Effects of On-line Portal Interactions on Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The roles of social media and other on-line portals are becoming indispensable in the Digital Age as employees are keeping up with information and communication technology innovations. This study was conducted to determine the effects of using social media and other English as a Second Language sites on on-line teachers' professional development and interpersonal communication at work. To gather descriptive data regarding the perceptions of 64 purposely selected male and female on-line English teachers in one Korean company in the Philippines, quantitative methods through a survey instrument was used. Majority of the respondents based on the analysis of the data gathered responded that the use social media and other English as a Second Language sites is mainly for professional and social purposes. Keeping up-to-date with world events and connecting to co-workers were the top uses of social media to instructors. In effect, most instructors perceived that they became informed and knowledgeable and sensitive to their co-workers' concerns. Social media and other on-line portals not only designed for social networking. These are rich resources that on-line teachers can refer to in meeting both social and professional goals but must be used with caution as the perceived effects of the user may have opposite effects on the user in reality.

Keywords: On-line portal interactions, Effects, Professional, Interpersonal communications

INTRODUCTION

The on-line portals' roles in the workplace are becoming indispensable in the Digital Age as organizations are keeping up with information and communication technology innovations. Employees communicate, share, and access information instantly, in most cases, and virtually, where people no longer share physical space. With a plethora of on-line portals, users can choose what platforms to use deliberately for particular purposes as they are embedded in work and leisure time. This change and its impact have been phenomenal and to some, a day without the internet is beyond imagination.

The importance of using on-line portals remains debatable but opportunities and benefits they bring should not be underestimated. Across many fields, social media use is continuously gaining popularity. In the education field, social media and other on-line portals can be efficiently used. In a blog[(1)] on teaching strategies, uses of social media in education include sharing of information and other educational contents across programs in the institutions; fast sharing of collected data using mobile devices during field work and other educational activities; creating an avenue to communicate research results and connect with individuals with same interests; creating an avenue for students to share their thoughts during class discussions; adding social tools to e-textbooks; and building and strengthening student study groups.

In the Philippines, the Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP) has created a substantial employment opportunities in teaching on-line English among Filipinos as educational companies in South Korea continually invest in the country to answer the steadily rising needs of Koreans in developing communicative competence in English. Korean students studying the language aims to be globally competitive, and thus in need of quality teachers. And to address this need, the on-line English teacher has to stay informed and updated, for instance, in global trend in business negotiations, presentations, business communication, and the like to teach effectively the advanced level learners who are mostly heavy Internet users. Since social media are incorporated in work and leisure time, it is logical to state that social media use is an avenue in meeting the on-line teachers' professional and personal goals. However, there is lack of studies found focusing on the effects of social media on English on-line teachers' professional and interpersonal communication at work, thus the need to conduct this study.

METHODS

This study utilized the descriptive method of research to find out the perceived effects of the on-line portal interactions on on-line English instructors' professional and interpersonal communication at work. The purpose

of descriptive research is to measure and understand better how naturally distributed the variables are. There is no manipulation of the variables to check if there is an effect in the other variables according to Yegidis and Weinbach[2]. Through the use of the descriptive method of research, the perceived effects of social media interactions among the on-line teachers can be measured and analyzed accurately. The population for this study was composed of male and female on-line English teachers to Koreans with social media accounts or multiple accounts which they logged in for professional and interpersonal communication development purposes. Foreign English teachers were also included in this study. A subset of the population was chosen to participate in the survey. Using Slovin's formula, the researcher arrived at 111 as sample from the total 153 of on-line English teachers (126 Filipinos and 27 foreign teachers) in one Korean company in the Philippines. However, only 64 completely answered questionnaires were retrieved and statistically treated.

RESULTS

The respondents' demographic variables revealed that most of the online English teachers were female (71.88%) Filipinos (89.06%) belonging to the age bracket 24-29 (45.31%). There were two Filipino-Americans, one American, and one Australian among respondents. Most of the respondents were college graduates (82.81%) but there were four college undergraduates and one completed a vocational course.

Table 1. Frequency and percentage distribution of the perceived uses of on-line portals in terms of professional and social aspects

Uses	f	%
1. Share work-related content (ideas and teaching stories)	49	76.56
2. Collaborate to drive new ideas and innovative thinking about teaching English on-line	49	76.56
3. Track goals, contribute content, and gain recognition in the on-line teaching industry	36	56.25
4. Offer consultation	30	46.88
5. Keep up-to-date with world events	58	90.62
6. Connect to co-workers	55	85.94
7. Connect to others (i.e. sharing same interests) in a fun way	54	84.37
8. Avoid talking face-to-face	20	31.25
9. Get through to a co-worker who is hard to reach	31	48.44

Table 2. Frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' perceived professional development and interpersonal interaction effects of using on-line portals

Effects	f	%
1. Improved teaching skills	52	81.25
2. Informed and knowledgeable (i.e. latest news/issues useful in on-line teaching)	57	89.06
3. Confident	43	67.19
4. Improved communication skills	55	85.94
5. Be sensitive to co-workers' concerns	49	76.56
6. Make oneself understood by others	48	75
7. Know how to respond to co-workers' statements	47	73.44
8. Take turns	31	48.44
9. Listen to co-workers	47	73.44

DISCUSSION

The respondents' demographic confirmed that the teaching profession is dominated by women. However, Taqi, Al-Darwish, Akbar, and Al-Gharabali's[3] study revealed that language learners prefer male teachers over females for they believe that males are with better personality but the study concluded that gender is the student's criterion but it is not the basis for effective language teaching.

Most of the respondents (90.62%) considered social media to keep them up-to-date with world events. However, the study of Dutton and Blank[4] revealed that social media users (79% of the respondents) mainly used

them for social activities and never used the informational capabilities of social media. This can be attributed to the credibility issue of the information confronting the social media user.

More than half (85.94%) of the respondents replied that through social media and other on-portals they get connected to co-workers and some (31.25%) considered it a means to avoid talking face-to-face with co-workers. In terms of interpersonal interaction effects, most of the respondents (76.56%) believed that they become sensitive to their co-workers' concerns and understood by others but findings of Drussell's[5] research in 2012 revealed that face-to-face interaction with others is preferred and the most effective way of communicating and in dealing with problems.

CONCLUSION

This study reveals that teaching job is still preferred by women than men. Among the identified possible uses of social media and other on-line portals, keeping up-to-date with world events scored the highest but previous studies revealed that other social media users who value the trustworthiness of the information never used the information found in social media. Getting connected to co-workers and avoiding face-to-face encounter are among the reasons for social media use and sensitivity to others' needs and becoming understood by others are some of the social media effects as perceived by the on-line English teachers but findings of some studies showed that communicating in person with others remains to be effective in dealing with problems and in building and establishing relationships at work. The study recommends a bigger population and more on-line portal choices be included in their study to provide a better picture of the on-line teachers' social media use. A qualitative study is also recommended for an in-depth understanding of social media utilization in on-line English teaching.

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