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Social Media Sites Use Intensity and Job Burnout Among the U.S. and Thai Employees

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ABSTRACT

This research explored the effect of social network sites (SNS) use intensity in the workplace on three aspects of job burnout. The data were collected from non-teaching employees from universities in the U.S. (N = 174) and in Thailand (N = 182). Results from partial least squares regression revealed some evidence of the u-curve relationship between SNS use intensity and depersonalization in both countries. However, the u-curve relationship between SNS use and lack of personal accomplishment is only supported in U.S. samples. This suggests that while a moderate degree of SNS use at work tends to lower burnout, a high degree of use appears to create more burnout. The results also reveal a strong positive linkage between SNS use intensity and emotional exhaustion in U.S. samples. Overall, these findings imply that allowing employees to use SNS can provide some benefits, but it is important that employees do not overuse SNS to avoid burnout.

KEYWORDS

Burnout, Culture, Facebook, Social Network Sites, Social Support, Stress, Work-Life Balance

1. INTRODUCTION

The recent advances in technology, especially the Internet, have changed the way people connect with each other (N. Ellison & Boyd, 2013). The Internet has led to the advent of several technological revolutions in the information age; one of which is social network sites (SNS) such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Google Plus (Moqbel, Nevo, & Kock, 2013). Use of SNS is not a recent phenomenon as it started in the mid-90s with the Classmates site (Moqbel, 2012), but it did not become popular until 2003 when LinkedIn and Friendster were introduced. By late 2016, Facebook alone had already exceeded 1.86 billion users.

SNS have been redefined by Ellison and Boyd (2013) as:

...a networked communication platform in which participants 1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; 2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user-generated content provided by their connections on the site (p. 158).

Research on the impact of SNS has gain more popularity in literature over the past years (Błachnio, Przepiórka, & Rudnicka, 2013; Brandtzæg, Luders, & Skjetne, 2010; Jang Hyun, Min-Sun, & Yoonjae, 2010; LaRose, Connolly, Lee, Li, & Hales, 2014; Sipiør, Ward, Volonino, & MacGabhann, 2013; Yong Gu et al., 2010). However, it is essential to note that the use of SNS in the workplace has been controversial in academia and in the industry. Some argue that the use of SNS at work can contribute positively to the work-related outcomes (Moqbel et al., 2013), to customer relations (Acker, Grone, Akkad, Potcher, & Yazbek, 2011), to improved marketing strategies (Trusov, Bucklin, & Paulwels, 2009), and to improved access to knowledge enhancing innovative performance (Ali-Hassan, Nevo, Kim, & Perelgut, 2011). Others argue that the use of SNS in the workplace might expose organizations to various types of risks (Bernoff & Li, 2006; Koch, Gonzalez, & Leidner, 2012; Kucuk, 2010; Moqbel, 2012). Some of those claimed risks include privacy threats such as sensitive data leakage and security threats such as exposing organizations to malware and phishing scams (Moqbel, 2012). Another type of risk can be damage to the organization's reputation from employees who post inappropriate statements on SNS (Aula, 2010). Another major argument against the use of SNS in the workplace is that it leads to loss of productivity as employees' use of SNS wastes time by detracting their effective use of time on work-related activities (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In order to mitigate the risks mentioned earlier, some organizations resorted to establishing social-media-use policies while others decided to prohibit the use of SNS entirely (Koch et al., 2012).

Although research about SNS has gained more popularity in literature over the past few years, very little has been conducted on the impact of SNS use by employees in the workplace from the organizational behavior aspect. In order to fill this research gap, the focus of this study is on investigating whether SNS use in the workplace can relate to the level of job burnout that employees experience. Job burnout is selected as the outcome factor in this study since it is the issue that organizations regard as one key problem that needs to be prevented (Singh, Suar, & Leiter, 2012; Sochos, Bowers, & Kinman, 2012). Generally, job burnout can be perceived in terms of the level of stress that people experience in the workplace. It is one of the major problems that not only reduces productivity and performance of employees (Hollet-Haudebert, Mulki, & Fournier, 2011; Hung, Fisher, Gapp, & Carter, 2012; Singh et al., 2012), but also causes employees to suffer from mental and physical health problems (Tourigny, Baba, & Xiaoyun, 2010; Zhong et al., 2009). Even though there is some prior evidence in literature about the effects of SNS usage on personalities and psychological outcomes of people (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011), to the knowledge of the authors, there is no study conducted to explore the nonlinear relationship between the SNS use in the workplace and the level of job burnout. In this research, the authors aim to provide evidence whether the effect of SNS use in the workplace on job burnout might present in terms of an u-curve relationship; this means it might be possible that a certain amount of SNS use can lower burnout, whereas too much SNS use can result in more burnout. Moreover, existing research was mainly conducted using single-country analysis; there is no research that compares whether the effects of SNS use in the workplace might differ between samples from two different nations. In the research, the authors aim to explore whether the effect of SNS use in the workplace on job burnout might differ between the U.S. sample and the Thai sample. Overall, the results from the present study can make a contribution to SNS research by bridging these gaps. Understanding the role of SNS in the workplace might provide some benefits to organizations as it can help managers make decisions on whether to establish formal policy regarding the use of SNS in the workplace.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: The literature review section provides research background and key literature review on job burnout and SNS. The method section describes our research model and methods. The result section presents the empirical results of our survey study.

