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Negative Consequences of Using Social Networks at the Workplace from the Point of View of the Sports and Youth Departments Staff

[1]Fatemeh Shakki, [1]Akram Esfahani Nia*, [2]Nasser Bai

[1]Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, Aliabad Katoul Branch, Islamic Azad University, Aliabad Katoul, Iran. **[2]**Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, Azadshahr Branch, Islamic Azad University, Azadshahr, Iran.

ABSTRACT

Background. Nowadays, employees' use of social networks at the workplace is increasing, which creates opportunities and challenges. **Objectives.** The current study aimed at investigating the negative consequences of the use of social networks at the workplace from the viewpoint of the employees of the sports and youth departments. **Methods.** The current descriptive survey was conducted on Golestan Province Sports and Youth Department consisted of 220 employees as the population. The sample was the randomly selected 141 employees based on the Cochran formula. The study employed some questionnaires to collect data, using social networks at the workplace by Barker et al., Job inattention by Zwarun & Hall, lack of time management by Landers & Callan, and ostracism of Chung & Kim. To analyze the data and identify the effects of research variables, structural equation modeling was used with the PLS software. **Results.** The obtained results showed that the application of social networks at the workplace had a positive and significant effect on job inattention ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 9.33$). The effect of using social networks at the workplace on the lack of time management of staff was also positive and significant ($\beta = 0.33$, $t = 12.94$). Finally, the positive and significant effects of using social networks at the workplace was confirmed on the ostracism ($\beta = 0.84$, $t = 66.98$). **Conclusion.** According to the results of the current study, it can be concluded that the application of social networks at the workplace can have negative consequences. It is recommended that specific rules be employed regarding the use of social networks in the organizational environment of sports and youth departments.

KEY WORDS: *Job Distraction, Ostracism, Social Networks, Time Management*

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, organizations experience a new era of competition, and in such an environment, successful organizations can achieve competitive advantage by adapting themselves to the existing conditions, relying on their capabilities. The complex nature of these conditions encourages organizations to take advantage of new technologies [1]. Information technology is one of the most important technologies that modern organizations widely use and all organizational processes depend on it in some ways. The tumultuous business environment leads organizations to focus on information technology and make them more efficient [2]. According to the importance of information, a variety of information technology systems and technologies are developed and used. Social networks are among the most important information tools used today in individual, social, and organizational areas. The formation and development of social

networks is one of the most important social events of the present century [3]. Social networks are internet-based communication and participatory channels that are widely used since 2005 for different purposes [4]. Statistics show that active users of Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus in 2016 were US$1.5 billion, 304, and 300 million, respectively, indicating the popularity of social networks among people [5]. Although social networks were initially used only for recreational activities, these networks are now widely used to achieve organizational goals [6]. Two different types of social networks used by organizations are internal and external social networks. Internal social networks are tools to manage communications and knowledge within the organization tailored to the needs and characteristics of the organization [7]. External social networks including Facebook and Instagram have applications beyond organizational issues, but can also be used in organizations to address customer responses, product and service advertising, and consumer engagement [8].

The employment of social networks by organizations is a global phenomenon, and more than two-thirds of the organizations ranked in the list of the top 500 organizations in the world in the Fortune magazine have accepted and developed regular use of these networks over a five-year period [9]. Icha & Edwin also reported that 92% of marketers from different organizations reported using social networks to improve their business [10]. However, comprehensive and accurate information on the use of social networks and its implications is not available in Iranian organizations and companies. The employment of social networks in organizations is rising for many reasons, including practicality, easy access, low cost, diversity, and fun; in 2016, in the USA, 86% of staff from different organizations used at least one social network at the workplace [11]. The widespread use of these networks in the organizational environment brings about opportunities and threats. With regard to the benefits and opportunities created by social networks, the results of the research show that using such networks can improve job performance [12], increase job satisfaction [13], expand knowledge sharing [14], improve employee learning [3], increase employee productivity [15], increase job engagement [16],

as well as staff creativity and innovation [17] in organizational environments.

