THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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ABSTRACT

Social media platforms can be used to transform the communication process for both individuals and organizations. These platforms have eased the communication and sharing process inside organizations. The purpose of this qualitative phenomenological research is to discover the experiences of respondents in using social media in their respective organizations. Their input is crucial to gain a better understanding about the role of social media on employees' communication and empowerment. Generation Y entry-level employees were the purposeful sample of this study. They widely use social media in the workplace and are able to provide insights on social media's functions in an organizations' communication and employee's empowerment. The data were collected through interview sessions, which were then analyzed with a constant comparative analysis technique. Six themes emerged from the data. These six themes are: Social Media as a Communication Bridge, Social Media as a Global Communication Platform, Social Media as a Global Knowledge Sharing Platform, Social Media in Building Employee Network and Collaboration, Social Media Encouraging Continuous Learning from Diverse Resources, and Social Media in Developing Employee's Empowerment.

Keywords: Social media, communication, empowerment, qualitative research.

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a world phenomenon and people are actively using it for connecting with others and gaining information. Erasing time and place barrier, social media allows its users to experience instant and versatile digital communication (Hassan & Shiratuddin, 2013). Global Web Index stated that since January 2016, based on 7,395 billion of the total world population, there were 3,419 billion people who used Web 2.0. Moreover, 2,307 billion of Web 2.0 users utilized social media actively to connect with others. The figure reported was ten percent (10%) higher compared to the previous year (Chaffey, 2016).

Similarly, Malaysians have adopted social media into their lifestyle as a core communication and information seeking tool. Based on the Internet Users Survey 2016 by the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commissions, a majority of Malaysians are using the internet to communicate with each other via social media chatting applications

(92.7%) to and search for information (90.1%). Moreover, most of them regard social media as the first source to obtain updated information (86.9%). This percentage is not surprising as almost all Malaysian citizens is a Facebook user (96.5%) – making Facebook the number one social media in the country. Likewise, internet and social media have changed the Malaysian corporate industry. Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) literacy is the absolute skill for existing and future employees for forty-three percent (43.2%) of the Malaysian corporate bodies (Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission, 2016).

Razmerita, Kirchner, and Nabeth (2013, p.4) cited that Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) defined social media as "*the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, a platform for social interaction, communication, and collaboration that allows creation and exchange of user-generated content*." The phenomenon of social media adoption in an organization depends on the organizations' awareness of its functions and benefits. The digital platform in an organization has been used to increase interaction frequency among staffs, facilitate information sharing, and create a collaborative working and learning environment (Meredith, 2012). Social media's practicality and universal presence have changed communication process among employees' in an organization (Husain et al., 2014).

Communication is explained as a verbal and non-verbal language that is used to transfer information, ideas, and beliefs that unite the whole organization. Also, communication is viewed as the foundation of other activities inside an organization such as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling (Cacciattolo, 2015). Organizational communication brings many positive outcomes such as employees' commitment, retention, and relationship (Bakar & Mustaffa, 2013). Some organizations in Malaysia have been utilizing social media in their organizations. For example, Air Asia and Malaysia Airlines companies have been embracing social media to connect with both employees and customers. Employees can easily interact with each other online despite their different job levels in the organizations. The implementation of social media has a positive impact such as removing hierarchy barrier that slows down the communication and information sharing process. Similarly, employees are continuously encouraged to be active and be vocal about any ideas and problems that are of concern to them (Kamisan & King, 2013).

Furthermore, social media and communication and freedom in knowledge sharing will only thrive when the company makes conscious decisions to nurture it. Besides improving communication inside an organization, the most notable impact of social media usage is employee empowerment (Hill, Kang, & Seo, 2014). Employee empowerment can be defined as the process of giving control and independence to employees' to make a decision, share suggestions and ideas related to their work and organization. Open communication and information sharing are the beginning steps that initiate empowerment in an organization (Ramesh & Kumar, 2014).

