

Impact of Online Social Networking on Employees Productivity at Work Place in University of Gondar - A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Employees are considered as one of the most important assets of any institution. University of Gondar is one of the known universities in Ethiopia and has large number employees. Success of this University depends on the productivity of its employees. Social media, which has become very popular, has infiltrated the workplace and most employees are utilizing social media in the workplace without any access restriction. The purpose of this study is to examine the extent of social media participation by employees and its effect on their productivity. A sample was stratified randomly selected from a population that has internet connectivity in the workplace. Primary data was collected by using a questionnaire and interview. The research found both negative and positive relationship between social media participation and employee productivity. The negative relationship was however found to be stronger as 68.4 % employees spend most of their time on social media enhancing personal networks and 86 % of employees use office hours to visit online social networks. Positive relationship exists in employee, who use of social media for seeking and viewing work related information. The study concluded that employees participate in social media in the workplace for both work and non-work related activity. Social media has the potential to allow employees to form collaborations and communities for knowledge creation and sharing, better channels of communication, which enhance employee productivity. However, it can draw employees in to an addiction that distracts performance as well as straining the University resources.

Keywords

Online Social Networking, Employee productivity and University of Gondar.

1. INTRODUCTION

For some years employers have had to deal with issues concerning employees' Internet use via organizational information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructures. Thus, it has quickly become an accepted practice for employees to use social media internally and externally to achieve organizational outcomes. The current popularity of online social networking is undeniable and companies have started to take notice of this fact, although skepticism regarding productivity and technological risks do widely exist [1]. In the organizational context the problems associated with online social networking (OSN) technology as well as the nature of the content on such sites present employers with a dilemma. Many organizations effectively

employed acceptable use policies combined with other defense technologies to manage Internet access and use.

On the other hand, the opportunities that OSN can present to organizations should be investigated in order to make informed decisions before simply discarding this type of communication and collaboration technology. Similar to other organizations, tertiary education institutions apply and benefit from various communication and collaboration technologies.

The findings of Quan-Haase, *et al.* [3] suggest that the Internet provides a sphere for social interaction; it encourages people to interact with others that have similar interests and creates social unity. This sense of camaraderie that can be obtained through social networking may assist in creating a loyal organizational culture, increasing morale and the general sense of unity among employees.

1.1 Productivity and Social Networking in the Modern Economy

Productivity defined as 'how much and how well we produce from resources used. If we produce more or better goods from the same resources, we increase productivity. Or if we produce the same goods from lesser resources, we also increase productivity'[6]. In this research, 'productivity' refers to the time spent by an employee actively executing the job he or she was hired to do, in order to produce the desired outcomes expected from the employees' job description.

Recent studies, for example, [6], [7][8] agreed that social networks are typical characterizations of human behavior to fulfill the need to communicate and connect with people they know, meet new people who share a common interest, collaborate, participate and share information and knowledge as well as gain new knowledge.

Generally, these are also the reasons why individuals engage in social behavior via the Internet. To many, the Internet provides effective social networking opportunities and their online behavior includes building individual relationships, expanding their personal network of friends, finding people who have had similar experiences, discussing common topics of interest, dating and finding potential life partners, staying connected to old friends or distant family and virtually meeting peers, including work colleagues, to discuss current issues or topics of interest.

1.2 The Major Social Networking Websites

A social network is a set of individuals or groups who are connected to one another through socially meaningful relationships [8]. Some of the common social networking sites in common are:

Facebook, introduced in February 2004, is one of the most popular social networking websites today. This website was originally open only to students at Harvard University, but this no longer holds true. Facebook has reached a membership of over 1.11 billion [5].

LinkedIn was started in May 2003, and is less focused on social networking. This tool is used to network within a desired professional atmosphere and allows individuals to build professional, career-oriented relationships. "LinkedIn is the most business-oriented of the four big social networking websites" [9]. LinkedIn has a membership of about 277 million [10].

MySpace was started in August 2003. It is more directed toward the musically inclined. This social networking website is no longer solely for social networking. It is more about connecting different bands and groups, rather than connecting individuals. The membership for MySpace is about 126 million [11].

Joining the social networking trend in March 2006, Twitter is the most immediate of the four big social networking websites. It has become a self-promotional tool used by celebrities. For those who like to "follow" their favorite celebrities, they can get instant updates about where their favorite singer or actor is, what they are doing, how they are feeling, etc. Twitter has around 10 million members.

