



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Effect of Social Media Participation in the Workplace on Employee Productivity

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Abstract

Organizational success largely depends on employees who are considered as one of the most important assets of any organization because they are capable of creating value and enable organizations have a sustainable competitive advantage. Success of any organizations depends on the productivity of employees. Social media, which has become very popular, has infiltrated the workplace and most employees are utilizing social media in the workplace. The main purpose of this study was to examine the extent of social media participation by employees and its effect on their productivity. A sample was randomly selected from a population that has internet connectivity in the workplace. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) test and Pearson's correlation was undertaken to ascertain the degree of relationship between the variables. Primary data was collected by use of a questionnaire. 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 employees spend most of their time on social media enhancing personal networks. Positive relationship exists in employee use of social media for seeking and viewing general 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 organizational resource.

Keywords: *Social media, Participation, Employee productivity, Workplace.*

Introduction

Today's business world has been faced with momentous challenges on a global scale ranging from financial crisis, ever increasing competition, dwindling and unpredictable flow of natural resources such as oil, raising cost and reduced profits. Revitalizing and possibly even reinventing the culture of organizations and the way they do business is key to achieving increased levels of workplace productivity and employee satisfaction [1].

Employees who are regarded as assets of the organizations have a greater role to play to make organization succeed in this ever changing environment. Economies and organizations are in continuous change where the reliance on manual workers is shifting to productivity of knowledge workers. According to [2], knowledge workers account for more than two-thirds of the workforce. Digital literacy and internet connectivity has become a mandatory skill in life not just for the employee but also organizations, business is

therefore at a cross road marked by a disruptive change. Networking sites are generating mixed feelings and are being used by millions of people across the world and have altered certain forms of human behaviour such as inhibitions to sharing information [3]. Employees are spending 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 [1,4].

Over time, it has been clearly demonstrated that the internet has become a focal point for almost every human activity and interest [5]. Human nature dictates the need to form alliances or networks in order to form communities for family, education, religion, work and personal interests. In the last six to seven years, innovative online social communities have crept into employees' personal spaces and by extension the workplace [6].

With the explosion of the social media phenomenon making it part of daily life to many people, there is need for studies on ways to strike a balance between social media use and its effects on employee productivity in terms of use of organizational resources and time.

Social media participation has other positive effects that practitioners need to manage such as informal learning, creation and sharing of knowledge, retention of organizational knowledge in searchable formats, effective use of computer aided communication technologies and increased productivity and workflow [7-9]. The rise of information technology coupled with the ever expanding possibilities of the internet has ensured that such emerging technologies like social media, are gaining entry into the workplace.

The importance of social media tools in the today's business environment has gained importance due to the increasing complexity of the global business setting which involves global coworkers, customers and suppliers. Business processes have become so complex that they must be automated because employees can no longer perform all the tasks required in the time available. 'None of us can work in a vacuum in today's world; we must work with one another to get things done [7]. Organizations today are constantly facing the challenge of contextualizing this phenomenon and its effects on the employees' ability to perform duties assigned to them and the ability to draw boundaries between personal and professional use of organizational information technology resource. Wasting time through internet activities is simple and it is a huge hidden cost to business. If the company has an eight-person department and each of them spends an hour a day on the above activities, that is a whole employee wasted [10].

There is a very small chance that an IT technician will be able to know every social networking website and successfully block access to everyone [11]. Such challenges have driven employers to opt to monitor their employees' social media usage amidst an ethical debate on the right to do so. Proponents of monitoring argue that this is proper as the employer has the obligation of ensuring that productivity is enhanced and company time is not wasted or abused. As the owner of the technology equipment, the corporation has a right to know how it is being used and in what capacity [12].

Employees are faced with the challenge of work encroaching on personal life. This is evident in the

use of devices that enhance connectivity with the world of work outside the office. This might mean that an employee replies to email from home or checks and responds to interactions on the organization's social space for example a Facebook page.