The objective of this research is to understand the role of social media on employees' communication and empowerment through employees 'experiences in organizations. In order to be able to fulfil the objective of the study, the following three research questions guided this study:

1. What are the benefits of social media?
2. How is social media used in organizations?
3. How does social media support employee empowerment?

However, the employees' experience in using social media in organizations is still rarely discussed. There are only limited publications that discussed the role of social media in organizations. Likewise, studies about the benefits of social media on both employee communication and empowerment are rare. Hence, it has become a challenge to obtain much literature about this area of study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, related studies on social media and its role in empowering employees in organizations are discussed. This section is divided into three subtopics. The first section discusses social media and its benefits, followed by social media usage in organizations, and lastly how social media can empower employees in organizations.

Social Media and its Benefits

Generally, social media is known as an internet-dependent communication platform for immediate connection between friends and family universally. It is able to connect individuals worldwide because social media allows users to create a virtual identity and enrich their connection by adding lists of "friends" (Aguenza, Al- Kassem, & Som, 2012). Looking at the bigger picture, social media is an interactive Web 2.0 based application whereby users can post, share, edit, and discuss content online (Jucan, Jucan & Rotariu, 2013). Social media's most common categories are media-sharing sites, social network, blogs, and wikis. Some examples of social media applications are Pinterest, Linkedln, Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, and MySpace (Choudhury & Counts, 2013).

Although social media takes many forms, the global traits of social media are the same. Social media is interactive, social, communal, and relational (Men, 2014). Therefore, based on its characteristics, social media brings many benefits such as creating a two-way communication platform, which allows participation (Cao et al., 2015), promotes user-generated content (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012), mobile (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012), practical, and lastly a payment free communication channel (Househ, Borycki, & Kushniruk 2014).

Traditional communication prior to Web 2.0 is very limited due to the fact that there is no opportunity for information senders to communicate freely with information receivers. One way communication is linear and rigid and the exchange of ideas are not encouraged (Linke & Zerfass, 2013). In contrast, participation in social media is highly valued by both information senders and receivers (Jucan et al., 2013; Men, 2014). A dialog between both is an uncommon sight in the open social media platform. On the other hand, constructive feedback is expected to be given instantly as a response in digital communication (Aguenza et al., 2012; Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012).

Likewise, unlike the traditional sharing system, social media is decentralized in nature. An individual has no more right than others to edit, classify or filter information from the public, which erases the need for a centralized supervision body (Jucan et al., 2013). Thus, social media made self-organizing and sharing information possible due to the openness and flexibility that the media provided. For example, every individual has control over their own profile and has the right to post information according to their preference (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Advantages of social media usage have been recognized by 43%

of the private United States of America (USA) business as early as 2009 and in current days social media is universally used in organizations. Also, according to Forrester's Research, organizations spending on social media is more than 4.6 billion US globally (Linke & Zerfass, 2013). Cao et al. (2015) mentioned that "*social media enables informal social interaction across space, time and organizational boundaries.*" (2015, p. 532). Social media uses the virtual community to connect with each user. The fact that users do not have to be available physically while communicating with each other made social media a perfect tool to connect with individuals even in remote places (Choudhury & Counts, 2013). Web 2.0 also gives users the advantage to search, accumulate, and reprocess information from social media. Therefore, besides solving the geographical issue, social media is efficient in time as users do not have to be online in a specific time to interact with others (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012).

Moreover, minimum completion time is required when information sharing and other social activities are done online. Similarly, social media is ideal to send information to many receivers simultaneously (Jucan et al., 2013). Beside its parallel trait, social media is accessible and straightforward. Users can use social media naturally and less time is wasted to master it (Househ et al., 2014). In addition, users do not have to pay for the basic cost of social media fixtures. Besides low or even zero cost for individual users, social media that are used in organizations can reduce their operational budget (Aguenza et al., 2012).

