The Mechanism of the Effect of Digital Hoarding Behaviors in Social Media Environment on Psychological Resource Depletion

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Abstract. In the digital age where social media is deeply integrated, the widespread digital hoarding behavior among users (such as unrestrained preservation of digital content) can contribute to the depletion of psychological resources (including cognitive distraction and emotional exhaustion) due to the consumption of cognitive resources and the accumulation of emotional stress, making it a key issue in the research of digital mental health. Based on the resource conservation theory, this study constructs a mediating model of "digital hoarding -information overload-psychological resource depletion", introduces psychological resilience as a moderating variable, and verifies the variable relationships through regression analysis to reveal the mechanism by which digital hoarding affects psychological resource depletion. The research findings indicate that digital hoarding significantly and positively predicts psychological resource depletion ($B = 0.064$, $p < 0.01$), directly intensifying psychological load; information overload plays a mediating role between the two ($B = 0.064$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that digital hoarding indirectly leads to psychological exhaustion by triggering information overload; the moderating effect of psychological resilience is not significant (interaction term $p > 0.05$), and it fails to effectively buffer the negative impact of digital hoarding. By integrating multidisciplinary theories and empirical methodologies, this study not only addresses the theoretical gap in the "behavior-cognition-psychology" linkage mechanism but also provides users with digital behavior management strategies (such as optimizing information filtering and targeted enhancement of psychological resilience), thereby alleviating psychological stress induced by digital hoarding. This research holds significant practical value for fostering sustainable digital lifestyles.

Keywords: digital hoarding behavior, psychological resource depletion, information overload, psychological resilience, social media.

1. Introduction

The digital technology revolution has profoundly changed the cognitive and behavioral patterns of human beings. Digital platforms such as social media have accelerated the transformation of

information production and consumption, with the daily output of content by users increasing significantly. The resulting excessive collection, repeated storage, and redundant recording of digital data have become a typical phenomenon in digital existence [1].This behavioral pattern not only reflects the deep psychological aspects of the interaction between technology and individual data, but also, in the context of widespread cognitive overload and information anxiety, prompts the academic community to pay attention to the mechanism of the balance between digital behavior and psychological resources. Digital hoarding may lead to psychological resource depletion due to excessive consumption of cognitive resources and accumulation of emotional stress, manifested as distraction of attention, decision fatigue, and emotional exhaustion [1]. The resource conservation theory suggests that behaviors that involve excessive collection and difficulty in discarding continuously consume resources are prone to causing psychological exhaustion [2,3]. Psychological resilience is a key ability in coping with stress, and it can mitigate the bad sides of digital hoarding through modulating cognitive and affective reactions [4]. Currently, Related studies have conducted preliminary investigations into the association between digital information hoarding and psychological stress. However, the mediating effect of information overload in the "digital hoarding-psychological resource depletion" pathway and the moderating mechanism of psychological resilience throughout the process have not been fully analyzed, and there are research gaps in this area.

This study proposes a mediating model centered on "digital hoarding behavior - information overload-psychological resource depletion" and incorporates psychological resilience as a moderator to illuminate the dynamic process of psychological resource depletion formation. The study centers on three key dimensions: exploring direct impacts of digital hoarding behavior on psychological resource depletion, investigating the mediating influence of information overload and analyzing the moderating function of psychological resilience

Specifically, it is necessary to clarify whether excessive storage of digital content directly aggravates psychological load, explore whether massive unprocessed information is a key transmission link, and analyze whether individuals with high psychological resilience can weaken the negative impact of hoarding by enhancing their stress coping ability.

In the era of information explosion, clarifying the mechanism by which digital hoarding affects psychological resources is a critical access point for exploring the interplay between behavior as well as psychology in the digital era, and it is also a necessary exploration for maintaining individual mental health. This research is expected to fill the theoretical gap in the "behavior - cognition - psychology" correlation, provide a solution to the problem of "digital dependence - psychological exhaustion" that is both theoretically profound and of practical value, and lay the foundation for building a sustainable digital lifestyle.