The use of social networking software by professionals is increasing dramatically. How it is used, whether it enhances or reduces productivity, and how enterprise-friendly design and use might evolve are open questions [13]. Indications from [14] show that social media is not the first occurrence where technological innovations have been a cause for concern in regards to employee productivity.

The introduction of the telephone in the workplace caused and still does raise issues of its effects on productivity due to the time spent by employees making non-work related phone calls. The same was also a concern with the introduction of the desktop computer that raised issues of employees wasting otherwise productive time playing computer games [15]. Although productivity in some occupations can be measured in total units produced in a workday, productivity in centers that focus on cognitive tasks is more challenging to assess [16].

Organizations are increasingly adopting social media use for marketing and consumer outreach with organizations still at a crossroad of distinguishing social media participation benefits and drawbacks to productivity [17].

Problem Statement

Relevant literature has shown that the popularity of social networks and their increasing use in the workplace present some concerns for employers, but all indications are that employers cannot hope to prevent social network use during work hours [11]. A dilemma therefore arises where 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 [1,4]. This comes at time when organizations on a global scale have been faced with a multitude of challenges and are looking for different ways to remain afloat. 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 business age is to enhance productivity of the workforce in order to increase profits and avoid waste of

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

Literature Review

The connectivism theory which is a learning theory for the digital age, shows that knowledge societies require that individuals constantly update their knowledge which cannot happen as a process of progressive knowledge acquisition but through preservation of connections [18]. Continued learning is centered around the capability to stay connected and belong to digital communities with which interests are and can be continuously shared [19]. Connectivism is networking applied to learning and knowledge patterns, on which we can act, can reside outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database), is focused on connecting specialized information sets.

However, organizations are also constantly concerned with the threat posed by leak of confidential information by unguarded comments by employees on social media as per [9,20].

Communication networks and the organizational forms are undergoing dramatic changes due to globalization and advances and convergence in computer and communication technology. The organizational landscape is transforming towards network form organizations where communication medium has become comprehensive, diverse and malleable to the point where it absorbs the whole of the human experience.

Social media is defined as a web service(s) that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a system with definite boundaries, articulate a list of other participants in the system whom they share a connection and, view and explore their list of connections and of those made by others in the system. The nature and connection rules may vary from one service to the other [21]. Social media is founded on three major constructs user-generated content, communities of interest and web 2.0. It is based on user driven activity where the boundaries between the producer and consumer are blurred [22]. Users play the role of generation of content, distribution and filtration based on relevance. Content is created through, participation where social media encourages contributions and feedback from everyone who is interested, and openness where majority of social media

applications are based on participation and feedback that encourages free access and exchange of information. Barrier to access, sharing and use of content is frowned upon and conversation, where unlike contemporary media that relies on broadcasting content to an audience, is more of a two-way conversation [23].

Communities of interest in social media facilitate efficient formation of communities around a shared interest such as career, cultural or political inclination. This involves the interaction between people, creating, sharing, exchanging and commenting in virtual communities and networks [24]. Web 2.0 is the new forms of digital technologies and applications that allow people to easily participate on the internet by being part of its creation and development [25]; most social media communities are born of their connectedness that make use of links to resources, groups and individuals.

Social media is a real phenomenon with massive number of users signing into or accessing sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, MySpace, Tumblr and a list that boasts an endless number of sites as well as new ones joining.

In December 2011 Facebook accounted for 1 on 7 minutes spent online, while in January 2012, PC users spent an average of 405 minutes on Facebook during the month, compared to 89 minutes on Tumblr, 89 minutes on Pinterest, 21 minutes on Twitter, 17 minutes on LinkedIn, 8 minutes on MySpace, and just three minutes on Google+ [26]. The web ranking company [27] indicates that five out of the top ten websites on the internet ranked by number of unique visitors using desktop computers are social media sites. Globalization has also led to a deepening of self that provides opportunities for participation in new kinds of communication networks that convey news, information, and entertainment and societal processes. This transformation can therefore be interpreted as a major driver in the growth of social networking in the workplace that goes against the traditional hierarchies of flow of information where interaction either followed a bottom up or top bottom approach.

