The Impact of Enterprise Social Media Fatigue on Employee Creativity: A Conceptual Paper

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Abstract

In the era of information technology, the rise in popularity of social media is reshaping communication, entertainment, work, and learning. As social media has shown its potential to have a significant impact, organizations are pouring resources into their social media programs to focus on finding or building enterprise-level social media that suits the features of the business. Enterprise social media is proving to be an efficient instrument for improving communication, enhancing collaboration, and accelerating the dissemination of corporate knowledge. However, information and communication technology has been characterized as somewhat of a "double-edged sword", and as such, there is also growing concern among researchers that enterprise social media use has an undeniable "dark side". This conceptual paper applies the stressor-strain-outcome (SSO) model to explain the potential roles played by "fear of missing out" (FoMO) and privacy concerns as stressors that affect "enterprise social media fatigue" (ESMF); as well as the effect that ESMF may have on employee creativity. Research propositions based on this conceptual framework have also been developed.

Keywords: fear of missing out, privacy concerns, enterprise social media fatigue, stressor-strain-outcome, employee creativity

1. Introduction

Following the advancement of information technology, social media applications have deeply penetrated people's lives. Social media has redefined the manner in which people are able to socialize, entertain themselves, and share information and knowledge. It plays an important role in the realms of work and learning. Using social media in the management of organizations and for promoting businesses is now an indispensable commercial and administrative device for the modern enterprise (Kane, 2019). Consequently, companies

today are increasingly using social media as a formal workplace communication tool. A range of social media platforms, including WeChat Work, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, DingTalk, LinkedIn, and Slack, have been widely used by enterprises (Braojos, 2019). Colleagues interact and communicate on social media to exchange knowledge, information, and ideas (Yaqub & Alsabban, 2023).

Enterprise social media is a digital social platform that utilizes existing social media technologies to achieve effective communication and cooperation within a company. It involves using the project creation, distribution, feedback, authorization, and communication processes of an enterprise to improve team members' tacit knowledge, collaboration, communication, information sharing, and task tracking. An additional benefit is the improvement of knowledge management among workers and stakeholders (Sun et al., 2020; Nisar et al., 2019) and the overall work performance of enterprises (Kane, 2015).

However, commentators do not uniformly praise enterprise social media applications. By that employees access the Internet at anytime and anywhere, enterprise social media applications can give the discomforting appearance of monitoring people. Employees feel that they must stay abreast of information so they do not miss important tasks, and they are concerned that openly expressing themselves on enterprise social media might expose their inadequacies or compromise their privacy. As organizations embed enterprise social media, it continues to show its "dark side" or unpleasant and harmful aspects. As such, employees are fatigued by enterprise social media, and this progressively influences their job performance (Chu, 2020; Karimikia et al., 2020). Grounded in the stressor-strain-outcome (SSO) model, this conceptual paper presents a conceptual framework of the impacts of "fear of missing out" (FoMO) and privacy concerns on enterprise social media fatigue (ESMF), as well as the influence ESMF has on employee creativity.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Stressor-Strain-Outcome (SSO) Model

The SSO model (Koeske & Koeske, 1993) is a commonly used framework in the study of social media, particularly of causes leading to social media fatigue (Ou et al., 2023; Malik et al., 2020; Whelan et al., 2020; Dhir et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2016). The SSO model is composed of three main modules—the stressor, the strain, and the outcome. Stressors are psychological and behavioral stimuli that can adversely affect an individual and include overload, conflict, and invasion (Pang & Ruan, 2023; Shagirbasha et al., 2023; Sun et al., 2019). Strain is a negative mood or state of being due to stressors, and includes psychological, physiological, or behavioral effects (Tarafdar et al., 2019; Ragu-Nathan et al., 2008). Outcomes are the eventual reduction in productivity and mental and physical functioning in response to the strains (Dhir et al., 2018; Pontes, 2017; Luqman et al., 2017).

2.2 Enterprise Social Media Fatigue

As the intense popularity of social media grows, it has become clear that social media users are experiencing problems of information, system, and social overload. All these factors will deepen users' dissatisfaction with social media and their willingness to discontinue using it (Zhang et al., 2015). A significant amount of research has been conducted on the antecedents and effects of social media fatigue. It shows that social media fatigue may be related to privacy concerns and feelings of overload among users (Zhang et al., 2022; Teng et al., 2022; Bright et al., 2015; Goasduff & Pettey, 2011). The prevalence of enterprise social media, a professional version of social media, can also cause fatigue among employees in the workplace, which may be physical or psychological. This study proposes the potential negative influence of enterprise social media utilization, and ESMF in particular, upon employee performance in the workplace. Employees are also increasingly feeling fatigued due to the hindrances caused by enterprise social media. Existing studies have shown that employees who use enterprise social media face privacy concerns (Bhave et al., 2020), as well as information, communication, and social interaction overload (Cao & Yu, 2019; Chen & Wei, 2019; Yu et al., 2018), and emotional exhaustion (Luqman et al., 2021).

2.3 Fear of Missing Out

Due to the convenience of enterprise social media, employees are often online 24 hours a day, and group work tasks and assignments will frequently be posted using enterprise social media. When employees receive a quantity of information that is greater than their information-processing capability, it can result in feelings of intrusion and a lack of control, and the discomfort of the external environment will affect individuals' attitudes, evaluations, and behavior. With the possibility of missing important information or novel events, there can occur a type of anxiety, which involves feelings of worry and the "fear of missing out" (FoMO). As a stressor, FoMO can lead to social media burnout and associated response behaviors (Bright & Logan, 2018), which ultimately results in poor employee performance. JWT Intelligence (Thompson, 2016), the research arm of JW Thompson, defined FoMO as "when you miss out on something your friend is doing, knows, or has more or better than you, it makes you feel uneasy and sometimes very uncomfortable." Przybylski (2013) defined FoMO as a feeling of generalized anxiousness about an experience in which the individual is unable to participate, which makes them very eager to know what other people are doing and getting. FoMO in the context of social media use has drawn significant academic interest and prior study (Tandon et al., 2020, 2021a).

