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The Good, Bad and Ugly Sides of Internet Usage in the Workplace

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Computer was designed to help in human daily activities especially in replacing typewriter, a common tool in most offices. The purpose of this paper is to identify positive and negative effect of Internet usage, as well as its factors and impacts.

Methodology: Reviews of articles are retrieved from databases of SCOPUS and Science Direct from 2006 to 2016.

Results: Many people misuse the Internet for personal usage especially during working hours and it known as cyberloafing.

Implication: Computer is used together with internet in the world of information technology for faster communication after 2000s. Internet and social media can improve work performance especially in marketing and communication. However, the misuse of internet had caused cyberloafing issues due to ease of access. Mostly, it is related to factors such as personality-related factors, organizational-related factors, and work-related factors.

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1. Introduction

In 1989, the creation of World Wide Web (WWW) by Berners-Lee has provided the world with unlimited access of information technology (Kashyap, 2015) which emerged between telecommunication and computers. Since then, Internet has been used as the primary method of communication for most of the organizations (Ramayah, 2010); and this kind of communication programme also known as computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Christopherson, 2007). Currently, Internet has a world population of 7,340,159,492 and Malaysia is the top eleven users of Asian country out of 35 others with a population of 30,949,962 (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2016).

In the beginning of 2000, communication using networking is known as social media networking (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson, & Seymour, 2011), which was defined as electronic

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communication tool by using Internet to connect, create, share, and exchange information in a virtual community on a common interest, information, views, music, education and so on (Edosomwan et al., 2011; Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015). The most popular social media networking website began with Yahoo and Friendster in 2001, and they were overtaken by MySpace and Twitter in 2006, followed by Facebook in 2008 (Edosomwan et al., 2011). Facebook has been announced as the most popular social network in the world in 2009 as its users may register own account for free, create personal profile, get to know their friends around the world, update their profile and photo for others to view or comment. Apart from that, YouTube is the world's most popular online video website in social media (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

2. Literature review

2.1 Positive Usage of Internet

Interaction of Internet has become massive popular. Pew Research Center (2016) reported that different communication tools (website) were used for different social needs; and Asia is the top internet users with 48.2% from the world population. Since 2005, there is a dramatic growth in Internet usage, especially social networking usage all around the world for activities such as work, politics, getting information about health, news consumption, communities, and teenager's life, parenting and dating (Pew Research Center, 2016). An individual can learn new things that can affect on ones' creativity and innovative outcome (Alshuaibi, Mohd Shamsudin, & Alshuaibi, 2015).

In the working environment, email and the Internet are important tools for "white collar" employees and employers. These include professionals, executives, managers, business owners, and clerical workers (Pew Research Center, 2016). As we move with 21st Century skills, social media has also become a part of the marketing and communication tools, if compared to the usage of flyers or advertisement back to non-technology era. Thus, the way organization functions have also changed rapidly.

In many organizations, time is the most important criteria to ensure the work can be completed in the most efficient way. In fact, email or instant messenger through Internet help employees to get the fastest communication response as compared to other method (Edosomwan et al., 2011; Lu & Yang, 2014; Ramayah, 2010). This may include receiving feedback, information about product definition, product development, or providing customer service and support. Information that disseminates faster actually increases communication process (Banerjee & Singh, 2015); shorten product cycle time, increase market products and services to achieve competitive edge (Anandarajan, Simmers, & Igbaria, 2000).

The use of Internet can enable the members of an organization to work as a team. When an individual or employee cannot solve a problem, he or she can share ideas, experience and work with others in a team effectively. At this point, Internet acts as a source of communication to allow employees and management to generate and share their ideas, to allow webcast and video conference to discuss a problem or even promotion issues. A productive computerized organization may form a virtual team to organize knowledge-based work, employed individual based on performance and skills (Kidwell, 2010). Finally, this can increase the overall effectiveness of a team (Edosomwan et al., 2011).

An online survey conducted by the Pew Research Center (2016) shows that 46% of the respondents feel more productive because of the Internet, email and cell phone usage if compared to 7% of respondents who feel their productivity has dropped. This suggests that Internet has becomes a tool in improving productivity of employees. Meanwhile, social media acts as an alternative option for selling products

and providing services beside building a good reputation for a business organization (Edosomwan et al., 2011; Lu & Yang, 2014). This is because social media has provided the world without boundaries, where few words that describe a brand can effectively be shared in business space just by a simple click, and it helps to reinforce the brand in the minds of the consumers.

