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Perez, Crystal M. *How is Social Media Being Used in the Workplace?*

Abstract

Social media is often used in hiring procedures to screen applicants, but little is known about the ways in which social media is used by employees in the workplace. The purpose of this paper is to delve deeper into the reasons why employees are using social media in the workplace, as well as to learn more about what outcomes are associated with social media policies in the workplace, specifically how social media policies are related to employee trust and job satisfaction. Data were collected using a survey methodology. A questionnaire was distributed to 135 employees via MTurk from various organizations to gather their perceptions on social media use in the workplace. The results suggest that most employees are using social media in the workplace and the most commonly reported reason for social media use was to take a mental break from work. Furthermore, it was more common for employees to work in an organization that had social media policies versus organizations that did not have social media policies. Lastly, there were not statistically significant differences among social media use in relation to job satisfaction nor organizational trust. Implications are described last.

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Chapter I: Literature Review

The use of social media has been of interest to many researchers since the development of social media technologies in the 2000s (El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2015). According to Perrin and Anderson (2019), about 69% of U.S. adults currently use social media sites such as Facebook. Among young adults (ages 18 to 29), this usage rate significantly increases to 79% (Smith & Anderson, 2018). The rise of social media has affected the ways individuals engage in politics, communicate, and work, for example (Perrin, 2015). The interest in the current project is social media use in the context of work. Some work has been done in this arena already. For example, some researchers have found that social media is more commonly being used in work settings, which can, in turn, influence employee work performance (Ali-Hassan, Nevo, & Wade, 2015; Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014).

Gunnlaugsdottir (2015) found that 76% of employees reported using social media at work. Although it has been known that some *employers* use social media to screen applicants during the hiring process, little research has been done on the use of social media by *employees* in the workplace (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Nikolaou, 2014; Sameen & Cornelius, 2015). For instance, we know that it is common for employees to use social media at work to take a mental break from work (Lampe & Ellison, 2016). Furthermore, it is also common for employees to use social media to strengthen ties with colleagues, connect with family and friends, make professional connections, or to get information to help solve a problem at work (Cao, Gua, Vogel, & Zhang, 2016; Lampe & Ellison, 2016).

The purpose of the current study is to expand our knowledge of social media in the workplace by conducting a descriptive study to examine (1) reasons why employees are using social media in the workplace and (2) what outcomes are associated with social media policies in

the workplace. The paper below is organized in the following sections. First, the theoretical basis of connectivism is described. Next, how and why social media is being used in the workplace, followed by a description of the known outcomes associated with workplace social media use is offered. Research questions are described throughout the literature review. The survey methodology is described following the literature review, including participants, survey materials, and procedure. This is followed by a results section detailing the findings, and a discussion of the results.

Theoretical Basis: Connectivism

According to Siemens (2005), most learning theories focus on the idea that learning occurs inside a person, but they do not address learning that occurs outside a person, such as learning that is stored and manipulated by technology. Siemens (2005) states, “learning theories are concerned with the actual process of learning, not with the value of what is being learned” (p. 5). Because information can be manipulated through internet technologies, the process of assessing worthiness of information is important (Bell, 2011). Siemens (2005) identified the need to move learning theories into the digital age, as learning is no longer acquired in a linear manner. Connectivism presents learning as a process that occurs within vague environments, not entirely under the control of the individual (Bell, 2011). Siemens (2005) established a set of principles for connectivism, which are replicated in Figure 1.

Principles of Connectivism:

- Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions.
- Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources.
- Learning may reside in non-human appliances.
- Capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known.
- Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning.
- Ability to see connections between fields, ideas, and concepts is a core skill.
- Currency (accurate, up-to-date knowledge) is the intent of all connectivist learning activities.
- Decision-making is itself a learning process. Choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is seen through the lens of a shifting reality. While there is a right answer now, it may be wrong tomorrow due to alterations in the information climate affecting the decision.

Figure 1. Principles of Connectivism. (Siemens, 2005)

The theoretical basis of this project is grounded in the intersection between technology and learning. Given the way technology influences the *way* in which individuals learn, the theory of connectivism explains how internet technologies have created new opportunities for individuals to learn and share information (Siemens, 2005). These technologies include web browsers, email, online discussion forums, and social media (Siemens, 2005). Note that the theory of connectivism does not change depending on the type of technology being used. Connectivism presents an idea of learning that recognizes changes in society whereby learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity, but rather, the way individuals work and function is reformed when new ways of collecting information are identified (Siemens, 2005). Downes

(2005) describes connective knowledge as knowledge that is distributed across more than one entity, such as the internet. Thus, a learner will connect to a network to find and share new information, and will modify his or her beliefs based on this information. The learner will then connect to a network to share these realizations and find new information once more (Kop & Hill, 2008).

Siemens (2005) explains connective knowledge as learning that occurs through others' experiences because one individual is unable to experience everything. For example, imagine being asked to learn why an organization is failing to build connections with its clients. Since one probably does not already know everything there is to know on connection-building, one would have to do research, whether that be on the internet or through personal connections, such as coworkers. Once the needed information has been gathered, disseminating the new knowledge is necessary. According to Siemens (2005), the ability to recognize and adjust to learned information is a key learning task. Siemens (2005) believes that the ability to learn is more important than what we already know. Connectivism is driven by the understanding that decisions are based on rapidly altering foundations because new information is continually being acquired and the ability to draw distinctions between important and unimportant information is vital (Bell, 2011).

