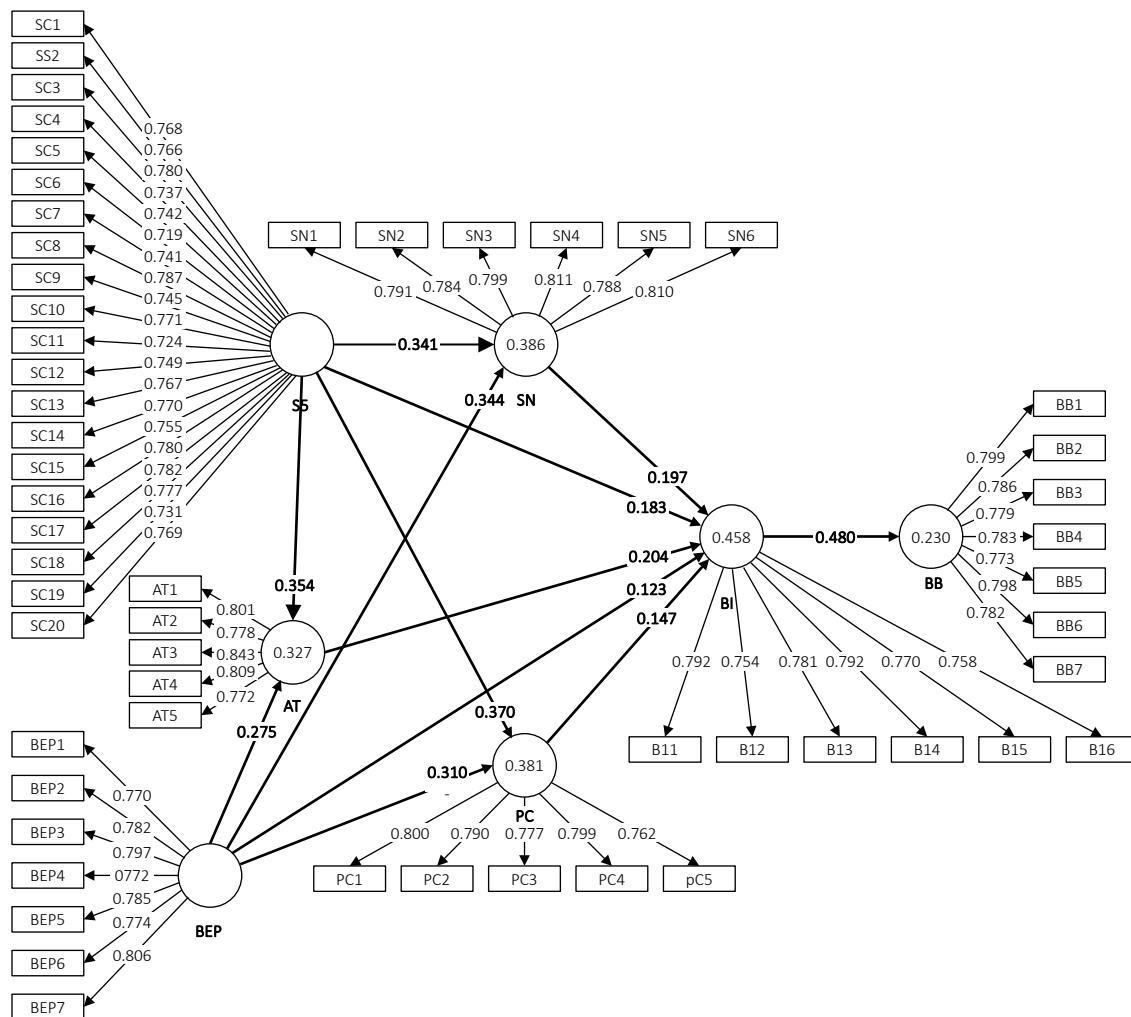
**Table 7.** Structural equation model

Hypothesis	Path $\beta$	$\beta$	SE.	T	P	Results
H1	SC → BI	0.183	0.064	2.865	0.004	Supported
H2	SC → SN	0.341	0.052	6.527	0	Supported
H3	SC → AT	0.354	0.054	6.555	0	Supported
H4	SC → PC	0.370	0.054	6.910	0	Supported
H5	BEP → SN	0.344	0.052	6.556	0	Supported
H6	BEP → AT	0.275	0.052	5.253	0	Supported
H7	BEP → PC	0.310	0.052	5.973	0	Supported
H8	BEP → BI	0.123	0.057	2.158	0.031	Supported
H9	SN → BI	0.197	0.056	3.533	0	Supported
H10	AT → BI	0.204	0.052	3.953	0	Supported
H11	PC → BI	0.147	0.050	2.920	0.004	Supported
H12	BI → BB	0.480	0.036	13.180	0	Supported

