Millennials: Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) and Social Media Engagement

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Abstract

Communication between employees play a crucial role in increasing the productivity in the workplace. Social media is an ideal tool that can be used to enhance the communication process between the employees. This tool can be used to retrieve an insurmountable amount of information. Nevertheless, the usage of social media has two different consequences known as the "dual effects": productive behaviors (task-oriented and relationship-building) and unproductive behaviors (deviance) at work (Carlson D., Carlson J. & Harris, 2016). It is essential for organizations to understand what drives Millennial employees and what tools they prefer to utilize in the workplace. Understanding Millennials' characteristics will enable the management team to lead them appropriately and thus elicit more productive outcomes. Millennials have certain characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. They are known as "digital natives" as the idea of technology has been ingrained in their mind since birth. (Myers, Sundaram & Vodanovich, 2010). This generation expects an abundance of information, aims for the speed of communication and multi-tasking, and are willing to share their experiences with the world via social networks (Krishen et al, 2016). In this study, we will see how social media can have an impact on their psychological health.

INTRODUCTION

Communication between employees play a crucial role in increasing the productivity in the workplace. Social media is an ideal tool that can be used to enhance the communication process between the employees. This tool can be used to retrieve an insurmountable amount of information. Nevertheless, the usage of social media has two different consequences known as the "dual effects": productive behaviors (task-oriented and relationship-building) and unproductive behaviors (deviance) at work (Carlson D., Carlson J. & Harris, 2016). It is essential for organizations to understand what drives Millennial employees and what tools they prefer to utilize in the workplace. Understanding Millennials' characteristics will enable the management team to lead them appropriately and thus elicit more productive outcomes. Millennials have certain characteristics that distinguish them from previous generations. They are known as "digital natives" as the idea of technology has been ingrained in their mind since birth. (Myers, Sundaram & Vodanovich, 2010). This generation expects an abundance of information, aims for the speed of communication and multi-tasking, and are willing to share their experiences with the world via social networks (Krishen et al, 2016). In this study, we will see how social media can have an impact on their psychological health. The findings of the study are crucial as Millennial employees will represent the largest workforce in the near future, and it is essential for organizations to find incentives that drive this generation. In addition, the study also covers the concept of self-determination and its relationship with social media engagement by Millennials. The assumptions are (a) Millennials share similar characteristics (b) Individuals are rational (c) The study is not influenced by extraneous factors (recession, natural disaster, etc.)

There is a scarce amount of research that has provided empirical support to demonstrate FOMO and the antecedents and consequence of social media engagement by Millennials. Therefore, this study can provide

us with a better understanding of these emerging topics. The findings of the study will profoundly benefit organizations in the long run.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Millennial employees

Millennial employees are the youngest generation entering the workforce (born between early 1980s to mid-1990s) (Kuron & Lyons, 2013). Employees from this generation have unique characteristics that separate them from previous generations. For example, they are more likely to pay attention to tasks that are appealing and are less likely to stay at one place over an extended period (Pffeffer, 2013). Furthermore, these employees are open minded and willing to participate in activities that encourage self enhancement and personal growth (Duxbury & Higgins & Lyons, 2007).

The Millennials are considered by far the best-educated and the largest generation in the U.S. workforce (Fry, 2015; The Council of Economic Advisers, 2014). In addition, this generation also regards extraneous factors (money, image, fame) as more valuable compared to innate factors (self-acceptance, affiliation, community) (Campbell, Freeman & Twenge, 2012). Millennials also have the intense desire to receive the awards associated with work input, however, they aren't necessarily willing to assert the effort required to earn the desired outcomes. Furthermore, Millennials are reported to be more individualistic in nature (Twenge, 2010). In addition, they are also more likely to be open to changes and eager to participate in self-enhancement activities compared to their older counterparts (Duxburz, Higgins & Lyons, 2007)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS

Fear of Missing Out

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is a phenomenon experienced by individuals who are afraid of being absent in situations in which others might be having entertainment (Przybylski, 2013). As a result of FOMO, people experience social anxiety, which they want to prevent by having constant connection with other members of the society. This phenomenon also causes people to exhibit remorse since they fear that they have missed a possibility for social interaction, a new experience, beneficial associations, or other gratifying occasions. Due to this constant apprehension, people are concerned about their time utilization. The word was first coined in 2004 by author Patrick J. McGinnis who published an article in a magazine of Harvard Business School with the title "Social Theory at HBS: McGinnis' Two FO's".

The phenomenon FOMO is particularly prevalent among young adolescents, especially students starting high school, college or graduate schools (primarily the Millennial demographic). Majority of these individuals are obligated to use websites for retrieving information in order to complete projects and assignments on online platforms. Nevertheless, this constant access to internet/technological devices also expose these individuals to deleterious and addictive social media websites (Przybylski, 2013). For example, when these individuals spend time on the internet finishing a project, they will be tempted to browse social media websites out of boredom just to take a glimpse at what their peers are doing. During the exploration process, if an individual comes across the information that a group of friends are having a night-out, it can incite FOMO in that individual. A social media post consisting of images has high media richness and could influence the individual to feel vulnerable and detached from the community. This negative emotion has the potential of demotivating an individual and thus prevent him/her from completing the planned task at hand efficiently.