A key feature of connectivism is that much learning can happen across peer networks that take place online (Siemens, 2005). Internet technologies have created new opportunities for people to learn and share information across the internet (Downes, 2005). Social networking is also an element of connectivism because through social networking, individuals can maintain knowledge flow and connect with other people (Siemens, 2005). According to Siemens (2005), learning, knowledge, and understanding through the extension of a personal network is the

essence of connectivism. Connectivism provides insight into learning skills and tasks needed for learners to thrive in a digital era (Bell, 2011).

Social Media Defined

The term “social media” is somewhat amorphous due to the constant evolution of the technologies used for social interactions between users. El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, and Henderickx (2014) sought to examine scholarly definitions of the term “social media” in order to establish a universally accepted definition. El Ouiridi et al. (2014) defined social media as, “a set of mobile and web-based platforms built on Web 2.0 technologies, and allows users... to share and geo-tag user generated content... to collaborate, and to build networks and communities, with the possibility of reaching and involving large audiences” (p. 119). Social media technologies are creating numerous possibilities for sharing ideas and have altered the way individuals communicate (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013). Communication via social media differs from traditional communication tools because of its ability to transmit information much quicker (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013). For example, individuals can gather information much more quickly using social media than if they were gathering information from a traditional communication tool, such as a newspaper. Additionally, many researchers have come to define social media as online tools that allow users to interact with other users, as well as create, exchange, and share information, opinions, and interests of user-generated content (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are commonly being used to access the latest information and are often used to share and exchange information with others through messages, events, photos, and videos (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013; Kolmes, 2012). Additionally, many individuals are using social media as a place to look for recommendations, ratings,

thoughts, or preferences on certain subjects (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013). The most commonly used social media sites in the U.S. include YouTube (73%), Facebook (69%), Instagram (37%), Pinterest (28%), LinkedIn (27%), Snapchat (24%), and Twitter (22%; Perrin & Anderson, 2019). LinkedIn was the most popular among Americans with a college degree (51%) compared to those with a high school diploma or less (9%; Perrin & Anderson, 2019). Moreover, according to Gunnlaugsdottir (2015), social media allows individuals to interact with other people through a mixed set of internet-based tools whenever they choose. What makes social media unique is the potential that almost everyone has access to it by having access to the internet, suggesting that almost anyone can be involved on social media sites (Eren & Vardarlier, 2013). The questions of interest in the current study include the reasons for social media use in the workplace and what outcomes are associated with having a policy for social media use at work.

Reasons for Social Media Use in the Workplace

The first goal of the current study is to explore reasons for social media use in the workplace. Ali-Hassan et al. (2015) suggested that it is important to look at the way social media is being used at work, as social media can be used for both unproductive entertainment purposes or productive work purposes (Ali-Hassan et al., 2015; Charoensukmongkol, 2015; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014). The following sections present our current understanding of social media use at work for both work and non-work (personal) uses.

Work-related social media use. Employees are motivated to use social media at work to gather information, keep in contact with customers, recruit candidates, post available jobs, screen and review candidates, and get information that helps solve problems at work (Lampe & Ellison, 2016; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Sameen & Cornelius, 2015). Moreover, organizations and companies commonly use social media sites, such as Facebook or Twitter, to advertise or

communicate with customers, and to communicate with their own employees (Gunnlaugsdottir, 2015). Additionally, Lampe and Ellison (2016) found that employees were using social media at work to make or support professional connections (24%) and to ask work-related questions for people inside their organizations (12%). Choudhury and Counts (2013) found that social media use in the workplace had an impact on information sharing, collaboration, communication and interpersonal connectivity in the workplace. Moreover, Choudhury and Counts (2013) found that social media tools, such as Facebook, enhanced information sharing among employees in large organizations, which helped create a feeling of connectedness among individuals across the organizational hierarchy. The theory of connectivism (Siemens, 2005) helps us explain social media use in the workplace and the sharing of information. In a work context, the use of internet technologies may be used by employees to gather new information and to share what they have learned with other employees within their organization.

Personal social media use. Many employees are using social media at work for personal reasons as well. Garrett and Danziger (2008) refer to personal internet use as use of company-provided internet access that is unauthorized and is being used during reserved work time. Use of the internet while at work has the potential to cause problems. Many organizations consider time spent on the internet for personal use as a waste of paid employee time, or as unproductive to the company (Garrett & Danziger, 2008). Personal use of the internet can include communicating with friends or family via social media, paying personal bills, or even checking scores of sporting events (Garrett & Danziger, 2008). However, more recently, Lampe and Ellison (2016) found that employees were using social media at work to take a mental break from work (34%) and to connect with friends and family (27%).

The Intersection between Professional and Personal Use: Connections with Co-workers

Becoming Facebook “friends” with co-workers has become a common practice in the workplace and some researchers have found positive associations with Facebook use among co-workers and job satisfaction (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Robertson & Kee, 2017). According to Eck, Karl, and Fertig (2013), receiving friend requests from co-workers has many mixed reactions from employees. Some react positively, with feelings of flattery, while others feel uncomfortable receiving friend requests from their co-workers due to not wanting to mix their personal lives with their professional lives (Eck et al., 2013). Lampe and Ellison (2016) found that 17% of employees utilized social media to build or strengthen personal relationships at work. Additionally, Huang and Lui (2017) also found that coworkers tended to use Facebook to organize events and coordinate projects, as well as a way to strengthen ties with coworkers and create close relationships. Frampton and Child (2013) sought to examine how employees respond to coworker friend requests and whether or not they adjust their privacy setting in response to these requests and found that the majority of their participants (90.5%) responded to coworker friend requests by accepting them and tended not to adjust their privacy settings in relation (75%). Jiang, Hughes, and Pulice-Farrow (2014) found most of their participants (56%) would have liked to become Facebook friends with coworkers and that perceived workplace friendship and trust towards coworkers had a positive correlation with becoming Facebook friends with coworkers.

