

# Impact of Performance Climate on Overtime Behaviors of New Generation Employees: The Moderating Effect of Perceived Employability and Mediating Role of Job Insecurity

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**Purpose:** In the post-pandemic era, the employment environment in China has been worsening. New generation employees are faced with higher work requirements. Against the backdrop, the “involution” culture has been a mainstream culture of different walks of life. Pressure of competition brought about by “involution” has made overtime behaviors increasingly prevailing among new generation employees. In this background, this research discusses about the impact of organizational performance climate on new generation employees’ overtime behaviors as well as the role of job insecurity and perceived employability in the process.

**Patients and Methods:** The data collection is conducted in the currently popular industries. Ultimately, 348 valid questionnaires are collected. Later, the regression analysis and bootstrap methods are used to test the theoretical hypotheses.

**Results:** Organizational performance climate can promote new generation employees’ overtime behaviors; job insecurity plays a mediating role between organizational performance climate and new generation employees’ overtime behaviors; perceived employability can negatively moderate the correlation between job insecurity and overtime behaviors, and negatively moderate the mediating effect between performance climate and overtime behaviors.

**Conclusion:** Based on conservation of resources theory, this research explains the new generation employees’ overtime behaviors formation mechanism under the “involution” culture in China. These results deepen the understanding of the overtime work mechanism according to characteristics of new generation employees and post-pandemic era, which can provide theoretical support and practical guidance for a reasonable control of employees’ overtime behaviors under the “involution” culture.

**Keywords:** new generation employees, overtime behaviors, performance climate, perceived employability, job insecurity

## Introduction

Overtime has been a major issue for long time around the world. Only globally in 2016, 488 million people worked more than 55 hours one week.<sup>1</sup> In the post-pandemic era, lack of job opportunities has been an opportunity for employers to require employees to handle a workload inconsistent with their salary.<sup>2</sup> Though the Chinese law expressly forbids organizations from forcing employees to work overtime, the workplace principle of “survival of the fittest” has weakened the binding force of this legal term. That employees accomplish their performance objectives by working overtime either “Invisibly” or “actively” has been a normal status in the workplace. In order to learn the degree of involution among current employees, 51job.com, a leading provider of integrated human resource services in China, carried out a survey on employees’ overtime behaviors status. Results suggested that 91.6% of employees were expected to work overtime, of which 40.5% worked overtime for no pay. This means that the increase of weariness is not rewarded with matching resource, which can easily result in declining work performance or even turnover behaviors of employees.<sup>3</sup> Evidence has also been found that overtime behaviors can influence employees’ individual health, family ties, emotional exhaustion, etc.<sup>4,5</sup> Overtime behaviors driven by involution will not only cause the loss

of efficient employees, but also result in employees' losses more than their profits. Therefore, it has been imperative to explore factors influencing overtime behaviors and find out solutions to alleviating the status of overtime behaviors.

Previous scholars have substantiated that internal factors, such as educational level, traditional culture, and income level, as well as external factors, such as employment rate and unemployment rate can all result in overtime behaviors.<sup>6-8</sup> Though the organizational climate can reflect characteristics of an organization and influence employees' behavioral motive and work performance through their cognition,<sup>9</sup> the correlation between organizational climate and employees' overtime behaviors has not yet gained adequate research attention. In 2020, the word, "involution", emerged as a hot word in the workplace, and directly entered the list of the top 10 buzzwords of the magazine, *Yao Wen Jiao Zi*. The influence of the involution culture on organizations has changed employees' cognition of the traditional organizational culture. Involution refers to the unnecessary vicious competition between members inside the organization and internal friction arising thereof. "Act as regulated" in the traditional organizational culture could hardly generate the corresponding self-recognition. Under the cutthroat competition, employees can more easily perceive the performance climate within the organization.<sup>10</sup> The climate can result in the phenomenon of "compelled social comparison", making new generation employees believe that success is achieved by a higher degree of competence and better performance.<sup>11</sup> The correlation between performance climate and employees' withdrawal behavior, including turnover intention<sup>12</sup> and knowledge hiding<sup>13</sup> has already been evidenced, but exploration of the mechanism of action on employees' work engagement based on employees' characteristics is still lacking. So the mechanism of action of performance climate on new generation employees' overtime behaviors calls for more research efforts.