Aside from the positive benefits, the employment of social networks creates problems and threats for organizations as well. Valentino et al., stated that the employment of social networks at workplace has negative consequences both for employees and the organization [18]. One of the most important negative results of the employment of such networks in organizational environments for employees is job inattention and performance decline. Involvement of employees in social networks causes their negligence of job responsibilities. Instead of engaging in a job, such employees are drowned in using such networks, which ultimately leads to job discontinuity and loss of performance. The decline in the job performance caused by the social networks also causes significant financial costs to organizations, which is estimated UD$ 2.2 billion [19] in British organizations and US$650 billion [20] per year in American organizations. Moreover, the employment of social networks leads to lack of time management by the staff. Due to the dependence of individuals on social networks, the employment of such networks is a significant part of the lives of individuals. The statistics show that the average time spent on such networks in the United States by people aged 18-64 is 2-3 hours per day [19], and in Iran, the average time is 7.4 hours per day [21]. Easy access to social networks through various tools such as mobile phones removes the time and space constraints in using such networks; today, employees of organizations also devote part of their working hours to using such networks [22]. The lack of specific rules in organizational environments regarding the employment of such networks increases the time spent using these tools [23]. More application of social networks at the workplace, while reducing the staffs` focus on their core tasks and wasting useful work time increases psychological problems such as social networking addiction, stress, depression, and anxiety, which ultimately negatively affect job performance and productivity of employees [24]. Along with other negative implications, the change in human and work relationships is another negative result of the employment of social networks at workplace. Social networks change the form of working relationships in organizations, and the transformation of relationships, along with positive benefits such as easy communication,

causes problems such as reducing face-to-face calls, sending messages without taking into account the feelings of others, and spreading gossip-rumors [25]. One of the most important negative consequences is the use of these networks in relation to employee relationships, employee negligence or the so-called ostracism of the others [26]. Ostracism at the workplace is defined as employee perceptions of the extent of negligence, abandonment, or exclusion of others at work [27]. Employees' involvement in social networks causes their negligence and disregard of the workplace, which can have negative consequences [28]. The ostracism of employees at the workplace is raised as an important ethical issue in organizations and can violate social ethical norms and harm employees in the organization.

Accordingly, ostracism at the workplace can lead to negative occupational and behavioral outcomes such as an increase in the level of occupational stress and emotional exhaustion in the staff [29], increased counterproductive behaviors [30], and antisocial behavior in the organization [31]. A lot of research is done on the negative implications of using social networks in various organizations. Bucher et al., conducted research on staff from different organizations in the EU countries and concluded that the employment of social networks such as Facebook by employees in the organizations increased job pressure, aggressive behaviors, and job uncertainty. Finally, the networks increased job stress for employees [32]. Landers & Callan investigated the advantages and disadvantages of using social networks in American organizations. The results showed that the production of inappropriate content by employees, lack of time management, upsetting others through exchanged messages, and theft of the content of others were the damages of such networks in the organizational environment [20]. The study by Taylor et al., on British organizations showed that using social networks in organizations was a tool to bother employees, and the lack of specific rules in this area increased its intensity [33]. Makvand & Fernandez in a study entitled "The Impact of Social Networking on Organizational Behaviors in Non-Democratic Countries" found that the employment of these networks led to the job inattention, lack of time management, reduced participatory behaviors, and reduced group work [34]

Holland et al., found that the employment of social networks at workplace led employees to devote more time to using such networks and the use of these networks was more common among younger employees than older employees [35]. Chung & Kim found that the employment of social networks in organizations led to increased ostracism. Another part of the research results showed that ostracized employees used social networks to communicate with other colleagues rather than face-to-face [7] contacts. The study by Moqbel & Kock on different information technology companies found that the employment of social networks by employees of these organizations led to job inattention and loss of positive emotions toward the job [24]. Today, new technologies such as information technology play an important role in the success of sports organizations. According to Sellitto et al., sports organizations and companies need to invest more on innovations in order to deliver better goods and services to their customers, and one of the most important areas of innovation is the employment of new communication technologies.