According to Jiang et al. (2014), Facebook users tended to like to “friend” coworkers on Facebook, but tended to find it inappropriate to “friend” supervisors. Eck et al. (2013) developed a few rules to guide Facebook “friending” in the workplace, the first being that organizations should have social media policies at work that regulate what employees can and cannot post

about work. Eck et al. (2013) also recommended that managers refrain from accepting or sending friend requests to their subordinates. As for employees, Eck et al. (2013) recommended the use of privacy settings and blocking co-workers or bosses from being able to view the majority of their profile content, as well as not accepting nor initiating friend requests to and from their bosses. Vitak, Lampe, Gray, and Ellison (2012) recommended that employees refrain from friending their coworkers and supervisors altogether on social media sites such as Facebook, and instead suggested employees connect with their co-workers on sites such as LinkedIn. Vitak et al. (2012) also mentioned creating multiple Facebook accounts, one for personal contacts and one for professional contacts.

According to Lampe and Ellison (2016), discovering information on social media about a co-worker can negatively and/or positively influence opinions of a co-worker. Lampe and Ellison (2016) found that 14% of employees have found information on social media that improved their professional opinion of a colleague, while 16% have found information that lowered their professional opinion of a colleague. The theory of connectivism can also be used to explain coworker connections. The more an individual is gathering and sharing new information with their coworkers, the more interactions they will have with those coworkers, which can help enhance coworker relationships (Siemens, 2005). Additionally, younger employees (ages 18-29) are more likely to find information on social media that changes their opinion of a co-worker.

The above research suggests that employees are using social media at work, and for a wide variety of purposes. However, much of this work was done some time ago, and thus, the first goal of this project is to explore our current understanding of employee social media use at work. The following research questions are offered:

- Research Question 1: How often do employees utilize social media at work?

- Research Question 2: For which reasons are employees using social media at work?
- Research Question 3: Is one reason for social media use more frequently used than the others?

Reactions to Social Media Policies

The second goal of the current study is to explore outcomes associated with social media policies in the workplace. Half of all full-time and part-time employees (51%) said their workplace had policies on social media use in the workplace (Lampe & Ellison, 2016). The next research question explores whether the current sample of employees are working in organizations with a similar rate of policy vs. no policy environment.

- Research Question 4: How often are employees working in organizations that have a social media policy?

Before considering reactions, it is important to understand best practices for communicating such a policy. There are many ways in which a social media policy can be presented to employees (Grover, 2014; Vaast & Kaganer, 2013). Vaast and Kaganer (2013) suggested that employers *should* attempt to shape or guide employees' use of social media in the workplace through social media policies. Such guidance includes what employees can and cannot do with social media in the workplace, as well as whether and how social media should become a part of what they do at work. Grover (2014) found that policies need to be fair in order to not negatively affect the employees who do not abuse internet accessibility. Additionally, it is important to provide guidelines and policies on social media use so that everyone is on the same page and understands appropriate social media use in the workplace (Dreher, 2014). Employer guidelines or policies should include social media "do's and don'ts" (p. 350), as well as what will occur in the case of a violation (Dreher, 2014). Moreover, Cain (2011) also suggested

employee education regarding the expectations of the organization on social media use in the workplace, as well as the reasons for those expectations. Having policies in place will provide organizations with some protection if a violation should occur (Cain, 2011). Cain (2011) provides a summary of suggested policy elements specific to the health care industry and workplace social media use, which is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Suggested Elements of Social Media Policies (Cain, 2011)	
Issue	Major Policy Elements
Reputation of organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define who is permitted to speak officially on behalf of the organization through social media. • State that if employees' posts can be linked to the organization, employees should not post anything that is potentially damaging to the organization. • State that when expressing personal opinions on social media, employees should provide a disclaimer advising that they are not speaking officially on behalf of the organization. • State that the organization reserves the right to request removal of any potentially damaging information.
Privacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State that social media postings should not reveal private information about patients. • State that social media postings should not reveal confidential or proprietary business information.
Productivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State that personal use of social media is permissible only during nonwork hours and should not interfere with work activities.

General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State that all other organization policies (e.g., harassment, ethics) are applicable to social media communications. • State that individuals are personally responsible for all social media posts. • State that employees should not expect privacy on social media. • Define consequences for violating policies.
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Figure 2. Suggested elements of social media policies. (Cain, 2011)

Although some researchers have made suggestions on how employers should enact social media policies, Bucciol, Houser, and Piovesan (2013) recommended that employers should refrain from broadly prohibiting internet use at work. Instead, employers should simply limit the amount of time employees have access to the internet for personal use (Bucciol et al., 2013). Additionally, based on the findings of Bucciol et al. (2013), it is recommended that allowing employees regular internet breaks, just as they would regular breaks, will help enhance employee productivity. Moreover, Banghart, Etter, and Stohl (2018) suggested that workplace social media policies also need to have boundaries. Banghart et al. (2018), found that boundaries need to be clearly defined when restricting what employees can and cannot post on social media sites. These boundaries range from employees thinking the policies apply only at work versus the policies always applying. Therefore, organizations need to learn how to navigate boundaries in social media environments (Banghart et al., 2018). Banghart et al. (2018) also mentioned the boundary of social media policies applying only in the workplace or outside of the workplace, during work hours or off work hours, and/or on company-owned platforms versus employees' personal devices.