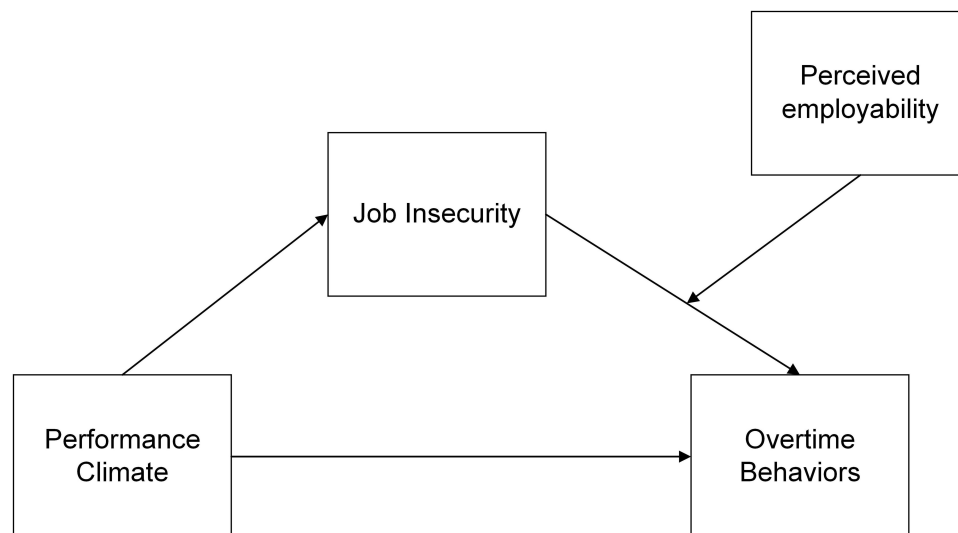
In the current workplace, the post-90s' employees are the first to bear the brunt of the issue of overtime. So new generation employees is adopted as research object. We attempt to explain the mechanism of action of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors from the perspective of conservation of resources. According to conservation of resources theory, people have the motivation to protect, invest, and gain resources. Meanwhile, this theory holds that individuals are highly sensitive towards the stress of resource loss, thus tending to take measures in advance to prevent entering loss spirals, and that individuals perceiving the threat of resource loss will further invest resources to avoid losses.<sup>14</sup> This perspective can provide a new thinking for the correlation between performance climate and overtime behaviors. The stress brought by intensification of competition can easily form performance climate at the workplace, causing employees' unstable work expectations and strong anxiety. Employees tend to increase their resource storage to avoid resource loss via preventative behaviors. Meanwhile, Maimai, a China-based career and social-networking platform known as the Chinese LinkedIn, released the "Report on China's Workplace Mobility Trend in 2021", pointing out that "work" has been the main source of anxiety for employees in the involution era, and that "comparison with peers" has been a steady source of stress for each age group. Based on this finding, we adopt job insecurity as the mediating variable to further explore the overtime behaviors of employees under Chinese "involution" situation.

Considering the characters that Chinese new generation employees have a strong self-awareness, pursue a high return and show a weak loyalty towards organizations.<sup>15</sup> As a subjective faith in one's employability,<sup>16</sup> perceived employability can alleviate the negative influence of job insecurity.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, new generation employees with different perceived employability tend to respond differently to the necessity of overtime behaviors in the face of job insecurity. According to the conservation of resources theory, resources are defined as anything perceived by individuals that can help them realize their objective. Since the objective can be realized through multifarious resources, different resources are substitutable.<sup>18</sup> Perceived employability can be regarded as positive psychological resources,<sup>19</sup> which can, to some extent, make up the threat of losing work resources. So perceived employability is pinpointed as a regulating variable to investigate new generation employees' overtime behaviors in the involution era. The theoretical model is shown in Figure 1 below. This can not only enrich and deepen the impact of the organizational climate on the possibility of overtime work, but also provide theoretical evidence and practical guidance for organizations' further management of new generation employees' overtime behaviors.

## Theory and Hypotheses

### Performance Climate and Employees' Overtime Behavior

Ames studied the motivational climate and divided it into mastery climate and performance climate. These two kinds of climate can easily trigger different behavioral modes.<sup>20</sup> According to conservation of resources theory, individuals with



**Figure 1** Theoretical Model.

low resource reserves will be more vulnerable to the stress of resource loss.<sup>21</sup> To avoid the effect of stress, driven by the involution culture in the current workplace, new generation employees tend to compare their work performance with their colleagues to identify resources possessed by them. These resources owned by them can lower their perception of inferiority caused by uncertainties. Hence, it is easier to foster the performance climate among new generation employees, but a strong performance climate can inhibit the impact of the mastery climate on employees' internal motivation.<sup>22</sup> So we think that current performance climate can influence employee behaviors more easily.

Overtime behaviors are defined as behaviors to work beyond ordinary working hours (stipulated by the national law). Performance climate lays great emphasis on standards of success, thinking that the success or failure of an employee is defined by his or her comparison with others.<sup>23</sup> Under the performance climate, employees' focus of the work is normative ability, social comparison, and intra-team competition.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, those who are publicly recognized as excellent and exemplary under the climate are those with outstanding performance after comparison. Additionally, performance climate will make employees more concerned about competing with their colleagues. Nicholls stressed that "When winning is everything, it is worth doing anything to win."<sup>24</sup> New generation employees care more about how to excel other colleagues in work performance so as to earn more resources. At the same time, a high devotion to work might make them blind to their working hours and their own welfare.<sup>25</sup> So new generation employees are more likely to overpass others by working overtime to improve their performance.

Moreover, another focus of employees' efforts under the performance climate is to display their competitiveness in an organization.<sup>26</sup> Driven by the performance climate, a majority of employees will have a strong desire to bring out the best in them so as to gain more resources, and they are willing to realize organizational goals at the sacrifice of rest to gain recognition from the senior management.<sup>27</sup> This will deepen the overtime culture within an organization. According to the principle of resource investment,<sup>21</sup> new generation employees, even if unwilling to work overtime, should invest more time in maintaining their interpersonal resources (not being isolated because of being different) and work resources (avoiding the performance gap that others finish their tasks but they have not finished their own) by working overtime.<sup>28</sup> This will increase the probability of their blind overtime behaviors. Based on the above discussions and analysis, the following hypothesis is made:

H1: Performance climate can positively affect employees' overtime behaviors.

