Social Media Use and Job Performance: Moderating Roles of Workplace Factors

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to examine the conditions that make social media use at work yield higher benefit to employee job performance. Survey data were collected from 211 employees in Thailand. Results from partial least square regression analysis show that although the intensity of social media use at work positively affects job performance, the benefit is significantly higher when (1) employees encounter high job demands, (2) social media access is allowed in the workplace, and (3) social media are accessed mostly from a personal computer instead of from mobile devices. These findings suggest some implications regarding the workplace policy on social media access during work.

Keywords: Job Performance, Mobile Devices, Social Media, Work Characteristics, Workplace Policy

1. INTRODUCTION

Undeniably, our society nowadays has experienced many major changes as a result of technological advancements. In particular, the emergence of online social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) has made territories of the world become virtually united, as people everywhere can search for and socially connect with one another through this online platform (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). However, social media technology can be seen as a double-edged sword. Despite the benefits it provides, a concern has been raised regarding the negative impacts it may cause when inappropriately use (Griffiths, 2013; Griffiths et al., 2014). Recently, research has begun to extend the understanding of social media use by focusing on the impacts that it may cause in a workplace. To date, there are a few studies that found that using social media at work can enhance job-related outcomes (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Moqbel et al., 2013). Despite these findings, little is known whether these positive outcomes of social media could be contingent on some factors.

Therefore, the main objective of the study is to fill this research gap. In particular, the author aims to investigate the effect of the intensity of social media use at work on job performance.

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However, instead of focusing on the direct effect of social media, the present study is interested in examining some factors that might influence the benefit that using social media during work yields on job performance. The key research question is which conditions make social media use at work provide more benefit to help employees increase job performance. In particular, the author argues that the degree of benefit that an employee will receive from social media use at work may depend on two workplace factors including the characteristics of work in terms of job demands and the workplace policy that prohibits or allows employees to use social media during work hours. In addition to those workplace factors, the author aims to explore whether the type of device that employees mostly use to connect to social media, either through personal computers or through personal mobile devices, can affect the degree to which employees benefit from using social media at work.

Findings from the present study will offer extra contributions to social media research. Although the impact of social media on work outcomes is a topic that has already been explored, to the best knowledge of the author, the issue about factors that moderate the benefits of social media is an area that still lacks empirical evidence. In addition, findings from this research will provide some policy implications for organizations that are concerned about the consequences that may occur when employees access social media during work hours. Nowadays, many organizations begin to enact a formal policy to ban employees from using social media in the workplace (Gaudin, 2009). However, whether this policy is truly effective is still an issue that needs to be explored. This research will provide some insight about whether organizations should allow or prohibit social media access at work, by considering under which conditions making use of social media in the workplace provide more benefit to employees.

2. BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS

2.1. Social Media Use at Work and Job Performance

To date, there are a few studies that examined the benefits of social media use at work on job performance. Among these is a study by Moqbel et al. (2013), which is considered a pioneer work in this area. These scholars argued that using social media at work can enhance job performance because employees can achieve work-life balance and reduce work-family conflict through interaction with their family and friends through social media sites. Empirically, their study also found that the intensity of social media use at work positively but indirectly affected job performance through the mediating effect of job satisfaction. On the other hand, a study by Charoensukmongkol (2014) employed media synchronicity theory to explain the link between social media use and job performance. This theory posits that communication performance is enhanced when a variety of media are used (Dennis et al., 2008). Empirically, his research also found that the intensity of social media use at work directly affected job satisfaction and job performance, which indirectly led to higher cognitive absorption. Finally, Cao et al. (2012) used social capital theory to explain that using social media allows employees to build and expand connection with other people and to benefit from social network. In this regard, employees can use social media as a means to acquire critical knowledge from their friends and colleagues (Chow & Chan, 2008), which can yield benefits to their work performance. Therefore, to be consistent with the previous research on the benefits of social media on job performance, the first hypothesis is presented as the following:

Hypothesis 1: Holding other factors constant, the intensity of social media use at work will positively associate with job performance.
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