Impact of Online Social Networking on Employees' Commitment to Duties in Selected Organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Abstract
Nigeria Labour Act under chapter 198 of 2004 states categorically the duty of employer of labour to provide employees' with duties and tools to work with. In the quest to ensure this, most employers of labour often provide employees' with computer system and internet facilities hoping this will facilitate their effective discharge of duties but reverse is the case as this study reveals what average employees use their official work hour for which now constitute distractions and interruption to their primary task. This research was conducted to determine the impact of online social networking (OSNs) on employees' commitment to duties in the private and public organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria. Two (2) organizations constitute the population of study involving a total number of 100 respondents consisting of 40 senior staff and 60 junior staff whom were picked at random, as sample. The data was collected through the use of questionnaire and simple frequency distribution was used for the analysis. Findings were made and recommendations were put forward on how to manage unproductive online social networking during office hours. It was however concluded that online social networking cannot be stopped but managed to yield positive result for the organization.

Introduction

It is unarguable that encouraging employees to discharge their duties effectively and be committed to organization towards achieving organizational goals and objectives is one of the most significant challenges for any manager/management team. Previous researches attributed employees' commitment to three constructs namely; commitment to the boss, to the work group, and to the organization. These three constructs excluded the direct behavioural tendencies of an individual job holder towards their primary task. The concept of work behaviour at individual level justifies the need for 'commitment to duties' as another construct that is fast manifesting in the world of work and which should be explored.

Having said this, lot of factors can ignite these behavioural tendencies "the level of employees commitment" to duties among which are; monetary and/or non monetary reward, length of service in an organization, size of organization, promotion prospect, level of employees concentration, availability of working tools, sense of ownership, civility, surplus/profit sharing scheme, etc. Availability of working tools comes with its attendants of challenges to employees and management. The provision of computer system with internet facility is the direction of our discourse.

An assessment of the impact of online social networking (OSNs) shows that it is a mixed blessing to managers and management in determining employees' level of concentration at work as this generate distractions and interruptions to their effective performance on primary task at work. It is the individual employees' involved that decide on the choice and purpose of becoming a user on any of the existing online social networks, average quality of time spent on daily basis and the reason why the sites are visited not the organization.

On the other side of the coin, it is no doubt that it has aided business growth and development most especially in the area of recruitment and advertising but how are these guided? For individuals, it is often hard to maintain self-discipline while discharging primary task without yielding to changes such as distractions and interruption (Molendijk, 2011). It is against this background that this paper presents the findings of our research on the impact of online social networking on employees' commitment to duties.

Problem Analysis

Over sometimes now both public and private organizations in Nigeria have not thought of what is eating up men work hours in their respective organizations without commensurate result. Staffs are seen with their computer systems busy and while they 'form busy' with nothing but social networking (blogging or tweeting) for their personal motives and gains.

Truly, most establishments have a way of monitoring employees' presence at work but do not have the measure of knowing whether they have actually contributed fairly to a day's work to deserve a day's pay as opine by Henri Fayol in his principles of management. Their ideology is 'working with pleasure', good idea but how many of the employees' are matured in guiding the abuse of working with pleasure. Let us note that, maturity in this wise is not a function of age.

A further analysis of the situation reveals that irrespective of the level of an employee's competency if a proportionate commitment is not exercised on his/her duties, low or zero productivity will be experienced.

Research Questions

In carrying out this research work, the following questions were asked:
1. Do you have access to a functioning computer system at work?
2. Are you connected to the internet via your computer or phone?
3. Are you on any of the online social networks?
4. Are staffs allowed to visit social network sites during the office hours without exception?
5. How can management ensure the effective utilization of computer and internet facilities for organization's task?

Literature Review

Understanding of the concept of commitment to duties at work requires clear definition of the following concepts: work, employee and work behaviour.

