Social Media Usage and Its Impact on Work Productivity at a Malaysian Univerisity

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ABSTRACT: *The ubiquity of social media at the workplace has motivated researchers to investigate its contribution to the work performance among employees. However, an investigation of this phenomena at a learning institution in Malaysia is still non-existence. Thus, this study aimed to explore the perceived impact of using social media to work productivity among employees at a particular university. A focus group interview among nine employees consisting of different job scope at an academic centre of a particular university has been conducted. Data were transcribed, coded and categorised using Nvivo Pro 11 software. The finding of this study showed the common social media used by the respondents are Whatsapp followed by email, Facebook, Youtube and Google via smartphone and desktop for work, notification and reminder purposes. Respondents highlighted the positive and negative impacts of using social media which affect their job productivity and showed different perceptions toward the relationship between the reasons of using social media and staff productivity. The findings were limited to a particular context hence generalising them to other context need to be done with caution. Further, this study can be considered as a preliminary study to gain further understanding of the impact of social media to work productivity.*

KEYWORDS: Social Media, Work Productivity, Focus Group, Perceptions, Usage Pattern, Impact of Usage

1. INTRODUCTION

Productivity displays work efficiency and effectiveness when minimum input is used to fulfil the needs of a society [1].

In any organisations, employees are one of the assets needed to produce high quality work [2]. Employers are very concern about their employees' productivity as they expect their employees to be productive to enhance their profits. With the advanced development of Information and Computer Technology, internet-based technology has facilitated the work performance of employees at organisations. It has become a significant medium to smoothen the task management and the relation between subordinate and the employer in organisations [3]. Although these technologies have the affordances to improve performance, they also have disadvantages if they are not used appropriately.

Social media refers to a type online communication that makes it easy for users to interact with free, share and discuss information using a combination of multimedia consisting of text, images, video and audio. It can be categorized into six categories, which are social networking, social bookmark application, social news, media sharing, microblogging, blog comments and forum. As this technology has been embedded in the organisation, most of the employees are using the social media for any purposes as it can help to complete their work. They are more interested in using the social media at working places to settle the task given by superior rather than doing manually as it saves time and money. They can use the social media to submit the report, informed the colleagues and public, as reminder for superior and subordinated by using email, search engine and others in the social media [4].Furthermore, employees can enhance their skill and knowledge by sharing the idea with colleagues from the social media [5][6]. For this reason, employers highly encourage their employees to use social media during working hours as this technology can help them to complete the task easily.

The overuse of social media can develop many negative impacts on employee's performance as it may directly disrupt employee's productivity in the organisation which later affects the profit, management and the company's reputation worldwide [7]. These critical issues have urged researchers to investigate the impact of social media usage on workers productivity [8].

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This paper reports on a study that posits the use of social media has a positive relationship with workers productivity as it can help to boost their productivity in organisation. It aimed to explore the perception of workers on social media usage toward work productivity at a particular university in Malaysia.Specifically, the objectives of this study is twoolds: i) to investigate the usage pattern of social media among employees at a university and ii) to investigate the impact of social media on employee's productivity at university.

It is a common understanding that productivity is reflected by the final result obtained by using the minimal sources provided by the organisation. When investigating work productivity, majority of the researchers used output and input ratio to measure the productivity level of a worker. For the purpose of this study, the worker's productivity level is measured based on the suggestions by [9] who stated that employee's productivity can be measured based on four elements, namely time, quality, quantity and others.

The paper is structured based on five sections. After the introduction presented in the first section, the second section present the discussion of the related literature. This is followed by the third section that describes the methodology and the fourth section that reports the findings and discussion. This paper ends with a conclusion and future study in the conclusion section.

1.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies related to the use of Internet as well as the use of social media has been extensive. The use of social media toward employee's productivity has been extensively studied abroad, especially in organisations, but there has been a limited investigation on the use of social media among employees at the university. However, in line with the objectives of this study, the literature review discusses the pattern of social media usage at the workpalce and the impacts of social media on workers productivity.

Studies related to the use of Internet as well as social media have been varied and extensive, but there have been very limited studies that investigate the impact of social media on work productivity at the workplace. In general, there are various patterns of social media usage found among employees. A study focusing on the use of Internet has categorised the usage pattern according to three aspects, namely the different platforms, frequency of usage, and the purpose of usage [10]. It has been reported that the most accessible social media platforms at the workplaces are such

as Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, LinkedIn, etc.[4][9][11]. Additionally, Youtube has become increasingly popular among workers [12]. Some of the employees also used the blogsas a means of internal and external communication [13]. Majority of the employees tend to use email as to communicate and to inform their colleagues and superior regarding official task or purposes. Based on the frequency of accessing social media at workplaces,various findings have been reported. 55 percentages of the employees, regardless the types of organisation accessed the social network at least once a week [14]. Employees at the university were found to spend the most time on line via email every hour [15]. Ogunrewo and Odusina[16] stated that majority of the academic staff were likely to access email and search engine in workplaces using their desktop and own laptop. The main purpose for most of the employees to use social media is to obtain the information sources for their task purposes [17]. They are also most likely to socialize with others through social network, get entertained and find information related to their study [18]. Some of them have involved in the misuse of social media usage specifically for their own purposes, accessing sex web, being addicted with online games in social network with others [19]. This type of purposes may lead to the decline of productivity among employees.