The focus therefore lies on; Internet age with focus on shift from web 1.0 to web 2.0 forms of internet and how they have affected employment and organizational related scholarly debate and early and more recent employee applications of the internet [4].

The findings point to rise of novel forms of industrial protest and spaces for self-organized employee resistance through the ability to drum up support through employee led narratives.

Various studies have highlighted the perceived benefits that social media offers in the work place such as, improved communication channels, sharing of skills and knowledge, channels for informal learning and improvement of morale and job satisfaction [1,9,19]. Indications from [9] tends to capture the bulk of these applications by indicating that, individual success in society depends on size of their social networks and ability to network and form connections with social groups.

Learning benefits of social systems occur through provision of a collaborative learning environment where problems are collectively tackled and solutions shared among peers, sharing of knowledge that ensures that organizations do not incur extra costs reproducing existing knowledge. Organizations that are able to harness this ability of humans to manage and acquire knowledge will therefore be able to lower transaction costs and increase profits [9].

Social networking has transformed online content ownership from owners to contributors of materials to the site thus the shift from gathering to participation in terms of information and knowledge creation. Companies can reap benefits of increased productivity and cost shifting through implementation of virtual spaces that have replaced traditional social mechanics. Maintaining personal and professional networks is a very vital aspect of business and was very labor intensive before the advent of social media that has allowed for initiating and maintaining thousands of acquaintances simultaneously easily. For companies to remain ahead of the competition, employees need tools to organize work around network communities and information aligned to them as well as ability to activate new connections. These technologies also recognize diversity of workers, contractors, consultants, partners and customers and how to share information across boundaries [1].

Social sites remove friction in collaboration by creating a culture of sharing and henceforth increasing job satisfaction that translates to productivity gain. The study by [9] brings out the value of personal networks highlighted in other

studies as an important component in knowledge creation a task that is connected to improved

productivity. Some of the major challenges as highlighted in studies by [28-30] include, withholding work effort, reduced boundaries between work and personal life, and issues of addiction.

Absenteeism affects productivity; however, even when employees are physically present at their jobs, they may experience decreased productivity and below normal work quality. This concept known as decreased presenteeism. Presenteeism among employees in mid to upper management is that of active engagement in work with a focus on cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement during work [31]. Employee engagement with social media during work hours can be a factor that contributes to waste of time leading to reduced productivity levels.

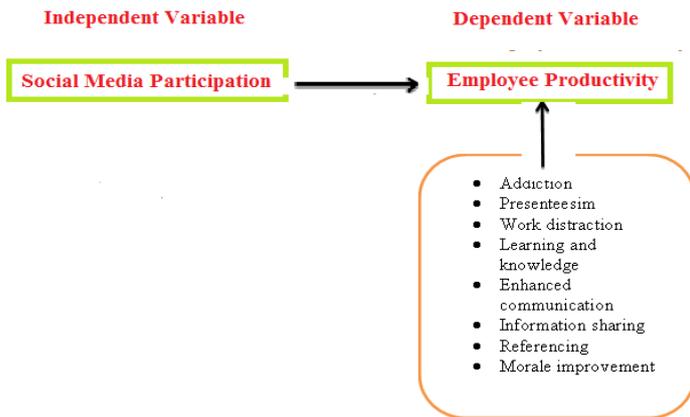
The internet is becoming an important area for users to seek social gratification. Communication with high degrees of interactivity like social media, are more likely to satisfy and retain users thus causing tendency for addiction and abuse of the internet. Employees that develop such addictions show disorders like depression, sexual disorders and loneliness that affect employee productivity, which might lead to legal exposure and loss of reputation to the organization [29]. Checking email, or any similar online activity, has that addictive quality of instant positive feedback and delayed negative feedback [32].