Social Media Policies and Trust at Work

Implementing social media policies in the workplace has become a relevant issue in the workplace and has even resulted in trust issues among employees and an organization (Grover, 2014; Gunnlaugsdottir, 2015). Hubbell and Chory-Assad (2005) define organizational trust as employee confidence in those they deem trustworthy. Hubbell and Chory-Assad (2005) stated that to be trustworthy, upper management must follow through on their word/promises. Many organizations allow employees access to the internet during work hours for work purposes, but some also limit the use of the internet for personal access (Gunnlaugsdottir, 2015). Not only has limiting internet use for personal access become a relevant issue, but also monitoring employee use of the internet can be difficult. Informing employees that their social media use will be monitored can be complicated, as issues of personal privacy may arise. These privacy concerns may include employees feeling as if their employers do not trust them. Another issue is when employees have to make a distinction between what is considered personal use and work use of the internet, such as checking one's personal email versus their employer email (Gunnlaugsdottir, 2015).

Organizational policies can also have an influence on interpersonal trust (Six & Sorge, 2008). Six and Sorge (2008) suggested that organizations can enhance interpersonal trust by instilling and promoting norms, as well as monitoring practices down in a hierarchical level, such as relating information from upper management down to lower staff. Six and Sorge (2008) found that in order to maintain employee trust, organizations need to enact policies with good intentions – that is, the organization needs to go beyond direct self-interest, taking employees' interests into account in order to maintain good relationships. An organization's social media policy can also influence whether someone accepts a job offer (El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, &

Pais, 2015). El Ouiridi et al. (2015) found that many young students reported that they would decide about job offers based on the content of the organization's social media policies. El Ouiridi et al. (2015) found that 27% of surveyed students would accept a job that banned social media access during work hours, but would still access social media platforms, while 29% reported that they would not accept that job offer because they consider the organization to be behind the times in terms of social media use, and that affects their trust of that organization.

- Research Question 5: Is having a social media policy associated with employee trust in the organization?

Social Media Use and Job Satisfaction

In addition to documenting perceptions of trust and reasons for use, social media use in the workplace has also been linked to employee job satisfaction (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Moqbel et al., 2013; Robertson & Kee, 2017). Charoensukmongkol (2014) found a positive link between social media use at work and job satisfaction and suggested that social media use does not directly increase job satisfaction, but may aid in creating conditions, such as small mental breaks, that later improve employee job satisfaction. Moqbel et al. (2013), however, found that the more intensely an employee used social media in the workplace, the higher their job satisfaction. According to Moqbel and colleagues (2013), the use of social media sites can lead to better employee work-life balance, which in turn can help increase job satisfaction. Because of the potential to increase job satisfaction, Moqbel and colleagues (2013) recommended the use of social media sites in the workplace.

Co-worker connections have also been linked to improved job satisfaction (Roberson & Kee, 2017). A study by Robertson and Kee (2017) showed that an employee's job satisfaction was positively associated with the amount of time they spent interacting with their co-workers on

Facebook. Robertson and Kee (2017) concluded that organizations should promote Facebook use among co-workers and should also consider revising any policies in place that limit the use of Facebook during work. Furthermore, Schmidt, Lechhook, and Martin (2016) examined the impact and percentage of co-worker social media connections and found that the presence of connections between co-workers on social media positively related to perceived organizational support. In addition, the number of co-worker social media connections was not related to perceived organizational support, suggesting that the quality of co-worker social media connections is more important than the overall quantity of co-worker social media connections (Schmidt et al., 2016).

- Research Question 6: Do employees who more frequently use social media at work rate their job satisfaction higher than those who use social media at work less frequently or not at all?

Chapter II: Methodology

The current study aimed to gather information on (1) reasons why employees are using social media in the workplace and (2) what outcomes are associated with social media policies in the workplace. Data were collected using a quantitative methodology. A questionnaire, developed by Pew Research Center and modified by the researcher, was distributed to employees at either the entry level or intermediate level from various organizations to gather their perceptions on social media use in the workplace.

Participants

The participants for this study were recruited through MTurk (Amazon Mechanical Turk). Multiple studies have shown that obtaining participants via an online panel data source does not negatively affect the credibility of the sample (Porter, Outlaw, Gale, & Cho, 2018; Walter, Seibert, Goering, & O'Boyle Jr., 2019). A power analysis indicated that a minimum sample of 128 participants was needed to answer the research questions. The participants came from various organizations. There were no restrictions on sex or race of the participants. However, there were restrictions on age and employment status. The restriction on age was that participants needed to be 18 years of age or older. The restriction on employment status was that the participants needed to be employed either full-time or part-time and not self-employed. A total number of 135 individuals were recruited and included in the analyses below.

Of the participants, 62.2% identified as male, and 36.3% identified as female. The average age of participants reported was 31.16 years old ($SD = 8.61$). Most participants identified as White (49.6%), followed by other Asian (28.1%), and African American/Black (15.6%). The majority of participants reported working more than 40 hours per week (45.2%). The majority of participants reported working in middle management (31.9%), followed by

support staff (16.3%), junior management (11.9%), and administrative staff (11.9%). The most frequently reported industries represented were: information (12.6%), finance and insurance (10.4%), manufacturing (9.6%), and management, administrative, and waste management (9.6%). The mean number of years participants reported working in their current position was 3.85 ($SD = 3.10$). The majority of participants reported a bachelor's degree (64.4%) as their highest level of education. See Table 1 for a complete listing of the demographic breakdown.