The discussion section discusses the results and implications for future studies as well as discusses the limitations. The last section concludes and summarizes our findings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Job Burnout

Job burnout is a problem that employees normally experience when they encounter stress over a prolonged period of time. Scholars suggested that job burnout is a multidimensional construct consisting of three main aspects including emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and lack of personal accomplishment (Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 2008). The first aspect of burnout, emotional exhaustion, normally occurs when people perceive that they cannot cope effectively with stressors. This issue consequently makes people feel emotionally drained and lacking energy to perform their tasks (Shepherd, Tashchian, & Ridnour, 2011). The second aspect of burnout, depersonalization, normally occurs when people perceive that they have no control over a situation at work (Hollet-Haudebert et al., 2011). Employees who developed personalization syndrome tend to detach from other people in the workplace and become cynical (Cole, Walter, Bedeian, & O'Boyle, 2012). The third aspect of burnout, lack of personal accomplishment, involves the perception of people that they lack confidence to achieve their work objectives (Hollet-Haudebert et al., 2011). Employees who encounter this aspect of burnout tend to perceive that their contributions are not worthwhile to the organization.

2.2. SNS Use intensity and Job Burnout

2.2.1. Benefits of SNS on Lower Burnout

Using SNS at work can serve as a solution that helps employees cope effectively with job stress. When experiencing stress at work, employees may use their SNS to connect with their friends in order to relieve themselves from stressors. In this regard, using SNS may serve as an emotion-focused coping strategy that employees use to divert their attention from stress at work (Boyd, Lewin, & Sager, 2009), which is a source of emotional exhaustion. In fact, a recent study found that SNS provide employees with work-life balance mechanisms (Moqbel et al., 2013). The positive role of SNS on preventing burnout can also be supported by the job demands-resources-model (Evangelia Demerouti, Bakker, & Fried, 2012; E. Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner, & Schaufeli, 2001). According to this model, demands can be perceived as any aspect of job that can cause psychological strain to employees (e.g. workloads) (Singh et al., 2012), while resources can be perceived as any factor that support employees achieve their work objectives (e.g., support from coworker/supervisors) (Evangelia Demerouti et al., 2012; Luria & Torjman, 2009). In addition, Lin et al (2011) used network externality theory and motivation theory to explain why individuals use SNS. They suggested that the number of friends that people have in SNS caused them to realize the benefits and enjoyment from using SNS.

In this regards, access to friends in SNS can provide a critical resource in terms of advice, empathy, or emotional support, that helps employees deal with job demands which are major sources of stress (Gaan, 2008). This positive contribution of SNS is also consistent with social support theory (Shumaker & Brownell, 1984) which emphasizes social relationship as a factor that alleviates stress perception (Lawrence & Callan, 2011; Sochos et al., 2012); and therefore, can reduce emotional exhaustion. Moreover, social support from SNS access can prevent lack of personal accomplishment problem because it is a channel by which employees can receive encouragements from their contacts in SNS. For example, a study by Valkenburg, Peter, and Schouten (2006) reported that positive feedbacks that people received from SNS was found to associate positively with self-esteem. Finally, it is possible that activities in SNS can help reduce depersonalization. In particular, this contribution of SNS can be explained by social compensation hypothesis (Schouten, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2007) which predicts that "individuals who struggle to make social connections in face-to-face interactions

will use the Internet as a place to enhance their interpersonal lives by forging social relationships online” (Gosling, Augustine, Vazire, Holtzman, & Gaddis, 2011, p. 483). For example, Kalpidou et al. (2011) found that SNS can facilitate social adjustment in college students.

2.2.2. SNS as a Cause of More Burnout

Although using SNS may help employees deal with stress at work, it is possible that SNS use at work can also lead to job burnout rather than reducing it. In this sense, frequent access to SNS during work can distract employees from their regular tasks, which may subsequently make them develop a negative attitude towards their job responsibilities. For example, employees who spend a lot of time updating their SNS status and/or following and commenting on their friends’ SNS status may not be able to focus on their tasks well. These employees may lack interest and motivation to work as they pay more attention to their SNS activities rather than to their tasks at hand. In addition, since relying on SNS to divert one’s attention from stress at work is considered emotion-focused coping strategy in which people use to avoid negative feelings, it does not help employees deal directly with the sources of stress but can eventually lead to emotional exhaustion in the long-run (Boyd et al., 2009). In addition, it is likely that using SNS can lead to more depersonalization. This can happen when people excessively access SNS, and that can eventually cause them to lose interest to develop interpersonal relationships with people in the real world. Finally, it is also possible that interacting with people in SNS can make people experience lack of personal accomplishment. In particular, Valkenburg et al. (2006) found that people tended to have lower self-esteem when they received negative feedback from their friends in SNS.

2.2.3. Research Hypothesis

From the above discussion, it is possible that using SNS at work can have both positive and negative impact on burnout, and this could very well depend on the degree to which employees use SNS during work. At some moderate level, using SNSs during work can help employees lower burnout; however, overusing SNS during work can lead to higher burnout. Therefore, this research expects a nonlinear relationship between SNS use intensity during work and all three aspects of burnout in the u-curve form. The hypothesis is presented as following:

Hypothesis 1: A u-curve relationship exists between social media use intensity at work and (a) emotional exhaustion, (b) depersonalization, and (c) lack of personal accomplishment.