Social networking has been linked with impatience, making individuals more self-centered, change of brain patterns and activity, and reduction of the average person's attention span from 12 minutes to five in the last decade [33]. These findings can indicate that social media participation is increasingly affecting employee job engagement. Job engagement has been linked with absorption that is characterized with being totally focused on one's work such that time appears to pass speedily and one finds it increasingly difficult to detach oneself from work. Engaged employees work hard, are enthusiastic about their work and are immersed in their work activities [3].

Even if managers do not personally use social media, they recognize that social media sites have infiltrated modern culture and work life [34]. Most organizations have restricted access to social sites during work time. The key to successful management of social media lies in development of clear, fair and implementable user policies. Monitoring can however overcome such

challenges according to [35] by following data protection principles.

Conceptual Framework



Research Methodology

This study used a descriptive research design, which is a process of collecting data from the members of a population in order to determine the status of the subject under study with respect to one or more variables to determine the frequency of occurrence or the extent to which variables.

The sample for this research was from a population who has internet connectivity in their workplace.

Questionnaires were the instrument used in data collection. The questionnaire contained 19 closed

and open-ended questions with majority of the questions being close-ended to enhance validity of response. A 1-5 type Likert scale (5: Strongly disagree 4: Disagree 3: Neither agree nor disagree 2: Agree 1: Strongly agree) was used to measure respondents' agreement with the concepts under investigation.

The instrument was subjected to a reliability test to check for reliability by checking for internal consistency. One of the most commonly used indicators of internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Ideally, the Cronbach alpha coefficient of a scale should be .7 with values above .8 being preferable [36]. A Cronbach alpha test of the instrument returned $\alpha=.756$ which meant that the instrument was reliable and therefore the study proceeded to the data collection stage.

The study applied Analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Pearson's correlation was undertaken to ascertain the degree of relationship between the variables.

Findings

Social Media Participation Period

Response indicates the period in which the respondents have actively participated on social media in the workplace.

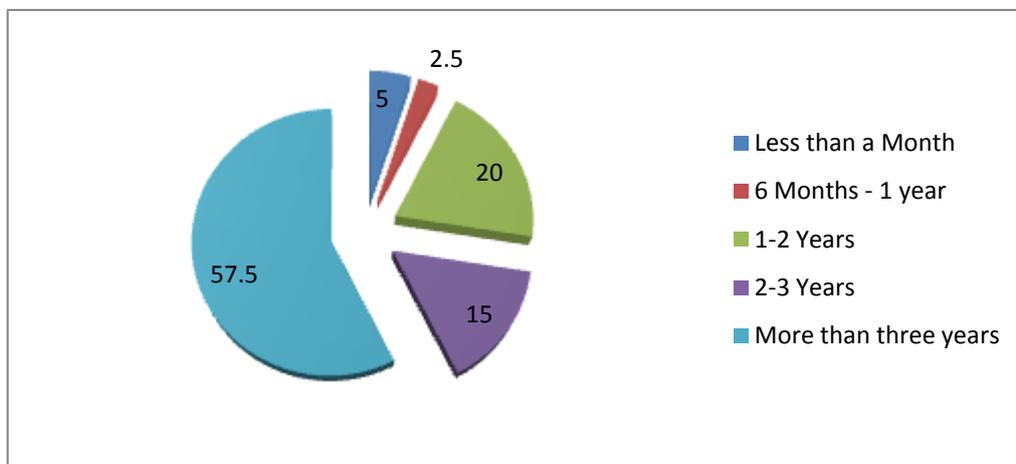


Fig.1: Period of social media participation

Figure 1 above indicates that a majority of respondents had been participating in social media for more than three years, 57.5% and 15% between two and three years, 20% between one and two years, 2.5% between six months and one year, and 5% for less than a month. These trends

were used to deduce that, social media participation in the workplace is real.

Regularly Used Social Media Sites

The response of the popular social sites shows the social sites the respondents regularly visited.