Social media has gained much attention from many employers especially in the field of business. Based on the literature review, it has both positive and negative effects on the organisations. On the positive side, it is claimed that the use of social media for business purposes has reached from 11 percent in 2008 to 22 percent in 2009 [20]. It is also emphasized that social media should be a tool for protecting the employee and company privacy in order for them to work efficiently and effectively [21]. Some researchers have shown that the values delivered by social media in organization especially based on the profit can be declared as an effective channel of communication and information. Furthermore, the social media usage can also retain the relationship among staff through the creation of unity within the organization. This type of technology can lower their stress at work and ultimately enhance their working skills as they communicate with each others. Further, social media is claimed to heavily influence organizational productivity outcomes across geographical and hierarchical work structures, promote their products as they can receive collection of feedback responses from the market place and increase their visibility online in the commerce world [21]. However, the usage of social media can be misused among workers. As many information were uploaded, there will be more people outside try to hack company and employee information [5]. In this case,

security of using the social media needs to have more attention. Further, there are also instances in which some employees can get addicted to the social media at workplaces. In relation to this, there are studies on internet addiction among university students and youths [10][22] that show that users of Internet can easily get addicted. There are evidences that some of the addicted workers are involved with law liabilities [5]. This phenomena needs to be addressed as it may affect the productivity of the workers which ultimately affects the company's reputation as well as incurring high management cost as the company has to support the non-productive workers[23].

Based on the discussion above, there has been very limited number of studies that determined the pattern of social media usage, although there are a number of studies related to Internet usage. Further, studies related to the use of social media and its impact on productivity is found to be very limited and most of these studies tend to focus on commercial organisations which are contextualised in other countries except Malaysia. Based on these conditions and considering that Malaysians are among the highest social media users globally, this study aims to investigate the usage pattern and the perceived impacts of social media to the work productivity among employees at a university in Malaysia.

2. METHODOLOGY

To address the objectives of this study and to gain an understanding of this phenomena at a particular context, we adopted a qualitative research method using a focus group interview. It is found that most of the related studies have adopted quantitative approach by distributing the survey through online or self-report [6][24]. In relation to this, we aimed to adopt a different approach of investigating this phenomena by adopting a qualitative approach. Further, considering that this study is a preliminary study to investigate what is happening or how things are working at a particularly work place namely a learning institution, it is relevant to conduct a focus group interview.

This study was conducted at a small public university in Malaysia. This university is a focused university located at the Southern Peninsular of Malaysia and it has seven faculties and one academic centre. The faculties consist of six engineering and technical based faculties and one humanities related faculty, while the academic centre houses a variety social science background academicians and provides servicing subjects to the other faculties. Hence, this centre represents the personnel of the university as it functions to serve all the faculties in the university. This study was conducted with the personnel from the academic centre which involved nine

respondents represented by two management, three academic and four admin personnel.

Prior to the conduct of the interview, an invitation to participate to the interview were emailed to all employees at the centre. The email consists of the consent letter and information regarding the topic to be discussed. However, only nine personnel turned up for the interview. Interview protocol consisting questions to be discussed during the interview was also prepared and validated by an expert in the area of internet usage. Two open-ended questions were constructed, namely i) what and how they use social media at the work place? and ii) How does it impact their work productivity and does it have positive or negative impact? An approval from the dean of the centre to conduct the interview has been sought also.

Moderated by one of the researchers, the interview was conducted for approximately one hour and the discussions were recorded after seeking permission from the respondents. At the beginning of the interview session, the respondents were requested to complete a demographic questionnaire and a brief introduction of the purpose of the interview session. During the interview, each respondent was given opportunity to give any opinion or comments related to questions posed.Other researchers were present during the interview and they mainly observed and took down notes throughout the interview.

The recorded data were transcribed verbatim and the transcription were coded and analyzed using categorisation. For this purpose, Nvivo Pro 11 were used for the categorization of the data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of this study that was conducted at a particular university involving nine respondents. The respondents consisted of six males and three females. Their age ranged between 35-44 years old and they had between 11-15 years of working experience at a learning institution. In terms of the degree of necessity using social media at the working places, the majority of them ranked social media as the highest [25].

The results of this study can be categorised into three main aspects, which are i) the usage pattern of social media at the workplace, ii) the impact of using social media at the workplace and iii) the relationship of using social media to work productivity [26].