YouTube is a video-sharing website head quartered in San Bruno, California. The service was created by three former PayPal employees in February 2005 and has been owned by Google since late 2006 [11]. The site allows users to upload, view, and share videos, and it makes use of Adobe Flash Video and HTML5 technology to display a wide variety of user-generated and corporate media video. Available content includes video clips, TV clips, music videos, and other content such as video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos.

As with organizations in general, employees at University of Gondar (UOG) have varying computers and internet literacy and skill levels. The UOG, as a tertiary education institution, has the opportunity to implement internet and online social networking to positively influence its employees' productivity and to enhance collaboration among its employees. However, University of Gondar employees spend more and more time on social media engaging in non work related activities such as creating personal networks, checking on family and friends, streaming and downloading music and video, checking sports scores, following social bookmarks. This study aimed to establish whether employees of university of Gondar had previously used, were using, or would be interested in using online social networks in a professional environment and what effects the unrestricted use of OSN technology possibly had on the productivity of these employees.

The development of social media policies and internet use policies in by most employers is at an early stage as most employers do not have proper policies, although practice has dictated use of arbitrary control and restriction. One of the challenges of this university is to enhance productivity of the

workforce in order to increase profits and avoid wastage of resource. University of Gondar would be a leading center of universal knowledge, taking into consideration the changing world environment, geared towards poverty reduction, welfare improvement and development of science and technology in Ethiopia. To achieve these things, the information and communication technology is very important. After 2004, all infrastructure of ICT are installed, all employees have internet access in offices.

This study therefore seeks to investigate the effects of the social media in the workplace on employee productivity.

In order to address the research problem stated, the following sub-problems were considered.

- What are global Online Social Networks?
- Do Online Social Networks links communities online in a valid, useful manner?
- What are the possible consequences if employees are allowed to access online social Networks without restriction?
- How can Online Social Networks contribute to the productivity of an organization, specifically University of Gondar?
- What are the possible advantages and disadvantage that social networking could have for University of Gondar?

2. RELATED WORK

The aim of this study was to discover the effect of social networking on employee productivity within University of Gondar.

2.1 Methodologies and Procedures

The research conducted was Analytical Research and the data was collected with the help of a questionnaire and interview in a cross sectional survey.

2.1.1 Population

The population of the study consisted of the number of employees that visited social network for the period under study. The target population for the study was the university of Gondar employees. The employees were chosen from the four campuses of the University of Gondar which are Medical College, Atse Tewodros, Maraki and Fasil campus. All the target populations have internet access in the campus and their work place or office.

Since there are different classes of respondents, the researcher team used stratified sampling method. For the purpose of getting information on employees' internet access, the research team was classifying the possible employees who can be solicited in this study as "higher officials", "permanent academic staff", "temporary academic staff", "temporary administrative staff" and "permanent administrative staff" working in the university as a full time employee. This classification is made taking into account the level of awareness to the Internet technology of employees and the type of information we need from them.

2.1.2 Participants

The participants for this research were from a population who has internet connectivity in their workplace. Respondents of the study was composed of 250 participants and the participants was chosen using randomly sampling technique in which the researchers selects these participants from the four campuses because this category is considered to mirror the whole employees with reference to the characteristic in question. The selected respondents are selected randomly

from different departments and offices. The questioners are distributed for those 250 employees.

2.1.3 Data Collection Techniques

Data was obtained over a period of three months; between Januarys to May 2015 from University of Gondar. For the purpose of data collection, we used interviews, questionnaires and observation. Respondents who used social networking sites were asked to complete a questioner. The questionnaire contained 10 major questions. Almost all questions were being close-ended to enhance validity of response. In addition to questioner, 20 participants who are higher official and ordinary employees were interviewed about social network at UOG.

2.1.4 Procedures

For the purpose of data collection, we used three data collection instruments which are interviews, questioner and observation. First all possible respondents were stratified as “higher officials strata”, “system administrators strata”, “academic staff strata” and “administrative staff strata”. Next, simple random sampling methods were used to select respondents from each stratum. Finally, the selected respondents from “higher official strata” and “system administrator strata” were interviewed; and respondents from “academic staff strata” and “administrative staff strata” were given questionnaires.

2.1.5 Data Analysis and Discussion:

After collection of the data is completed, the researchers were applying descriptive data analysis technique with respect to the specific objectives we have considered. A series of examinations and interpretations on the collected data were carried out thoroughly to determine which web sites are frequently accessed, non-work related; the average time an employee wastes in accessing these sites per day or week and to explore impacts of online social network on employees’ productivities. Finally, by combining all the examinations and interpretations, the research team was concluding the extent that employees waste working hours surfing the Internet.

