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THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKS ON THE ABUSE OF INTERNET SERVICES IN THE WORKPLACE

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Abstract

Employees who abuse Internet services in the workplace have become a major concern among today's employers. The aim of the research was to investigate the influence of social networks on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace in Slovenia. We have designed a structural model to study the impact of social networks on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace. Research was conducted in order to collect data on the impact of social networks on Internet abuse in the workplace. The survey sample included employed people in Slovenia. Our results indicate that there is a serious problem within the impact of social networks on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace. The proposed model in this study can be used for further research on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace

Keywords: Internet, social networks, virtual communication, abuse of internet services in the workplace.

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Introduction

Nowadays, social networks and virtual communication are increasingly in use. Employees who use social networks and virtual communication can abuse these Internet services in the workplace during their working hours. They may use social networks and virtual communication in the workplace as a form of relaxation or as an escape from work or the reality of the work; they can also use it as a way of spending time at work, or they may excessively use it because they are unable to control themselves.

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Online social networks

Online social networks are Internet networks, which combine different generations of people or individuals connected with certain common interests. These networks can be formed within businesses, schools or universities, associations, parties and the like. The development of the technology also results in the updating and upgrading of social networks. The latter allow the construction of public or semi-public profiles and the formation of a list of other users with whom a user shares his or her connections. They represent a new social and economic phenomenon that has already attracted millions of users and that has also brought us a new way of communicating and new kinds of interpersonal relationships.

Social networks offer their users an easy way to communicate with friends, relatives and acquaintances. In addition, they enable them to consistently meet some of their own desires. Research among young users has shown that the two main reasons for their use of social networks are to stay in touch with their friends as well as to feed their desire for positive feedback. Feedback from one's peers has a major impact on a user's self-esteem. Self-esteem, in turn, affects the psychological well-being. It has turned out that users like the openness and transparency of social networks as this enables them to obtain information from others in a simple and quick way, which is one of the main reasons for their use of the social networks.

Social networks first appeared in the United States, where, in 1995, the Classmates.com website was founded and, in 1996, the SixDegrees.com website was established. Both had the characteristics of the newer social networks. The proliferation of networks started at the beginning of this millennium with the development of LinkedIn and Flickr. Friendster, MySpace and Facebook rose to great popularity as they appeared between 2002 and 2004.

Facebook

The Facebook online social network was founded on February 4, 2004. On September 11, 2006, it became accessible to everyone. It is owned by a company called Facebook, Inc. Free access to the website allows its users to connect and makes it easier for them to communicate with other people within the same network. According to the data provided by Google's DoubleClick, the website has more than 800 million active users and over 600 billion page views a month. Every day about 100 million images are uploaded and monthly about 30 billion of content, which amounts to more than 150TB of log messages daily.

Google +

It is the latest social network and is currently the most emerging. It was launched on June 28, 2011, while registrations were open to the public on 20 September of the same year. At the same time, the API platform for developers was published. Currently, the Google+ service, which is available as a web app, is also planning a desktop application. Already in July, the new social network reached 10 million registered users and in October it exceeded 40 million.

LinkedIn

The LinkedIn business social network was founded in December, 2002 and officially started its operations publicly on 5 May, 2003. The most recent data shows that they can already boast 135 million registered users from over 200 countries. In October, 2008, LinkedIn also created a development platform, which allows other websites to access the network's data via the interface.

Twitter

Twitter is an online social network and a microblogging service that allows users to post and read posts limited to 140 characters ("tweets"). Initially, the first prototype of Twitter was used as a service within a company with the full version being publicly presented on July 15, 2006. The company has experienced rapid growth since then. In 2007 around 400,000 tweets were published in one quarter of the year. In one year, the number of tweets per quarter increased by a factor of 250, while in 2011 it reached 200 million posts daily, behind which there are 200 million users.

MySpace

The MySpace online social network emerged in August 2003. Between 2005 and 2008, it was the most visited social network in the world and then, in April 2008, it was overtaken by Facebook. Since then, the number of users within this network has only been declining, although it monthly still has more than 80 million unique visitors. The particularity of this social network is music, because the users can upload their own songs on their profile and thereby promote themselves. The network also enables the creation of a profile according to one's own preferences. The only things needed for this is some knowledge of html and css.

Netlog

Netlog is a Belgian social network specifically geared towards young Europeans. This page was established in July 2003. The network also has a specific localization technology ensuring that all content is

linguistically adapted for the user's profile. It is currently available in 40 languages and has more than 93 million users.