Table 1

Sample Demographics

Demographics	Frequency (%)	Mean	SD
Age		31.16	8.61
Years in Current Position		3.85	3.10
Sex/Gender			
Male	84 (62.2%)		
Female	49 (36.3%)		
Transgender	1 (0.7%)		
Race			
African American Black	21 (15.6%)		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2 (1.5%)		
Cambodian	1 (0.7%)		
Laotian	2 (1.5%)		
Vietnamese	1 (0.7%)		
Other Asian	38 (28.1%)		
White	67 (49.6%)		

Highest Level of Education

High school	9 (6.7%)
Some college	15 (11.1%)
Associates degree	8 (5.9%)
Bachelor's degree	87 (64.4%)
Master's degree	14 (10.4)
Doctoral degree	1 (0.7%)

Industry Currently Employed (categories from
Census, 2017)

Information	17 (12.6%)
Finance & Insurance	14 (10.4%)
Manufacturing	13 (9.6%)
Management, Admin, & Waste Services	13 (9.6%)
Retail Trade	12 (8.9%)
Scientific & Technical	9 (6.7%)
Health Care & Social Assistance	9 (6.7%)
Educational Services	8 (5.9%)
Transportation & Utilities	7 (5.2%)
Construction	6 (4.4%)
Other Industry	6 (4.4%)
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	4 (3.0%)
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	3 (2.2%)
Hotel & Food Services	3 (2.2%)

Government & Public Administration	3 (2.2%)
Mining	2 (1.5%)
Wholesale Trade	2 (1.5%)
Legal Services	2 (1.5%)
Role in Industry	
Upper Management	12 (8.9%)
Middle Management	43 (31.9%)
Junior Management	16 (11.9%)
Administrative Staff	16 (11.9%)
Support Staff	22 (16.3%)
Trained Professional	10 (7.4%)
Skilled Laborer	4 (3.0%)
Consultant	1 (0.7%)
Temporary Employee	3 (2.2%)
Researcher	4 (3.0%)
Student	1 (0.7%)
Other	1 (0.7%)
Employment Status	
Working 20 hours or less per week	30 (22.2%)
Working between 20-40 hours per week	43 (31.9%)
Working more than 40 hours per week	61 (45.2%)

Measures

There were three measures used in this study. The first was a questionnaire developed by Pew Research Center and modified by the researcher. The second was a measure on organizational trust developed by Rawlins (2008). Lastly, the third was a measure on job satisfaction developed by Macdonald and MacIntyre's (1997).

Social media use. The questionnaire was created by the Pew Research Center (Pew Research Center, 2018) and modified by the researcher in order to best answer the research questions in this study. There were 18 questions with two foci: (1) employee use of social media at work, and (2) whether employers are enacting social media policies in the workplace. A sample question that focuses on social media use at work is, "Do you ever use social media at work?" A sample question that focuses on social media policies in the workplace is, "Does your workplace have rules about using social media while at work, or not?"

Organizational trust. A total of 3 items from Rawlins' (2008) organizational trust measure were used to assess perceptions of overall trust in one's organization. A sample question is, "I'm willing to let the organization make decisions for people like me." Participants were asked to rate each item using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The researcher found a coefficient alpha of .60 for overall organizational trust after removing one problematic item.

Job satisfaction. Ten items from Macdonald and MacIntyre's (1997) job satisfaction measure were used to assess total job satisfaction. A sample question is, "I feel good about my job." Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The coefficient alpha was .93 for the current sample.

Demographics. The survey ended with a demographic section to gather information on the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, and level of education. The demographic section was also used to gather information on the participants' job position, industry and length of time in current position. See appendix A for a full list of questions.

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed via MTurk (Amazon Mechanical Turk; www.mturk.com). Participants were paid 0.30 cents for completing the survey, which was made available from June 17th, 2019 through June 27th, 2019. If interested, participants were asked to click on the survey link. Once they were redirected to the survey, they were presented with a consent form for consideration. Those that elected to continue were then presented with the survey questions. Upon completion, they were taken to a screen that thanked them for their participation and compensated them for their time. The researcher's email was available to them on the "thank you" screen if they had any questions.

Chapter III: Results

After cleaning the data, descriptives and frequencies were run to explore how often employees utilized social media in the workplace and for which reasons. Reliability analyses were conducted to explore trust and job satisfaction. Due to low reliability (originally .41), one of the questions relating to trust needed to be removed from analysis prior to computing a mean score for each participant. After removing the problematic item, reliability for this scale increased to .60. The limitations of utilizing this variable are described further in the discussion section. The job satisfaction scale demonstrated sufficient reliability and mean scores were computed as intended. Inferential statistics were then used to explore each of research questions, and findings are presented below.

Research Question 1: How often do Employees Utilize Social Media at Work?

First, descriptives were explored. Results suggest that the majority of participants reported using social media while at work (91.1%) and the average amount of time spent on social media per day while at work was 2.17 hours ($SD = 2.09$). Facebook was the most commonly used social media site while at work (73.3%), followed by Instagram (65.9%), Twitter (51.9%), LinkedIn (32.6%), and Pinterest (23.7%). Participants also reported using their phones to access social media while at work (75.6%), followed by their work computer or tablet (42.2%), and personal laptop or tablet (24.4%). See Table 2 for additional details.