2. Research design

A questionnaire survey methodology was utilized in this study, coupled with structural equation modeling (SEM) to examine the mechanism by which digital information hoarding within social media contexts affects psychological resource depletion. Information overload was introduced as a mediating variable, and psychological resilience was introduced as a moderating variable. The mediating effect and moderating effect of these two variables were verified. The subjects of this study were Chinese users who used social media. Eventually, 532 valid samples were collected through an online questionnaire. Meanwhile, to eliminate the influence of statistical factors, this study included the user's gender as a moderating variable for consideration. After conducting

variance analysis and regression analysis, it was found that the gender factor did not significantly affect the paths between the variables in the model. Therefore, its interference can be excluded.

2.1. Variable explanation

This study focuses on the relationship between the independent variable - digital hoarding behavior and the dependent variable - psychological resource depletion and introduces the mediating variable-information overload and the possible moderating variable-psychological resilience to conduct a more in-depth exploration [1, 5].

Digital hoarding behavior refers to the behavior where an individual excessively collects and stores digital content (such as photos, articles, videos) and finds it difficult to delete. The specific manifestations include long-term inactivity of the favorites list, repeated backup of files, and overloaded storage space, etc [1].. This behavior is measured using the "Digital Hoarding Questionnaire - 7" version, which consists of three dimensions: emotional attachment, information anxiety, and difficulty in cleaning up.

Psychological resource depletion refers to the situation where, when individuals are confronted with stress and challenges, the psychological resources they have available for coping and recovery (such as self-control, emotional regulation ability, attention, etc.) decrease or become exhausted [2, 3]. Based on relevant theories, this study measured the psychological load issue in the context of media behavior research using the SRF-S (Self-Regulatory Fatigue Scale), which covers three resource dimensions: emotional fatigue, cognitive fatigue, and self-control depletion [6].

Information overload is defined as the stress and stress state experienced by an individual when exposed to more information than their processing capacity allows [5]. In the study, the Information Overload Scale-3 was used to measure it, in order to assess the degree of information overload that an individual feels when confronted with a large amount of digital information [7].

Psychological resilience is the moderate variable in this study. It refers to the ability of an individual to adapt well and recover from negative events such as adversity, trauma, tragedy, threat or significant stress, and is a psychological trait for positively coping with pressure and setbacks [8]. The Psychological Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-2) was used to measure this ability of individuals [9].

2.2. Research assumption

This study constructs an analytical framework based on multiple disciplinary theories to systematically explain the internal mechanism by which digital hoarding behavior leads to psychological resource depletion.

As an important paradigm in the field of information behavior research, the I-PACE theoretical model provides an analytical dimension that integrates user characteristics, emotional experiences, cognitive control, and behavioral performance - individual psychological resilience differences (user characteristics) affect the management ability of digital hoarding behavior, information anxiety and other emotional experiences drive the tendency to hoard, self-efficacy and other cognitive control factors regulate the intensity of the behavior, and the results of the hoarding behavior in turn interact with the emotional and cognitive processes, possibly triggering emotional exhaustion and cognitive fatigue [10-12].

The resource conservation theory further explains the core logic of the dynamic changes of psychological resources. Individuals instinctively protect their core resources, including psychological energy. Excessive digital hoarding leads to continuous behaviors of information

acquisition, organization, and storage, which continuously consume limited psychological resources. When the resource depletion exceeds the recovery capacity, they will fall into a state of psychological resource exhaustion such as distraction and decision fatigue [4].

The information overload theory reveals the key mediating path-the combination of the information explosion and hoarding behavior in the social media environment causes the amount of information received by individuals to exceed the cognitive processing threshold, leading to overload of the brain's information processing system. This triggers a stress response, accelerating the consumption of psychological resources [7].