The introduction of new communication technologies such as social networks has positive implications for organizations, and sports organizations are no exception. Nevertheless, little research is done on the implications of using social networks in Iranian organizational environments. The results of a study conducted at Sports and Youth Organizations by Shaki et al., showed that the employment of social networks at the workplace of sports and youth departments increased the knowledge sharing and employee's learning [35]. However, much of the literature in this study showed that the use of such networks can produce negative outcomes, which showed a contradiction in the research. On the other hand, due to the widespread application of social networks by the community, paying attention to the positive and negative consequences of using such networks in working and organizational environments such as sports and youth departments can help managers to strengthen positive outcomes of using such networks including employee learning and minimizing their damages such as job inattention, lack of time management, and ostracism. Therefore, due to the importance of the topic and the existence of scientific gaps in this regard, the current study mainly aimed at modeling the negative consequences of using social networks at the

workplace from the viewpoint of employees of the sports and youth departments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design. The current descriptive survey was based on a structural equation modeling.

Participants. The statistical population of the study consisted of all employees of Sports and Youth Department of Golestan Province, Iran including 220 employees in 2018. Sample size was determined to be 141 subjects using Cochran's formula. A randomized simple sampling method was used to select the subjects.

Data Collection and Instruments. To collect data, some questionnaires were employed including the use of social networks at workplace by Barker et al. [7], job inattention questionnaire by Zwarun & Hall [23], lack of time management by Landers & Callan [19] and Ostracism by Chung & Kim [7]. The questionnaires of using social networks at workplace, job inattention, lack of time management, and ostracism had eight, two, two, and ten items, respectively, which were assessed based on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 as strongly disagree to 5 as strongly agree). Five questionnaires were employed to determine the content validity of the research questionnaires. Then, to determine the reliability of the questionnaires, a pilot study (completed by 40 employees of the Sport and Youth Department of Golestan Province, Iran) was conducted and the reliability coefficient of the questionnaires was investigated using the Cronbach's alpha, which were 0.85, 0.81, 0.83 and 0.78, respectively. After determining the validity and reliability of the instruments, the questionnaires were distributed among the subjects and 141 completed questionnaires were collected.

Statistical Analysis. In the current study, descriptive statistics were used to organize, summarize, classify, and describe the data including frequencies, means, and standard deviations. To test the research model, structural equation modeling was used. This method is a statistical model to investigate the linear relationships between research variables and questionnaire items. In other words, structural equation modeling is a powerful statistical method that combines the measurement model and the structural model with a simultaneous statistical test. For this purpose, the Smart PLS software was employed.

RESULTS

The current study findings were analyzed in two sections: descriptive and inferential. In the descriptive part, the results of the study showed that 81% of the subjects used Telegram social network. Instagram and WhatsApp ranked second and third among the most widely used social networks. Surveying the level of education of staff showed that most of the subjects (51.7%) had a bachelor's degree. The results showed that 57.2% of the staff participating in the study were male subjects. The Fornell & Larcker triple criteria were considered for internal consistency or reliability of structures. Investigating the factor load of the observed variables as the first criterion showed that the factor load and t values obtained for the observed variables were significant at the level of 0.01 (Figure 2).

The second criterion to assess the reliability of structures is the Dillon-Goldstein coefficient or composite reliability (internal consistency index of the model of measurement) of structures, which should be more than 0.7. The values obtained for this index also showed an acceptable reliability of the structures (Table 1). The average variance extracted (AVE) is the third criterion to assess the internal consistency of the structures presented in Table 1. Values above 0.5 were acceptable for this criterion. According to Table 1, the structures and their markers had acceptable reliability in the study.

According to Table 2, it can be argued that the AVE of the study structures was higher than the correlation of the structures with other structures. Therefore, the structures had a good diagnostic validity. The construct cross-validated communality presented in Table 3 showed that the questionnaire had a good quality.

The path coefficient values greater than +1.96 and smaller than -1.96 indicate the significance of the relevant factor and the confirmation of research hypotheses. The results of the current study showed that the effect of using social networks at the workplace on the job inattention of the employees was positive and significant (β = 0.42, t = 9.33). Also, the results showed that the effect of using social networks at the workplace on the lack of time management of employees was positive and significant (β = 0.33, t = 12.94). Finally, the results showed that the effect of using social networks at workplace was positive and significant on ostracism (β = 0.84, t = 66.69) (Table 4 and Figures 1 and 2).