Table 2

Frequency of Social Media Use in the Workplace

Social Media Use	Frequency (%)	Mean	SD
Average Hours Spent on Social Media at Work		2.17	2.09
Do you use social media while at work?			
Yes	123 (91.1%)		
No	12 (8.9%)		
How much do you use the internet for social media use?			
Frequently	36 (29.5%)		
Sometimes	70 (57.4%)		
Hardly	13 (10.7%)		
Never	3 (2.5%)		
Social Media Sites Used			
Facebook	99 (73.3%)		
Instagram	89 (65.9%)		
Twitter	70 (51.9%)		
LinkedIn	44 (32.6%)		
Pinterest	32 (23.7%)		
Devices Used for Social Media Use at Work			
Phone	102 (75.6%)		
Work Computer/ Tablet	57 (42.2%)		
Personal Laptop/ Tablet	33 (24.4%)		

To explore this question further, a one-sample t-test was conducted to compare Gunnlaugsdottir's (2015) finding that 76% of employees reported using social media at work to the current sample. Here, 91% of the sample reported using social media in the workplace, which was significantly more than reported in 2015, $t(134) = 13.38, p < .001$. Moreover, of the individuals who reported using social media in the workplace, 29.5% indicated that they accessed social media frequently at work, and an additional 57.4% reported that they engaged in this behavior sometimes. Gunnlaugsdottir (2015) found that 84.5% of their participants reported using Facebook, which is similar to the 73.3% reported in this study. Moreover, Gunnlaugsdottir (2015) found that time spent on social media varied from less than half an hour to over four hours or more per week, with the majority (34%) using social media for more than two hours per week, which is less than the average of 2 hours spent on social media per day in this study.

Research Question 2: For which Reasons are Employees Using Social Media at Work?

Participants were asked to indicate the reasons why they use social media in the workplace. Lampe and Ellison (2016) found that a common reason employees used social media at work was to take a mental break from work. This sample also indicated mental breaks (59.3%) as the most frequent reason individuals were using social media in the workplace. The second most common reason for social media use in the workplace was to make or support professional connections that help individuals do their jobs (43.0%), followed by keeping individuals connected to family and friends while at work (41.5%). See Table 3 for a breakdown of the reasons for social media use.

Table 3

Reasons for Social Media Use in the Workplace (N = 135)

	Frequency (%)
Take a mental break from work	80 (59.3%)
Make or support professional connections	58 (43.0%)
Keep you connected to family/friends while at work	56 (41.5%)
Get information to solve problems at work	49 (36.3%)
Build/strengthen personal relationships with coworker	31 (23.0%)
Ask work-related questions inside organization	30 (22.2%)
Ask work-related questions outside organization	25 (18.5%)
Learn more about someone you work with	17 (12.6%)

Of the individuals who used social media in the workplace for work-related purposes, Facebook (51.1%) was most commonly used, followed by Instagram (37.0%), Twitter (32.6%), LinkedIn (21.5%), and Pinterest (19.3%).

Research Question 3: Is One Reason for Social Media Use More Frequently Cited than the Others?

A chi-square test was performed to examine whether one (or more) reasons for social media use in the workplace was significantly more common than the others. Participants' top ranked reasons were compared, $\chi^2(7, N = 122) = 83.38, p < .001$. The majority of participants (32.8%) ranked taking a mental break from work as the main reason they used social media in the workplace, followed by getting information that helps them solve problems at their jobs (25.4%), and making or supporting professional connections that help them do their jobs (13.1%). See Table 4.

Table 4

Rank of Reasons for Social Media Use (N = 122)

	Frequency of being ranked 1 st (%)
Get information to solve problems at work	31 (25.4%)
Make or support professional connections	16 (13.1%)
Keep you connected to family/friends while at work	13 (10.7%)
Take a mental break from work	40 (32.8%)
Ask work-related questions OUTSIDE organization	5 (4.1%)
Ask work-related questions INSIDE organization	6 (5.0%)
Build/strengthen personal relationships with coworker	9 (7.4%)
Learn more about someone you work with	2 (1.6%)

Research Question 4: How often are Employees Working in Organizations that have a Social Media Policy?

A chi-square test was conducted to determine whether social media policies in the workplace are significantly more common than not having social media policies. The majority of participants worked in an organization that *did* have social media policies (66.2%), which was significantly more common than organizations that *did not* have social media policies (33.8%), $\chi^2(1, N = 130) = 13.57, p < .001$.

Research Question 5: Is having a Social Media Policy Associated with Employee Trust in the Organization?

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the trust of employees in organizations with and without workplace social media policies. There was not a significant difference in organizational trust in employees who worked in organizations that had social

media policies ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.03$) compared to those who worked in organizations that did not have social media polices ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 0.98$), $t(128) = -0.97$, $p = .343$, $d = .18$.

Research Question 6: Will Employees who more Frequently Use Social Media at Work Rate their Job Satisfaction Higher than those who Use Social Media at Work Less Frequently or Not at All?

A Pearson's correlation was computed to assess the relationship between social media use and job satisfaction. There was not a significant relationship between social media use and job satisfaction in the workplace, $r(9) = 0.09$, $p = .303$.

Chapter IV: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to expand our knowledge of social media in the workplace by conducting a descriptive study to examine (1) reasons why employees are using social media in the workplace and (2) what outcomes are associated with social media policies in the workplace. The results of this study suggest that most employees (91%) are using social media in the workplace. The most commonly reported reason for social media use in the workplace was to take a mental break from work (59%), followed by making or supporting professional connections (43%), and keeping individuals connected to family and friends while at work (42%). Furthermore, the researcher found that it was more common for employees to work in an organization that used social media policies (66%) versus organizations that did not use social media policies (33%), which was in line with previous research. Moreover, there was not a significant difference in organizational trust among employees with and without workplace social media policies. Lastly, there were no significant differences among social media use in relation to job satisfaction.

Practical Implications

The current findings suggest social media use in the workplace has significantly increased since Gunnlaugsdottir's (2015) report on this topic. This finding suggest that organizations need to consider that social media use in the workplace has become very common and that most of its employees may be active on social media during the work day. Furthermore, the most frequently cited reason for social media use in the workplace was to take a mental break from work. The majority of employees worked in middle management (32%), junior management (12%), and administrative staff (12%). Perhaps employees in middle management experience more stress on the job, therefore are more likely to need a mental break at work and

utilize social media to do so. Due to mental breaks being the most frequently cited reason for social media use in the workplace, organizations may consider allowing social media breaks, just as they would a generic 15-minute break.