The study applied Analysis of variance, frequency, chi-square and Pearson’s correlation was undertaken to ascertain the degree of relationship between the variables.

3. RESULTANT OBSERVATIONS

3.1. Findings and Discussion

To explore the relationship between social networks and its impacts on employees’ performance, 250 employees’ respondents who are working in university of Gondar were selected. So, the following section of this research discusses the analysis of data collection by using SPSS16.0. In this

section, the findings of the empirical component of the study are stated, explained and discussed. The respondents were asked to respond 10 main questions. However, most of those major questions have more than two options under each. In addition to questioner, 20 employees were interviewed. The analysis starts from the following questions and answers,

Q1: Social Media awareness

Our target groups were asked their awareness concerning any social network. From 250 respondents, almost all the employees know well one or the other social networking sites. As the result of this research indicates, almost all of respondents had awareness about social media with the following percents; 88.3% of the respondents had awareness and recognize well YouTube, 15% recognize MySpace, 92% of the respondents recognize Face book, 35.1 % recognize LinkedIn, 71% recognize Google+, 48 % of the respondents recognize Twitter, 18.1 % recognize Other online social network such as Viber, Skype, whatsApp and 3.2 % do not recognize neither of these social web sites.

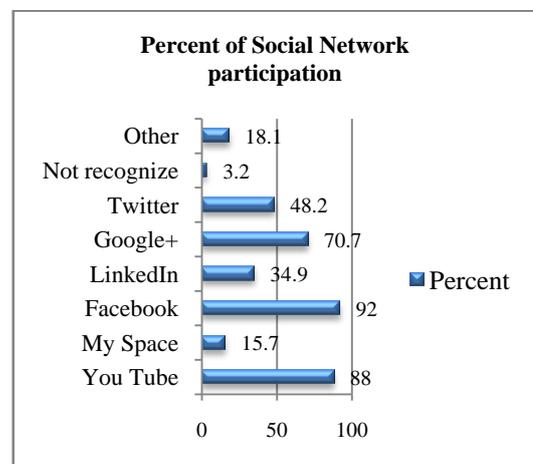


Figure 1: Social network used by employee

Q2: Visiting or using OSN

The target groups were asked whether they have user accounts and use one or more of the above social network sits. And the result indicates 95.2% of the respondents were using one or more online web sites. The rest 4.8% are not using any online social networks.

Q3: Frequency of Social Media Participation:

The study sought the number of times in a day or a week each respondent participate in social media.

