

Chapter 14

The Influence of (Online) Social Networks on Workers' Attitudes and Behaviours in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

According to the literature, social relationships have a positive influence on work-related attitudes and behaviours. Taking into account that Online Social Networks (OSNs), brought about by Web 2.0, have become an international phenomena and have a considerable impact on the way people communicate and interact with each other, the chapter's purpose is to evaluate the effect that the use of OSNs has on the worker's attitudes and behaviours. In this way, the authors use a questionnaire to evaluate the attitudes of 157 faculty members in Higher Education Institutions (HEI). To assess the use of OSNs by faculty members, they use a binary variable. After analysing and discussing the results, the authors conclude that the use of OSNs influences the workers' performance traits. The relations they propose in what concerns the workers' attitudes are all empirically proven. At last, the authors describe the study limitations and suggest some perspectives for future research.

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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, electronic social networks, the so-called Web 2.0, have taken on a high role and importance in the relationships between people and organizations. Castilla (2005) refers 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 Online Social Networks (OSNs) on the workers' attitudes and behaviours. 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 behaviours and individual performance. On the other hand, the intention is to verify whether there are positive relationships between the workers' attitudes and behaviours—some of them already proved in previous studies—specifically between satisfaction and commitment, satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviours, satisfaction and performance, commitment and organizational citizenship behaviours, commitment and performance and organizational citizenship behaviours and performance. When 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 knowledge transference increase, as well as the fact that HE teachers have the duty to cooperate, justify the choice of context and the answering of a questionnaire given to the Professors 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 analyse 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 influences performance, specifically the individual's performance traits. We also verify that satisfaction positively influences commitment, organizational citizenship behaviours and performance, that commitment has a positive impact on organizational citizenship behaviours and on performance, and that organizational citizenship behaviours 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. Existing work shows that Web 2.0 applications can be successfully exploited for technology learning enhancement (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

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