The majority (66%) of participants reported working in an organization that has a social media policy. However, 91% of participants reported using social media in the workplace. This suggests that most participants are using social media in the workplace. Even though the majority of participants reported working in an organization that has social media policies, the type of policy was not addressed in this study. Organizations should consider that even though they are enforcing social media policies, employees may still be using social media in the workplace. In addition, the majority of participants reported accessing social media sites on their phones (75%), which could make it more difficult for organizations to enforce social media use in the workplace. Instead, organizations should consider implementing policies on cell phone use in the workplace if they really want to prevent social media use in the workplace. As suggested in the previous paragraph, allowing employees a 15-minute “social media break” may also help prevent employees using their personal devices while at work to access social media sites.

The results indicated that there was not a significant difference in organizational trust between employees who worked in organizations that enact social media policies and employees who worked in organizations that did not have a social media policy. These results suggest social media policies are unrelated to employee organizational trust. It is possible that many employees “forget” about such policies after initially being informed of them, despite research indicating that applicants would make decisions in part based on these policies.

Lastly, given the majority of employees (91%) are using social media in the workplace and are accessing social media on their personal phones (76%), it may be difficult to prevent

employees from accessing social media sites in the workplace. As such, organizations may want to consider cell phone polices, for example, as opposed to social media polices if they are seeking to eliminate social media use in the workplace. Moreover, of the 91% of employees who are using social media in the workplace, 66% indicated that their workplace has social media polices. Therefore, the researcher suggests that social media polices may not be very effective in preventing social media use in the workplace.

Limitations and Direction for Future Studies

There were a few limitations to the study that will be noted here. First, the researcher used MTurk to distribute the survey. Because the survey was only available via MTurk, this required the researcher to limit the scope of the sample, therefore, future research would benefit from using a different sampling methodology, such as a stratified sampling methodology and focusing on age or role in industry. It would be interesting to focus on an older population to see if social media still has as large of an impact in the workplace. Specific suggestions for what these might include are described further below. Furthermore, due to the sample make up of more males (62%) than females (36%), the generalizability of the results can be of question, as the results may not generalize to other populations. Future research should ensure that both males and females are equally represented so that sample can be generalized to the population.

A second variable that may limit generalizability is age. The average age of participants was roughly 31 years old. This sample was relatively young, and had not been employed in their positions for a long time. This could be related to the high percentage of social media use in the workplace. Smith and Anderson (2018) found that among younger adults, social media use was significantly higher. Future research could focus more on if age has an impact on social media use in the workplace and could possibly focus on older adults to see if social media use in the

workplace differs from this study. Additionally, a large population of this sample (32%) worked in middle management, which could have also influenced the results, as employees in middle management may have less supervision than lower level employees, which could have influenced the results. Future research could explore whether the amount of supervision on an employee plays a role in social media use and if social media use in the workplace differs depending on the employee's role in their industry. Furthermore, due to mental breaks being the most cited reason for social media use in the workplace, future research could delve deeper into the reasons why employees are needing to take mental breaks in the workplace.

Another limitation of this study is the reliability of the researcher's trust measure (.60). Originally, there were three questions included in the trust measure, but due to a very low reliability, one question needed to be removed in order to increase the measure's reliability. Due to the low reliability score, the researcher recommends further research on employee trust in the organization and social media policies. A measure demonstrating higher reliability would allow us much more confidence in these conclusions. The current results should be interpreted with caution. Additionally, the job satisfaction scale used in this study was not technology specific. Future research may benefit in including job satisfaction questions that are more technology specific.

Lastly, another limitation to note is that participants were asked to indicate if their organization used social media polices, but the type of policy was not addressed. This study assumed that if an employee indicated that their organization had social media polices, that meant their organization did not allow employees to access social media sites in the workplace, or restricted it in some fashion. Future research could explore more in depth the types of social media polices organizations are using. Additionally, the researcher acknowledges that the

responses are all self-reported, which could result in potential sources of bias. Future research could go directly to the source and verify social media policies with an organization, and then survey that organization's employees to explore their social media use in the workplace.

Conclusion

The current study explored the use of social media in the workplace. The results suggest that most employees are using social media in the workplace. The most commonly reported reason for social media use in the workplace was to take a mental break from work, followed by making or supporting professional connections, and keeping individuals connected to family and friends while at work. It was more common for employees to work in an organization that had social media policies versus organizations that did not have social media policies, which was in line with previous research. The type of social media policy was not addressed in this study. Therefore, future research should delve deeper into the types of social media policies that are being enforced in the workplace. Additionally, there was not a significant difference in organizational trust nor in job satisfaction between those employees working in organizations with and without a policy on social media use.

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Appendix: Survey Questions

BEFORE CONTINUING TO THE SURVEY:

Are you employed, at least part-time?