The theories of psychological resilience and stress coping jointly form the theoretical basis for the regulatory mechanism. Psychological resilience, as the core adaptive resource of an individual, determines the adaptability to digital hoarding stress - highly resilient individuals can effectively mobilize internal cognitive resources and external support systems to buffer the erosion of information overload on psychological resources; while low-resilience individuals may exacerbate resource depletion due to an imbalance in coping strategies (such as excessive reliance on negative coping strategies that focus on emotions) [8].

These theories jointly constructed the main effect path of "digital hoarding behavior-information overload-psychological resource depletion" and the analysis framework of psychological resilience's moderating effect in the stress response process, providing a solid theoretical basis for the formulation of research hypotheses [1, 8].

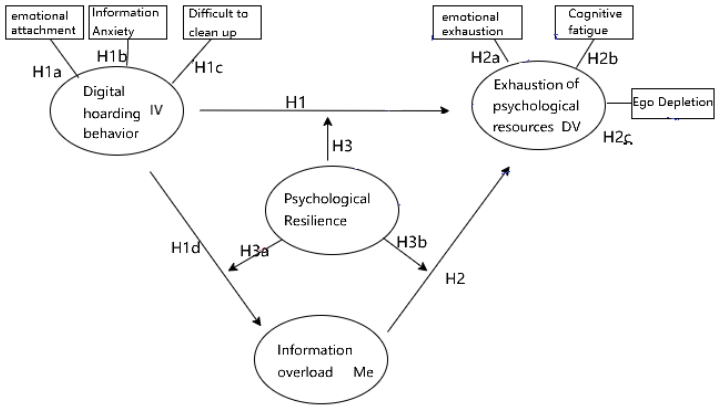

Figure 1. Theoretical model of digital hoarding behaviors, information overload, psychological resilience, and psychological resource depletion with hypotheses

As shown in Figure 1, this study constructs a theoretical model around digital hoarding behavior (IV), information overload (Me), psychological resilience (moderator variable), and psychological resource depletion (DV; including emotional exhaustion, cognitive fatigue, and self-control depletion dimensions), and proposes the following hypotheses.

H1: Digital hoarding behaviors (including dimensions of emotional attachment, information anxiety, and difficulty in disposal) positively affects psychological resource depletion. From a theoretical perspective, digital hoarding, as a user behavior, directly exacerbates psychological resource depletion through the resource conservation theory (which consumes psychological resources), the information overload theory (which triggers overload and consumes resources), and the theory of psychological resilience and stress coping (individuals with low resilience have greater difficulty coping) [13-15].

H2: Information overload acts as a mediator between digital hoarding behaviors and psychological resource depletion (H1d). Digital hoarding leads to information overload, increasing the burden on the brain, consuming emotional, cognitive and other psychological resources, resulting in a decline in self-control ability, and ultimately exacerbating depletion (in terms of emotional, cognitive and self-control dimensions), which is in line with the mediating path of the information overload theory and the I-PACE theory.

H3: Psychological resilience positively moderates the relationship between digital hoarding behaviors and psychological resource depletion (including indirect moderation of H1d and H2). Individuals with high psychological resilience can effectively utilize resources for adaptation and recovery, reduce information overload, make reasonable choices in coping strategies, and lower resource consumption; conversely, individuals with low resilience behave differently, which is based on the psychological resilience theory and the stress coping theory [8, 16].

3. Results

Table 1. Results of correlation tests among variables

	Mean	SD	Psychological Resource Depletion	Digital Hoarding	Information Overload	Resilience
Psychological Resource Depletion	2.808	0.429	1			
Digital Hoarding	4.898	1.349	0.202**	1		
Information Overload	5.905	2.056	0.307**	0.685**	1	
Resilience	2.752	0.959	-0.156**	0.407**	0.311**	1