Flickr

Flickr is a website that provides hosting for pictures and videos. It is intended for editing photos and videos, and sharing user content with other users. The Flickr online network was developed in 2004 by Ludicorp and, in 2005, was acquired by Yahoo. The online network allows us to store images with the people we desire. The network has become a "home" to several billion images and 10 million users. The online network allows you to create your own account and has thus become part of a social network. Upon the successful account creation and login the user can upload photos, create albums, share photos, and comment on photos of others.

Instagram

Instagram was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in October 2010. The service rapidly gained popularity with more than 100 million active users by April 2012, and more than 300 million by December 2014. Instagram is distributed via the Apple App Store, Google Play and Windows Phone Store. Instagram is an application used for sharing pictures, videos and is social networking service that allows users to take photos and videos and share them on various social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr. Instagram's characteristic is that it limits the pictures in the form of a square, which is similar to Kodak instamatic. The users can also apply digital filters to their images. The maximum clip length is 15 seconds.

Abuse of the Internet in the Workplace

Abuse of the internet in the workplace may induce an employee's Internet addiction disorder. Internet addiction has many health and behavioural consequences. In the past, companies already supervised the use of the internet and were worried about the addiction caused by excessive and inappropriate use of the Internet by employees. This is reflected in the loss of productive time and poor work performance (Young, 1998). Moreover, excessive use among employees can lead to destructive and behavioural changes and in the worst case to sexual harassment in the workplace.

Employers are dealing seriously with the issue of excessive use of the Internet, which is harmful. The results of the research conducted among 1,000 top companies showed that 55% of executives believe that employees browsing the internet for purposes not associated with the company's intentions weaken their effectiveness in the workplace. Thus,

they began tracking the Internet use of employees with the help of controlled devices. One company also found that only 23% of internet use is for business purposes (Young, 1999).

In 2002, the Websense company carried out a survey in which 67% of employees admitted to accessing the Internet for private reasons. Among such users, 24% were compulsive shoppers. The second place was held by news addicts (23%). They were followed by those searching for pornographic content (18%), gamblers (8%) and those who participate in auctions (6%). Separately collected statistics indicate that 70% of pornographic traffic takes place between 9am and 5pm, during the working day. Despite the fact that many companies are trying to prevent such activities, employees quickly find alternative ways to get to the desired content on the Internet. As an example, research indicates that 78% of employers prevent employees to access pornography, 47% sites for gambling, 20% shopping and auction sites, and 4% block news sites. Among the services used for private purposes during work time, shopping also ranks very high on the scale (Hyman, 2000).

Problems of Internet abuse in the workplace can also lead to job losses. The action against IBM, which, in 2003, due to the use of online chat (conversation about sexuality), resulted in the dismissal of a longtime employee, again revived a debate on whether the overuse of internet should be classified as an addiction. The company perceived being available (being logged in) on the website as a violation of the business contract and abuse of the company's property (Holahan, 2006).

The Purpose and Objective of the Research

The purpose of the research was to determine how widespread the incidence of Internet abuse in the workplace and the Slovenian area is and whether or not social networks influence the abuse of the Internet services in the workplace. We have also analyzed the impact of demographic factors on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace. With this research, we want to determine the consequences of the impact that social networks have on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

The aim of the research was to determine whether the use of social networks affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace. The final goal of the research was to create a conceptual model valid for the Slovenian population and intended for the abuse of Internet services in the workplace and to explain the effects of individual variables / factors on the basis of the final conceptual model. The stated problem and identified need for a conceptual model which would clarify the

relationships between the studied population and the abuse of Internet services gave rise to some hypotheses, which were, through research and conducted empirical research, either confirmed or rejected. The research hypotheses arose from the problem, the purpose and the objective of the research. The basis for the formation of the hypotheses was the results of previous research on Internet addiction outside Slovenia and Internet abuse in the workplace.