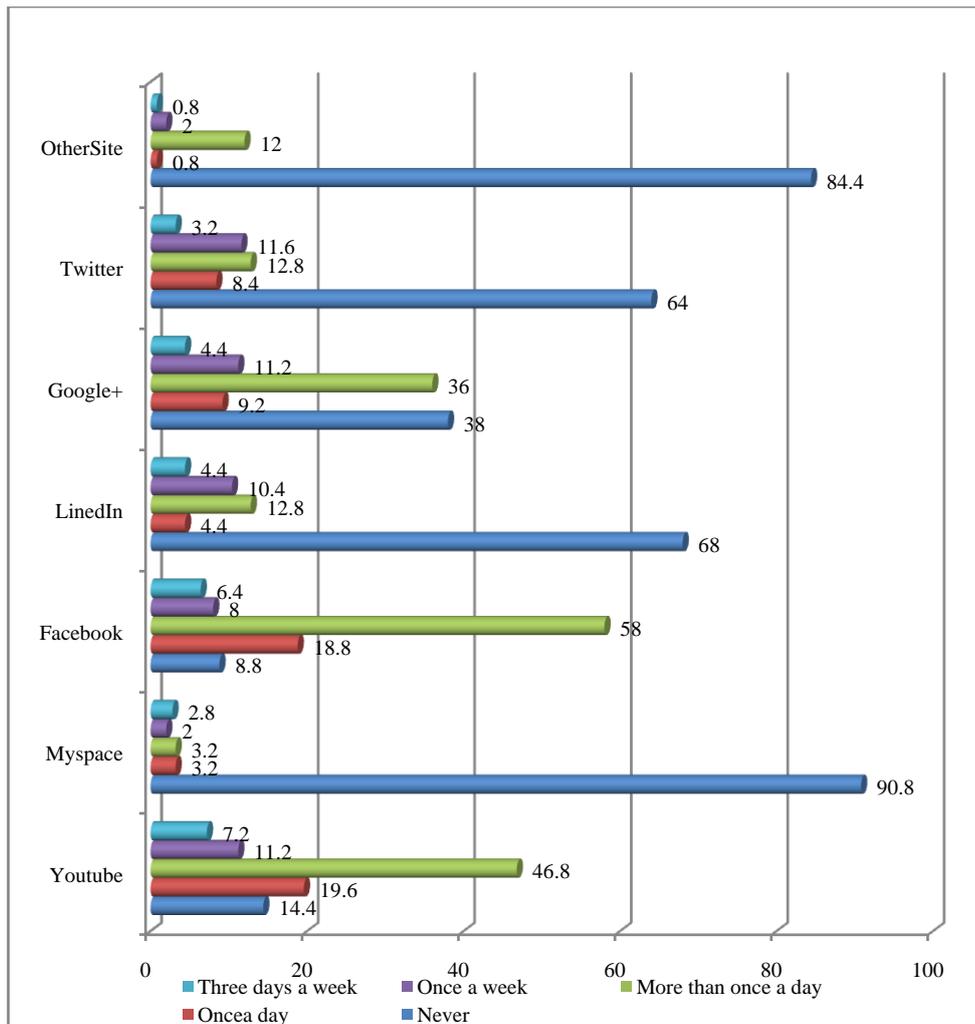


Figure 2: Access frequency of social network

As figure 2 depicts, the social networking sites that UOG employees used most frequently included Face book, YouTube and Google plus. 92.8% of the respondents have face book account and used it regularly, 85.6 % of the respondents used you tube regularly, 62 % of the respondents have Google+ account and used it regularly, 36.6 % of the respondents have twitter account and used it regularly. MySpace was the least used of all the websites by UOG employees.

Hence, from this graph we can conclude that social media participation in the workplace of UOG is real or common

among employees and almost there are no respondents who spent zero hours on the social networks. Majority of the participants login to their social account more than once a day and waste a lot of time instead of focusing on their work.

Q4: Place of using Social Media

Question 8 aimed to establish whether the respondents who accessed Online Social Networks did so more often from their office computer, home or internet café. The result indicates that these Online Social Network visits are most likely done during office hours.

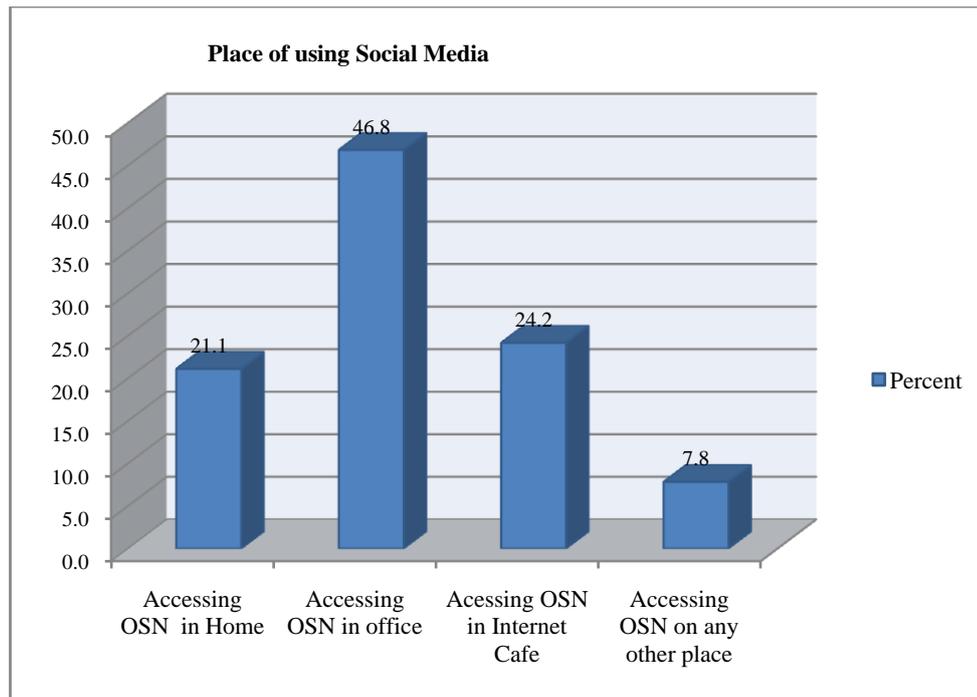


Figure 3: Access place of social network

The results, depicted in figure 5.5, showed that 46.8% of the respondents visit Online Social Networking sites from the office, while 21.1% of the respondents visit Online Social Networking sites from home. The fact that 46.8% of the respondents in the sample group visit Online Social Networking sites during office hours may influence various aspects of organizational functionality.