* p<0.05 ** p<0.01

This study used Pearson correlation analysis to verify the research hypothesis preliminarily. The results, as shown in Table 1, showed a considerable positive correlation between digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion ($r=0.202$, $p<0.001$), supporting the hypothesis that in the social media environment, digital hoarding behavior positively impacts psychological resource depletion. This suggests that individuals who excessively store digital content due to emotional dependence, hoard impulses caused by information anxiety or accumulate digital resources due to difficulties in clearing may exacerbate emotional exhaustion, cognitive fatigue, and self-control loss. A significant positive correlation exists between information overload and psychological resource depletion ($r=0.307$, $p<0.001$), providing preliminary evidence for the mediating role of information overload. The information redundancy and processing pressure caused by digital hoarding behavior may indirectly exacerbate psychological resource depletion by leading to emotional exhaustion, cognitive fatigue, and loss of self-control. In addition, psychological resilience is highly negatively correlated with psychological resource depletion ($r=-0.156$, $p<0.001$), which preliminarily confirms that psychological resilience, as a core indicator of individual psychological resilience, can effectively buffer the resource depletion caused by digital hoarding and information overload, setting the tone for the subsequent construction of the "digital hoarding information overload psychological resource depletion" theoretical model and verification of the moderating effect of psychological resilience.

Table 2. Results of regression analysis for digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	B	Standard Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant Number	2.492	0.069	-	36.252	0.000**	-	-
Digital Hoarding	0.064	0.014	0.202	4.758	0.000**	1.000	1.000
R^2	0.041						
Adjust R^2	0.039						
F	F (1,530) =22.635, p=0.000						
D-W	2.095						
Note: Dependent Variable = Psychological Source Depletion *p<0.05** p<0.01							

Table 2 analyzes the linear relationship between digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion. In the regression model, the standardized coefficient of digital hoarding is 0.202. After considering the standardized scales of all variables, for every unit increase in the degree of digital hoarding behavior, the degree of psychological resource depletion will correspondingly increase by 0.202 units. A high t-value indicates that the independent variable of numerical hoarding has strong explanatory power in the regression model, while an extremely low p-value further confirms that this relationship is not accidental and has statistical significance. From this, it can be seen that the higher the degree of digital hoarding behavior, the deeper the depletion of psychological resources. Hypothesis H1 holds.

Table 3. Results of regression analysis for digital hoarding and information overload

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	B	Standard Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant Number	0.791	0.245	-	3.227	0.001**	-	-
Digital Hoarding	1.044	0.048	0.685	21.643	0.000**	1.000	1.000
R^2	0.469						
Adjust R^2	0.468						
F	F (1,530) =468.412, p=0.000						
D-W	1.847						
Note: Dependent Variable = Information Overload *p<0.05** p<0.01							

Table 3 shows the linear relationship between digital hoarding and information overload of mediator variables. As shown in Table 3, in this regression model, the statistical indicators of the numerical hoarding variable exhibit clear directionality. The standardized coefficient of this variable is 0.685, demonstrating the strength of the effect of digital hoarding on information overload throughout the model. The t-value is 21.643, far exceeding the general testing standard, which fully demonstrates the strong explanatory power of numerical hoarding in the model for information overload, indicating that the relationship between the two is not random or accidental. From this, it can be clarified that there is a significant positive relationship between the degree of digital hoarding

behavior and the degree of information overload. The higher the degree of digital hoarding behavior, the deeper the degree of information overload, which strongly verifies hypothesis H1d.

Table 4. Results of regression analysis for information overload and psychological resource depletion

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	p	Collinearity Diagnostics	
	B	Standard Error	Beta			VIF	Tolerance
Constant Number	2.429	0.054	-	45.035	0.000**	-	-
Digital Hoarding	0.064	0.009	0.307	7.428	0.000**	1.000	1.000
R^2	0.094						
Adjust R^2	0.093						
F	F (1,530) =55.175, p=0.000						
D-W	2.127						
Note: Dependent Variable = Psychological Source Depletion *p<0.05** p<0.01							

Using the same analytical approach, this article found that hypothesis H2 also received solid empirical support. In Table 4, the results of regression analysis show that information overload, as the independent variable, has a standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.307 and a t-value of 7.428. From a numerical perspective, the standardized coefficient of 0.307 demonstrates the relative effect of information overload on psychological resource depletion. A high t-value indicates that information overload has a strong explanatory power for the dependent variable psychological resource depletion in the regression model, suggesting that the relationship between information overload and psychological resource depletion is not randomly generated. In summary, there is a significant positive relationship between the degree of information overload and the degree of psychological resource depletion, that is, the higher the degree of information overload, the deeper the degree of psychological resource depletion. Hypothesis H2 holds true.