H1: The use of the social networks influences the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

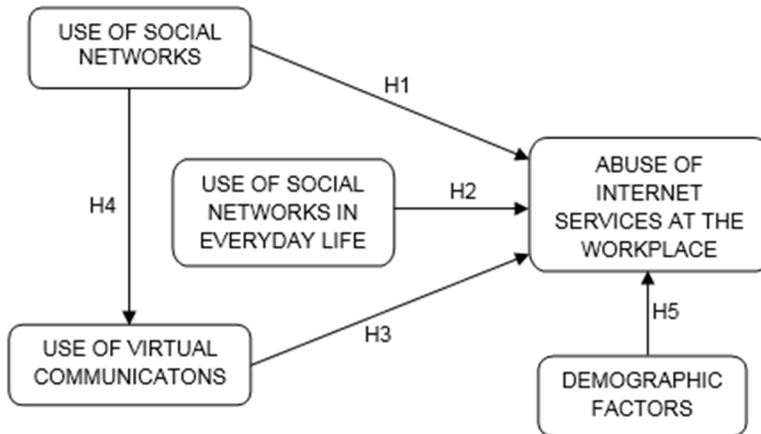
H2: The use of the social networks in everyday life influences the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

H3: The use of virtual communications influences the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

H4: The use of social networks influences the increased use of virtual communications.

H5: Demographic factors (gender, age, education, income, region, sector of work, company size) influence the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

Figure 1: Structural model of the impact of social networks on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace



Methodology

The quantitative research involved 1651 people of which 599 responded by filling out an online survey; of these, 448 questionnaires were valid and 151 questionnaires were eliminated; the real sample of the quantitative research is therefore N = 448, and it is represented by employees in the Republic of Slovenia, aged 18 to 65 who use a computer at work and have a connection to the Internet. The quantitative survey took place from 1.6.2016 to 30.6.2015.

Table 1: Demographic variables

Demographic variables	Sample (N=448)
Sex	
Female	45.5 %
Male	54.5 %
Age (years)	
Below 30	8.5 %
30 – 40	31.0 %
40 – 50	36.6 %
50 or above	23.8 %
Education	
Secondary School (V) or less	20.3 %
College (VI)	12.5 %
Faculty, College, Academy of Arts (VII)	48.0 %
Specialization or Master's Degree (VII/2)	19.2 %
Income	
Up to 1.000 EUR	32.1 %
1.000 EUR - 2.000 EUR	55.4 %
2.000 EUR - 3.000 EUR	8.3 %
Over 3.000 EUR	3.1 %
No answer was provided	1.1 %
Job Sector	
public sector	50.7 %
private sector	49.3 %
Organization Size	
Micro or small organization	23.7 %
middle-sized organization	31.1 %
large organization	45.2 %
Region	
East	45.8 %
Central	33.9 %
West	20.3 %

Source: Author's research

The basis for understanding the interactions between variables and the first key condition for the implementation of the linear regression analysis is the determination of interconnections among pairs of independent variables and also between independent and dependent variables (Tabacnick & Fidell, 2013, p. 326). In Tables 2 to 4, we summarize the regression analysis for Internet addiction in the workplace (values of correlation coefficients, values of determination and adjusted determination coefficients), the F - test (ANOVA) and t statistics (values of regression coefficients) with the help of which we examined the hypothesis on a sample of employees. Based on the results, the hypotheses were confirmed, partly confirmed and rejected. The presentation of the results in the above-mentioned tables is followed by a descriptive presentation of the results obtained from the sample of employees. In the end, there is a descriptive display of the summary of the hypotheses' regression analysis.

Table 2: The results of verifying the hypotheses of social networks impact on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace - coefficients (correlation, determination)

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	R Square	Adjusted R Square
H1	Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of social networks	0.234	0.053
H2	Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of social networks in the everyday life	0.139	0.017
H3	Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of virtual communication	0.363	0.129
H4	Use of social networks	Use of virtual communication	0.011	0.009

Source: Author's research

Table 3: The results of verifying the hypotheses of social networks impact on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace - F test coefficients (ANOVA)

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	F	Sig.
H1	Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of social networks	25.832	0.000
H2	Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of social networks in the everyday life	8.838	0.003
H3	Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of virtual communication	67.485	0.000
H4	Use of social networks	Use of virtual communication	4,837	0.028

Source: Author's research

Table 4: The results of verifying the hypotheses of social networks impact on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace - t statistics regression coefficients

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standard. Coeff.	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of social networks	0.225	0.044	0.234	5.083	0.000
Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of social networks in the everyday life	0.139	0.047	0.139	2.973	0.003
Internet abuse in the workplace	Use of virtual communication	0.369	0.045	0.363	8.215	0.000
Use of social networks	Use of virtual communication	0.109	0.050	0.104	2.199	0.028

Source: Author's research

Results

To continue, we descriptively present the results obtained to verify the hypotheses of social networks impact on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace presented in Tables 2 to 4.