Nonetheless, until this moment, most of the organizations that use social media in their daily activity do not have a guideline on social media usage (Linke & Zerfass, 2013). The missing guideline for social media usage in organizations could result in massive problems such as viral confidential information on a trade agreement, the release of organization's private data, and reputation lost due to employees' engagement with inappropriate content online (Macnamara & Zerfass, 2012). Besides, misinformation is prone to happen when there is a lack of standardized rules on online activity (Househ et al., 2014). These fatal repercussions can be prevented if organizations monitored their employees' social media usage. Even worst, some organizations banned the usage of social media based on the fear of losing information confidentiality (Weinberg, Ruyter, Dellarocas, Buck, & Keeling, 2013).

Usage of Social Media in Organizations

Organizations utilize social media as a communication platform by employees to induce active employees' participation by improving employees' knowledge sharing and communication (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015). Knowledge or information sharing is a situation where mutual information exchange among individual occurs and gives birth to a whole new idea or understanding. The existence of knowledge will benefit employees in increasing work performance as employees are constantly updated on actual problems, learn about the best methods to assess them and finally channel all the information into real problem-solving actions (Jucan et al., 2013). However, knowledge sharing environment would not happen without active communication in organizations. Communication can be viewed as a situation when employees conduct social interactions with others. Also, social media administers a time saving and effective communication tool for employees to build connections with unknown co-workers and locate experts inside organizations in times of crisis (Choudhury & Counts, 2013).

Similarly, employees feel more comfortable to share their opinions and concerns in a supportive environment. A responsive platform such as social media helps employees to present their ideas and problems instead of solely following orders from their leader (Men, 2014). Besides, conversations among employees in social media may lead to a better understanding of information and encourage feedback. For instance, wiki and web blogs allow staff to write their own perceptions of problems or ideas on wiki or weblog, share them, participate in question and answer online, and receive reflections about it (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015).

Furthermore, information sharing via social media is not handled by specific individuals or groups. On the other hand, social media can be used by every employee freely to share information. Therefore, the user-generated social media is more open and public-oriented (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). These attributes are useful in an organization as social media can be utilized by the employee to get transparent information and understand the situation objectively as input comes from various points of view. Similarly, the abundance of sources makes employees learn from others and develop awareness of their surroundings (Jucan et al., 2013).

Organizations are not deserted environments although some employees work in different locations or sometimes from remote areas. Nevertheless, interaction is still needed and social media is the perfect platform to do so. Unlimited by place and time, the internet-based social platform is able to help organizations to communicate easily even with people in extremely far locations at any given time (Choudhury & Counts, 2013). Also, the practicality of social media made it versatile to be used in both simple and complex organizations' projects. Since social media is flexible and highly accessible for employees, organizations can set social media as one of the platforms to share insights and communicate with others. Even though social media facilitates informal conversation among employees, this interaction can be used as a moment to glue and engage them in a shared vision to ensure the accomplishment of a project (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015; Househ et al., 2014). Also, social media reduces inefficiency in information sharing. As a result, social media increases frequency and quality of information sharing in organizations (Cao et al., 2015). Hence, social media is used by leaders to develop employee's involvement with each other to diminish organizational silos (Weinberg et al., 2013).

Social Media and Employee Empowerment

Currently, an isolated working environment in organizations is outdated. Goals need to be achieved by actively sharing information and working with others (Aguenza et al., 2012). Nonetheless, many organizations still struggle with "silos" in their internal managerial body. "Silos" is a situation where different departments re compartmentalized due to diverse tasks and responsibilities. As a result of this alarming situation, individual contribution is exclusively channeled to one particular department and information is not able to be distributed to all. Similarly, silos hinder employees from developing their full potential, capabilities, and escalate antagonist relationship among departments. Therefore, by using social media organizations intent to empower their employee, break the silos and avoid its fatal impact (Weinberg et al., 2013).