As a result of the emergence of social media websites, individuals now prefer communication via technology rather than a face to face interaction (Koestner & Saffran, 2016). Technological devices such as smartphones, laptop, tablets and smartwatches have changed the way how individuals interact in the society today. This modern method of communication has enabled people to process information in a fast and efficient manner. The usage of internet via these technological devices has changed how individuals interact as well. Internet doesn't come free of cost, however, the proportion of expenses allocated to this method of communication is minimal. As a result, individuals are likely to utilize the service of internet frequently and their daily lives are affected significantly. Emotional dependency on the internet can incite extraneous anxiety in majority of

the people which can give rise to the FOMO mindset in individuals (Swan, 2017). Furthermore, the reliance and addiction to social media websites can lead to adverse mood symptoms such as anger and depression. For the purpose of this study, we will focus on the use of social media websites and applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram.

The usage of social media websites can result in deviation of attention by individuals from projects at hand due to digital immediacy contact. This influences individuals to check their digital devices consistently, seeking for an update on emails, personal message, social media app notifications, calendar notifications, etc.

Social Media Engagement

Social media websites and applications such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram are used prevalently by Millennials. It is crucial to emphasize that the addictive nature of these websites can influence individuals to deviate from completing important tasks. Social media websites enable individuals to have connections with their peers on a constant basis, and this frequent connection and abundance of information potentially result in an addictive behavioral pattern which urges individuals to check their social media accounts frequently. Nevertheless, the information presented to these individuals can also incite them to compare themselves with other members of the society, thus giving them a feeling of disparity for not living up to the standard of others. For example, an individual may come across a social media post in which another individual has boasted about an accomplishment (ex. purchase of a new car or new house), and this may leave the former individual feeling inferior, given that he/she hasn't accomplished that goal yet. The 'story' feature of Instagram, Facebook messenger and Snapchat enable users to update videos on a frequent basis. Due to the extent of its frequency and ease of use, personal updates are provided consistently to viewers which makes these applications even more addictive.

The usage of Facebook results in mental distress in individuals to some extent (Greitemeyer & Sagioglou, 2014). The findings specified that individuals using these websites consider these activities to be unproductive which incites the mental distress due to the wastage of time associated with it. Therefore, it can be questioned why individuals will participate in activities which is detrimental to their productivity and psychological well-being (Dhir, 2018). The researchers arrived at the conclusion that these individuals are unaware of the negative emotions associated with the unproductive activity.

The goal of the article is to demonstrate whether the widespread use of social media websites has a positive or detrimental impact on Millennials, which is a crucial factor to consider in terms of determining organizations' success. Millennial employees are currently the youngest generation entering the workforce.

Self – Determination theory

According to self-determination theory, effective self-regulation and psychological health are based on the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: competence – the capacity to act effectively on the world, autonomy – self authorship or personal initiative, and relatedness – closeness or connectedness with others (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Self-determination theory is also driven by five different types of motivation: *intrinsic motivation* which refers to focusing on the task as a result of self-delight, *integrated motivation* which refers to behavior guided by the values of the individual, *identified motivation* which refers to behaviors guided by values identified by the individual but different from personal values, *introjected motivation* which refers to the behaviors that are guided by values and forces that are extraneous to the individual but whereas the individual recognizes the authority of the force, and *external motivation* which refers to the behaviors guided by extraneous factors such as reward or punishment (Deci & Gagné, 2005).

Negative Affectivity

Negative affectivity refers to the experience of subjective distress and unpleasurable engagement that leads to changing mood states, including anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, fear and nervousness (Clark, Tellegen & Watson 1988).

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is a personality trait which influences individuals to experience negative emotions, higher levels of arousal, worry and anxiety (Eysenck, 1967; Eysenck, 1975).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

FOMO and Social Media Engagement by Millennial employees

It has been mentioned earlier that Millennials expect an abundance of information, fast communication and a platform to share their information. In this case, social media platforms are best suited to satisfy the needs of this generation. They can utilize social media websites/applications to retrieve information, communicate efficiently with their peers and share their own experiences. Social media is used extensively in organizations nowadays, therefore, it is crucial to address whether the use of this tool would result in an improvement or deterioration of performance by the employees. It appears that the use of social media can be advantageous as well as detrimental to work performance depending on dispositional and situational factors.

Studies conducted in the past have shown a positive relationship between social media engagement and FOMO (Przybylski et al., 2013). According to one study, young adolescents have reported a feeling of disconnectedness and missing out without access to online communication, which encouraged them to keep their phones within reach at night (Vorderer et al., 2016). This suggested that individuals have a desire to stay connected to the internet consistently, even at bedtime (Scott & Woods, 2016). The devices are used in order to have access to social media applications. Therefore, when individuals experience FOMO when they're out of touch with their peers, they are likely to engage in social media activities.

Proposition 1: There is a positive relationship between FOMO and social media engagement by Millennials.

