Chapter 18

The Use of Online Social Networks in Higher Education and Its Influence on Job Performance

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ABSTRACT

There is plenty of evidence on a positive influence of social relationships on work-related attitudes and behaviors. Besides, online social networks (OSNs), made possible by Web 2.0, have become a global phenomenon and have a considerable impact on the way people communicate and interact with each other. Our purpose is to evaluate the effect of using OSNs on the worker's attitudes and behaviors, particularly in the context of Higher Education. In this sense, we used a questionnaire, to evaluate the attitudes of 157 faculty members. To assess the use of OSNs, we resorted to a dichotomous variable. After analyzing and discussing the results we conclude that the use of OSNs influences the worker's performance, but not Job satisfaction, Organizational commitment or extra-role performance. The relationships we propose in what concerns the worker's attitudes are all empirically proved. Lastly, we describe the study limitations and we suggest some perspectives for future research.

INTRODUCTION

The development and popularity of online social networks (OSNs) has shaped a new world of collaboration and communication. More than a billion individuals worldwide are connected and networked together, creating, collaborating and contributing with their knowledge (Cheung, Chiu & Lee, 2011). OSNs, the so called Web 2.0, have

also taken on a high role and importance in the relationships between people and organizations. Castilla (2005) mentions that social relationships are an important tool for the understanding of the workers' outcomes in the organizations and that it is necessary to understand the dynamics of these interactions. In this perspective, the main purpose of this study consists of evaluating the influence of OSNs on the workers' attitudes and behaviors.

Specifically, it is intended to evaluate to what extent the use of OSNs to maintain contact with co-workers influences job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors and individual performance. On the other hand, the intention is to verify whether there are positive relationships between the workers' attitudes and behaviors – some of them already proved in previous studies -, specifically between satisfaction and commitment, satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors, satisfaction and performance, commitment and organizational citizenship behaviors, commitment and performance and organizational citizenship behaviors and performance. If the proposed relations are proved, it will be possible to broaden the understanding of each of the concepts being studied, and increase their importance in the organizational context.

More than organizations in most sectors, Higher Education Institutions (HEI) know a great deal about facilitating environments in which people collaborate to create, share and advance knowledge. HEI should, in this sense, be very well prepared to reap value from the new online tools (Barnatt, 2008). In this scenario, it seems adequate to resort to the Higher Education (HE) context to investigate the proposed relations. HEI are characterized as community service providers, specifically of transference and economic value increase of the scientific and technological knowledge, which are autonomous and should define good management practice codes. The transference and knowledge increase, as well as the fact that HE teachers ought to cooperate, justify the choice of context and the answering of a questionnaire given to the Lecturing staff as an instrument to gather data.

Firstly, the concepts that are being studied are briefly summarized. Then, two research models, based on 10 hypotheses, are proposed. After explaining and stating the hypotheses, the methodology is described and the results are presented and discussed. Finally, we describe the findings, the limitations of the study are explained and some guiding lines for future research are suggested. The methods used to analyze the results are the *t-student* test and the PLS method. It is possible to conclude that the use of OSNs to maintain contact with co-workers. We also verify that satisfaction positively influences commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors and performance, that commitment has a positive impact on organizational citizenship behaviors and on performance, and that organizational citizenship behaviors have a positive effect on performance.

THE WEB 2.0

Web 2.0 refers to the appearance of the Internet as an interpersonal resource and a service delivery platform (Barnatt, 2008). The term Web 2.0 is used to describe applications that distinguish themselves from preceding generations of software by a number of principles (Ullrich et *al*., 2008).

The second incarnation of the Web (Web 2.0) has been called the 'social Web', because, in contrast to Web 1.0, its content can be more easily generated and published by users, and because the collective intelligence of users encourages its more democratic utilization. Originally, the World Wide Web (WWW) was intended to be used to share ideas and encourage discussion within a scientific community. Web 2.0 heralds a return to these original uses, and prompts important changes in the ways the World Wide Web is being handled in Education. In this context, there is a need to raise awareness of Web 2.0 tools and the possibilities they offer, and an imperative need to carry out quality research to inform better use of Web 2.0 applications (Boulos & Wheeler, 2007).

The development of social media has transformed the ways in which the Internet is experienced by most users. Nowadays, the Internet is no longer a one-way broadcast distribution system where the user downloads data, information and other resources created by a relatively small number of content providers. Instead, it is driven

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