## The Mediating Effect of Job Insecurity

Job insecurity is the sense of powerlessness that an individual feels to maintain the stability he or she requires in a threatening work environment, which can reflect a fundamental and involuntary change of job sustainability and

stability of an employee in an organization.<sup>29</sup> Job insecurity can be divided into two types. First, cognitive job insecurity, which refers to employees' perceived threat of the job continuity or job characteristics. Second, emotional job insecurity, which means the emotional response of employees after perceiving the negative changing process.<sup>30</sup> Job insecurity emphasizes on employees' concern and apprehension about the employment. According to conservation of resources theory, resources are limited,<sup>31</sup> and performance climate is a comparative climate. This means that success of other colleagues is equal to fewer opportunities for the individuals to gain rewards or realize objectives.<sup>26</sup> The competitive culture gives employees the notion that their resources might be deprived of by their colleagues at any time. This notion can deepen their job insecurity, driving them to ease their individual sense of crisis through redoubled efforts, but it is hard for them to improve their competence in the short term, so working overtime is the only way for them to improve their performance and ensure the security of their resources.

According to conservation of resources theory, potential losses of resources can bring extra pressure to employees.<sup>31</sup> When the accomplishment of performance goals becomes the only index to measure the value of employees, success of employees depends on that they possess more prominent outcomes and abilities than others.<sup>10</sup> So in a strong performance climate, employees tend to feel that they lack necessary resources to meet work requirements, which will cause their job insecurity more easily. On the other hand, in the performance climate, to surpass colleagues is the only way for employees to gain recognition, so employees are highly concerned about colleagues' performance information.<sup>11</sup> As a result, they might ignore their own strengths and potential objectively, thus negatively affecting their self-efficacy and underestimating their importance in the organization.<sup>13</sup> Research also has suggested that performance climate can easily trigger performance anxiety and stress at work among individual employees.<sup>32</sup> So performance climate has a positive effect on employees' job insecurity.

As employees' job insecurity deepens, they tend to obtain results more beneficial to them, out of their longing for work stability and panic about uncertainties of the job market, and this can promote employees' organizational citizenship behaviors.<sup>33</sup> Fear of losing their job can plunge employees in a stressful condition. The condition can motivate employees to clarify the direction of improvement and work harder.<sup>34</sup> At the same time, referring to the primary principle of resource losses upheld by conservation of resources theory, the harm done psychologically by resource losses is far stronger than the help given by resource gain.<sup>14</sup> When employees experience insecurity, their resource gain and loss are decided by potential threats facing their work resources and spiritual resources given by the substitution effect between work and leisure. Compared with the latter, the former can exert a greater impact on employees' psychological status, which can inspire employees to work. Therefore, in the face of job insecurity, employees tend to work overtime. So the following hypothesis is made:

H2: Job insecurity has a mediating effect between performance climate and employees' overtime behaviors.

## Moderating Role of Perceived Employability

Perceived employability is derived and developed from the concept of employability. Employability is also called the ability to find a job or the ability to be employed. Berntson et al defined perceived employability as the individual's subjective perception of the probability for them to get a new job.<sup>35</sup> Rothwell et al divided perceived employability into internal and external dimensions.<sup>36</sup> Internally, perceived employability represents employees' subjective assessment of their ability to retain in the current organization; externally, perceived employability is employees' subjective assessment of their employability in the labor market excluding the current organization they currently work for. Our research follows the opinion proposed by Vanhercke et al.<sup>37</sup> We define perceived employability as subjective perception of an individual to obtain and maintain his or her employment probability.

According to conservation of resources theory, new generation employees tend to prevent their resources from being damaged through resource investment and gaining of new resources, while individuals with resources have more opportunities to invest resources.<sup>18</sup> As the new generation employees' perceived employability strengthens, they can have more capital to bargain with the organization, when their work resources are threatened, they have more options.<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, new generation employees with a high perceived employability have a stronger desire to control their own career development,<sup>39</sup> so they will be dissatisfied with the threat of resource loss, and extra work also can damage new

generation employees' self-esteem<sup>40</sup> and weaken their perceived value of work. At the same time, driven by a high perceived employability, new generation employees pay little attention to organizational standards and show less commitment to the organization.<sup>41</sup> Therefore, these employees are more likely to reject working overtime in the face of job insecurity.