H1: The use of social networks affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

The multiple correlation coefficient R shows the strength of the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. It amounts to 0,234, which shows a weak correlation. The multiple coefficient of determination explains that we have managed to explain 5.3% of the total variance (Internet abuse in the workplace) with the impact of the independent variable (use of social networks) representing 94.7% of the unexplained impact. We are dealing with a weak correlation between the dependent and independent variables. The reliability of the obtained regression function was measured with an F - test, wherein, depending on the value of Sig. (Significance level of less than 0.05), we can argue that the prediction from the regression model of Internet abuse in the workplace is good and of quality. To verify the H1 hypothesis, we examined the value of the statistical characteristics of the standardized regression coefficient (β) and the value of the significance level. A significance level lower than 0.05 indicates there is an influence of the independent variable (use of the social networks) on Internet abuse in the workplace. Based on the results obtained and the value of regression coefficient β , we can confirm the H1 hypothesis and conclude that Internet abuse in the workplace is affected by the use of social networks as well as other unexplored influences, so it would make sense to also involve other relevant factors of the use of social networks in the study, which influence Internet abuse in the workplace.

H2: The use of social networks in everyday life affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

The correlation coefficient R and the coefficient of determination R^2 indicate a low correlation between the dependent variable (abuse of Internet services in the workplace) and the independent variable (use of social networks in everyday life). The power of the independent and dependent variables is moderate. The standardized regression coefficient is 0.139. Based on the results obtained and the value of regression coefficient β , hypothesis H2 can be fully confirmed.

H3: The use of virtual communications affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

The correlation coefficient R and the coefficient of determination R^2 indicate a low correlation between the dependent variable (Internet

abuse in the workplace) and the independent variable (use of virtual communication). The power of the independent and dependent variables is low. The standardized regression coefficient is 0.363. Based on the results obtained and the value of regression coefficient β , hypothesis H3 can be fully confirmed.

H4: The use of social networks affects the increased use of virtual communications.

The correlation coefficient R and the coefficient of determination R² indicate a low correlation between the dependent variable (use of social networks) and the independent variable (use of virtual communication). The power of the independent and dependent variables is low. The standardized regression coefficient is 0.109. Based on the results obtained and the value of regression coefficient β , hypothesis H4 can be fully confirmed.

In Tables 5 to 8 we investigate demographic factors (sex, age, education, income, labor sector, region, company size) for the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

Table 5: Results based on the sex of respondents and job sector

		Group Statistics			Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		N	Mean	Std. Dev.	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.
Sex	Female	204	-0.035	0.875	2.223	0.137	-0.770	446	0.442
	Male	244	0.030	0.926					
Job Sector	public sector	227	-0.002	0.865	0.001	0.973	-0.040	446	0.968
	private sector	221	0.002	0.942					

Source: Author's research

Based on the data in Table 5, we can conclude that sex does not affect the abuse of Internet services in the workplace. The sector of work also does not affect the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

Table 6: Results based on age group, education, income, region and size of the organization

Demographic variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age (years)			
Below 30	38	-0.091	0.508
30 - 40	138	0.117	1.054
40 - 50	163	0.016	1.065
50 or above	106	-0.138	0.372
Education			
Secondary School (V) or less	91	0.026	0.877
College (VI)	56	-0.020	0.868
Faculty, College, Academy of Arts (VII)	215	-0.027	0.767
Specialization or Master's Degree (VII/2)	86	0.054	1.225
Income			
Up to 1.000 EUR	144	0.082	1.027
1.000 EUR - 2.000 EUR	248	-0.070	0.660
2.000 EUR - 3.000 EUR	37	0.223	1.675
Over 3.000 EUR	14	-0.115	0.197
Job Sector			
public sector	227	-0.002	0.865
private sector	221	0.002	0.942
Region			
East	205	-0.052	0.746
Central	152	0.118	1.209
West	91	-0.080	0.547

Source: Author's research

Table 7: Results displayed according to age, education, income, region and size of the organization - coefficients of F test (ANOVA)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	F	Sig.
Internet abuse in the workplace	Age	0.739	0.158
Internet abuse in the workplace	Education	0.200	0.896
Internet abuse in the workplace	Income	1.716	0.163
Internet abuse in the workplace	Region	3.834	0.022
Internet abuse in the workplace	Size of the organization	1.849	0.159

Source: Author's research

Table 7 shows the respondent average based on age group, where it is evident that internet abuse in the workplace declines with age. Table 7 shows the respondent average by level of education, income, region and size of organization. Table 7 shows that education, income, region and the size of organization do not have any impact on Internet abuse in the workplace.