In this study, the usage pattern of social media was

categorized under three categories, namely the type of social media, platform and purpose. All the respondents reported that they used Whatsapps, Facebook, email and Google search engine and YouTube.They accessed email and Whatsapp mainly through smartphone and desktop [27]. This is reasonable as all employees have their own smartphones and a desktop provided by the organisation.Respondent 1 stated "I like to use Whatsapp followed by Facebook and e-mails at work as it ensures the efficiency of my administrative work". While Respondent 9 stated, "I used the social media through my smartphone and desktop at the workplace". In this case, the usage of this type was totally different from each other depending on their job scope and purpose

With respect to the purpose of using social media, four main purposes have been identified which are i) work, notification, reminder and socialisation. They claimed that they used it mainly for working purposes to complete the task, doing paperwork and to notify the colleagues about important matters [Respondent 2,3,9]. These types of usage actually dependon their job scope. There were also respondents who used it for socializing during working hours {Resp 6]. However, there are also respondentswho did not prefer to use social media for socialising during working hours as they argued that when socialising the means of communication need to have 'a spirit' which the social media dos not.According to Respondent 2: "The social media is the best communication tool used to communicate with each other without face-to-face. The usage simplifies the work process and arrangement and save money and time. However, I prefer face-to-face for socializing purposes. This is because technology does not have spirit, which make people misinterpret real meaning…"For them, it is not necessary to use social media for completing the task, especially for administrative work as they only usedWhatsappto inform urgent matters.

The contribution of social media to the work productivity has also been discussed. Among the contribution of social media to work productivity are i) enhances work productivity; ii) save time and money; iii) facilitates effective and fast communication; iv) improvesinnovation; v)delivers information on time; and vi) facilitates work collaboration. In this regard, Respondent 2 and 8 highlighted that " social media helps me to complete my work faster as I can get the information needed on time and quickly [Respondent 2]. Through Whatsapp, I can send and receive the information on the spot which accelerate the completion of my work [Respondent 8]. According to Respondent 1, "YouTube is not just for entertainment …, it can also be used to share and learn from others. If I want to know about something that people

have already done, I just searched in YouTube.." Further, Respondent 5 said that " when I organized a programme, I can easily get participants through Facebook and Google".

Based on the above responses, they indicate that the social media usage can make people become more knowledgeable as they share their knowledge together to create new ideas and work collaboratively. People can make many friends through network to share the idea which they refer as mutual intelligent [Respondent 6]. Furthermore, task can be completed on time as the information can be sent immediately to facilitate their work. In addition, it also helps them to find the participant which is organised by staff itself through social media like Facebook and Google form. Majority agreed this technology especially Whatsapp save their time and money. All the benefits gained from the use of social media will directly boost work productivity at the workplace.

Not all respondents agreed that social media contributes solely to work productivity.The majority of them have mixed responses, in which there are positive and negative impact in using the social media at the workplace. With respect to negative impact of using social media at the workplace, it is found that the respondents perceived that the negative impact of social media relate to the miscommunication caused by people's different perception as they interpret the message and the possibility of distracting their work. Specifically, Respondent 2 and 7 claim that "the use of Whatsapp can disrupt my focus when doing my work". Respondent 3 claimed that "the information can be viral in second without taking into account the validity of the information". Respondent 1 and 9 highlighted that social media it may lead "to misunderstanding of meaning of the word conveyed as people have different perceptions"[Respondent 1] and "to miscommunication with each other and it can kill the mind and spirit to work" [Respondent 9].

Based on the above results, the relationship between social media usage and work productivity based on the respondents view are varied. Certain employees agreed that there is a relationship between the usages of social media with staff productivity. One of the respondents said the social media as an added value for each staff. The social media is closely linked to improve the educator productivity such as lecturer and teacher. While, some of the respondentsclaimed that there is no relation between social media usage with staff productivity. This is because the social media itself cannot contribute to any implication that can affect staff productivity. They cannot be productive or non-productive through the use of social media itself. Unless the purposes of usage is for notification, the relationship between social media and staff

productivity exists. However, this study supports that there is a relation between the usage of social media and productivity. People will be using social media to facilitate their work productivity either for information, communication and other purposes [4].

4.   CONCLUSIONS

As a conclusion, this finding of this study showed that most commonly used social media among the respondents are Whatsapp and email, followedby Facebook, Google and Youtube. Based on the pattern of usage, there is not much difference among the employees as they used it for work purposes during working hours. They would prefer to use Whatsapp in order to reach their target because Whatsapp is one of the fastest platforms for information and communication channel. They also used it for notifying and reminder purposes among colleagues and students. However, not all respondents agreed that social media contributes solely to work productivity.The majority of them have mixed responses, in which there are positive and negative impact in using the social media at the workplace.This medium has its negative side if users could not control their usage.However, its impacts, whether positive or negative depends on the user's attitude and behaviour in controlling their usage. Further, the relationship between social media usage and productivity exists only if the purpose of usage is to search the information to enrich their knowledge as an educator and to notify the students. However, when it is mainly used for socializing purpose, its usage does not contribute to work productivity. In this case, it is recommended that the management of the organisation should limit the usage of social media specially for personal purposes during working hours. By doing so, it is expected that work productivity among employees can be maintained or improved.

It is important to highlight that the findings of this study is restricted to a particular contexts, hence generalising the findings to other contexts should be made with caution. Further, this study was conducted as a preliminary study to investigate the usage patterns and impact of using social media among employees at a university. A focus group interview with only nine respondents was conducted to address these objectives. In this case, a different research approach may generate different findings. For future work, the findings of this study will be used as the basic knowledge to gain indepth understanding on the relationship between the use of media social at the workplace and work productivity.

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