Specifically, when the external employability perceived by employees is high, changing to a new job is less hard in their opinion. This means that their willingness of retention and organizational commitment will be weakened, and out of the hedonistic instinct, they tend to look for jobs which offer favorable development opportunities and cater to their preferences to avoid their resource loss.<sup>42</sup> Thereby, these employees are less likely to have overtime behaviors, who, on the contrary, might even think of quitting. Otherwise, if the internal employability perceived by employees is high, individuals will develop a high self-efficacy.<sup>43</sup> This means that individuals are confident in their competence for their post. The employees, after analyzing their abilities and work situation, believe that they have every reason to continue to be employed by their current organization without suffering resource loss, so job insecurity will not make them worried what if they fail to compete with their teammates, let alone working overtime to improve their performance. To sum up, the following hypothesis is made:

H3: Perceived employability negatively moderates the impact of job insecurity on employees' overtime behaviors, that is, the higher the perceived employability is, the weaker the positive impact of job insecurity on employees' overtime behaviors.

Based on the above discussions, it can be further induced that, when new generation employees have a high perceived employability, performance climate can weaken its positive impact on employees' overtime behaviors through job insecurity. Performance climate of an organization emphasizes on comparison and competition among employees. New generation employees believe that success is defined by their abilities and performance excelling others.<sup>12</sup> The climate can exert a sense of urgency on a majority of employees. New generation employees, in order to maintain and even continuously increase their resources, tend to work overtime to create their capital advantage in the organization. As a positive psychological resource, perceived employability can alleviate the stress imposed by job insecurity on employees.<sup>17</sup> This will further weaken the impact of job insecurity on employees' overtime behaviors. Thereby, the following hypothesis is made:

H4: Perceived employability can moderate the indirect effect of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors via job insecurity. When employees have a high perceived employability, the positive impact of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors via job insecurity will be weakened.

## Methods

### Procedures and Samples

A survey is carried out among new generation employees from the currently popular industries. Before the survey, we browse relevant materials and visit respondents. Usually providing favorable benefits but offering only a few job opportunities, these industries require workers to finish a large workload. Under the tremendous pressure of competition, overtime behaviors are serious in these enterprises. So to choose employees working in these industries as research objects is consistent with our research expectations. In order to weaken the impact of single-source bias, pre-survey is carried out. According to the feedback of respondents, the questionnaire is further improved. Affected by the outbreak of COVID-19, the questionnaire is given out through two channels online. First, we entrust friends from relevant organizations for aid. Second, employees of relevant organizations are surveyed through intermediaries. Employees are required to fill in the questionnaire through self-assessment. Red envelopes are given to these employees after finishing the questionnaire. Volunteers are from multiple regions, such as Jiangxi and Shanghai. So the coverage of regions and professions is extensive enough to ensure a high representativeness of respondents. At last, 451 copies of questionnaire are collected, of which completed copies with an obviously wrong logic are screened out to obtain 348 valid ones in total. This registers a high valid response rate of 77.16%. The details are listed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1** Structural Distribution of Samples

Items	Options	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	169	48.56	48.56
	Female	179	51.44	100.00
Age	18–26 years old	73	20.98	20.98
	27–30 years old	172	49.43	70.40
	31–35 years old	103	29.60	100.00
Academic Degree	Senior High School and Below	3	0.86	0.86
	Junior College Degree	94	27.01	27.87
	Bachelor Degree	195	56.03	83.91
	Master and Above	56	16.09	100.00
Nature of Organization	State-owned Enterprise	56	16.09	16.09
	Private Enterprise	49	14.08	30.17
	Institution/Government Department	56	16.09	46.26
	Scientific Research Design Institutions	50	14.37	60.63
	Medical Treatment and Public Health Institutions	43	12.36	72.99
	Institution of Higher Learning	29	8.33	81.32
	Institution of Secondary Education	34	9.77	91.09
	Other Public Institutions	28	8.05	99.14
	Others	3	0.86	100.00
Position	Ordinary Employees	275	79.02	79.02
	Grassroots Managers	53	15.23	94.25
	Middle Managers	11	3.16	97.41
	Senior Managers	9	2.59	100.00
Total		348	100.0	100.0

## Measures

Mature scales and measurement methods verified by previous scholars are adopted for the questionnaire. All scales employ the Likert 5 point scoring method. (1 suggests complete inconsistency, while 5 suggests complete consistency.) To ensure the applicability of these scales to survey scenarios in China, the English scales are first translated into Chinese and then back-translated into English. SPSS26.0 is used for reliability test of variables excluding overtime behaviors.

## Overtime Behavior

A method prevailing both at home and abroad is used to measure employees' overtime behaviors. Gap-filling questions are designed for new generation employees to fill in their overtime hours.<sup>44</sup> The average overtime hours every week within one month is given by the question, "How many hours have you worked overtime on average every week last month?" The questionnaire also investigates the average overtime days every week last month.



## Performance Climate

The performance climate scale developed by Nerstad et al is employed.<sup>23</sup> As a single-dimensional scale, it includes eight questions, such as “You feel that the achievements of your organizational/department employees can be measured by the performance comparison of different employees.” The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of this scale is 0.928.

## Perceived Employability

The perceived employability scale optimized by Zeng is adopted.<sup>45</sup> The scale contains 11 statements, of which the former 7 are designed from the dimension of external employability. For example, “If necessary, I can easily find a job in a similar organization.” The remaining 4 are oriented towards the dimension of internal employability. For example, “Even if the organization downsizes, I am convinced that I can stay.” The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  value of the scale is 0.957.