3. METHODS

3.1. Data Collection and Participants

The sample in this study includes staff members who were working for universities in the U.S. and in Thailand. All of them are public universities; and are also research universities. Thailand and U.S. are focused in this research because they are countries in which SNS are popular among all age groups. According to the recent statistics from Pew Research Center (2014), as of January 2014, 74 percent of America adults have SNS access. Likewise, the number of social media users in Thailand has also grown significantly, as recent statistics showed that in 2013, there were about 18 million social media users in Thailand, about 27 percent of the total population. However, there are some cultural differences between these two countries. According to Hofstede (1980)’s cultural dimensions, for example, Thailand was ranked among countries high in collectivism (individualism score = 20) while U.S. was ranked among country high in individualism (individualism score = 91). Basically, while the individualist cultures tend to put more emphasis on self-interest and personal achievements, collectivist cultures tend to care more about group harmony and group goals (Hofstede (1980)). Due to this aspect of cultural differences, it is worth exploring whether there is any difference

in the effects of SNS use between people from the collectivistic culture (Thailand) and people from the individualistic culture (U.S.). Thus, using samples from these two countries will provide some insight regarding the role of cultural differences on SNS use.

Questionnaires along with cover letters were delivered to supervisors in each department asking them to persuade their subordinates to complete the survey. A total of 431 questionnaires were administered in the U.S. and 250 questionnaires were administered in Thailand. The authors received a total of 174 useable surveys from the U.S. participant (40.37% response rate) and 182 useable surveys from Thai participant (72.8% response rate). The total number of participants was 356 (48.9% from the U.S. and 51.1% from Thailand). Demographic and job characteristics of participants in each country are reported in Table 1. The indicators for SNS use intensity are shown in Table 2.

Generally, the samples from U.S. and Thai universities were quite similar in age and job tenure. The compositions of gender, marital status and job position were also quite proportionate between the two sample groups; most of them were female, were single, and worked as junior staffs. However, most U.S. sample were Bachelor's students whereas most Thai sample already earned a Bachelor's degree. In terms of SNS use intensity, a majority of U.S. sample reported that they did not access to SNS during work hours, whereas a majority of Thai sample reported that they accessed to SNS during work hours about one to ten times and spend about one to ten minutes on SNS.

3.2. Measures

Two aspects of SNS intensity that were used in this study include the frequency of SNS use at work and the amount of time spent on SNS at work. These two indicators were selected as they represent the actual usage of SNS during work hours. Frequency of SNS use was measured by asking the participants how many times per day that they normally check SNS during work hours. This variable was also measured ordinally ranging from 0 (*None*), 1 (*1-20 times*), 2 (*21-40times*), 3 (*41-60 time*), 4(*61-80 times*), 5 (*81-100 times*), and 6 (*More than 100 times*). The amount of time spent on SNS was measured by asking the participants about the number of minutes per day that they normally spend using their SNS during work hours. This variable was measured ordinally ranging from 0 (*none*), 1 (*1-10 minutes*), 2 (*11-20 minutes*), 3 (*21-30 minutes*), 4 (*31-40 minutes*), 5 (*41-50 minutes*), 6 (*51-*

Table 1. Characteristics of participants

| | <i>U.S. samples (N = 174)</i> | <i>Thai samples (N = 182)</i> |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Age | Mean = 30.25 (s.d. = 10.39) | Mean = 28.62 (s.d. = 5.61) |
| Gender | Female: 91 (52%) Male: 83 (48%) | Female: 116 (64%) Male: 67 (36%) |
| Education | Below Bachelor's degree: 77 (44%) Bachelor's degree: 41 (24%) Master's degree: 40 (23%) Doctoral degree: 16 (9%) | Below Bachelor's degree: 19 (11%) Bachelor's degree: 115 (63%) Master's degree: 46 (25%) Doctoral degree: 2 (1%) |
| Marital status | Single: 117 (67%) Married: 57 (33%) | Single: 159 (87%) Married: 23 (13%) |
| Working class status | White collar: 103 (59%) Blue collar: 71 (41%) | White collar: 170 (93%) Blue collar: 12 (7%) |
| Job tenure | Mean = 5.08 (s.d. = 4.86) | Mean = 3.34 (s.d. = 2.83) |
| Job position | Senior-level manager: 6 (3%) Middle-level manager: 25 (14%) Junior manager: 15 (9%) Senior staff: 49 (28%) Junior staff: 79 (45%) | Senior-level manager: 4 (2%) Middle-level manager: 19 (10%) Junior manager: 20 (11%) Senior staff: 21 (12%) Junior staff: 118 (65%) |

Table 2. SNS use intensity of participants

| | | <i>U.S. samples (N = 174)</i> | <i>Thai samples (N = 182)</i> |
|---|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Frequency of SNS access during work hours | <i>None</i> | 56 (32%) | 19 (11%) |
| | <i>1-10 times</i> | 51 (29%) | 126 (71%) |
| | <i>11-20 times</i> | 36 (21%) | 17 (9%) |
| | <i>21-30 time</i> | 7 (4%) | 8 (4%) |
| | <i>31-40 times</i> | 7 (4%) | 2 (1%) |
| | <i>41-50times</i> | 0(0%) | 5 (2%) |
| | <i>More than 50 times</i> | 15 (9%) | 5 (2%) |
| Time spent on SNS during work hours | <i>None</i> | 56 (32%) | 19 (10%) |
| | <i>1-10 minutes</i> | 44 (25%) | 82 (45%) |
| | <i>11-20 minutes</i> | 20 (11%) | 32(18%) |
| | <i>21-30 minutes</i> | 22 (13%) | 23 (13%) |
| | <i>31-40 minutes</i> | 0 (0%) | 5 (3%) |
| | <i>41-50 minutes</i> | 10 (6%) | 5 (3%) |
| | <i>51-60 minutes</i> | 2 (1%) | 14 (7%) |
| | <i>More than one hour</i> | 20 (11%) | 2 (1%) |

60 minutes), and 7 (more than one hour). These two indicators were used to construct a reflective latent variable of SNS use intensity. SNS construct was measured based on Moqbel et al. (2013) and Moqbel (2012).