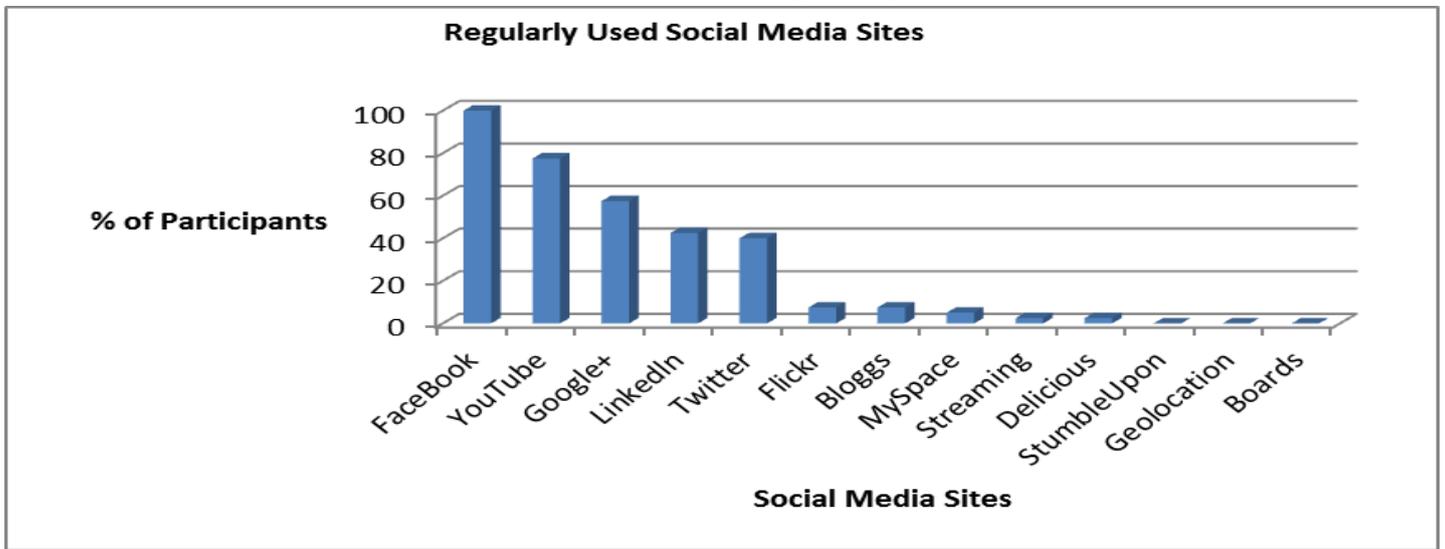


Fig. 2: Regularly used social media sites

As Figure 2 above shows, 100% of the respondents regularly used Facebook, 77.5% regularly used YouTube, 57.5% regularly used Google+, 42.5% regularly used LinkedIn, 40% regularly used Twitter, 7.5% regularly used Flickr, and 7.5% regularly used blogs, while the 10% regularly used the other six sites. However, respondents had the option to indicate whether they visited other social media sites not listed but none of the respondents indicated any. This shows that all respondents participate in social media in the workplace in one form or the other.

Frequency of Social Media Participation

The study sought to establish the number of days in a week that respondents participate in social media.

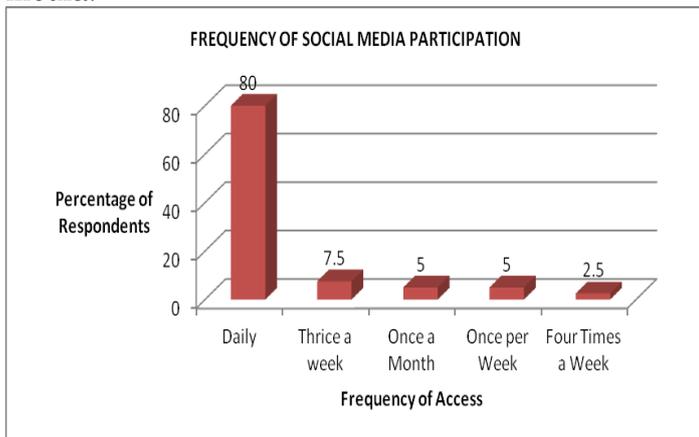


Fig. 3: Frequency of social media participation

As shown in Figure 3 above, 80% of the respondents access social media sites on a daily basis, 7.5% at least thrice a week, 2.5% four times a week, 5% once a week and 5% once a month.