## Job Insecurity

The job insecurity scale compiled by Hellgren et al is used.<sup>29</sup> It contains 7 statements, of which 3 are positive scoring statements, such as “I am faced with the risk of getting fired in the future”, and the remaining 4 are reverse scoring statements, such as “I am convinced that the organization will still need my abilities in the future.” The Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  of this scale is 0.910.

## Control Variable

According to Li et al,<sup>46</sup> gender, age and education level are usually set as control variables in the researches about overtime. Position and the nature of organization also included as control variables according to the improved control variable setting approach. This is to prevent these variables from influencing the theoretical model.

## Analytical Procedure and Results

### Validity and Single-Source Bias

The data are obtained through self-assessment of employees, so common method bias can easily occur. In order to control the occurrence of this problem, the questionnaire is completed anonymously. At the same time, quality control item is included in the questionnaire to more precisely eliminate some invalid copies.

A low discriminant validity might still exist, even if the aforesaid measures are adopted. So AMOS23.0 is used to carry out a confirmatory factor analysis of three variables, namely performance climate, job insecurity and perceived employability, to further test the discriminant validity. (See Table 2) Table 2 shows that the three-factor model outperforms in various indexes. In order to make this research more persuasive, we take the suggestion of Fornell et al to work out the average variance extracted (AVE) of each latent variable.<sup>47</sup> (See Table 3) As one observes in Table 3, the AVE of all variables in the model is larger than 0.5, which indicates a favorable convergent validity of the three-factor model. Second, the correlation coefficient between the AVE square root and other variables is compared. Results show that the AVE square root of performance climate, job insecurity and perceived employability is all larger than the correlation

**Table 2** Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

Models	$\chi^2$	df	$\chi^2/df$	IFI	RMSEA	TLI	CFI
Three-factor Model (A,B, D)	353.866	296	1.195	0.991	0.024	0.990	0.991
Two-factor Model (A,B+D)	1483.498	298	4.978	0.819	0.107	0.801	0.818
Two-factor Model (A+B, D)	1068.052	298	3.584	0.882	0.086	0.871	0.882
Single-factor Model (A+B+D)	2915.718	299	9.752	0.600	0.159	0.563	0.598

**Note:** A denotes performance climate; B denotes job insecurity; D denotes perceived employability; “+” denotes merger.

**Table 3** Discriminant Validity: Pearson Correlation and AVE Square Root

	Performance Climate	Job Insecurity	Perceived Employability
Performance Climate	0.787		
Job insecurity	0.571	0.771	
Perceived Employability	0.350	0.428	0.820

**Notes:** The diagonal number is the AVE square root.

coefficient between factors of the same column, which suggests a favorable discriminant validity. Thereby, all scales involved in this research possess favorable validity.

## Correlation Analysis

Descriptive statistics of all variables based on SPSS26.0 are presented in Table 4. As shown in Table 4, performance climate and job insecurity are positively correlated ( $r=0.571$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Job insecurity and employees' overtime behaviors are positively correlated ( $r=0.432$ ,  $p<0.01$ ); performance atmosphere and employees' overtime behavior are positively correlated ( $r=0.581$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Relevant analysis results are basically consistent with theoretical expectations.

## Hypothesis Test

To further examine the correlation between variables, SPSS26.0 is used for hierarchical regression analysis to verify hypotheses made above. In order to avoid the effect of heteroskedasticity on the regression model, the research further calculated the residual values in the hierarchical regression model, and found that the absolute value of the residual term in the model of independent variable on mediating variable, was significantly correlated with the performance climate. Therefore, to eliminate this phenomenon, the model was measured in this research by weighted regression, and the combined results are displayed in Table 5.

**Main effect test:** According to Model 5 of Table 5, to add the predictive variable and performance climate after the control variables are substituted into the regression equation can significantly and positively influence employees' overtime behaviors ( $\beta=0.574$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). This can provide solid evidence for H1.

**Mediating effect test of job insecurity:** According to the four regression equations recommended by Baron et al to test the mediating variables.<sup>48</sup> (1) Test whether performance climate has a significant impact on overtime behaviors; (2) Test whether performance climate has a significant impact on job insecurity; (3) Test whether job insecurity has a significant impact on employees' overtime behaviors; (4) Substitute performance climate and job insecurity simultaneously into the regression equation to test whether job insecurity can significantly influence employees' overtime behaviors, and whether the impact of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors is weakened. According to Model 2 of Table 5, performance climate can significantly and positively influence job insecurity ( $\beta=0.606$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). Model 4 shows that job insecurity can significantly and positively influence employees' overtime behaviors ( $\beta=0.439$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). After substituting performance climate and job insecurity both into the regression equation, Model 6 suggests that job insecurity has a significantly positive impact on employees' overtime behaviors ( $\beta=0.166$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). The impact of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors weakens ( $\beta=0.480$ ,  $P<0.01$ ). To further verify the mediating effect of job insecurity, the Bootstrap method and the Process program are used. After repeatedly drawing for 5000 times, the 95% confidence interval is [0.029, 0.161], excluding 0. Table 6 implies that performance climate exerts a significant mediating effect on employees' overtime behaviors through job insecurity, and that the mediating effect is partial. So H2 is verified.