Table 8: Model testing – multiple regression

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.428 ^a	0.183	0.178	0.81872947

a. Predictors: (Constant), Use of virtual communication, Use of social networks in everyday life, Use of social networks

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	66.772	3	22.257	33.204	0.000 ^b
	Residual	297.621	444	0.670		
	Total	364.393	447			

a. Dependent Variable: Internet abuse in the workplace

b. Predictors: (Constant),), Use of virtual communication, Use of social networks in everyday life, Use of social networks

Coefficients ^a						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.843E-16	0.039		0.000	1.000
	Use of social networks	0.185	0.042	0.192	4.432	0.000
	Use of social networks in everyday life	0.113	0.043	0.113	2.639	0.009
	Use of virtual communication	0.344	0.044	0.338	7.839	0.000

a. Dependent Variable: Internet abuse in the workplace

Source: Author’s research

Based on data from Table 8, we can, with a negligible level of significance, conclude that all the three regression coefficients are statistically significantly different from zero. It can be seen from the table that the use of social networks, the use of social networks in everyday life, and the use of virtual communications affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace. That is to say, if we increase the use of social networks, the use of social networks in everyday life, and the use of virtual communication, the abuse of internet services in the workplace increases.

Discussion

We set up a fundamental thesis, derived from the basic research question: The use of social networks affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

Table 9: Checking the hypothesis' impact of social networks on the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.

	Hypothesis	Qualitative research conclusion
Use of social networks	H1: The use of social networks affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.	Confirmed
Use of social networks in everyday life	H2: The use of social networks in everyday life affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.	Confirmed
Use of virtual communication	H3: The use of virtual communications affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace.	Confirmed
Use of social networks	H4: The use of social networks affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Confirmed
Demographic factors		
Sex	H5a: Sex affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Rejected
Age	H5b: Age affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Rejected
Education	H5c: Education affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Rejected
Income	H5d: Income affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Rejected
Region	H5e: Region affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Rejected
Labour sector	H5f: Labour sector affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Rejected
Organization size	H5g: Organization size affects the increased use of virtual communications.	Rejected

Source: Author's research

From Table 9, it is evident that we have confirmed hypothesis H1 on the sample of employees, which means that we have confirmed the correlation between the use of social networks and Internet abuse in the workplace. We have also confirmed hypothesis H2, which means that we have confirmed the correlation between the use of social networks and Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis H3 has also been confirmed, which means that we have confirmed the correlation between the effects of the use of virtual communication and Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis H4a has been rejected, which means that sex does not affect Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis H4b has been rejected, which means that age does not affect Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis H4c has been rejected, which means that education does not affect Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis

H4d has been rejected, which means that income does not affect Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis H4e has been rejected, which means that region does not affect Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis H4f has been rejected, which means that labour sector does not affect Internet abuse in the workplace. Hypothesis H4g has been rejected, which means that company size does not affect Internet abuse in the workplace.

Conclusion

Technology has undoubtedly improved the quality and productivity of our lives in the workplace. The Internet has further opened up new possibilities for increased productivity, greater flexibility and new jobs for us to do. Social networks have now become an indispensable part of communication in modern times. Users who are involved in these networks should be very careful in their use because the research shows that the use of social networks affects the abuse of Internet services in the workplace. The survey also shows that the use of social networks increases the use of virtual communication. Users who are involved in these networks should therefore be very careful about the information they share with others, as they spread the exposure of themselves and their loved ones in this way. The increasing number of users on the social networking sites gives rise to a problem of personal data protection.

Internet abuse may occur in various forms. For most people, it seems that abuse of the Internet in the workplace does not pose a serious problem. The high level of Internet abuse by individuals can become a very serious problem for large companies. Internet abuse may have an impact on several levels: on employees, their colleagues and the company organization. Management and members of the professional staff responsible for hiring new employees should be more aware of this issue and draw the employees' attention to the need for awareness of this problem. Knowledge of these issues can be used by organizations in the hope that they can develop policies to prevent the abuse of Internet services in the workplace in the same way as many organizations have introduced policies on smoking and drinking alcohol. In addition, employers should inform their employees in good time of reasonable / correct use of the Internet and which uses are unacceptable. The abuse of the Internet in the workplace has the potential to become a social and health problem and it should be taken seriously as a professional issue.

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