Table 1. Indicators of Research Instrument Reliability

Item	Structure	Factor Load	t-Value	AVE	CR	Cronbach's Alpha
	Social networks usage in workplace			0.70	0.95	0.94
1		0.91	67.02			
2		0.77	27.09			
3		0.89	59.79			
4		0.76	22.44			
5		0.90	67.02			
6		0.74	23.70			
7		0.79	19.09			
8		0.87	43.04			
	Ostracism			0.56	0.85	0.82
9		0.54	10.26			
10		0.59	11.40			
11		0.52	9.49			
12		0.52	10.57			
13		0.76	31.15			
14		0.53	11.34			
15		0.65	13.03			
16		0.55	9.06			
17		0.69	24.93			
18		0.54	12.16			
	Lack of time management			0.68	0.81	0.65
19		0.81	19.78			
20		0.83	21.83			
	Job inattention			0.67	0.80	0.63
21		0.71	11.45			
22		0.91	32.05			

AVE, Average Variance Extracted; CR, Composite Reliability

Table 2. Results of the Diagnostic Validity of the Research Structures

	Structure	1	2	3	4
1	**Social networks usage in workplace**	0.54			
2	**Ostracism**	0.74	0.84		
3	**Lack of time management**	0.71	0.69	0.78	
4	**Job inattention**	0.78	0.62	0.65	0.81

Table 3. Results of Construct Cross-validated Communality of Research Structures

Structure	SSO	SSE	1-SSE/SSO
Social networks usage in workplace	1128.00	528.65	0.53
Ostracism	1410.00	1131.84	0.20
Lack of time management	282.00	267.71	0.05
Job inattention	282.00	251.40	0.11

Table 4. Effect of Predictive Variable on Criterion Variables

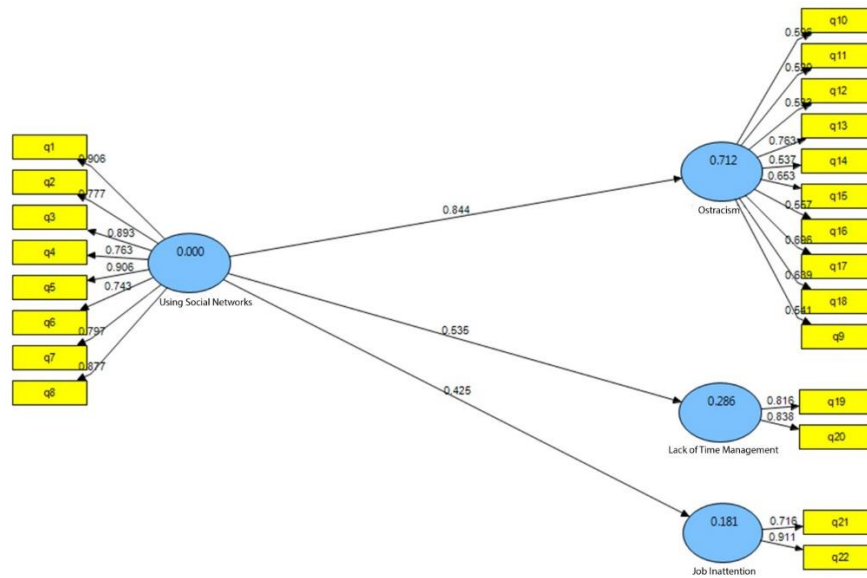| Predictor	Ostracism		Lack of Time Management		Job Inattention	
	t-Statistics	β	t-Statistics	β	t-Statistics	β
Social networks usage in workplace	66.98	0.84	12.94	0.53	9.33	0.42
Hypothesis results	Accept		Accept		Accept	