**Regulating effect test of perceived employability:** (1) Substitute job insecurity into the regression equation; (2) Substitute job insecurity and perceived employability into the regression equation; (3) Substitute the interaction between



**Table 4** Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Coefficient Matrix

Items	Mean	Standard Error	Gender	Age	Academic Degree	Nature of Organization	Position	Employees' Overtime Behaviors	Performance Climate	Job Insecurity	Perceived Employability
Gender	1.514	0.501	1								
Age	4.069	0.756	-0.018	1							
Academic Degree	6.839	0.847	0.053	0.148**	1						
Nature of Organization	4.721	2.605	-0.005	0.007	0.081	1					
Position	1.293	0.653	0.049	0.017	0.054	0.030	1				
Employees' Overtime Behaviors	7.305	2.531	-0.102	0.218**	0.041	-0.020	-0.060	1			
Performance Climate	3.157	1.038	-0.077	0.021	0.036	-0.035	0.014	0.581**	1		
Job Insecurity	2.899	0.977	-0.090	-0.044	0.028	-0.056	0.022	0.432**	0.571**	1	
Perceived Employability	2.937	1.108	0.049	0.046	0.001	-0.006	-0.012	0.190**	0.350**	0.428**	1

Notes: \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

**Table 5** Hierarchical Regression

	Job Insecurity		Employees' Overtime Behaviors					
Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6	Model 7	Model 8
Gender	−0.095	−0.047	−0.097	−0.055	−0.051	−0.043	−0.054	−0.053
Age	−0.052	−0.042	0.214**	0.237**	0.207**	0.217**	0.238	0.242
Academic Degree	0.044	0.018	0.019	0.000	−0.004	−0.007	−0.000	0.007
Nature of Organization	−0.060	−0.054	−0.022	0.005	0.001	0.007	0.005	0.011
Position	0.027	−0.011	−0.060	−0.072	−0.069	−0.072	−0.072	−0.067
Performance Climate		0.606**			0.574**	0.480**		−0.053
Job Insecurity				0.439**		0.166**	0.443**	0.772**
Perceived Employability							−0.009	0.332*
Job Insecurity *Perceived Employability								−0.577*
R <sup>2</sup>	0.016	0.379	0.061	0.251	0.388	0.406	0.251	0.263
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.002	0.369	0.048	0.238**	0.377**	0.394**	0.236**	0.246**
F Value	1.117	34.750	4.481	19.059	35.991	33.199	16.294	15.142

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$  and \*\* $p < 0.01$ .

centralized job insecurity and perceived employability into the regression equation to examine the coefficient of the interaction item. Model 7 of Table 5 reveals a significant impact of job insecurity on employees' overtime behaviors ( $\beta = 0.443$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Model 8 shows that the interaction item between job insecurity and perceived employability is significant ( $\beta = -0.577$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ), meaning that perceived employability has a negatively regulating effect on the correlation between job insecurity and overtime behaviors. This helps substantiate H3. To more directly suggest the regulating effect of perceived employability, we use the simple slope test for analysis. Figure 2 indicates that, when employees have a low perceived employability, job insecurity will exert a more sensitively positive impact on employees' overtime behaviors. Otherwise, the impact will be weaker.

Regulated mediating effect test: Following the suggestion of Edwards et al,<sup>49</sup> we analyze the mediating effect between performance climate and employees' overtime behaviors under different perceived employability. First, we divide samples into one group with a high perceived employability and the other group with a low perceived employability. The data which are higher than the average perceived employability by one standard deviation are put in the first group; otherwise, the data are put in the second group. The mediating effect of the two groups is estimated, respectively. The results are shown in Table 7. We can observe that, when individuals have a high perceived employability, the indirect effect of their overtime behaviors is 0.148 (SE=0.102,  $P > 0.05$ ), and the 95% confidence interval is  $[-0.054, 0.353]$ , including 0. At this moment, the mediating effect is insignificant and weak; When individuals have a low perceived employability, the indirect effect of their overtime behaviors is 0.423 (SE=0.132,  $P < 0.05$ ), and the 95% confidence interval is  $[0.178, 0.697]$ , excluding 0. At this moment, the mediating effect is significant and strong. So employees with a lower perceived employability will experience a stronger mediating effect of job insecurity. This conclusion leads to the substantiation of H4.