Empowerment is an individual's improvement process from being passive to a more active role. An employee who is truly empowered is able to be independent and gain control over his/her decisions without always seeking for their superior's guidance.

Furthermore, empowered employees work and collaborate with others; they engage and share innovative ideas with their peers as opposed to working in a vacuum (Ahmad, Bromley, & Cokley 2013). In order to be empowered, employees need knowledge and active communication channels. Social media is the perfect platform for obtaining them in a participative and instant manner. Thus, the usage of social media in organizations initiates employees' empowerment through advancing their learning and communication process (Weinberg et al., 2013).

Knowledge sharing is highly important for employees to work well with others as without proper information exchange employees would not able to get input that helps them to perform, make decisions, or solve problems objectively (Jucan et al., 2013). Likewise, keeping professional and personal ties strong is becoming a priority since employees constantly work with others (Cao et al., 2015). Hence, highly accessible social media is an ideal platform for both information distribution and communication among staffs in organizations on a regular basis (Weinberg et al., 2013; Aguenza et al., 2012). Employees can have conversations on single or multiple topics simultaneously, adding value in the information sharing process. Besides, social media allows all employees to connect and collaboratively work with others regardless of their original departments (Househ et al., 2014; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Additionally, organizations can trace an employee's virtual discussion flow. The discussion is extremely useful when employees' work from a distance (Choudhury & Counts, 2013).

Consequently, employees' who use social media are able to gain competence and control of their actions by maximizing knowledge sharing and communication online (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Empowered individuals in organizations make conscious choices to work in a participative environment. They are actively communicating with others, breaking silos, and functioning as a whole (Weinberg et al., 2013). Conversely, some studies argued that social media hinders employee empowerment. Social media online consensus process cause postponement in decision making, heavy peers oriented opinion, addiction, and employee unproductivity in organizations. Nevertheless, organizations' agree that social media's benefits outweigh disadvantages (Jucan et al., 2013; Aguenza et al., 2012).

METHODOLOGY

The simplest definition of qualitative research is a study that processes words instead of numbers. This study has been very useful to understand experience and meaning of a situation towards individual or groups (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Creswell (2007) listed several characteristics of qualitative research, which are understanding meaning, participant centered, inductive approach, frequent interpretation, and emergent design.

Qualitative research is focused on studying the effect of situations towards individual or groups and how these situations will shape peoples' lives. It is participant-centered as it seeks to report unique views from respondents instead of researchers' knowledge from the literature. In this study, the respondents' experience in using social media in the organizations and how it can impact their communication and empowerment process were explored. The inductive approach allowed the researcher to interpret experiences into themes for further analysis. Also, by using the emergent design, the researcher can explain about respondents' view from a better approach.

Research Design

In this research, the phenomenological approach was used to obtain more detailed data from each respondent. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote that phenomenology is the most suitable approach to research on peoples' experience, habits, or social actions. The main objective of the research is to study the respondents' experience as employees in organizations on using social media in the workplace. Moreover, the research wants to emphasize on respondents' experience in communication and empowerment when they utilize social media in organizations. Hence, the phenomenological approach was deemed as the most effective measure to obtain such information. Interview was the primary data collection method for this study.

Demographic Information

There were two respondents who participated in this research. Both of the respondents were generation Y entry-level employees in tourism and hospitality related organizations in the Klang Valley area. Both of them are not of the same gender and are working in separate organizations.

Sample

The researcher used purposeful sampling to choose participants for the study. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 96) stated that "*purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned*". Hence, purposeful samples would generate information-rich cases to support this study. Furthermore, the two respondents from the tourism and hospitality related organizations were purposely asked to contribute their experience in the study. The respondents' were in their early to mid-twenties. Generation Y respondents were chosen by the researcher because they are the most technologically savvy and are generally active users of social media compared to the other generations (Bolton et al., 2013).