Job burnout was measured using sixteen questions adopted from the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) general survey (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996). Five questions belong to emotional exhaustion (e.g., “I feel emotionally drained from my work”); five questions belong to depersonalization (e.g., “I doubt that significance of my work”); and six questions belong to lack of personal accomplishment (e.g., “I have accomplished many worthwhile things in my current job”). All questions were scored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). All of them were measured as reflective latent variables.

Control variables that might affect job burnout were also included. Control variables which are demographic factors include age, gender, education, marital status, salary, and workplace policy regarding SNS access during work. Age was measured in years. Gender was measured as a dummy variable (1 = male; 0 = female). Education was measured ordinally (1 = less than bachelor’s degree, 2 = bachelor’s degree, 3 = master’s degree, and 4 = doctoral degree). Marital status was measured as a dummy variable (1 = married; 0 = single). Control variables that are job-related factors include job demands, working class, job position, and job tenure. Job demands were measured in terms of quantitative workload. The questions were adopted from the Job Content Questionnaire (JCQ) survey developed by Karasek et al. (1998) consisting of five aspects (e.g., working hard, conflicting job demands). The measures were rated on a five-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 5: strongly agree). This construct was measured as a reflective latent variable. Working class was measured as a dummy variable (1 = white collar, 0 = blue collar). Job position was measured ordinally (1 = junior staff, 2 = senior staff, 3 = junior manager, 4 = middle-level manager, and 5 = senior-level manager). Job tenure was measured by the number of years that employee has been part of the organization. Workplace policy regarding SNS access during work hours was measured as a dummy variable (1

= allowed; 0 = not allowed). Salary was measured in terms of annual income for U.S. samples and monthly income for Thai samples.

3.3. Estimation Technique

This study used partial least squares (PLS) regression to analyze the data. PLS offers more advantages over covariance-based structure equation modeling since it does not require data to be normally distributed and it requires smaller sample size for the analysis. The analysis was performed using WarpPLS 3.0 (Ned Kock, 2012). In order to test for the nonlinear relationship between constructs, the Warp2 option in WarpPLS 3.0 was selected to capture a nonlinear relationship, if it exists.

4. RESULTS

Reliability and validity tests of latent constructs were performed prior to PLS analysis. First, construct reliabilities were evaluated using Cronbach alpha (α) and composite reliability coefficients. Most of the values exceeded the widely suggested value of .7 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Only SNS use intensity of Thai samples that had α equal to .618, which is lower than the recommended value but is still acceptable according to Nunnally (1967). Convergent validity of latent variables was evaluated using factor loadings. The analysis found that all factor loadings were greater than .5 as recommended by Hair et al (2009). Next, discriminant validity test was performed using average variance extracted (AVE). Fornell and Larcker (1981) recommended the square root of the AVE of each construct must be greater than other correlations involving that construct in order for discriminant validity to exist. The results also met this requirement. Table 3 and Table 4 reported correlations among all variables, reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity of all latent variables for the U.S. and Thai samples respectively.

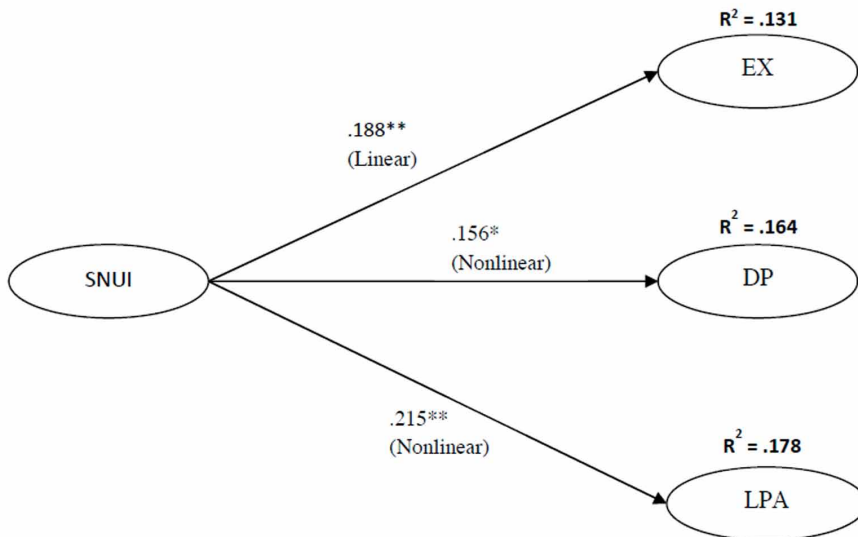
Finally, to check for possible multicollinearity among all indicators in the model, the full collinearity Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) statistics was evaluated. The maximum full collinearity VIF value was 2.533 for the U.S. sample and 1.947 for the Thai sample. These values were below the critical value of 3.3 suggested by Petteeret et al. (2007). This implies no serious multicollinearity issues in the analysis. In addition, Kock and Lynn (2012) argued that the full collinearity test can serve as a technique that captures the possibility of common method bias (CMB) in the PLS model analysis. In this regard, they proposed that full collinearity VIF lower than the critical value of 3.3 can provide some evidence that CMB may not be a major issue for the analysis.

Results from PLS analysis for the U.S. and Thai samples were presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively. The standardized coefficients and t-values were calculated using a jackknifing resampling procedure.