Note: SC: Social capital; BEP: Bridge employment policies; SN: Subjective norm; AT: Attitude; PC: Perceived behavior control; BI: Bridge employment intention; BB: Bridge employment behavior.

behavior control on bridge employment intention with coefficients of 0.197, 0.204, and 0.147, respectively, highlighting their role in shaping intentions to engage in bridge employment. Notably, the most potent direct effect is observed from bridging em-

ployment intention to behavior with a coefficient of 0.480, underscoring the pivotal role of intention in translating into actual employment behaviors. The analysis, supported by high *T*-values and low *p*-values, solidifies the theoretical framework pro-



**Figure 2.** SmartPLS output of SEM

**Table 8.** Bootstrap test of mediation effect

Hypothesis	Mediation path	Effect size	SE	Bias-Corrected		Results
				95%CI		
H13	SC → SN → BI	0.067	0.021	0.032	0.111	Supported
H14	BEP → SN → BI	0.068	0.021	0.031	0.110	Supported
H15	SC → AT → BI	0.072	0.021	0.034	0.115	Supported
H16	BEP → AT → BI	0.056	0.018	0.023	0.093	Supported
H17	SC → PC → BI	0.055	0.020	0.014	0.098	Supported
H18	BEP → PC → BI	0.046	0.019	0.013	0.085	Supported
H19	SC → BI → BB	0.088	0.031	0.030	0.152	Supported
H20	SN → BI → BB	0.095	0.027	0.047	0.153	Supported
H21	AT → BI → BB	0.098	0.026	0.049	0.150	Supported
H22	PC → BI → BB	0.071	0.026	0.020	0.121	Supported
H23	BEP → BI → BB	0.059	0.028	0.005	0.112	Supported

Note: SC: Social capital; BEP: Bridge employment policies; SN: Subjective norm; AT: Attitude; PC: Perceived behavior control; BI: Bridge employment intention; BB: Bridge employment behavior.

posed, offering a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics driving bridge employment among older adults in social media environments.

Table 8 explores the indirect effects within the structural model of the study, assessing how different constructs mediate the influence of social capital (SC) and bridge employment policies (BEP) on bridge employment intention (BI) and behavior (BB) among older adults on social media. The bootstrap test of mediation effect reveals significant mediation pathways where subjective norm (SN), attitude (AT), and perceived behavior control (PC) act as intermediaries. The analysis shows effect sizes ranging from 0.046 to 0.095, with powerful mediation observed for the path from social capital through attitude to bridge employment intention (SC → AT → BI), which has an effect size of 0.072 and a confidence interval that does not cross zero, indicating significant mediation. Similarly, bridge employment policies (BEP → SN → BI) also show a notable mediation effect with an effect size of 0.068. Extending this analysis to bridge employment behavior (BB), the results indicate that bridge employment intention serves as a pivotal mediator in transmitting effects from the initial constructs to behavior, underscoring the substantial role of psychosocial channels in influencing the employment behavior of older adults. This robust support for indirect effects highlights the complex interplay of social capital and policy settings in shaping the employment activities of older adults within digital platforms.

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study employs structural equation modeling (SEM) and partial least squares path modeling (PLS-PM) to investigate the factors influencing bridge employment behavior among older adults on social media platforms. The paper utilizes social capital and technology acceptance model theories to examine the relationships among variables such as social capital, subjective norms, attitudes, perceived behavior control, and employment intention. The results reveal the mediating roles of attitude and perceived behavior control and the moderating role of a subjective norm in the relationship between social capital and bridge employment behavior. Specifically, the study highlights the pivotal role of social capital in enhancing bridge employment intentions, underscoring its significance in promoting active aging and participation in the digital economy. This investigation addresses gaps in understanding the dynamics of older adults' engagement in the digital workforce and the effects of policy measures designed to support such engagement.

This study significantly contributes to the theoretical landscape by delineating how social media influences bridge employment behaviors among older adults, integrating insights from several contemporary studies to offer a multifaceted view. The analysis draws on the findings of Wilson-Nash et al. (2023) to illustrate how enhanced service quality on social media platforms can significantly affect user identification and satisfaction,

which is pivotal for the active participation of older adults in the digital workforce. Moreover, Rostamzadeh et al. (2024) provide insights into the strategic benefits of social CRM capabilities that facilitate relationship management on digital platforms, enriching the understanding of how older adults can leverage these tools for professional networking and employment.