Self-determination and FOMO

As a result of the self-regulatory component of the self-determination theory, individuals are likely to monitor their behaviors due to situational and chronic deficits in psychological need satisfactions (Chatzisarantis & Hagger, 2007; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Przybylski, Rigby, Ryan & Weinstein, 2009). Looking through the perspective of the self-determination theory, the phenomenon FOMO can be considered as a self-regulatory mechanism which is used to satisfy the psychological needs.

There are three psychological needs explained by self-determination theory: competence, autonomy and relatedness. These three needs can be satisfied by social media engagement in the following ways: The social media platforms can be used by individuals to compete with their peers, ex. Sharing posts about individual accomplishments, autonomy is expressed by sharing posts according to one's will and interests, and relatedness can be satisfied by sharing posts with other individuals and viewing their content on social media platforms. Therefore, individuals with high self-determination psychological needs would engage in social media activities more frequently in order to satiate their needs.

Proposition 2: There is a positive relationship between the level of self-determination and social media engagement by Millennials.

Neuroticism, Social Media Engagement and Negative Affectivity

Users of social media websites are constantly exposed to an abundance of information. The extent to which individuals experience negative emotions such as anxiety or distress as a reaction to a social media post depends on the extent of neuroticism experienced by that individual. For the purpose of this study, we will only include participants that fit the Millennial demographic.

Social media engagement will elicit more negative emotions in Millennials. In this case, the neuroticism experienced by individuals will strengthen the positive relationship between social media engagement and negative affectivity in individuals.

Proposition 3: Neuroticism moderates the positive relationship between social media engagement and negative affectivity in Millennials, such that the positive relationship is stronger when neuroticism is high.

DISCUSSION

The propositions developed for this study and the empirical support provided for the test of the hypotheses will demonstrate the influence of FOMO and social media engagement on individuals. Currently, more research should be conducted in order to identify the unique characteristics of Millennials that distinguish them from other generations. In addition, the phenomenon FOMO needs to be studied at a greater depth which would help us understand its antecedents and consequence. This study predicts that when individuals experience Fear of Missing Out (FOMO), they are likely to participate in social media activities. FOMO incites individuals to believe that they're left out of a social experience, and that emotion can be alleviated by engaging in social media platforms. Secondly, the study predicts that there is a positive relationship between the level of self-determination and social media engagement. Self-determination theory explains the three psychological needs that needs to be satisfied: competence, autonomy and relatedness. Individuals can satisfy these three needs by engaging in social media activities. Competence can be addressed by sharing various accomplishments on these platforms, autonomy can be addressed by sharing only posts related to the individual's interest, and relatedness can be addressed by staying connected with peers via these social media platforms.

Thirdly, the study predicts that neuroticism in individuals strengthen the positive relationship between social media engagement and negative affectivity in Millennials. People who are neurotic in nature tend to experience negative emotions such as anger, contempt, disgust, guilt, etc. more intensely than individuals with low level of neuroticism. Social media engagement (use of Facebook) has been reported to give mental distress to individuals (Greitmeyer & Sagioglou, 2014). Individuals with high level neuroticism are likely to experience this mental distress more intensely, therefore, the variable "neuroticism" will strengthen the positive relationship between the level of social media engagement and the level of negative affectivity in Millennials.a periodeear.

Unique Contribution

Millennial employees will represent the largest division of workforce in the near future and thus it is essential for organizations to understand their characteristics, drives, preferences and interests. The study provided an insight on the effects of self-determination and fear of missing out on social media engagement by Millennials. There is a scarce amount of research that has focused on the influence of FOMO and social media engagement on Millennials, this study provides an insight on the relationships between variables such as FOMO, social media engagement, self-determination and negative affectivity.

Future Research Implications

The study can be replicated by collecting responses from participants of various countries across the globe. The findings of the study can provide a global perspective of the phenomenon FOMO and the antecedents of social media engagement. In order to increase the validity of the constructs, and infer a strong relationship between the variables, it is necessary to manipulate the independent variables and the conditions of the experiment. In addition, including control variables such as age, race and gender can also provide a different perspective of FOMO and social media engagement by Millennials. This study developed hypothesis stating that FOMO influences individuals to engage in social media activities. Future studies can demonstrate how engagement in social media activities can influence individuals to experience FOMO. It can be also beneficial to explain the personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience) that can influence individuals to experience FOMO. In addition, the study can also introduce variables such as self-esteem and self-evaluation, and their roles in relationship to FOMO and social media engagement.

CONCLUSION

It is necessary to state that the significance and impact of FOMO and social media engagement is phenomenal and prevalent among young adults. The studies conducted in the last decade have demonstrated the crucial

impact of FOMO on individuals. Social media websites have drastically intensified these effects. Millennials are particularly vulnerable in this situation as they are required to use internet in order to complete daily tasks at school and in the workplace. Exposure to such consistent access to social media sites could have potential damaging impacts on the mental health of individuals due to stress and peer pressure. Furthermore, the negative emotions incited can hamper the productivity of individuals in the workplace. Researchers and organizations must analyze both the positive and negative impact of FOMO and social media engagement in order to make a conclusion about the potential benefits and drawbacks of this phenomenon.

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