Q5: Reasons for Social Media Participation:

Question 9 aimed to explore for what purpose the respondents use online social network most of the time in their work place. As Figure 4 indicates; most respondents use social media for finding current and old friends, chatting and doing work related tasks. These are the most important reasons for social media participation. These four reasons came out most strongly as the reasons for social media participation in the workplace, which shows that participation can be attributed to both work and non-work related reasons. 69.5% respondents use social media for finding their old or previous friends, 71.5% keeping in touch with their current friends. 69.4% agreed that they participate in social media to search work related information. 70.7% of the respondents agreed that they participate in social media to share information with colleagues and other friends. 29.3% of the respondents agree that they participate in social media in the workplace to build their own business. 48.3% of the respondents agree that they participate in social media in the workplace to build their own business.

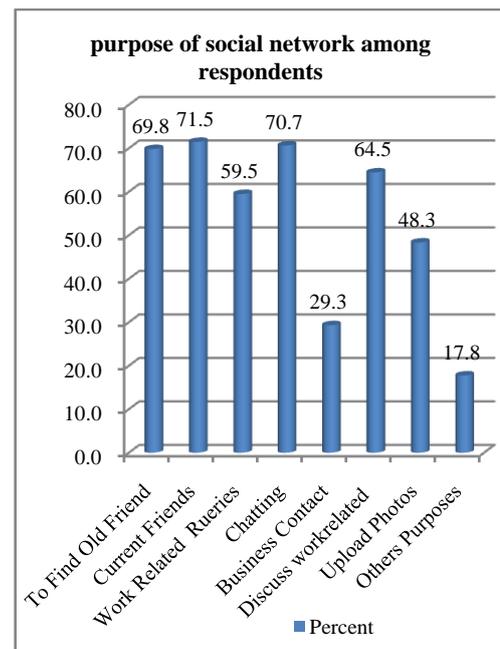


Figure 4: Purpose of social network among respondents

Q6: Attitude and perception towards Online Social Network:

This questionnaire aimed to establish the attitude and perceptions of the sample group regarding Online Social Networking in their professional environment. Going by findings displayed in Figure below; respondents were prompted to give their sentiment on the probability of Online Social Networking encouraging the sharing of knowledge and expertise between users. The results showed that 47.2% of respondents agreed and 43.2% of respondents strongly agreed that Online Social Networking encourages people to share knowledge and expertise.

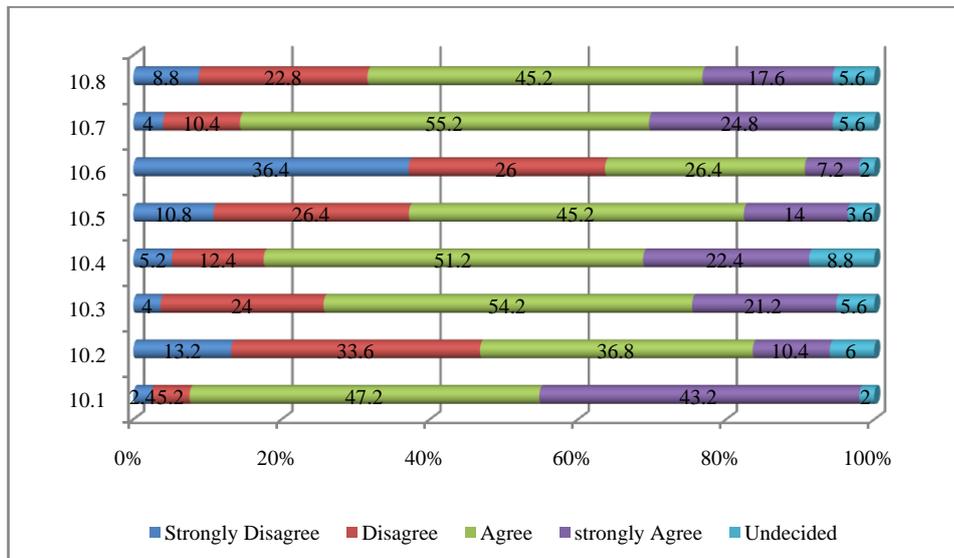


Figure 5: Attitude and Perception of respondents towards Online Social network

In the figure above on line 10.2 the respondents were given the opportunity to indicate whether they are sentiments that Online Social Networks lower the productivity of employees. An ambiguous result was found. The results found 46.8% of the respondents who indicated that they disagreed with the notion that Online Social Networks lower the productivity of employees, whereas the same percentage (47.2%) of respondents acknowledged that they agreed with the statement that Online Social Networks lower the productivity of employees.