Likewise, the most important factor is both of them have utilized social media to complete their tasks and responsibility in their organizations. Moreover, both of the respondents have experienced changes in their communication routine among their peers and were feeling empowered when they use social media in their organizations.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher met with the respondents separately to explain the research topic and asked about the respondents' general information to check their suitability for the study. After the criteria checking and obtaining respondents' consents, the researcher set an interview date that suited with the respondents' availability. Moreover, the place and time of the interviews were also discussed. Furthermore, once arrangements were made, formal invitations were sent to both respondents through e-mail. Once again the details and purpose of the study were written to respondents in order for them to get a better understanding of the issue. Inform consents were also attached and respondents could read them in advance.

On the time and place that were agreed in advance, the respondents were met separately and the interviews were conducted. Prior to the interview, first, the researcher gave the printed version of the informed consent and asked for each respondent's signature. The purpose of this action was to obtain respondents' approval legally and to address any concerns that respondents' might have. Second, the confidentiality of the interview was addressed and permission to record the whole interview was obtained. The transcript for each respondent was sent to them for member checking so as to ensure the accuracy of the content of both transcripts.

Data Analysis Procedures

The transcript was typed following each interview and the coding process was conducted. The first interview was analyzed and once the coding process only did the second interview was conducted. The average length of the transcription texts was eleven to twelve pages. In addition, the constant comparative method was used to analyze the interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 32) said that "*The constant comparative method involves comparing one segment of data with another to determine similarities and differences. Data are grouped together on a similar dimension. The dimension is tentatively given a name; it then becomes a category. The overall object of this analysis is to identify patterns in the data*". Therefore in this qualitative study, the inductive method in analyzing data was employed. Starting by reducing the interview information by segmenting the data. Data segmentation was then grouped by the coding process. Next, similar codes were collapsed with each other to develop pattern or themes for the study.

RESULTS

There are six themes that emerged from the analysis of the interviews. These themes are listed in Table 1 with their subthemes accordingly:

Table 1: Themes and Subthemes

Themes	Subthemes
1. Social Media as a Communication Bridge	a. Information Update b. Information Resource
2. Social Media as a Global Communication Platform	a. Peer Engagement b. Autonomy in Sharing
3. Social Media as a Global Knowledge Sharing Platform	a. Learning Resource b. Problem-Solving Resource
4. Social Media in Building Employee Network and Collaboration	a. Breaking Silos b. Participative Culture
5. Social Media in Encouraging Continuous Learning from Diverse Resources	a. Learning from Colleagues b. Learning from Online Resources
6. Social Media in Developing Employees' Empowerment	a. Active Problem Solving b. Productive Decision Making

The first theme derived from the interview analysis is Social Media as a Communication Bridge. Social media helped the respondents to communicate with other through two most prominent functions. Social media needs to be their source for information equipped with the latest information update on their family, friends, and colleagues. Moreover, the second theme is Social Media as a Global Communication Platform. On this part, respondents mentioned that social media is very crucial for peer engagement in global organizations. The respondents also believed that the autonomy in sharing information in social media encouraged employees to interact more with others in organizations. The third theme is Social Media as a Global Knowledge Sharing Platform. Not only to support communication, respondents highlighted that social media has become their learning resource in organizations by providing them with broader knowledge related to their job scope. Similarly, social media has simplified the process of solving problems and has provided adequate resources for helping employees facing issues in organizations.

In addition, social media is building employee network and collaboration. The fourth theme was generated from respondents who discussed that social media has helped organizations' employees to break departmental silos. Also, social media has built a participative culture among peers in organizations. Likewise, the respondents stated that employees in organizations are constantly learning from other colleagues' experiences which are broadly shared through social media. Also, online contents generated from social media usage are also beneficial for their learning process. Hence, social media is encouraging continuous learning from diverse resources. Lastly, the sixth theme obtained from the analysis is social media is developing employee's empowerment. The respondents described that social media usage in organizations encourages them to be more proactive in solving issues. They also believed that social media has increased the productivity of the decision-making process.

DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Social Media as a Communication Bridge

Social media is an internet-based platform to connect people universally through an immediate communication process (Aguenza et al., 2012). Social media is extensively used by both respondents to connect with others. Both of the respondents agreed that they feel dependent on social media as a daily communication platform to connect with friends, family, and colleagues.

Information Update

Based on the analysis, both of the respondents had the same opinion on social media's useful function in information update. One of the respondents said that social media is a platform to get updated status from friends, "*Reason behind to use social media, I think it's actually for me to connect with my friends, and to get the information, the status, what they are doing*" (R1).

Information Resource

Both respondents were really convinced that social media is extremely useful as information resources. "*It is always interesting to be in social media because of the various posts, or various online content that you can get from there*" (R2) said one of the respondents. Through social media usage, users can experience the benefits such as searching, accumulating, and reprocessing information (Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). Similarly, the respondents said that social media can be the source to obtain content.

Theme 2: Social Media as a Global Communication Platform

The respondents highlighted social media as a global communication platform, connecting employees from different parts of the world using one online platform. Social media is used by organizations to connect employees through a virtual community. Unlimited by geographical location and time, social media has the capability to connect employees at different locations, across the globe (Choudhury & Counts, 2013). Likewise, Cao et al. (2015) supported this point and mentioned that social media remove boundaries in social interaction. Thus, due to these traits, social media is utilized by organizations to connect employees' worldwide.

Peer Engagement

Social media can be used to glue the employees together in common goal. High flexibility and accessibility of social media increase employees' engagement in insight sharing and communication process with other peers (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015; Househ et al., 2014). One respondent suggested that social media fixtures have helped employees to stay connected to their colleagues, "*So whenever we want to chit chat with other colleagues or ask our colleagues, we will just use the software, search your name, and we ask the question there.*" (R1). Moreover, the other respondent added that engagement with others can happen when others rate the respondent's post in social media, "*They have this rating system, so it is almost like a LIKE and things like that. So, yeah.. Those are the most common feedback that is given to me*" (R2)

Autonomy in Sharing

A respondent claimed in the interview that they and every employee inside their organizations are free to use social media to connect with others and to share opinion regardless of their status as entry-level employees. "*So you can post whatever thing related, maybe what you eat for lunch, and this and that. And there are many managerial bosses that will post some article*" (R1). Furthermore, Vuori & Okknonen (2012) wrote that information sharing in social media is not under specific individuals' or groups' control. In contrast, every employee can use social media freely. Social media usage has "decentralized" the communication process, creating a more flexible communication platform for employees in organizations.

Theme 3: Social Media as a Global Knowledge Sharing Platform

Organizations utilize social media as a mutual employees' knowledge sharing platform. Through social media, employees can continuously learn new insights that can help them perform better at their job. Moreover, they can share knowledge inside organizations easily when they utilize social media (Sigala & Chalkiti, 2015).

Learning Resource

Social media is said to be a learning platform for both respondents, *"Being in an educational institution, we do have our own e-learning platform, whereby it is called Course Networking (CN), whereby I think it is also a form of social media, but it is more towards education"* (R2). By using social media respondents could obtain and share knowledge online, *"I realized Wikipedia provide (organization's name) a platform also. Which means that, there is a special Wiki, especially for its information"* (R1). The respondent also added that social media has helped the respondents' learning process, *"You just need to type there, search and there is a manual, there is a step for you to actually follow. As a newbie is a very useful thing. Because we cannot remember the step"* (R1). Additionally, another respondent said that, *"So things that we gave, or things that we post are mostly subject related posts, or syllabus related posts"* (R2), making social media to be a crucial knowledge sharing platform.