Table 5. Results of regression analysis for the moderating effect of psychological resilience on digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion

	Model 1					Model 2				
	B	Standard Error	t	p	β	B	Standard Error	t	p	β
Constant Number	2.808	0.018	153.930	0.000**	-	2.808	0.018	159.572	0.000**	-
Digital Hoarding	0.064	0.014	4.758	0.000**	0.202	0.101	0.014	7.098	0.000**	0.319
Resilience						-0.128	0.020	-6.369	0.000**	0.286
Digital Hoarding*Resilience										
R^2	0.041					0.109				
Adjust R^2	0.039					0.106				
F	F (1,530) =22.635, p=0.000					F (2,529) =32.442, p=0.000				
Δ R^2	0.041					0.068				
ΔF	F (1,530) =22.635, p=0.000					F (1,529) =40.562, p=0.000				

Note: Dependent Variable = Psychological Source Depletion
*p<0.05** p<0.01

Table 6. Results of regression analysis for the moderating effect of psychological resilience on digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion

	Model 3				
	B	Standard Error	t	p	β
Constant Number	2.816	0.019	149.255	0.000**	-
Digital Hoarding	0.099	0.014	6.901	0.000**	0.312
Resilience	-0.136	0.021	-6.434	0.000**	-0.303
Digital Hoarding*Resilience	-0.015	0.013	-1.192	0.234	-0.053
R^2	0.112				
Adjust R^2	0.107				
F	F (3,528) =22.120, p=0.000				
Δ R^2	0.002				
ΔF	F (1,528) =1.421, p=0.234				

Note: Dependent Variable = Psychological Source Depletion
*p<0.05** p<0.01

As shown in Table 5 and Table 6, regarding the moderating effect of psychological resilience, this article can evaluate hypothesis H3 through the results of the three regression models mentioned above. In Model 3, the moderating effect of psychological resilience on digital hoarding is examined through the inclusion of an interaction term. The non-standardized coefficient B of the interaction term is -0.015, the standard error is 0.013, the t-value is -1.192, and the p-value is 0.234 (p>0.05).

From a statistical testing perspective, a p-value greater than 0.05 means that the effect of the interaction term is not significant at the current level of significance. This suggests that contrary to hypothesis H3, psychological resilience fails to exert a moderating effect on the link between information overload and psychological resource depletion, i.e., it cannot be proven that individuals with higher psychological resilience have relatively weaker effects of information overload on psychological resource depletion. Further comparing the three models, Model 1 only includes numerical hoarding variables, Model 2 adds psychological resilience variables, and Model 3 includes interaction terms. The interaction terms in Model 3 are not significant, and from the perspective of adjusting indicators such as R-squared, the increase in interaction terms has limited improvement in the explanatory power of the model. Based on these results, it is assumed that H3 cannot be proven to hold for the time being.

Figure 2

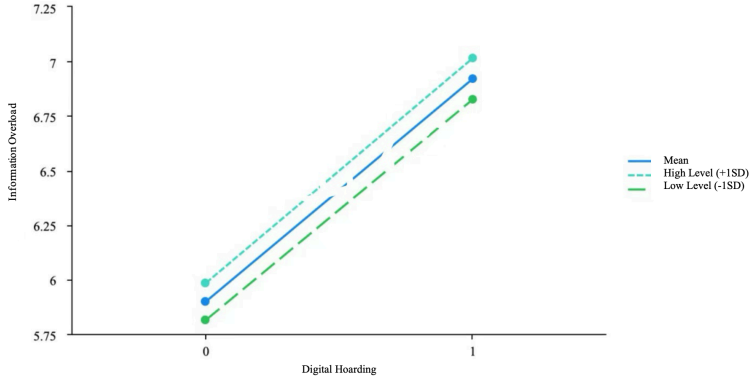

Figure 2. Simple slope plots illustrating the moderating effect of psychological resilience on digital hoarding-information overload