- a. Yes
- b. No

INTERNET/SOCIAL MEDIA USE AT WORK QUESTIONS (PEW SURVEY)

1. Do you use the internet or email at work, at least occasionally?

- a. Yes
- b. No

2. Do you access the internet on a cell phone, tablet, or other mobile handheld device at work, at least occasionally?

- a. Yes
- b. No

3. Do you ever use social media at work?

- a. Yes
- b. No

AMONG ALL INTERNET USERS:

4. Please tell me if you ever use the internet at work to do any of the following things. Do you ever... (select all that apply)

- a. Use Twitter
- b. Use Instagram
- c. Use Pinterest
- d. Use LinkedIn

- e. Use Facebook
 - f. None of the above
5. On a typical work day, how often would you say you use the internet to go on social media sites?
- a. Frequently
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Hardly ever
 - d. Never
 - e. Don't know
6. On average, how much time do you spend on social media while at work in a given day?
- _____ hours _____ minutes
7. What devices do you use to check social media while at work?
- a. Phone
 - b. Work computer/tablet
 - c. Personal laptop/tablet
 - d. Other (please specify) _____

AMONG SOCIAL MEDIA USERS

8. In your current job, do you ever use social media to... (select all that apply)
- a. Get information that helps you solve problems at your job
 - b. Make or support professional connections that help you do your job
 - c. Keep you connected to family and friends while at work
 - d. Take a mental break from work
 - e. Ask work-related questions to people OUTSIDE your organization

- f. Ask work-related questions to people INSIDE your organization
 - g. Build or strengthen personal relationships with coworkers
 - h. Learn more about someone you work with
9. In your current job, which of the following reasons is used more frequently than the others?
(rank items)
- a. Get information that helps you solve problems at your job
 - b. Make or support professional connections that help you do your job
 - c. Keep you connected to family and friends while at work
 - d. Take a mental break from work
 - e. Ask work-related questions to people OUTSIDE your organization
 - f. Ask work-related questions to people INSIDE your organization
 - g. Build or strengthen personal relationships with coworkers
 - h. Learn more about someone you work with
10. Which of the following social media sites do you use for work-related purposes? (select all that apply)
- a. Twitter
 - b. Instagram
 - c. Pinterest
 - d. LinkedIn
 - e. Facebook
 - f. A social media tool or site provided by your employer
 - g. Another social media tool or site I haven't already mentioned (please specify)

11. Have you discovered information about a colleague through social media that improved your professional opinion of them?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
12. Have you ever discovered information about a colleague through social media that lowered your professional opinion of them?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
 - c. Don't know
13. Does your workplace have policies about how you present yourself on the internet – for example, what you can post on blogs, websites, or what information you can share about yourself online – or does it not have policies about that?
- a. Yes, has policies
 - b. No, does not
 - c. Don't know
14. Does your workplace have rules about using social media while at work, or not?
- a. Yes, has rules
 - b. No, does not
 - c. Don't know
15. Thinking about your own work-related use of social media... do you think social media is useful for... (select all that apply)
- a. Finding information you need to do your job

- b. Staying in touch with other people in the field or type of job that you work in
- c. Connecting with experts
- d. Getting to know your co-workers on a personal basis
- e. Networking or finding new job opportunities
- f. None of the above

16. In general, would you say that using social media for work purposes mostly helps or mostly hurts your job performance?

- a. Mostly helps
- b. Mostly hurts
- c. Both
- d. Neither
- e. Don't know

17. Thinking about your OWN use of social media, please tell us if you agree or disagree with the following statements: (Do you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree or strongly disagree)

- a. Social media distracts you from the work you need to do
- b. Social media breaks help you recharge while you're at work
- c. Social media lets you see too much information about your coworkers

18. When gathering new information on the internet for work-related purposes, do you share the information gathered?

- a. Yes, share it on the internet
- b. Yes, share it with a coworker
- c. No, do not share

ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST

19. For each statement, please indicate your level of agreement (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

- a. I'm willing to let the organization make decisions for people like me.
- b. I think it is important to watch this organization closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.
- c. I trust the organization to take care of people like me.

JOB SATISFACTION

20. For each statement, please indicate your level of agreement (strongly disagree to strongly agree)

- a. I receive recognition for a job well done.
- b. I feel close to the people at work.
- c. I feel good about working at this company.
- d. I feel secure about my job.
- e. I believe management is concerned about me.
- f. On a whole, I believe work is good for my physical health.
- g. My wages are good.
- h. All my talents and skills are used at work.
- i. I get along with my supervisors.
- j. I feel good about my job.

DEMOGRAPHICS

How do you self-identify?

- a. Male

- b. Female
- c. Intersex
- d. Transgender
- e. Alternative identity (Specify) _____

What is your age in years? _____

Race (choose 1 or more):

- a. African American Black
- b. _____ American Indian or Alaska Native (Specify tribal affiliation)
- c. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- d. Cambodian
- e. Hmong
- f. Laotian
- g. Vietnamese
- h. _____ Other Asian (please specify)
- i. White

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- a. Less than high school degree
- b. High school degree or equivalent (e.g., GED)
- c. Some college but no degree
- d. Associates degree
- e. Bachelor degree
- f. Master's degree
- g. Doctoral degree

h. Other (please specify) _____

Which of the following categories best describes your employment status?

- a. Employed, working 20 hours or less per week
- b. Employed, working between 20 hours and 40 hours per week
- c. Employed, working more than 40 hours per week

In what industry do you work in? (Drop down menu)

- a. Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, & Hunting
- b. Mining
- c. Construction
- d. Manufacturing
- e. Wholesale Trade
- f. Retail Trade
- g. Transportation & Utilities
- h. Information
- i. Finance & Insurance
- j. Real Estate, Rental & Leasing
- k. Scientific & Technical Services
- l. Management, Administrative, & Waste Services
- m. Educational Services
- n. Health Care & Social Assistance
- o. Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation
- p. Hotel & Food Services
- q. Government & Public Administration

- r. Legal Services
- s. Homemaker
- t. Military
- u. Religious
- v. Other Industry (Please specify) _____

Which of the following best describes your role in your industry?

- a. Upper Management
- b. Middle Management
- c. Junior Management
- d. Administrative Staff
- e. Support Staff
- f. Trained Professional
- g. Skilled Laborer
- h. Consultant
- i. Temporary Employee
- j. Researcher
- k. Student
- l. Other (please specify) _____

What is the length of time at your current position?

Years _____

Months _____