-1.96 ≤ t-value ≤ 1.96

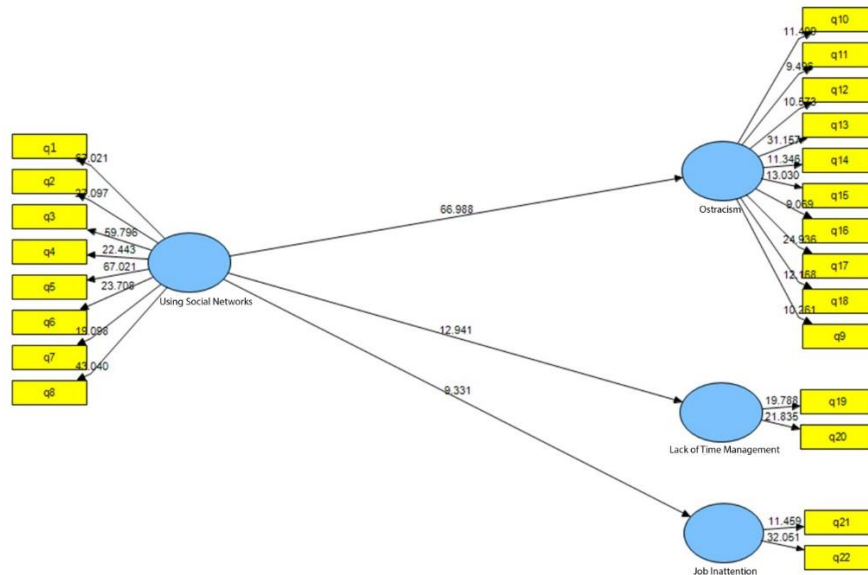**Figure 1. The Tested Model in the Standard Estimation Mode**

Figure 2. The Tested Model of the Research in Case of Significance

DISCUSSION

The current study aimed at modeling the negative consequences of using social networks at workplace from the viewpoint of employees of Sport and Youth Department of Golestan Province, Iran. The study results showed negative and significant effects of using social networks at the workplace on the job inattention of employees of Sport and Youth Department of Golestan Province. This result was consistent with the findings of Makvand & Fernandez and Moqbel & Kock [24, 34]. This result means that more use of social networks by employees of the Golestan Province Sports and Youth Department results in more job inattention. Today, social networks have

a very important place in personal and working lives. Factors such as ease of use, low cost, diversity, entertainment, and high speed information exchange increase the use of these networks in organization environments. The employment of social networks is an event that is nowadays expanding in all organizations and sports organizations are no exception. The employment of these networks in organizational environments has positive outcomes and negative consequences that should be considered by employees and managers. One of the most important negative consequences of using such networks is the intense involvement of employees

in them and the negligence of job and organizational tasks. According to Landers & Callan, the growing dependence of employees on social networks and spending too much time sending messages, forwarding others' messages, following others social pages, discussing in groups, and testing other social networking capabilities, creates a kind of internet addiction called social networking addiction [20]. The widespread use of these networks in organizations has different mental and emotional implications for employees including depression, shyness, confusion, and the desire to avoid community and reduce self-esteem. Moreover, excessive use of social networks at the workplace creates a conflict between the user (employee) and the job, which, ultimately negatively affects job performance. Due to the attractiveness and diversity, social networks attract employees` attention and efforts and this leads to employees' negligence of their tasks. In addition, research showed that engaging memory with addictive stimuli such as the use of social networks changes the mental and cognitive functions of the staff and leads to negative outcomes such as limited working memory, which can lead to forgetting how to do tasks, difficulty solving working problems, lack of focus on tasks, and intense mental conflict with non-work-related issues [24]. Ultimately, such cases can lead to behaviors that have a negative impact on occupational behaviors such as job performance and job engagement.

On the other hand, the widespread use of social networks due to persistent mental engagement leads to a deviation in the minds of employees from work issues to other areas, which provides job inattention. Considering the positive effect of using social networks on job inattention among employees of Golestan Sport and Youth Department, it is necessary to consider promoting the culture of using social networks in sports and youth departments, setting out specific rules regarding the use of social networks in these offices, informing employees of the positive and negative consequences of social networks on the workplace, and training the employees of the sports and youth departments to use such networks in order to carry out their tasks. Another part of the current study results showed that the use of social networks at the workplace had a positive and significant effect on the lack of time management of employees of Sport and Youth Department of Golestan Province. This finding

was consistent with the findings of Landers & Callan, Makvand & Fernandez, and Holland et al. [20, 35]. In the current era, organizations try to increase their productivity and efficiency using different methods. One of the best practices is to increase human resource productivity in organizations, manage time, and train it to employees; however, there are many factors in the workplace that can challenge the proper use of time as a valuable asset for employees. Nowadays, using information and communication technologies such as social networks is one of the most important factors that create problems for managing employees' time.