Additionally, Kim et al. (2024) underscored the potential of digital interventions to improve cognitive functions in older adults, supporting their sustained engagement in complex professional tasks online. Gambetti and Biraghi (2023) complement this by challenging prevailing narratives around the divisive effects of social media, suggesting its capacity to foster community and connectivity instead. These theoretical insights are crucial as they propose a model where social media acts as a tool for professional engagement and a supportive environment that enhances the social and cognitive aspects of older adults' lives. Thus, the theoretical contributions of this study extend beyond the immediate context of employment, suggesting broader implications for digital literacy, social inclusion, and cognitive health in aging populations, providing a robust framework for future research and policy development in the digital economy.

This study extends significantly to technical personnel, platform operators, and product designers targeting the senior market. For technical personnel, the paper underscores the necessity of developing more intuitive and accessible social media platforms tailored for older adults. Given the high engagement levels on platforms like Douyin and Bilibili among seniors, designing user interfaces that consider age-related cognitive and physical limitations is essential. Implementing features like larger text, voice commands, and simplified navigation can enhance usability and encourage continued engagement among older users. Moreover, incorporating adaptive technologies that adjust to the varying tech-savviness of senior users can help bridge the digital divide and make these platforms more inclusive.

For platform operators, the findings highlight the importance of creating a supportive and

engaging online environment that caters to the unique needs of older adults. The strategy includes curating relevant and appealing content for this demographic, providing opportunities for social interaction and community building, and ensuring robust privacy and security measures to protect older users. Additionally, offering targeted educational programs that help seniors navigate and utilize social media more effectively can boost their confidence and participation in digital activities. Product designers in the senior market can leverage these insights to create innovative solutions that enhance the online experience for older adults. The strategy includes developing products that integrate seamlessly with popular social media platforms and address specific needs such as health monitoring, lifelong learning, and social connectivity. By focusing on user-centered design principles and engaging directly with older adults during product development, designers can create more effective and appealing products that support the well-being and digital inclusion of the senior population.

However, this study has limitations that pave the way for future research. This study predominantly drew the sample from older adults active on specific social media platforms, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or countries. Future research could broaden the demographic scope to include diverse populations and settings to enhance the external validity of the results. Additionally, while this study highlights the mediating role of subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavioral control, it does not explore other potential mediators or moderators, such as technological literacy, socio-economic status, or digital anxiety. Further exploration of these aspects could provide a more holistic understanding of the dynamic factors influencing bridge employment. Longitudinal studies could also assess the long-term impacts and sustainability of bridge employment initiatives, offering more profound insights into their effectiveness and areas for improvement. By addressing these limitations, future research can contribute to a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the factors that drive bridge employment behavior among older adults in the digital age.

## CONCLUSION

This study aims to explore the factors influencing bridge employment behavior among older adults on social media platforms. The results indicate the importance of developing supportive policies and designing accessible digital platforms to enhance older adults' participation in post-retirement employment. Additionally, the analysis provides practical insights for technology professionals, platform developers, and product designers targeting the older adult market, emphasizing the need to improve digital literacy and access to technology.

This study significantly contributes to the academic discourse by expanding social capital theory and bridge employment policy models, providing crucial theoretical and practical insights into the factors influencing bridge employment behavior among older adults on social media platforms. It confirms the significant relationships between social capital, bridge employment policies, subjective norms, attitude, perceived behavioral control, bridge employment intention, and bridge employment behavior, emphasizing the critical role of these perceptions in fostering acceptance and sustained engagement in bridge employment. This study highlights the mediating effects of subjective norm, attitude, and perceived behavioral control on bridge employment intention, showcasing how these variables enhance understanding of the pathways through which social capital and employment policies impact older adults' employment behaviors. The findings underscore the importance of these variables in enhancing the effectiveness of bridge employment initiatives, offering valuable information to policymakers, technologists, platform operators, and designers of products targeting the elderly market. These insights are essential for those striving to address the challenges of digital inclusion and economic engagement of older adults, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms that drive their participation in the digital economy.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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## APPENDIX A