2.2 Negative Impact of Internet ~ Cyberloafing?

The increased activities on Internet usage did link with advantages and disadvantages. Some users might use Internet wisely, and some might not. Activities such as spamming, hacking, pornography viewing are considered as cybercrime; while activities of using Internet with unwanted and intrusive behaviors such as bullying, harassing and intimidating victim are called cyber stalking (Kashyap, 2015). Personal use of the Internet by employees while working for non-work-related purposes is called “cyberloafing” (Jia & Jia, 2015; Kidwell, 2010; Liberman, Seidman, McKenna, & Buffardi, 2011).

There are a few terms which are being used under the same definition of cyberloafing by different researchers across this field, such as “cyberslacking” (O’Neill, Hambley, & Chatellier, 2014), “cyberdeviance” (Al-shuaibi, Subramaniam, & Mohd Shamsudin, 2014; Blanchard & Henle, 2008), personal web usage “PWU” (Mahatanankoon, Anandarajan, & Igbaria, 2004). Sometimes, the employees do not use Internet to do their job during working hours, but use it for personal matter. Besides, some employees even browse through popular social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to seek friends, chat with friend, or seek information (Kim, Sohn, & Choi, 2011).

Basically, cyberloafing may include activities such as reading the news, doing travel arrangement, entertainment, online shopping or purchases (Mahatanankoon et al., 2004). Based on a study conducted by Blanchard and Henle (2008), cyberloafing can be divided into two types which are known as minor cyberloafing and major cyberloafing. Minor cyberloafing is defined as simple activities of sending and receiving personal emails, browsing news by Internet and online shopping during working hours; while major cyberloafing include online gambling, surfing adult websites, reading and updating information on personal blogs (Blanchard & Henle, 2008).

An employee might involve in cyberloafing without realizing. A case study by Kidwell (2010) showed an employee started his normal work routine, he arrives at the office by 8 o’clock in the morning. He grabs coffee while switching on his computer. His normal working day might continue by browsing emails, followed by reading news online. When any reminder suddenly came to his mind, for example, paying credit card or monthly bill payment, he might browse through internet for that purpose. Without realizing the time and workload, he can continue to update his Facebook page or blogging site. He might only realize his job when any of his colleagues come and ask about the report or receive calls to attend meeting. All these activities are actually personal matters that should not be done during working hours, and this behavior is considered as cyberloafing. An employee should focus on his or her job area during working hours for effective productivity, according to his or her working hours.

3. Factors contributing to Cyberloafing

As discussed earlier, cyberloafing might harm the organization. Over used of Internet as non-work activity at working hours are unacceptable and wrong (Ramayah, 2010). According to Robinson and Bennett (1995) and Mishra and Pandey (2014), any unethical behavior which might harm or violate the organization, its members, or both organization and its members is known as workplace deviance. Workplace deviance not only decrease productivity, it shown high turnover results in and can damage to the organization’s reputation (Mishra & Pandey, 2014). Thus, cyberloafing is one of the workplace deviances that gives negative impact if not solve immediately.

A study done by Mishra and Pandey (2014) evaluated three different factors that determined workplace deviance, which includes personality-related factors, organizational-related factors, and work-related factors. Personalities-related factors include sub-factors of negative affectivity, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and emotional intelligence; organizational-related factors included sub-factors of organizational climate, organizational justice, and perceived organizational support; work-related factors include sub-factors of work stress and powerlessness. The worst impact of workplace deviance behavior is destructive behavior which involve destroy organization property, insults others, shouting or gossiping during working hours besides cyberloafing(Mishra & Pandey, 2014).

Personality was found as the most related factor to effectiveness of work distribution (O'Neill et al., 2014), by using The Big Five as inventory to measure personality. In the study done by Jia and Jia (2015), factors of openness and extroversion were positively related to cyberloafing; factors of emotional stability and conscientiousness were negatively related to cyberloafing; while factors of agreeableness were found not related to cyberloafing. Meanwhile, extraversion and neuroticism were positively related to cyberloafing; conscientiousness was negatively related to cyberloafing; and agreeableness were found not related to cyberloafing(Andreassen, Torsheim, & Pallesen, 2014). Among these factors, factors of conscientiousness is the most important factors in personality as it leads to the individual behaviors by good thinking, planning, and structuring that are important in working area (Jia & Jia, 2015), beside the factors of neuroticism Five (O'Neill et al., 2014). That is why The Big Five Inventory was used in many organizations as assessment tools to identify worker's personality and advantages to enhance productivity and job satisfaction.