## Discussion

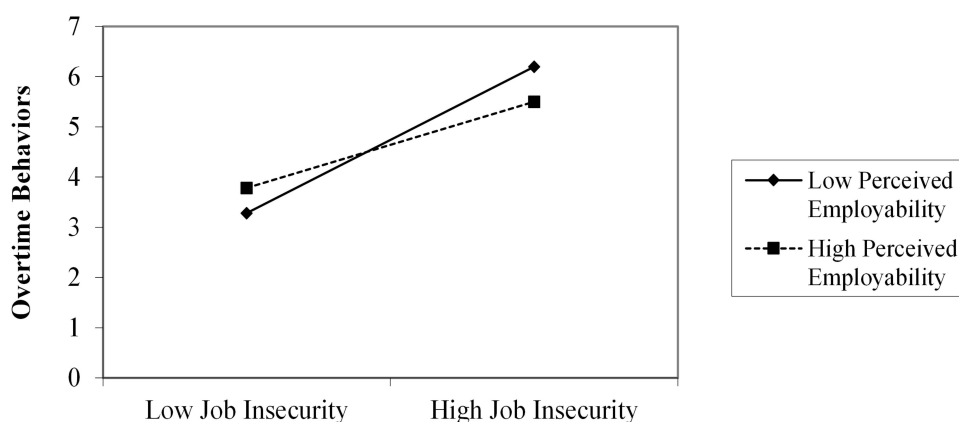
### Theoretical Contributions

First of all, this research reveals the impact of working climate on probability of individuals' overtime behaviors based on the characteristics of China's involutional society. Though previous researchers have pointed out various factors

**Table 6** Summary of Test Results Concerning Mediating Effect

Path	c Total Effect	a	b	a*b Mediating Effect	a*b (Boot SE)	a*b (z value)	a*b (p value)	Boot ULCI	Boot LLCI	c' Direct Effect	Conclusion
X→M→Y	1.400**	0.533**	0.429**	0.228	0.002	125.644	0.000	0.161	0.029	1.171**	Partial Mediation

**Note:** X denotes performance climate; M denotes job insecurity; Y denotes overtime behaviors; \*\*p<0.01.



**Figure 2** Regulating Effect of Perceived Employability on Job insecurity and Overtime Behaviors.

affecting overtime behaviors from different perspectives. For example, Lott et al substantiated that allowing workers more control over when and how long they work can easily result in workers' overtime behaviors.<sup>50</sup> They have failed to deeply examine the probability of overtime behaviors combining the social background. Involution is a kind of cutthroat competition, emerging under the condition of no increasing macroscopic welfare and requiring individuals to strive for limited resources through constant self-oppression.<sup>51</sup> It is different from other cultures in China like innovation culture and inclusive culture. Under the development background, performance climate can be easily shaped within an organization. In other words, employees no longer require themselves with work requirements but with others' performance.<sup>52</sup> This is consistent with the increasing work cost of the involution society caused for different walks of life in China. So analysis of the influence of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors is more consistent with the overtime work mechanism of employees in the Chinese society. On the other hand, research into overtime behaviors must be based on the signaling theory,<sup>53</sup> social exchange theory,<sup>54</sup> social learning theory,<sup>27</sup> etc. Compared with the aforesaid perspectives, conservation of resources theory emphasizes not only on acquisition and exchange of resources, but also individuals' perception of potential resource losses.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, conservation of resources theory can more comprehensively explain the mechanism behind employees' overtime behaviors. Research based on conservation of resources theory has provided a solid evidence for that performance climate is an important antecedent variable affecting employees' overtime behaviors, which can further expand and deepen research of this field.

Second, this research discusses about the mediating effect of job insecurity on the correlation between performance climate and employees' overtime behaviors. We analyze the causes behind employees' overtime behaviors from a new perspective. Currently, as the pandemic keeps sprawling, re-employment of new generation employees is still challenging, thus turning job insecurity an issue of great concern in social sciences. The growing pressure of competition can trigger employees' anxiety over the potential losses of their work resources. In order to prevent their resources from being deprived of, employees tend to work overtime to be more competitive in the workplace. Currently, academic circles generally focus on the effect of objective factors, such as position,<sup>55</sup> personality,<sup>56</sup> etc. Though Kim et al proved the

**Table 7** Conditional Indirect Effect

Mediating Variable	Level	Value of Level	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Job insecurity	Low Level (-1SD)	1.828	0.423	0.132	0.178	0.697
	Mean	2.937	0.285	0.092	0.116	0.476
	High Level (+1SD)	4.045	0.148	0.102	-0.054	0.353

**Note:** BootLLCI refers to the lower limit of the 95% bootstrap confidence interval, while BootULCI refers to the upper limit of the 95% bootstrap confidence interval.

correlation between work centrality, organizational constraints and overtime behaviors,<sup>27</sup> they failed to further expound on internal changes of factors. This research combines employees' psychological changes in the involution era for deeper analysis. This can help not only examine the overtime work mechanism of current employees from a psychological level, but also expand the influence of the post-pandemic era changes on employee behaviors.

At last, based on new generation employees' low loyalty towards the organization and their pursuit of happiness and freedom, this research introduces perceived employability as a moderating variable that influences the impact intensity of job insecurity. Previous investigation into different personnel's overtime behaviors generally focused on the influence of the country,<sup>57</sup> gender and position<sup>58</sup> et al on overtime behaviors, while ignoring the differences of values among employees at different ages. Different from the old generation employees who keep on the rails, new generation employees are less likely to compromise with their poor conditions when their individual resources are abundant, and when new generation employees perceive job insecurity, their commitment to the organization will be dramatically changed,<sup>15</sup> thus influencing their individual overtime behaviors. Hence, conservation of resources theory can more effectively explain new generation employees. This can enrich the application scenarios of conservation of resources theory. Meanwhile, The research further verifies the different effects of employees' work experience on their own behavior when changes in personal resource reserves affect employees' cognition.