Duty is the primary task being that activity on which the person is focusing all his/her attention. Within the context of this discourse, work assumed our concept for duty. Work is viewed as "a human activity directed to an object, such as; lecturing, producing soap, etc." Thus, work involves transitive activity existing for the sake of their objects which intend to meet needs of people. As Kuper & Kuper (1996) put it, 'any physical and or/mental activities which transform natural materials into a more useful form, improve human knowledge and understanding of the world, and /or provide or distribute goods to others'.

Cairns and Malloch (2008), opine that work is more of an enabled purposive effort by an individual to initiate activity or respond to an issue or problem in a range of situations for some perceived (by them) productive end. This emphasizes that the action is intentional engagement by an individual. Work from these views intends to serve a number of functions and these functions are for some purposes. The most obvious is the economic function of producing goods and services and in return for this exercise the job holder is paid wages for doing the job in a timely and right manner. This description represents productive work which we are interested in.

The job holder is the 'Employee' which can be any person who has entered into or work under a contract with an employer whether the contract is for manual labour or clerical work or is expressed or implied, or oral or written and whether it is a contract of service or a contract personally to execute any work or labour or a contract of apprenticeship. In executing the task, expectations on the kind of behaviour varies with the task at hand. Work behaviour refers to all human acts which are exhibited in work situations which will result into an outcome. Such act could be high, moderate, low or poor. If the act is not properly guided it could result into deviation from its initial planned activity which can be caused by distractions and interruption towards primary task due to poor commitment.

From the above understanding, employees' commitment to work involves active relationship with the organization in which individuals are willing to give something of them in order to help the organization succeed and prosper (Meyer & Allen, 1997). An effort which defines level of involvement in tasks allocated to job holder. This to some authorities like Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Mowday, Steers & Porter 1979; Porter et al. 1974; Nyhan 1999, are attitudinal commitment (identification with goals and values, willingness to exert effort, and a desire to remain). That was why Perlow (1999) opine that many forms of work involve individual cognitive activities, which require long periods of uninterrupted time during which one can concentrate.

Understanding this contention helps to explain the need for individual employee's increased effort to do a good and thorough job, by setting how to determine the pace at which an average employees discharges his/her duties whether low or high while at the same time discovering the factors responsible for the variations. But in this discourse, what bothers on low commitment is attributed to distractions and interruption which affect employees during official work hours due to time usage online networking with social friends for personal gains.

A Social Networking service is an online service, platform, or site that focuses on facilitating the building of social networks or social relations among people who share interests, activities, backgrounds, or real-life connections. It consists of representation of each user (profile). Online social network is a Web-based network that allows users to connect, communicate, and share information with friends, acquaintances, and, in some cases, strangers. Boyd and Ellison (2008) defined online social networks as, Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.

The late 20th century saw the birth of computer-mediated communication which led to the growth of online social networking (Martinez & Wartman, 2009). With the first notable social network site, SixDegrees.com (SixDegrees), launched in 1997, but fizzled out in 2000 when the service ended (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Between 1997 and 2001, a number of other online social network sites were created, but it was not until after 2001 when online network sites really began to take off (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Friendster emerged in 2002 with the feature which help friends-of-friends meet. The idea of Friendster was to help strangers, friends-of-friends, meet online and possibly become romantic partners (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Today we have lot of OSNs like; facebook, twitter, the Sphere, Nexopia, 2go, eBay, Skype, Amazon, Youtube, Bebo, Badoo, Hi5, etc but they all have basic features like users name with personal password, profile of users (Name, sex, age, location and interest), List of other users, some allow users pictures, posting, comments, group creation, upload or stream live videos, hold discussion in forums. Early 21st century, the levels of Internet use in workplaces increased the chances of employees' usage with direct access through company internet facility. The introduction of smart phones, black berry, ipad and the likes compounded the challenge in question and subsequently distraction at work was at its peak resulting into wastage of men work hours.