The existence of extensive communication infrastructure such as smartphones and the widespread use of social networking by organizations lead employees to devote part of their work time to the real work place and another part to the virtual space. However, statistics showed that the amount of time spent by employees on the virtual space increased relative to the real work place [13]. Increasing the time spent in virtual space by employees, such as the use of social networks, can have negative working outcomes including assigning time to these networks more than tasks, not focusing on tasks, and loss of job performance. The use of these networks in the long run damages memory, reduces motivation, and causes disorder in individual and social relationships [24]. Problems such as spending too much time on social networks and addiction to social networks among employees lead organizations to take measures to reduce the negative effects of using these networks in organizations. Woon & Kim stated that developing appropriate strategies to use social networks while reducing the negative implications of such networks in organizational environments, such as time lag, can lead to positive occupational outcomes such as improved job performance, increased employees' engagement, and their creativity and innovation [16].

Regarding the positive effect of using social networks on the lack of time management of employees of Sport and Youth Department of Golestan Province, it is suggested that social networks be used at specific time and under supervision at the workplace. The results of the current study showed that the application of social networks at the workplace had a positive and significant effect on ostracism by the employees

of the Sport and Youth Department of Golestan Province. This result was consistent with those of Chung & Kim [7]. Ostracism is part of human life, since it is a common phenomenon that individuals can experience in different situations such as organizational and work environments. Ostracism usually results in negative behavioral consequences, since it creates a sense of personal and social anger. According to Chung & Kim, ostracism at the workplace can simultaneously endanger four basic needs of self-confidence, need for membership, need for control, and the need for meaningfulness of the job [7]. Ostracism at workplace is often perceived as an ostracism by colleagues and ostracism by supervisors. Employees that experience ostracism at the workplace often imagine doing something wrong or having characteristics that are not attractive to other colleagues and may even be annoying. Ostracism in an organization can be observed in a variety of ways such as exile, lack of physical contact, quitting discussions, ostracism of organizational or informal groups, or even avoiding eye contact.

There are many factors in organizational environments that create a sense of ostracism of employees, one of the most important of which is the use of social networks. The use of social networks in an intentional and inappropriate manner leads to the ostracism of employees by colleagues. In the intentional way, employees use virtual networks to dismiss their colleagues for a variety of reasons, which is a kind of disregard for others and ignoring them. In an unintentional way, employees are so involved with the use of social networks at the workplace that do not notice the presence of others such as colleagues or even customers. Colleague ostracism can also be done in both physical and virtual modes. In the first type, the physical state, employees intentionally and inadvertently ignore the presence of others at their workplace. In the second type, the virtual mode, that is observed today, employees in virtual networks such as social networks form working groups, and for different reasons, prevent their colleagues to join them. The ostracism of employees by different means, such as social networks, can have devastating outcomes for employees and organizations. Lack of individual interactions in the workplace, lack of attention to the feelings and

affections of colleagues, lack of awareness of the problems of colleagues, decreased self-esteem in the employees, decreased trust among employees, increased sense of loneliness in the employees, reduced teamwork, and increased stress and job concern are the negative consequences of ostracism in organizational environments due to social networks. Since the employment of social networks in the sports and youth departments can cause employees' ostracism; the non-use of these networks during face-to-face contact of employees, the membership of all employees in the virtual working groups and using their comments and suggestions and having specific rules and regulations in virtual groups are suggested to prevent issues such as disrespect for each other and ostracism.

CONCLUSIONS

Finally, the results of the current study showed that the use of social networks at the workplace had a positive and significant effect on employees' job inattention, lack of employee time management, and colleagues' ostracism. In the current study, only negative effects of the use of social networks by employees of the sports and youth departments were studied, which can be considered as one of the limitations of the study. It is suggested that in the future studies, the positive effects of using social networks at the workplace from the perspective of employees of the sports and youth departments should be considered.

APPLICABLE REMARKS

- Setting up specific rules in the sports and youth departments to use social networks at workplace.
- Monitoring the extent to which employees of the sports and youth departments use social networks at workplace by the managers and supervisors.
- Notify the employees of the sports and youth departments of the negative consequences of using social networks at workplace.
- Training staff of sports and youth departments to use social networks in line with organizational goals.
- Determining the total time spent on social networks at the workplace.
- Creating virtual teams to facilitate intra-organizational communication and solving work problems.

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