Reasons for Social Media Participation

The study sought to determine the probable reasons for social media participation in the workplace. The respondents' responses were measured to the extent to which they agreed or

disagreed with the statements provided. A 5-point Likert Scale was used being (5: Strongly disagree (S.D) 4: Disagree (D) 3: Neither agree nor disagree (N) 2: Agree (A) 1: Strongly agree (S.A)

Reasons for Workplace Social Media Participation

Going by findings displayed in Figure 4 below; most respondents rate networking as the most important reason for social media participation as 35% agreed and 57% strongly agreed with keeping in touch with friends a social media participation reason, 42.5% agreed and 37.5% agreed that they participate in social media to search for work related information. These two 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.

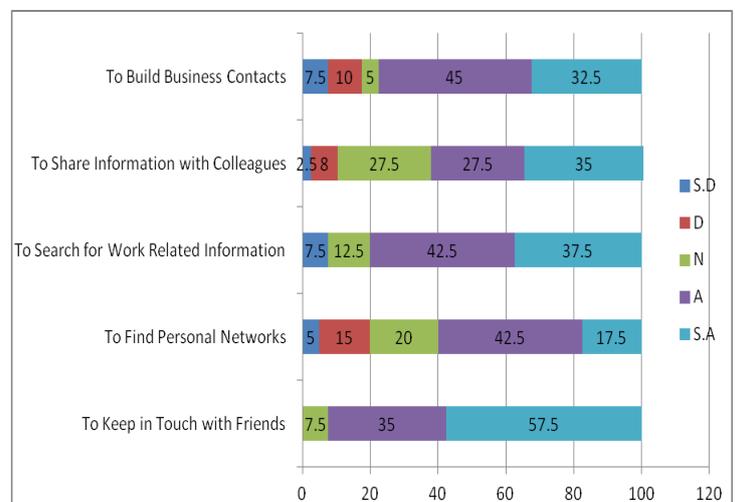


Fig. 4: Reasons for social media participation

This is also evident as seen where a majority of respondents 27.5% agreed and 35% strongly agreed that they participate in social media to share information with colleagues, 45% agreed and 32.5% strongly agreed that they participate in social media in the workplace to build business

contacts. This was against a majority of respondents 27.5% agreed and 35% strongly agreed of the respondents who that they participate in social media to share information with colleagues.

General Reasons for Workplace Social Media Participation

Respondents' response in the figure below shows their level of agreement or disagreement with general reasons for social media participation.

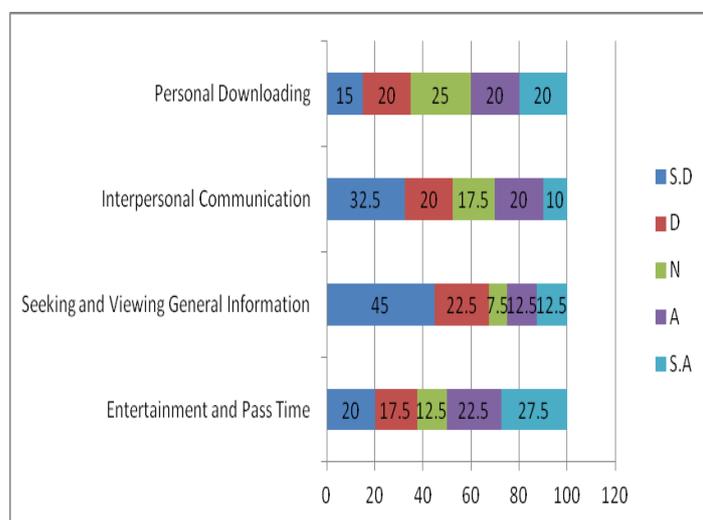


Fig. 5: General reasons for social media participation

As the results in figure 5 above shows, respondents rated the least important reasons for social media participation as seeking and viewing