2.4 Privacy Concerns

From the perspective of information transmitters, the use of public social media platforms and employees' self-disclosure can bring their own privacy concerns. Social media is characterized by four main affordances: persistence, visibility, editability, and association (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). Visibility enhances employees' fundamental connections by

improving the accuracy of instrumental and meta-knowledge (Leonardi et al., 2013; Leonardi & Meyer, 2014; Leonardi, 2015). But these transparent Internet interactions have raised concerns about online privacy (Karahasanovic et al., 2009). Enterprise social media within an organization is an open platform, and the visibility of information enables employees' communication behaviors, published content, and other information to be observed by a third party. Because of this, employees worry that their behavior on public platforms will expose their privacy, by revealing aspects such as their shortcomings, personality, knowledge mastery, and work progress. The persistence of such concerns can also bring about social media fatigue. Lee et al. (2019) suggest that social media users may also worry that their disclosures will affect their prestige in digital community groups, which can contribute to fatigue as well.

2.5 Employee Creativity

Employee creativity is considered to be a key competency for organizational competitiveness (Ardito et al., 2018; Cai et al., 2018; Alavi et al., 2014). Previous studies have examined the influence of work stressors on creativity (Ding et al., 2019; Sacramento et al., 2013; Byron et al., 2010). When using enterprise social media, employees often experience interruptions. These frequent breaks or switches in the focus of attention may prevent the employee from concentrating, which can damage creativity (Chen et al., 2019; Chen & Karahanna, 2018). Luqman et al. (2021) concluded that employees' creativity may be unfavorably impacted by job stress or demands. Ding et al. (2019) examined the impact of challenging and hindering stressors on the creativity of employees. Tandon et al. (2022) suggested that FoMO has a significant adverse association with creativity. Acting as a socially driven stressor, FoMO may overload the cognitive ability of employees to generate new ideas. Using the SSO model, Kasim's (2022) work investigated how social media overload led to technological stress in the context of using WhatsApp at work and subsequently affects employees' innovation-related job performance.

3. Conceptual Model and Propositions

The stressors that employees encounter while acting as information transmitters and receivers on enterprise social media platforms were considered independent variables. The primary pressures for employees as information recipients arise from the fear of missing important messages due to information overload. Previous studies have argued that FoMO can predict work burnout or social media fatigue (Budnick et al., 2020; Tandon et al., 2021b; Tandon et al., 2022). According to Koohang et al.'s (2021) research, privacy is social media users' main concern. Enterprise social media makes communication among employees more visible, which allows coworkers to judge others based on online information. In other words, enterprise social media creates a "monitoring" situation in companies (Deng, 2023). A secondary source of pressure for employees as information transmitters arises from privacy issues related to the enterprise social media platform. Dhir et al. (2019) found that privacy concerns promote social media fatigue.

Therefore, this study considers FoMO and privacy concerns as antecedent variables of ESMF for employees. Once employees experience social media fatigue, this burden ultimately leads to negative results. This study cites employee creativity as an indicator of the negative effects caused by enterprise social media. Previous studies have also examined the influence that work stressors have on creativity (Ding et al., 2019; Kalyar et al., 2021; Millier, 2023). When using enterprise social media, employees often experience interruptions. These frequent shifts in attention can hinder an employee's ability to develop sustained concentration, thereby impeding creativity (Leroy et al., 2020; Luqman et al., 2021; Madjar et al., 2019; Nusrat et al., 2023). Building on the SSO model, this study proposes that FoMO and privacy concerns as stressors are important triggers of ESMF—the strain—which in turn has an impact on employee creativity as the outcome. This study's conceptual model is presented graphically in Figure 1.
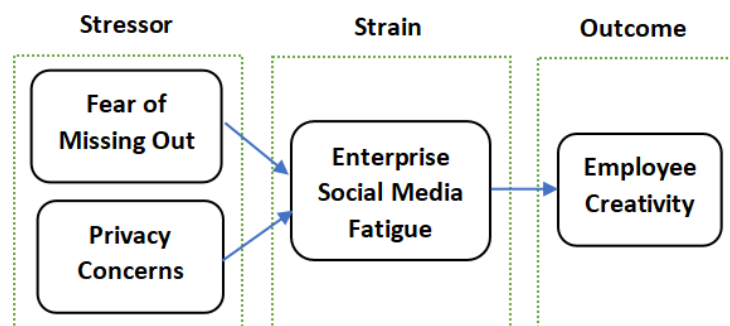

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Furthermore, based on the proposed conceptual model, the following research propositions are presented in this study.

Proposition 1: FoMO is significantly exacerbating ESMF.

Proposition 2: Privacy concerns are significantly exacerbating ESMF.

Proposition 3: ESMF is significantly and negatively affecting employee creativity.

4. Conclusion

To characterize the negative influence of enterprise social media on employees, this study proposes the concept of ESMF. Building on the SSO model, the study proposes a research model with FoMO and privacy concerns as stressors, ESMF as strain, and employee creativity as the outcome. Subsequently, research propositions based on this conceptual framework have been developed. Future researchers can therefore expand this area of research by empirically studying this framework.

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Authors contributions

Dr. Wang were responsible for study design. Dr. Wang drafted the manuscript and Dr. Teo revised it. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

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