In the line of 10.3 aimed at establishing the respondents' perceptions of the technical difficulty of OSN. Misconceptions might deter respondents from participation in organizational OSN. This however did not seem to be a major problem with 75.4% of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed that extensive knowledge about Internet applications was needed to participate in OSN. This should encourage an organization to employ OSN technology to its advantage.

The next aspect of the respondent's attitudes and perception which was explored in Line 10.4 was the notion that Online Social Networks contribute to the intellectual capital of an organization. The results showed that the majority of the sample group disagrees 12.4% and strongly disagrees 5.2% that Online Social Networks contribute to the intellectual capital of their organization, with 8.8% of the respondents remaining undecided. Even though a large number of respondents within this study agreed 52.2% of respondents and strongly agreed 22.4% of respondents that Online Social Networks contribute to the intellectual capital of their organization, the majority of respondents agreed with this statement.

In the above figure 5 lines 10.5 tested whether respondents experienced OSN as being addictive. The most widely held sentiments of the respondents is that Online Social Networking sites are addictive, with 45.2% of respondents agreeing and 14% strongly agreeing that these sites are in fact addictive. This result emphasized the need to support employees in applying technology in ways that did not

negatively influence the way they normally function at work. This could entail restricted access to OSN sites, which received attention in figure above line 10.6. The results, however, indicated that many respondents disagreed (26%) or strongly disagreed (36.4%) that access to OSN sites should be blocked by Office of ICT. On the other hand, some respondents agreed (26.4%) or strongly agreed (7.2%) that access should be blocked. Although the majority of respondents rejected the idea, a considerable percentage did see due cause for an Office of ICT. Even though the majority of respondents in this study do not agree with Online Social Networking sites being blocked by Office of ICT, however, when the threats of unrestricted access to Online Social Networking sites occur, measures have to be considered and taken by an ICT office to protect the University's information systems.

After considering the possible threats that unrestricted access to Online Social Networking may present, the following question subset explored a possible positive effect of Online Social Networking. On the above figure line 10.7 tested the sample group's perception and attitude regarding the possibility that Online Social Networking sites encourage innovation through collaboration. A majority of the respondents, in fact 55.2%, predominantly agreed and 24.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that Online Social Networks do in fact encourage innovation through collaboration.

In the figure 5 line 10.8 the findings show that 8.8% of the respondents disagree and 22.8% of the respondents strongly disagree that such an Online Social Network may have this effect on employee productivity. A noticeable number of respondents (5.5%) remained undecided in this question, however the majority of the remaining number of respondents agreed (45.2% of respondents) and strongly agreed (17.6% of respondents) that such an organization specific Online Social Network will allow them to perform their daily work functions more efficiently.

This positive attitude towards organizational OSN should encourage an organization to exploit OSN technology since

the positive effects of can benefit the University in future. However, the findings indicated that the OSN currently occurring at work was not necessarily for work-related purposes, which led this research to the following conclusion.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

These findings indicate that if not well managed, social media participation may lead to a loss of productivity. Studies by Kidwell [12] collaborate this as they indicate that, the workplace of the 21st century has provided new ways and means for problem employees to continue the long tradition of withholding effort from the job [12]. Human beings are predisposed to create networks and communities that they feel may contribute to creation and sharing of knowledge. This was evident from the findings which indicate that social media offers a new medium for knowledge creation and offers University the potential to enhance productivity. This can be achieved when proper and effective ways of managing employee social media participation exist.

To maximize the potential of OSN within the University, it is recommended that University designate specific networks for University-wide social networking. It is also recommended that employers consider developing and implementing clear and comprehensive acceptable use policies when attempting to deal with OSN issues. This will ensure that employees are aware of what is permitted regarding OSN, what risks are involved from a professional and personal point of view and what the technical implications are.

University should therefore establish strategies to address OSN issues such as personal usage, business relevance, site restrictions and information confidentiality without restricting employees to benefit personally as well as professionally from this social Web technology, thereby ultimately benefiting the University through its potential positive effect on employee productivity.

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