Problem-Solving Resource

Employees can utilize social media as a tool to help them in obtaining the required information in solving problems (Jucan et al., 2013).The interview results showed that respondents have utilized social media to handle issues related to their tasks in their organizations. One respondent who contacted peers online to obtain information described that the process has been helpful in solving language barrier and clarifying issues. *"People will call in, maybe the client, the customer is from China. And they call in to ask something about their hotel booked at Japan. But we cannot speak Japanese. So, we need Japanese colleague to actually help us to ask the hotel something. So Japanese colleague will take over this and ask on behalf of us and once they got the answer, they will actually make the remarks on the booking"* (R1).

Theme 4: Building Employee Network and Collaboration

The respondents shared that their organizations' use social media to connect employees' in order to prevent "silos". Organizations believe that "silos" will hinder employees' ability to share information and work well with others (Weinberg et al., 2013).

Breaking "Silos"

The organizations where the respondents work want them to break solitude in the workplace and interact with other employees from different departments as well as employees from different international branches. As reported by one of the respondents, *"They don't like*

isolation. Which mean you are in KL Branch but you are not just work for KL, you work for your entire organization. So, they actually create this Facebook platform to actually connect everybody. Feel like we are in the one family." (R1). Furthermore, another respondent also explained that social media's existence has helped them in initiating contact to others to get better understanding on others' personality, "*Before social media platform, it is always through phone calls or e-mails, so in a way it is very... to them it is a very formal or very serious matter. So now through social media, I can easily initiate not so serious conversation with them and it helps me to understand them better as well*" (R2).

Participative Culture

Organizations have tried to encourage employees to connect with others through both informal and formal actions. The respondents said that organizations are delighted if employees' send wishes and tips through social media platform, "*Like wishes. For example 'Happy International Woman Day'. Another one is article. They will, they actually encourage you to share something for example, 'The Tips to Handle Customer Complain Well'*'" (R1). Hence, social media usage has encouraged employees to be more involved in organizations through online sharing. The reason is organizations want to create a situation where everyone is comfortable to give any sort of contribution in the organizations.

Theme 5: Social Media in Encouraging Continuous Learning from Diverse resources

The respondents discussed that social media can be a rich source of knowledge that gives them multiple methods to obtain information (Househ et al., 2014; Vuori & Okkonen, 2012). In addition, it is also understood that social media's existence will help them to educate themselves in order to achieve better performance.

Learning from Colleagues

Knowledge can be obtained from other employees' experiences. One respondent in the interview provided details that manuals do not cover all the problems that they might face. Some employees' in his or her organization have experienced very effective problem sharing process even in unique cases. A respondent mentioned that other employees' experiences can be good real-life guidance that helps them in future problem-solving process. "*We can read from the handbook, manual, and some textbook. But then, in reality, different types of complaint, different ways to handle it. So, some seniors, they actually have a very good skill and smart ways to actually handle some specific very difficult complaints. So if they can write all these things for guidelines for newbie - for newly joined staff is actually very useful*" (R1). Additionally, the same respondent also stated that organizations give rewards to appreciate employees who shared their knowledge to help others' learning process. "(*The organization) actually appreciate all this effort done by senior. So there is sometimes a reward. For example, there is a drink for them or a travel voucher*" (R1). Thus, experiences shared by others through social media has become an input in a continuous learning process for the employees.

Learning from Online Resources

Besides, one of the respondents described that various contents online has helped him or her in his the learning process, especially in increasing respondent's desire to learn. The respondent said that learning can be done by both reading shared information online and watching online videos.

Social media has made learning process less tedious. "*I found like video is quite interesting as well. I tend to post and deliver those things through the social media*" (R2). Another respondent highlighted that social media has made him or her more active in finding information. The respondent stated that through the organization's wiki, he/ she can easily gather information needed to help his or her task without needing to depend on other colleagues. "*So everything is inside this Wiki. You want to do about payment, remove a room or add a room, you just need to type there. Search and there is a manual, there is a step for you to actually follow*" (R1). Hence, content in social media has promoted the respondents' desire to get knowledge and to learn within the organization.