Theoretical Framework

The boundaries between work and pleasure are hard to define in practice. Job holders are now facing the challenge of managing the problems they created as they contend with discharging their official duties at work while simultaneously feeling distracted by social demands through visual presence of individuals (online) that belong to another role. Few employees admittedly know that the use of OSNs create distractions and interruption which reduce their commitment to duties while lot claimed its part of work process 'working with pleasure' which to them enhance performance efficiency.

Fusing work with pleasure can be conflictive. Sanders et al (1978) explored Distraction-conflict theory in providing satisfactory explanation on how a particular distraction, specifically the presence of others, can affect an individual's performance on the primary task. Distractions can be social or non-social (Sanders et al., 1978), behavioral or psychological (Jett & George, 2003). From the psychological view it is reaction triggered by external stimuli or alternative activities that interrupt focused concentration on a primary task (Jett & George, 2003). Distractions are often triggered by competing activities or environmental stimuli that are irrelevant to the relevant task and they affect a person's cognitive processes by diverting attention that might otherwise have been directed to that task (Jett & George, 2003).

Speier, Vessey and Valacich (2003) provided a further clue into the discourse as they explored the distinction between interruption and distractions. According to them, the similarity between interruptions and distractions is that they both occur when the individual is performing a primary task. The main difference lies in the manner in which interruptions and distractions are detected. Interruptions are detected by the same sensory channel as the primary task, which is the main reason why the individual cannot ignore them (Baron, 1986). In other words, an interruption requires the necessary and complete shift of one's core, task-related sensory channels and cognitive resources away from the primary task at hand. In contrast, a distraction is often detected by a different sensory channel than that involved in the primary task and as a result, the distraction can be ignored or processed at the same time as the primary task (Groff, Baron, & Moore, 1983).

Distractions and interruptions consume time that could be spent on critical tasks, and these leave job holders with insufficient time to meet a deadline, achieve a goal, or simply complete a task (Jett & George, 2003).

Research Approach

        The findings reported here were drawn from a comprehensive research effort in the selected private and public organizations of Lagos State. The 100 respondents involved in the study cut across public and private organizations management and junior staff; male and female and young and old employees of the organizations (Table 1).

        From the administered questionnaires we were able to evolve pertinent fact to this discourse: Users of Social network, quality of time spent on it, purpose of visiting the site and employees commitment to work.

        Our measure of users of online social network was drawn from all the respondents. This information allowed us to classify the users along the gender, sector of the economy, occupational status and age distribution (Table 1 & 2). For measure on quality of time spent on social network, we examined responses on the numbers of friends and the average time spent with them on line (Table 3). Similarly, for measure on purpose of visiting the site and who they chat with, we explored responses on what they discuss on line (Table 4) while on employees commitment to work, we looked into the responses from the Managers/Heads of departments on subordinates with poor work performances due to lack of concentration and numbers with disciplinarian actions due to visiting of social network sites during official work hours.

Findings of Study

The following findings were discovered as a result of the analyses:

1.   95% of the respondents agreed and are aware of management policy on the restriction of visit to any of the online social network sites for personal gain during the official work hours either on office computer system or personal gadgets. It was also gathered that in the private organization there has been a restriction of the site facility users/employees can visit when using the company internet service. This is with the view to maintaining employees' optimum concentration at work.
2.   The study also revealed that employees of the public organization are frequent users of social networks because they are idler at work when compared to their private organization counterpart. Although, using their personal modem on either office computer or personal laptops and while others use their mobile phones.
3.   Respondents between the ages of 20 to 40 which averagely fall within junior staffers are the frequent users of the social networks in both public and private organizations but with highest percentage of females that are in possession of Smart phones, Black Berry, iphone, ipod, cell phone, etc which gives them direct connectivity.
4.   Table 3 showed the analysis of hours spent on the average by employees on social network as it admitted that 40 employees out of the 65 respondents admitted to spend an average of one to two hours on daily basis on social networks. This is unproductive and amount to waste of man work hours.
5.   Table 4 reveals that 63 of the respondents indicated that they visit most of these ONSs to keep in touch with old friends and meet new friends and all they do is posting of photographs to share experiences and not about work.
6.   This research revealed that non OSNs user employees exercise high level of concentration on work tasks than OSNs User employees.
7.   The quality of time is relatively high but difficult to calculate. Managers/Heads of Units/department claimed to have cautioned subordinates during office hours on a number of times over the act while they have pending task/deliverables.
8.   Most of the employees who visit the sites admitted to be on social relations and meeting people not for business contact but for personal gains.
9.   Managers/Heads of departments agreed that low employees' performance is partly caused by lack of employees' concentration on core task as caused by online social networking.