Besides, study also had shown that self-management is important in preventing cyberloafing(O'Neill et al., 2014). This is related to individual attitude as cyberloafing is found positively related to attitudes (Lieberman et al., 2011; Moody, 2011). Other factors that are connected to cyberloafing including social norms and organizational roles (Moody, 2011); job satisfaction (Mishra & Pandey, 2014); lower levels of job involvement (Lieberman et al., 2011) and so on. In terms of demography issues, males were found positively related to cyberloafing(Andreassen et al., 2014; Jia & Jia, 2015; Vitak, Crouse, & LaRose, 2011); and cyberloafing is negatively related to age (Andreassen et al., 2014; Vitak et al., 2011).

If we connect the above factors with theory, Attachment Theory seems related in explaining the behavior of cyberloafing. As mentioned by Miles, Attachment Theory explains how individual is attached to others in the workplace. The individual changed across time in his or her attitudes and behavior, which might involve helping others or disturbing others (Miles, 2012). Nowadays, most of the employees at work place are generation Y and Z. They are the dominant users of Internet, as they spend lots of time surfing Internet to socialize, complete their academic work, sending email, reading news and so on. Subsequently, these generations are obsessed with the technology and communication. These activities are being carried forward to the world of works; they are too addicted until they spend most of their work time cyberloafing than doing job. Attachment Theory is found related to one of the social media activities like surfing Facebook and it can predict the behavior of cyberloafing (Hart, Nailling, Bizer, & Collins, 2015).

4. Conclusion

According to a survey by Lim and Chen (2012), American employees spent 24% of their working hours on cyberloafing activities every day. Some companies showed that there were reports of Internet misuse in working hours for non-work related purposes (Lieberman et al., 2011). While a survey done by Ramayah (2010) in one of the companies in Malaysia showed the employees in average spent 25% of the daily work time to access Internet materials for personal use. Studies also showed that cyberloafing

could lower performance and productivity of a company (Al-shuaibi et al., 2014); and some employees cannot complete their task due to over cyberloafing and it decreases their work productivity (Lim & Chen, 2012); and lastly it is against work ethnics and harmful to organization (Al-shuaibi et al., 2014; Banerjee & Singh, 2015). Thus, some organization took action to ban the usage of cell phones in office during working hours due to its high potential effects on customers service (Kidwell, 2010).

Although Internet and social media can improve work performance, they can also be abused if the employees misuse it for personal purposes due to ease of access. The worst case happened lately across few countries that user's use social media to express his dissatisfy feeling through blogs or Facebook. This kind of emotional sharing actually brings negative effects, as over sharing might lead to judgmental if the context involves political issues or bigger social context issues that threaten national security (Christopherson, 2007). Similarly, cyberloafing can decrease efficiency of work output, increase risk of getting viruses or spyware, and finally waste of IT resources (Moody, 2011). Hence, organization needs to apply Internet usage policy that suitable according to work load, or even monitoring system which might control employees' cyberloafing intention; and appropriate awards must arrange by employers for those who following the rules.

As information technology is easily available at work area, this increases opportunity for employees to use it for personal reason. The personal use of the Internet at work has mostly been related to factors of organizational psychology, social psychology, and communication which are widely studied by many different researchers (Christopherson, 2007; Edosomwan et al., 2011). The usage of social networking sites include MySpace, Facebook have effects on interpersonal interaction, positive or negative behaviors is actually depending on the context (Christopherson, 2007). Based from the discussion above, Attachment Theory assumes that early experience of individual effects on activities and behavior of their lifetime. The positive impact of Internet is linked with positive outcome of technology information world; but over surfing of Internet on non-related websites during working hours is considered as unethical behavior of cyberloafing. Thus, a good behavior is important to enhance the qualities of services that lead to job efficiency and effectiveness. The combination of work and leisure into daily working activities as routine must stop as soon as possible.

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