Figure 2

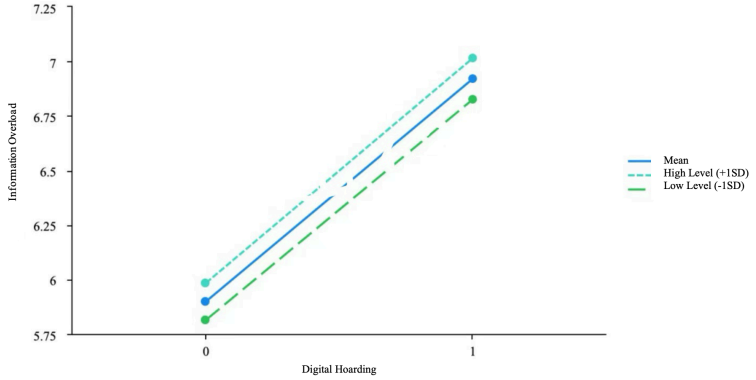

Figure 3. Simple slope Plots illustrating the moderating effect of psychological resilience on digital hoarding-psychological source depletion

Figure 4

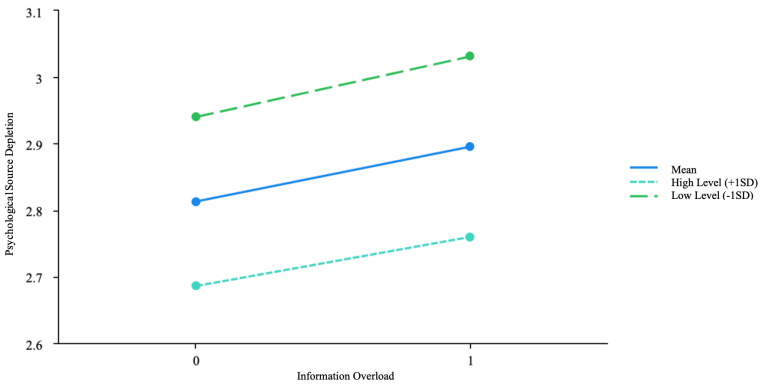

Figure 4. Simple slope plots illustrating the moderating effect of psychological resilience on information overload-psychological source depletion.

To further verify, this article produced slope plots of the correlation between digital hoarding and information overload, digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion, and information overload and psychological resource depletion at different levels of psychological resilience (average, high level+1SD, low level -1SD) (Figure 2,3,4). Observation shows that the lines representing different levels of psychological resilience in each graph tend to converge. In the relationship diagram between digital hoarding and information overload, regardless of the level of psychological resilience, the positive driving trend of digital hoarding on information overload is almost consistent, and there is no significant slope difference due to changes in psychological resilience. Within the model illustrating the link between digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion, the strength of the association between the two is not significantly affected at different levels of psychological resilience, and there is no significant difference in the high and low levels of psychological resilience regulation that should be present. The relationship diagram between information overload and psychological resource depletion is also the same, and psychological resilience has not effectively changed the degree of influence between the two. Overall, from the performance of the variable relationships presented in these three graphs at different levels of psychological resilience, it can be seen that psychological resilience does not have a significant moderate effect on the relationships between variables. Thus, the collected data indicates that psychological resilience does not exhibit a significant moderate effect on any of the three proposed research paths.