Figure 1 reports the results from U.S. samples. In particular, the curve estimation using Warp2 option in WarpPLS indicates that the nonlinear relationship fits the data better than the linear relationship for depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. However, for emotional exhaustion, it shows that the linear relationship has a stronger fit than the nonlinear relationship. The estimation of the coefficients further shows that the measure of SNS use intensity during work had positive relationship with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .188$; $p \leq .01$), depersonalization ($\beta = .156$; $p \leq .05$), and lack of personal accomplishment ($\beta = .215$; $p \leq .01$). The positive coefficient present in the nonlinear curve estimation performed by WarpPLS indicates that the positive effect of SNS use intensity at work tends to be stronger than the negative effect. All path coefficients are statistically significant.

Figure 2 reports the results from the Thai sample. The curve estimation using Warp2 option in WarpPLS indicates that the nonlinear relationship between SNS use intensity during work and all three aspects of burnout fits the data better than the linear relationship. Results from PLS analysis indicate that SNS use intensity during work has positive relationship with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .059$; $p = .348$) and depersonalization ($\beta = .175$; $p \leq .05$); but has a negative relationship with lack

Figure 1. PLS results – U.S. samples (N = 174) Notes: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$; Standardized coefficients are reported; Solid lines represent significant paths; EX = emotional exhaustion, DP = depersonalization, LPA = lack of personal accomplishment, SNUI = SNS use intensity during work hours, Control variables include age, gender, education, country, marital status, job demands, working class, job position, job tenure, salary, workplace policy that allows SNS access during work hours; All control variables are pointed to three dependent variables

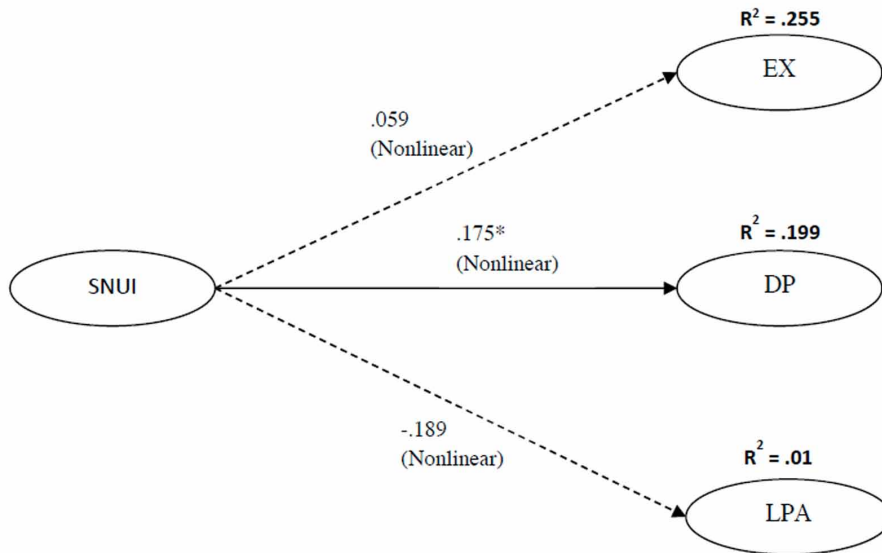


of personal accomplishment ($\beta = -.189$; $p = .474$). These findings suggest that the positive effect of SNS use intensity at work tends to be more prominent than the negative relationship for emotional exhaustion and depersonalization; but the negative effect is more prominent than the positive effect for lack of personal accomplishment. However, only the path coefficient of depersonalization was statistically significant.

To obtain more information about the characteristics of the nonlinear relationship that the analysis captured, data plots between SNS use intensity at work and all three aspects of burnout were performed for the U.S. and the Thai samples. The data plots are presented in Figure 3. The plots in the first column of Figure 3 report the relationships for the U.S. sample. The u-curve relationship clearly exhibits the relationship SNS use intensity has with depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. In this regard, a moderate degree of SNS use at work could lead to lower depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment; yet, higher degree of SNS use could lead to higher depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. For emotional exhaustion, the plots clearly show the linear pattern SNS use intensity at work has with it. The more SNS is used at work, the more emotional exhaustion follows. Therefore, only hypothesis 1b and 1c are supported for the U.S. samples.

The plots in the second column of Figure 3 present the findings from Thai sample. The plots clearly illustrate the u-curve relationship between SNS use intensity at work and depersonalization and lack of personal accomplishment. For the association between SNS use intensity at work and emotional exhaustion, the plots show that the pattern of relationship manifests in a quasi-linear rather than a u-curve. However, given that only the relationship with depersonalization is statistically supported in the PLS estimation, just hypothesis 1b is supported for the Thai sample. Thus, it can be concluded

Figure 2. PLS results – Thai samples (N = 182) Notes: * $p \leq .05$, ** $p \leq .01$, *** $p \leq .001$; Standardized coefficients are reported; Solid lines represent significant paths; EX = emotional exhaustion, DP = depersonalization, LPA = lack of personal accomplishment, SNUI = SNS use intensity during work hours, Control variables include age, gender, education, country, marital status, job demands, working class, job position, job tenure, salary, workplace policy that allows SNS access during work hours; All control variables are pointed to three dependent variables