Theme 6: Social Media in Developing Employees' Empowerment

Empowerment is a process of improvement from being passive to a more active role. (Ahmad et al., 2013). In order to be empowered, an empowered employee needs effective knowledge sharing and communication channels. The existence of both will not only give the employee more insights on issues that happened, but also enhance employee's ability to perform objective and efficient decision making through the problem-solving process (Jucan et al., 2013). Hence, social media can be an instant platform for both information distribution and communication in organizations (Weinberg et al., 2013; Aguenza et al., 2012).

Active Problem-Solving

An employee who is empowered would be able to be more proactive in handling problems. An individual would have control over one's own choice and do not always depend on the superior at work (Ahmad et al., 2013). Social media has provided a platform for employees to gain knowledge that helps them in the problem-solving process. Therefore, due to its efficiency, more employees are becoming proactive in solving problems inside organizations (Choudhury & Counts, 2013). One of the respondents was really vocal about this issue. The respondent stated that "*So customer maybe want to change credit card now. And if you change credit card now, my system will automatic charge now. I need to use the Lync to actually get some useful link to actually help the customer to change the credit card and also charge the booking now*" (R1).

Productive Decision Making

Social media usage has simplified the decision making process. Not only has it shorten the time to make a decision, it also helps employees to communicate with others easily in a time of crisis. Also, social media usage has helped employees' in finding experts in the organizations rapidly (Choudhury & Counts, 2013). Hence, social media has made decision-

making process in organizations more productive. A respondent described that by using social media, he or she was able to make a decision faster which increased his or her performance at work, "*I PING my leader, said the summary – what customer's need but I don't know how to find it. Senior will give you a link to check and then you check. You settle it in 3 minutes of the call...Done already*" (R1).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The first implication of this research provides insights to how employees in organizations' perceive social media implementation in their organizations. The employees see social media as a necessity platform to communicate in the 21st century. Organizations may determine types of online social media suitable for their needs, guidelines that govern social media usage, and most importantly how comprehensive can the social media be as employees' communication platform needs to be provided.

Moreover, the second implication derived from the result that social media can be a knowledge sharing platform inside organizations. Hence, organizations can allow knowledge to be more readily available and transparent and accessible to all employees. It is clear that social media has the potential to govern such information and organize them to make the learning process more efficient. Furthermore, online training programs could be developed to increase employees' performance. Online training programs are a flexible, cost-efficient, and less tedious method which may encourage more participation from employees.

The third implication is that through social media usage, organizations could empower their employees to be independent and more proactive in the decision-making and problem-solving processes. Based on the results, the empowerment experienced by employees is still closely linked to their respective tasks. Employees used social media to tackle daily operational issues and still have not used it to really incorporate valuable ideas or innovation in organizations. Through social media usage, organizations could encourage employees to be more innovative and involved in more important and bigger scale decision-making and problem-solving processes. Organizations can also make social media as a practical platform for individuals or groups to give ideas and develop innovation.

CONCLUSION

In summary, social media has become a communication bridge for most people. It has provided people with the latest update and information. Likewise, the multiple usage and flexibility of social media has attracted organizations' attention. Social media can be used as an internal communication platform by organizations to solve organizational "silos" which are hindering the employee empowerment process. It is able to promote sharing of information and active participation among employees. Social media has been used by organizations' as a global communication platform which focuses on peer engagement with the freedom of sharing. Additionally, organizations' that utilize social media as a global knowledge sharing platform provides learning and problem-solving resources for their employees.

In addition, social media has helped to empower individuals inside organizations by building the employee's network and collaboration. Also, social media is encouraging

employees to continuously learn from both colleagues' experiences and online sources. Lastly, social media has supported the employee empowerment process by facilitating proactive problem-solving and productive decision making inside organizations. Due to its role in advancing communication and promoting empowerment in organizations, it is suggested for organizations to develop a consistent system of social media usage that keeps supporting efficient communication and developing employee's empowerment.

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