general information with a majority 45% strongly disagreeing and 22.5% disagreeing. A majority of respondents indicated that personal downloading was not an important reason for social media participation with 15% strongly disagreeing, 20% agreeing and 25% neither disagreeing nor agreeing. A majority of respondents also indicated their disagreement with use of social media for interpersonal communication as 32.5% strongly disagreed and 20% disagreed. However, half the respondents indicated agreement with participation on social media for entertainment and pastime with 27.5% strongly agreeing and 22.5% agreeing with it as a reason for social media participation. These findings indicate the employees participate in social media mainly for the purposes of maintaining networks and seeking work related knowledge.

Relationship between Social Media Participation and Employee Productivity

An ANOVA analysis was done to check on the significance of the various models in the study and model 3 in the table below was the most significant. The model summary shows the relationship between social media participation and employee productivity with an $f < 0.05$. Model

3 having produced the best fit with $r = 0.589$ and $r^2 = 0.347$. This model was therefore adopted in the subsequent analysis.

Table 1 : Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.364	.133	.001	1.22358	.133	1.011	5	33	.427
2	.414	.171	-.124	1.29841	.039	.261	5	28	.930
3	.589	.347	-.034	1.24491	.176	1.615	4	24	.0203

Dependent variable: Employee productivity

The study also sought to find the correlation between time spent on social media and the reasons for social media participation that in turn have different effects on productivity. The coefficients related to model 3 are presented in Table 11, with the two coefficients significantly explaining the relationship between the effects and employee productivity ($p < 0.05$). The two coefficients are; to find personal networks, seeking and viewing general information. The results of coefficients in Table 2 above and model summary in Table 1 above led to the derivation of a simple regression model of the form;

Eq. 1

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \epsilon.$$

Where Y is the dependent variable, in this case employee productivity, β_0 is constant associated with model 3, β_1, β_2 , the beta coefficients of predictor variable X_1, X_2 and ϵ the error term. The relationship has been presented in the model below.

Model 1

$$EP = 1.458 - 0.558X_1 + 0.635X_2$$

$n = 40$

$r^2 = 0.347$

Where: EP = Employee Productivity

X_1 = To find personal networks

X_2 = Seeking and Viewing General Information

Table 2 :Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
3	(Constant)	1.548	2.344		.660	.052
	To Keep in Touch with Friends	.042	.458	.022	.092	.927
	To Find Personal Networks	-.616	.265	-.558	-2.326	.029
	To Search for Work Related Information	.560	.388	.412	1.442	.162
	To Share Information with Colleagues	-.154	.240	-.135	-.643	.526
	To Build Business Contacts	.091	.220	.090	.416	.681
	Reduces Boredom	.212	.230	.180	.920	.367
	Part of Daily Routine	.132	.239	.132	.551	.587
	Escape from Unsatisfying Job	-.544	.345	-.539	-1.579	.127
	Escape from Demanding Job	.295	.277	.267	1.067	.297
	Escape from Non-Demanding Job	.268	.245	.275	1.092	.286
	Entertainment and Pass Time	-.176	.178	-.219	-.985	.335
	Seeking and Viewing General Information	.532	.246	.635	2.162	.041
	Interpersonal Communication	-.244	.217	-.278	-1.125	.272
	Personal Downloading	.142	.177	.157	.803	.430

a. Dependent Variable: Employee productivity

The value $r^2 = 0.347$ means, 34.7% of the variations of the dependent variable (Employee productivity) is explained by two independent variables (to find personal networks, seeking and viewing general information). The remaining 65.3% of the variation remain unexplained; this implies that the model provides a moderate fit of the relationship. The study posits that there exists both a negative and positive relationship between social media participation and employee productivity. The negative relationship is stronger as X_1 has the highest influence on employee productivity, given that $\beta_1 > \beta_2$.