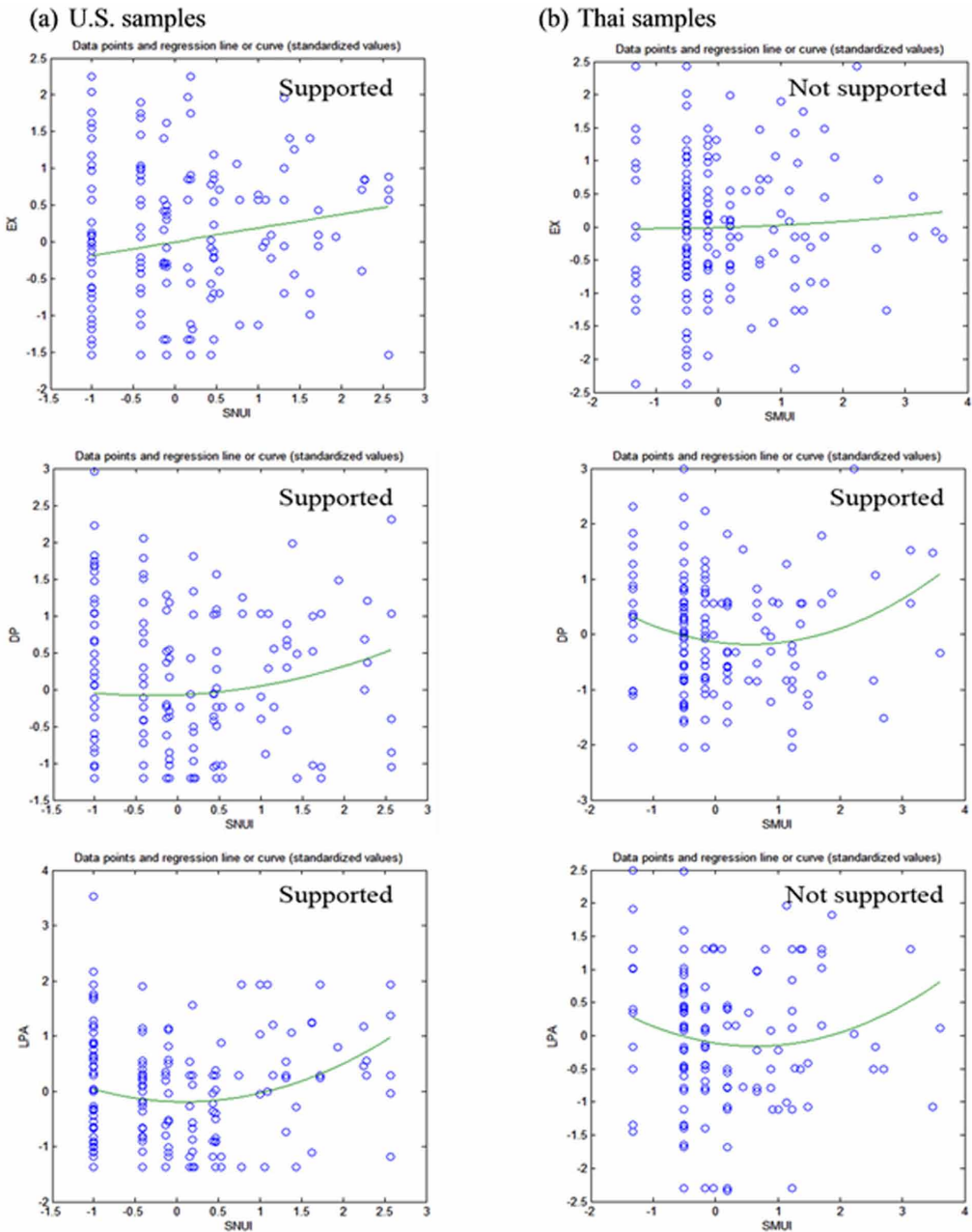


that a moderate degree of SNS access at work could lead to lower depersonalization for Thai people; but high degree of access could lead to more depersonalization.

Next, significant relationships between the control variables and burnout were found. For the U.S. sample, job demands were positively associated with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .343$; $p \leq .001$) and depersonalization ($\beta = .271$; $p \leq .001$), but negatively associated with lack of personal accomplishment ($\beta = -.202$; $p \leq .01$); job tenure was positively associated with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .202$; $p \leq .05$); males tended to report higher depersonalization ($\beta = .177$; $p \leq .05$) and lack of personal accomplishment ($\beta = .156$; $p \leq .05$) than females; and salary was positively associated with lack of personal accomplishment ($\beta = .179$; $p \leq .05$). For the Thai sample, job demands were positively associated with emotional exhaustion ($\beta = .479$; $p \leq .001$) depersonalization ($\beta = .192$; $p \leq .05$), but negatively associated with lack of personal accomplishment ($\beta = -.209$; $p \leq .01$); workplace policy that allows SNS access during work hours was negatively associated with depersonalization ($\beta = -.227$; $p \leq .001$).

Finally, given some differences in personal characteristics and the degree of SNS use intensity between the U.S. and Thai samples, an additional analysis was performed to make sure that these differences were not influence the main findings. In particular, a series of moderating effect analyses were performed by using personal characteristics and the degree of SNS use intensity as moderators. However, no significance moderating effect was found; this eases the concern about the influence of sample differences that might affect the results from hypotheses testing.

Figure 3. Data plots Note: EX = emotional exhaustion, DP = depersonalization, LPA = lack of personal accomplishment



5. DISCUSSION

The objective of this study is to explore the association between SNS use intensity in the workplace and job burnout of employees. The authors used participants from the U.S. and Thailand to explore differences in the results between people in both countries. In particular, similar findings were observed on the effect of SNS use intensity at work on depersonalization. The u-curve relationship is strongly supported in both the Thai and the U.S samples. This finding verifies the argument that

a moderate level of SNS use intensity can help lower depersonalization, but higher use intensity above this optimal level will increase depersonalization. However, one interesting point to notice in the graphs between these two sample groups is that the downward slope of the Thai sample appears to be more conspicuous than the downward slope of the U.S. sample. This implies that the role of SNS in helping lower depersonalization tends to be stronger for the Thai sample as compared to the U.S. sample. In particular, the collectivist nature of Thai people may explain this finding. As those from collectivistic cultures (e.g., Thailand) tend to develop interpersonal relationships with people in their social groups easier than those from individualistic cultures (e.g., U.S.), it is more likely for the role of SNS in fostering social relationships to be stronger for the Thai sample than the U.S. sample.