**Table A1. Measurement scale**

Construct	Items	Source
Social capital	SC1. I have a wide network of professional contacts on Douyin.	Xiao et al. (2020)
	SC2. My social media networks encompass various individuals, including colleagues, industry peers, and professionals.	
	SC3. I trust many of my social media connections for professional advice and support.	
	SC4. Among my social media connections, a considerable number are trusted colleagues or industry peers.	
	SC5. My social media connections are well-connected and can introduce me to new job opportunities.	
	SC6. Most people in my social media network hold professional or managerial positions.	
	SC7. Many social media contacts express willingness to assist me in my job search when asked.	
	SC8. I find that friends I have made through social media are ready to offer support for my professional endeavors.	
	SC9. Social media platforms provide access to numerous professional and leisure groups that align with my interests.	
	SC10. Social media exposes me to various professional, political, and social groups relevant to my job search.	
	SC11. Many groups and organizations I belong to on social media possess broad social and professional networks.	
	SC12. The cultural, recreational, and leisure groups I follow on social media represent my professional and personal interests.	
	SC13. Governmental, political, economic, and social groups on social media align with my professional interests.	
	SC14. Social media groups focused on employment and professional development are willing to offer assistance when approached.	
	SC15. Cultural and leisure groups on social media provide support and resources relevant to my bridge employment goals.	
	SC16. It is important to my self-respect that my family supports my efforts in social media employment.	
	SC17. My sense of self-worth increases when my family members are proud of my achievements as a social media anchor.	
	SC18. Knowing that my family members support my digital engagement makes me feel good about myself.	
	SC19. My self-esteem decreases when I do not feel supported by my family on social media.	
	SC20. I do not let the quality of my family's support for my social media activities influence my self-worth.	
Bridge employment policies	BEP1. Douyin widely disseminates information about opportunities for older adults to engage as hosts.	Madera et al. (2023)
	BEP2. Douyin provides information to older applicants regarding the steps and criteria for becoming a social media host.	
	BEP3. Douyin communicates feedback to older hosts about their performance after selection trials or evaluations.	
	BEP4. Douyin treats older hosts with respect and attention.	
	BEP5. Douyin offers older hosts benefits such as flexible scheduling and technical support.	
	BEP6. Douyin discusses performance appraisal criteria relevant to social media hosting and provides results to older hosts.	
	BEP7. In Douyin, performance appraisals for social media hosting form the basis for developing plans to enhance the skills of older hosts.	
Subjective norm	SN1. My closest family members believe I should explore bridge employment opportunities through social media.	Shah et al. (2021)
	SN2. My closest friends supported my pursuit of employment via social media during my post-retirement years.	
	SN3. People who are important to me endorse utilizing social media to find employment opportunities after retirement.	
	SN4. In my society, seeking employment through social media is acceptable for older adults.	
	SN5. The cultural milieu in my country is supportive of older adults engaging in digital platforms for employment purposes.	
	SN6. The role of older adults in the economy, particularly through bridge employment facilitated by social media, is valued in my country.	

Construct	Items	Source
Attitudes	AT1.If I have the opportunity and the necessary resources, I would seek employment through social media.	Boubker et al. (2021)
	AT2.Among different options, I prefer to use social media to bridge employment.	
	AT3.Finding employment through social media would bring great satisfaction to me.	
	AT4.A career pursued through opportunities found on social media is attractive to me.	
	AT5.Seeking employment via social media has more advantages for me.	
Perceived behavior control	PC1.I am prepared to use social media effectively to search for employment opportunities.	Miralles et al. (2016)
	PC2.I can control the process of finding employment through social media.	
	PC3.I know the necessary practical details to find jobs on social media platforms successfully.	
	PC4.I know how to develop a professional profile and network on social media that can lead to employment.	
	PC5.If I tried to find employment via social media, I believe there would be a high probability of success.	
Bridge employment intention	BI1.I am ready to leverage any necessary resources to find employment through social media.	Boubker et al. (2021)
	BI2.My professional goal is to successfully engage in bridge employment via social media.	
	BI3.I will make every effort to utilize social media to find employment opportunities.	
	BI4.I am determined to use social media as a key tool in my job search strategy in the future.	
	BI5.I have seriously considered using social media to find employment post-retirement.	
	BI6.I firmly intend to rely on social media platforms for employment opportunities someday.	
Bridge employment behavior	BB1.I have developed a strategy for using social media in my job search.	Farooq et al. (2018)
	BB2.I have built a network of professional contacts on social media platforms relevant to my job search.	
	BB3.I know where to find job listings and opportunities on social media.	
	BB4.I have already acquired the necessary tools and resources to use social media for employment.	
	BB5.I have identified the types of roles or industries I am interested in pursuing via social media.	
	BB6.I have researched potential employers and market trends relevant to my job search on social media.	
	BB7.I have devoted significant time to utilizing social media for my employment search.	