A negative relationship between X_1 (To find personal networks) and employee productivity implies that, the more time employees spend on social media, the lower the productivity. This is so because, the model shows that more time is spent enhancing personal networks. However, there exists a weaker positive relationship between X_2 (seeking and viewing personal networks) and employee productivity. This implies that social media participation has a slight positive effect on productivity, as employees are able to gain knowledge that can enhance their productivity

Extent of Social Media Participation in the Workplace

The study established that a majority of the respondents, 72.5% had been participating in social media for the last three years or more in the workplace. The study established that employees participate in at least one social media site as all the respondents in the study indicated they have a Facebook account. Other sites that are frequently used were YouTube, Google+, LinkedIn and Twitter. A majority of respondents

at 80% indicated that they participate in social media in the workplace on a daily basis

The reasons for employee social media participation in the workplace and it established that the reasons were both work and non-work related. These reasons were; to keep in touch with friends, to create personal networks, to seek work related information, sharing information with colleagues, and building business contacts. The study also established that employees rarely participate in social media for purposes of seeking general information or for interpersonal communication which indicates that they are either not aware of the potential of social media to allow access for information or the have alternative sources.

The study also established the role of social media participation on job satisfaction, which in turn affects the employee productivity. Social media participation was strongly linked with reduction of boredom in the workplace but the study also established that social media participation was not due to; an unsatisfying job, demanding or undemanding jobs.

It was ascertained that social media participation is a critical player in regards to job performance as; it has direct positive and negative impact on productivity. Social media participation has more negative than positive effect on employee productivity employees will use more time on their personal networks and less time gaining information and knowledge.

Other effects of social media were shown to be, allows employees to have easier communication

with colleagues, faster access to work related information, improved knowledge sharing within the organization and improved communication with various experts, cause distraction of work as the ability to cause addiction and reduction of concentration spans. However, no direct effect on productivity was established from these effects.

Conclusions and Recommendations

These findings indicate that if not well managed, social media participation may lead to a loss of productivity. Studies by Kidwell [30] 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 [30].

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 organizations the potential to enhance productivity. This can be achieved when proper and effective ways of managing employee social media participation exist. Although social media offers a myriad of potential advantages for today's organizations, its ability to draw interest in an era of corporate failings and global financial crisis that inevitably lead to reduced workplace satisfaction, employees are susceptible to the dark side of social media satisfaction that may lead to abuse, addiction and misuse of productive time. Organizations therefore may find themselves faced with a strained computing and network resource, reduced productive time and misrepresentation due to the cross between personal and workspace. Social media like other revolutionary technologies before it such as e-

mail and the telephone has both potential and challenges on productivity in the workplace. Employees and the employers can only address these challenges and opportunities in the right way through solutions that are agreeable and participative. The study therefore shows that employees participate in social media in the workplace for various reasons both work and non-work related reasons. The effects of this participation on performance, if not well managed, will lead to reduction of employee productivity.

The amount of time that employees are spending on social media per day should be a worry for any organization. Organizations being the owners of both computing and human resource deserve to expect the best return on investment from both. Due to the integrated abilities of social media to attract and divert attention from work, the study recommends that organizations develop vibrant, participative and agreeable policies to guide social media participation at work when trying to deal with challenges that arise from such participation so as employees understand implications of their actions concerning the boundary between personal and work boundaries.

Advantages arising from social media however cannot be ignored such as, personal participation, corporate significance and information sharing require formulation of proper strategies without restricting the value creation potential of social media for both the individual and the company that at the end enhances productivity. For such policies to be effective therefore in enhancing productivity, they must allow for acceptable monitoring of social media participation to avoid misuse without infringing on privacy or creating mistrust.

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