Nonetheless, there are some differences in the findings between two cultural groups. For the U.S. sample, the findings revealed a strong positive relationship between SNS use intensity and emotional exhaustion rather than the u-curve relationship as hypothesized. In this regard, using SNS at work does not help lower emotional exhaustion; but increases it. For the Thai sample, although the association between SNS use intensity at work and emotional exhaustion appears to be positive, it is not supported in this research. The u-curve relationship is only supported for the U.S. sample but not for the Thai. Similar findings were obtained for the effect of SNS use intensity at work on the lack of personal accomplishment for the two sample groups.

In particular, cultural differences in terms of social overload between the U.S. and the Thai samples can provide a possible explanation for the difference in the results in the relationship between SNS use intensity and emotional exhaustion. Social overload refers to the perceptions that others demand too much attention (Evans & Lepore, 1993). As being from a collectivistic culture, the Thai are already used to live in close social groups; they are less prone to be affected by social overload. On the other hand, being from an individualistic culture, the U.S. individuals might interpret the SNS interactions with their online friends as being too socially demanding (Maier, Laumer, Eckhardt, & Weitzel, 2012) which in turn might lead to feelings of emotional exhaustion. For lack of personal accomplishment, the fact that people from individualistic cultures tend to emphasize personal achievement rather than group achievement may explain why the u-curve relationship is strongly supported in the U.S. sample, but not in the Thai sample. Because SNS was found to enhance self-esteem (Valkenburg et al., 2006), a moderate level of SNS use intensity can reduce lack of personal accomplishment for U.S. people who tend to put more emphasis on the sense of self. For this cultural group, self-expression in SNS can enhance their confidence. However, too much exposure to postings from others in SNS may lead to upward social comparison (Festinger, 1954) which happens when individuals compare themselves with those who are better than them; and as a result, it can possibly cause people to lost self-confidence (Collins, 1996). This can explain why the role of SNS intensity on lack of personal accomplishment is strongly supported in the U.S. sample rather than in the Thai sample.

The findings about the positive relationship between SNS use intensity at work and burnout perception appears to be consistent with the literature on stress coping strategies which suggest that avoidance coping mechanisms may lead employees to experience more burnout (Boyd et al., 2009). It could be possible that employees who spend more time on SNS during work hours may not be able to focus well on their tasks; and this situation could negatively affect their performance and subsequently led to more stress. However, using SNS during work at a moderate level can serve as a solution that could allow employees to connect with their friends, coworkers, and family members online, which could help them relax from stress at work or even provide them with work-life balance (Moqbel et al., 2013). Therefore, the main implication from these findings is that organizations should pay attention to the intensity of SNS use by employees during work hours. Considering the positive association between SNS use intensity at work and burnout aspects, we suggest that while allowing employees to use SNS during work can provide benefits as it could alleviate the level of stress that employees experience, it is important for organizations to make sure that their employees do not over-use SNS as it may interrupt their regular work and could possibly lead to burnout syndrome.

However, there are several limitations in this study that need to be mentioned. This research collected data from university staffs who may not be the cultural representatives of the nations. Because this research did not collect data that measure the differences in cultural dimensions between the U.S. sample and the Thai sample, the implications from this research cannot be inferred to people at the national level. Moreover, this study used samples consisting of non-teaching employees. Thus, future research conducted in different organizational contexts is necessary. Second, the results from this research came from cross-sectional data analysis, which limits the ability to determine causality from the results. For example, even though we argued that the intensity of SNS use at work can cause employees to experience more burnout, it could be possible that employees who experienced more stress at work may use their SNS accounts more often. Research using longitudinal data will provide solid evidence of this causal direction. Third, this research does not distinguish types of social networking behaviors and that makes it unclear whether certain aspects of social networking behaviors are more likely to be associated with job burnout. Finally, the measure of SNS use intensity collected from the respondents came from a self-reported questionnaires, and that may not reflect the actual intensity and frequency that employees accessed SNS during work. Future research may incorporate other methods of data collection such as observations to have a more accurate measure of SNS use intensity.

The authors also offer some implications for future studies. Since research about SNS in the workplace is still an area that has not been widely explored, researchers may investigate whether the use of SNS at work can affect other work-related variables. For example, because one of the major concerns organizations have regarding SNS use at work is the distraction it causes to employees, future research may study whether using SNS at work can affect the ability of employees to focus at work. Also, it is still unclear whether using SNS during work can actually enhance the quality of social capital that employees develop with others. Therefore, research targeting these issues will provide more insight to organizations regarding the SNS use policy in the workplace. In addition, future studies may investigate the effect of SNS in other countries to explore if the results are consistent across different cultures.

6. CONCLUSION

The use of SNS in the workplace has been controversial in recent years. Organizations are still indecisive on whether to allow the use of SNS although there is an increasing trend in allowing employees to use SNS at work. The purpose of this research was to investigate whether the use of SNS by employees in the workplace would either alleviate job burnout or increase it. We have developed a research model to study the relationship between SNS and job burnout in the workplace. The findings, based on the nonlinear evidence, suggest that moderate use of SNS in the workplace by employees provides them with coping mechanisms that alleviates stress and therefore job burnout. This can be due to the fact that SNS provides employees, according to the job-demands-resource model (Evangelia Demerouti et al., 2012; E. Demerouti et al., 2001), with access to resources and support from coworkers, supervisors, friends, and family. In support of this finding, a recent study found that the use of SNS in the workplace provides employees with an opportunity to develop social connections which in turn benefit their work (Moqbel et al., 2013). On the other hand, a higher level of use of SNS in the workplace led to higher job burnout which can be attributed to the fact that employees resort to avoidance coping mechanisms by spending more time on SNS, and this in turn may have led them to experience more job burnout. Therefore, if an organization intends to allow the use of SNS in the workplace, limiting the SNS use to a moderate level should be considered.