4. Discussion

Table 7. Hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Result
H1	Proven
H1d	Proven
H2	Proven
H3	Unproven
H3b	Unproven
H3c	Unproven

As shown in Table 7, the correlation analysis results show that numerical hoarding significantly positively predicts psychological resource depletion, indicating that when individuals continuously hoard information content, their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive resources are more easily consumed. This discovery suggests that social media platforms can strengthen content integration and classification prompts, reduce the psychological burden caused by the accumulation of invalid information, and thus enhance the user experience.

In addition, research has found that digital hoarding significantly increases the sense of information overload. Individuals constantly save and accumulate information content, which can easily break the threshold of their information processing and cause bottlenecks in information reception. If social media platforms fail to provide effective content management mechanisms, hoarding behavior will ultimately transform into subjective overload experiences.

The results of linear regression analysis support the predictive effect of information overload on psychological resource depletion. Receiving too much information in daily life can not only cause short-term cognitive fatigue but also lead to long-term emotional stress and behavioral distress. Especially in the social media environment, excessive information stimulation accompanied by continuous interference makes it difficult for individuals to maintain focus and leads to resource depletion fatigue.

Regarding the moderating effect of psychological resilience, the analysis results showed that none of the three regulatory pathways received statistically significant support. Namely, psychological resilience did not exhibit a moderating effect in the relationships between digital hoarding and information overload, information overload and psychological resource depletion, and digital hoarding and psychological resource depletion.

In the context of this study, there are two possibilities for the H3 hypothesis not to hold. One reason is that the sources of pressure are different. Previous studies have focused on sudden and intense social harm events, such as being ignored or rejected. This situation often directly triggers emotional exhaustion, and psychological resilience is more likely to play a "buffering effect" in it. This study focuses on digital hoarding behavior, which involves long-term, low-intensity, and gradual accumulation of information. In contrast, this type of pressure may have a higher activation threshold for psychological resilience, making its regulatory effect less likely to manifest. The second is the mechanism of psychological resilience. In this study, the intervention of psychological resilience is aimed at a chronic behavioral pattern (long-term hoarding, long-term resource consumption), in which the moderating effect of psychological resilience may be more dispersed or delayed, and not easily significant.

5. Conclusion

In summary, this study draws the following conclusions. Digital information hoarding in social media contexts can intensify the exhaustion of individual mental resources via the mechanism of information overload. While certain theories posit that psychological resilience may mitigate the adverse effects of digital hoarding on mental resources by modulating cognitive and affective pathways, this research failed to identify a substantial moderating effect within these pathways. Therefore, this study suggests that platform design should strengthen content classification and information simplification mechanisms to help users manage their digital content burden and prevent psychological resource depletion caused by digital hoarding.

While this research offers certain empirical evidence in investigating the association between digital information hoarding and mental resource depletion within social media contexts, along with the mediating effect of information overload and the moderating effect of psychological resilience, several limitations still persist. First of all, the research sample is mainly users in the Chinese Mainland, and the cultural background of the sample is relatively concentrated, which may limit the wide applicability of the research conclusions. In addition, the use of self-reported questionnaires as the main measurement method in the study is easily influenced by subjective judgments, especially in dimensions with strong privacy such as emotional exhaustion and self-control loss, where this influence is particularly significant. At the same time, psychological resilience as a moderating variable did not show significant moderating effects in this study, which may be related to stress types, individual characteristics, or high-low grouping methods.

Future research can be conducted in different countries and cultural environments to compare the characteristics, causes, and impacts of digital hoarding behavior in different cultural backgrounds, providing a basis for constructing a universal and targeted theoretical framework. In addition, to reduce the subjective influence of self-reported scales, subsequent research can combine objective indicators such as behavioral records and platform data to capture the true manifestations of psychological resource depletion from multiple dimensions and improve the reliability and effectiveness of the data. In light of the non-significant moderating role of psychological resilience identified in this research, more precise grouping methods or the introduction of other psychological regulatory variables can be attempted in the future to compare the differences in regulatory pathways and further clarify the boundary of psychological resilience in digital behavioral stress.

Authors contributions

All the authors contributed equally and their names were listed in alphabetical order.

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