## Practical Implications

### Improving Performance Climate

In 2021 alone, students graduating from Chinese colleges had exceeded 9 million. Depression of the job market in the post-pandemic era has shaped the involution culture in the current human society. The performance climate driven by involution has led to malignant comparison among employees, which stimulate employees' involuntary organizational citizenship behaviors. On the surface, they take the initiative to work overtime; in fact, they are forced to work overtime. Meanwhile, an extremely strong performance climate can easily trigger negative consequences, such as controlled motivation, job burnout, negative affect, and performance anxiety, which can lower employees' basic need satisfaction and vigor of work.<sup>32</sup> Therefore, the organization's decision-making level should draw up clearer regulations and system to avoid cutthroat competition, lead employees to correctly cope with competition, encourage employees to work efficiently rather than work overtime blindly, etc. The organizational climate can be improved through team activities, which can contribute to forming fair and benign co-opetition among employees.

### Paying Attention to Job Security of Employees

Considering the asymmetry of information and rights between managers and employees, employees are usually the disadvantaged in an organization. In the post-pandemic era, job opportunities are decreasing, which make employees value their job even more. Meanwhile, to quit usually means a waste of all the potential and sunk cost paid previously. So a majority of employees have a high job insecurity in current organizations. In a bid to achieving better career development, new generation employees demonstrate a stronger desire to work, such as meaningless or irrational overtime behaviors. Therefore, enterprises should repeatedly emphasize on the importance of employees in organizations through improvement of promotion channels for employees. This can increase new generation employees' job security in the workplace.

### Dialectically Coping with New Generation Employees' Perceived Employability

Research suggests that perceived employability is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, perceived employability can generate counterproductive behaviors among employees, leading to their turnover intention. On the other hand, perceived employability can exert a positive influence on employees' self-efficacy, which can promote their working well-being and health level.<sup>17</sup> So managers should properly control employees' perceived employability, shape employees' Self-confidence through a management concept alternating justice with mercy, encouraging employees to think independently, and point out what improvements they can make in their workplace. This can stimulate employees to convert their perceived employability into the driving force to make progress.

## Limitations and Future Research

First of all, restricted by pandemic control and prevention, we adopt the cross-section data, thus failing to measure variables involved by different periods of time. At the same time, a survey is conducted on respondents in the form of questionnaire. This will inevitably give rise to the problem of common method variance. In the future, researchers can consider measuring different variables by different periods of time so as to mitigate the impact of common method variance.

Second, this research reveals the correlation between organizational performance climate and employees' overtime behaviors. It is found that performance climate is an important antecedent variable affecting employees' overtime behaviors in the backdrop of an involution-driven society. But in the real life overtime behaviors are subject to the influence of other management styles or organizational climate. Future researchers can further explore other external factors influencing overtime behaviors.

Finally, some researchers have pointed out that there is a threshold effect between compulsory citizenship behaviors in an organization and new generation employees' behavioral intention. So performance climate can, to some extent, be regarded as a source of challenge. When performance climate exerts a positive stress on employees, employees will decide to work overtime. But once the performance climate intensity exceeds certain scope, the obstructive source of stress will keep on strengthening, which can cause negative stress. This will weaken new generation employees' organizational commitment and even lead to their rejection of overtime tasks. So longitudinal research can be pursued in the future to deeply explore whether the threshold effect exists in the correlation between performance climate and overtime behaviors.

## Conclusion

This research attempts to examine the mechanism of action of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors and the boundary condition of the influence from the perspective of conservation of resources theory. After a survey of 348 new generation employees, we find that performance climate can increase employees' overtime behaviors; job insecurity plays a mediating role between performance climate and overtime behaviors; perceived employability has a moderating effect on the correlation between job insecurity and overtime behaviors. Specifically, when individuals have a relatively high perceived employability, the positive impact of job insecurity on employees' overtime behaviors can be weakened. Meanwhile, perceived employability can adjust the indirect impact of performance climate on employees' overtime behaviors via job insecurity. In other words, the stronger the employability is perceived by employees, the weaker the mediating effect of job insecurity will be. The results stated above can not only enrich research findings of overtime behaviors, but also provide positive implications to the sustainable development of enterprises.

## Publication Statement

We promise that the article has not been published in any language before; it is not being considered concurrently for publication elsewhere; and all authors have worked on the manuscript and approved the submission to your journal.

## Data Sharing Statement

The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

## Ethics Statement

This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and the study has been reviewed and approved by the ethics committee of Liaoning Technical University. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before they participated in the study.



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## Author Contributions

We promise that (1) all the authors made an equally significant contribution to this paper in the process of conception, study design, execution, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation. (2) All the authors have drafted or written, substantially revised or critically reviewed the article. (3) All the authors have agreed on the journal to which the article will be submitted, and reviewed and agreed on all versions of the article before submission including the revision, as well as all agree to be accountable for all aspects of the work. All authors made a significant contribution to the work reported, whether that is in the conception, study design, execution, acquisition of data, analysis and interpretation, or in all these areas, took part in drafting, revising or critically reviewing the article, gave final approval of the version to be published; have agreed on the journal to which the article has been submitted, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work.

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