This paper has contributed to SNS research. The findings have broadened the knowledge about the effect of SNS use in the workplace, and we highlighted some potential research directions, such as investigating the effect of SNS use in the workplace on other work-related outcomes. In addition,

we have also suggested how organizations can utilize SNS to alleviate employee job burnout. The research findings are valuable to organizations in practice.

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APPENDIX

Table 3. Correlations among variables, internal consistency, and convergent validity – U.S. participants

| | Cronbach's Alpha coefficient | Composite Reliability coefficient | SMUI | EX | DP | LPA | JDM | WC | JP | JT | AGE | GEN | EDU | MS | POL |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| SMUI | .84 | .618 | (.893) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| EX | .928 | .903 | .134 | (.864) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DP | .883 | .834 | .115 | .622** | (.833) | | | | | | | | | | |
| LPA | .867 | .815 | .146 | .172* | .437** | (.758) | | | | | | | | | |
| JDM | .872 | .816 | -.014 | .386** | .083 | .201** | (.757) | | | | | | | | |
| WC | - | - | .068 | .15* | .019 | -.092 | .171* | (1) | | | | | | | |
| JP | - | - | -.01 | .046 | -.023 | -.044 | .11 | .31** | (1) | | | | | | |
| JT | - | - | -.143 | .193* | .058 | -.063 | .182* | .461** | .385** | (1) | | | | | |
| AGE | - | - | -.16* | .085 | .004 | -.083 | .155* | .519** | .396** | .612** | (1) | | | | |
| GEN | - | - | -.013 | .078 | .166* | .109 | .063 | .091 | .117 | .017 | .229** | (1) | | | |
| EDU | - | - | .03 | .034 | .032 | -.025 | .051 | .424** | .251** | .254** | .485** | .219** | (1) | | |
| MS | - | - | -.118 | .084 | -.01 | -.14 | .136 | .48** | .325** | .322** | .505** | .167* | .464** | (1) | |
| POL | - | - | .174* | .003 | -.008 | .047 | .065 | .354** | .148 | .207** | .380** | .203** | .343** | .225** | (1) |
| SAL | - | - | .016 | .049 | .051 | .025 | .137 | .441** | .344** | .361** | .420** | .136 | .421** | .436** | .232** |

Notes: * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$;

Average variance extracted of latent variables are shown in the parentheses; SMUI = SNS use intensity during work hours, EX = emotional exhaustion, DP = depersonalization, LPA = lack of personal accomplishment, JDM = Job demands, WC = Working class status (white collar = 1), JP = Job position, JT = Job tenure, AGE = Age, GEN = Gender, EDU = Education, MS = marital status (married = 1), POL = workplace policy that allows SNS access during work hours (allow = 1), SAL = salary.

Table 4. Correlations among variables, internal consistency, and convergent validity - Thai participants

| | Cronbach's Alpha coefficient | Composite Reliability coefficient | SMUI | EX | DP | LPA | JDM | WC | JP | JT | AGE | GEN | EDU | MS | POL |
|------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|---------|--------|---------|
| SMUI | .605 | .835 | (.847) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| EX | .895 | .922 | .044 | (.839) | | | | | | | | | | | |
| DP | .829 | .88 | .043 | .562** | (.772) | | | | | | | | | | |
| LPA | .818 | .868 | .012 | .025 | .282** | (.724) | | | | | | | | | |
| JDM | .807 | .867 | -.096 | .478** | .196** | .170* | (.752) | | | | | | | | |
| WC | - | - | .021 | -.045 | -.058 | .031 | -.094 | (1) | | | | | | | |
| JP | - | - | -.056 | .071 | -.029 | .173* | .131 | .003 | (1) | | | | | | |
| JT | - | - | -.098 | .026 | -.051 | .07 | .046 | .11 | .262** | (1) | | | | | |
| AGE | - | - | -.251** | .026 | -.047 | .006 | .079 | .006 | .26** | .474** | (1) | | | | |
| GEN | - | - | .019 | .045 | .038 | -.029 | .039 | .217** | .119 | -.044 | .062 | (1) | | | |
| EDU | - | - | .023 | .088 | .085 | .04 | .127 | -.074 | .064 | .018 | -.005 | -.002 | (1) | | |
| MS | - | - | -.128 | -.085 | -.173* | .046 | -.034 | .032 | .001 | .183* | .431** | -.031 | -.404** | (1) | |
| POL | - | - | -.008 | -.056 | -.075 | -.128 | .032 | .016 | -.080 | .099 | -.016 | -.054 | -.018 | .106 | (1) |
| SAL | - | - | -.126 | .057 | .025 | -.167* | .15* | -.059 | .512** | .110 | .169* | .148* | .365** | -.189* | -.211** |

Notes: * $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$;

Average variance extracted of latent variables are shown in the parentheses; SMUI = SNS use intensity during work hours, EX = emotional exhaustion, DP = depersonalization, LPA = lack of personal accomplishment, JDM = Job demands, WC = Working class status (white collar = 1), JP = Job position, JT = Job tenure, AGE = Age, GEN = Gender, MS = marital status (married = 1), POL = workplace policy that allows SNS access during work hours (allow = 1), SAL = salary.

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