Limitations and Recommendation for Further Study

        There are several limitations of our study that bear discussion. The overriding one concerns the fact that we examined two organizations in Lagos State, Nigeria. Does this reflect the outlook of Nigerian Organizations? Therefore, the study cannot be used to generalise for the country. This suggests that future work should explore more Organizations and cover each of the geo-political zones of the country.

        Secondly, the researchers cannot make the participants be truthful with their responses. Employees/management may also underestimate or overestimate the time they spend on the activities listed on the questionnaire.

Conclusion

This research has presented the overall impact of online social networking on employees' commitment to duties. It revealed a significant drop in employees' commitment to duties due to the quality of time spent online with friends and admirers. Organizations with policy on restriction of visit to online social sites during official work hours stand the chances of earning higher work commitment from its workforce than one without such policy. As such, what the private organization does is to deny staff access to such social networking sites during official work hours but this could not stop their usage of black berry, iphone or ipad and other smart phones even with their knowledge of cell phone/internet usage policy. Thus, we conclude that online social networking cannot be stopped in the present day organization but managed to yield positive result for the organization.

Recommendations

Based on the exposition and findings of this study, the following recommendations are put forward:

1. Management must be cognizant of the fact that employees naturally are lazy and will prefer to play around than work unless they know and understand that feedback on their performance exists. In order to achieve this, management should continually strive to educate workers, making the importance of their undivided attention to duties non-negotiable if the organization is to remain a going concern.
2. Effective communication of organization policy as regards online social networking to new staff and re-emphasing same to old staff.
3. Information Communication Technology of organization should be configured to restrict visit to these sites during office hours.
4. A ban of private internet facility use in the office.
5. Stiffer disciplinary measures should be spelt for offenders of such standing organization's policy (internet and cell phone usage policy).
6. Training on time management should be carried out from time to time.
7. For effective employees' commitment, the importance of individual tasks to organizational goal must be communicated.
8. Since Online social networking cannot be eradicated during office hours, deadlines and job deliverables should be monitored with the need to ensure thorough jobs are done while unnecessary idle time is reduced to the minimum level.

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Variables	Filters	Frequency
Nature of	Private	50
Organization	Public	50
Total		**100**
Gender	Male	48
	Female	52
Total		**100**
Occupational Level	Senior Staff	40
	Junior Staff	60
Total		**100**
Age	20 – 30	38
	31 – 40	42
	41 – 50	15
	51 and above	05
Total		**100**

Table 1: Response on the respondents' profile

Variables	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Users	65	65	65	65
Non-Users	35	35	35	100
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	

Table 2: Response to users of online social network

Variables	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Below 1 Hour	5	7.7	7.7	7.7
1 – 2 Hours	40	61.5	61.5	69.2
3 – 4 hours	15	23.1	23.1	92.3
5 – above	5	7.7	7.7	100
Total	**65**	**100**	**100**	

Table 3: Response on quality of time spent online social network per day between 8am to 5pm

Variables	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Meet Old friends	23	35.4	35.4	35.4
Make new friends	40	61.5	61.5	96.9
Business contact	02	3.1	3.1	100
Total	**65**	**100**	**100**	

Table 4: Response on purpose of registering and using online Social network

Variables	Frequency	%	Valid %	Cumulative %
Yes	95	95	95	95.0
No	05	5	5	100
Total	**100**	**100**	**100**	

Table 5: Response to awareness of management policy on online social networking during office hours