MEDIATING EFFECT OF COMMUNICATION ETHICS PRACTISED ON WORK ETHICS RELATIONSHIPS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA USE, MOTIVES FOR USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND INTERNET SURFING ETIQUETTE

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ABSTRACT

Social media is a medium of communication nowadays. In fact, the accessibility of the internet at the workplace makes it is easier for the users to use it either positively or negatively. Hence, this study tests the relationship between social media use, motives for using social media, Internet surfing etiquette, work ethics, and communication ethics. The Utilitarian Theory is used to see the benefits gained by the employees in terms of social media use at the workplace. This study applies the quantitative research design where a self-administered survey questionnaire is used as the instrument for data collection. Based on a sample of 344 respondents among the administrative staff of International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM), the findings indicate that all variables are positively correlated with one another. Communication ethics fully mediates the relationship between social media use and motives for using social media towards work ethics. Communication ethics only partially mediates the relationship between the internet surfing etiquette and work ethics. Therefore, communication ethics mediates the relationship between social media use, motives for using social media and internet surfing etiquette towards work ethics.

Keywords: Administrative staff, communication ethics, social media use, Utilitarian Theory, work ethics.

INTRODUCTION

The work environment has changed due to the existence of the social media. The use of social media like Facebook has changed the way people communicate with each other (Cardon & Marshall, 2015). This has an impact towards the organisation where the authority needs to utilise the social media

usage for work-related purpose. However, the existence of the social media has become a dilemma in terms of ethical issues. Ferguson, Thornley and Gibb (2016) claim that new technology does not directly impact the ethical issues but it influences the way employees react on their work-related matters. They need to harmonize the usage of new technology in their workplace such as disseminating, receiving and filtering the authentic information. This is in line with study by Harden (2012), where the social media has become a platform among employees to share information among them.

Tae and Benbasat (2012) identify social media use at the workplace as a platform for a knowledge seeking behavior either for exploitation or exploration. Exploitation is the utilisation of a person's current information; on the other hand, exploration is the usage of relevant information based on the situation. Furthermore, the social media use is able to help the effectiveness of employees in information-seeking at their workplace (Lefteriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Nkwe & Cohen, 2017). However, the use of the social media can also be a bad influence towards employees at the workplace. It happens when their productivity decreases due to misuse of the social media (Clark & Roberts, 2010).

Islam highlights that work is an *ibadah*. There are six characteristics of work: (1) *al-shalah* or good and beneficial; (2) *al-itqan* or perfect or steadiness; (3) *al-ihsan* or doing the best; (4) *al-mujaahadah* or hardworking and be optimal; (5) *tanafus* and *ta'awun* or competition and to help each other; and (6) keeping in touch about time (Hafidhuddin & Tanjung, 2006). These attributes show that Islam emphasises its believers to do good deeds in their life and to do the best in their daily life including their working behavior. Hence, as a Muslim employee, all these characteristics should be practised to get job satisfaction and to perform better in achieving reward from Allah. Therefore, this study intends to identify the effect of social media use at the workplace among the administrative staff in an Islamic institution of higher learning.

Problem Statement

Social media use at the workplace can increase work ethics positively. In an organisation, social media eases the employees' work and help them

to complete their task easily. In addition, the social media nowadays is a communication platform for everyone. People communicate through the social media enormously across boundaries. However, being addictively attached to the social media during working hours can affect employees' work ethics. It affects their integrity to focus in doing their work. On the contrary, it can also delay them in meeting their work deadline. Herlle and Astray-Caneda (2013) state that excessive use of the social media can create various issue at the workplace. They discover that social media use has become a distraction to the employees towards their performance. They cannot focus in doing their work and thus delaying their tasks.

In Malaysia, the issue of abusive use of the social media at the workplace is rampant. Cheng (2013) reported that Malaysian employers suffer in terms of work productivity and performance because their employees spend a lot of their working hours on personal matters. Due to their excessive engagement to the social media, it has a negative impact towards their work performance. Coker (2013) supports that unbeneficial use of the social media at the workplace could lead to productivity decrease among employees. Ethically, this situation gives a bad image to the organisation especially in an Islamic institution. Hence, this study wants to determine the effects of social media use towards work ethics practised as well as communication ethics practised among the IIUM administrative staff.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

1) To test the relationships between social media use, motives for using the social media, the internet surfing etiquette, communication ethics and work ethics practised; and

2) To analyse the mediating effect of communication ethics practised on social media use, motives for using social media, internet surfing etiquette and work ethics practised.

Significance of the Study

The main contribution of the study is to know the motives for using social media especially during office hours. Utilising the social media for work-related matters can positively enhance work ethics practised. This is because the social media is a platform for communication or discussion for work purposes. Besides that, the authority also needs to promote the positive use of the social media among the administrative staff, especially in providing their best service towards students and colleagues. Ethically using the social media can improve their work environment and ambience while completing the assigned tasks. The existence of the social media eases work for the staff in many ways.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Utilitarian Theory

The Utilitarian Theory is an ethical theory. It stresses on moral actions that determine right from wrong by focusing on the outcomes. This theory was developed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and refined by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), later also known as Consequentialism (Moreland, 2009; Westacott, 2018). It defines that the best action is the one that maximizes utility. In this context, utility refers to happiness or pleasure (Westacott, 2018). According to Bentham, there are four principles of utility: (1) recognizes the fundamental role of pain and pleasure in human life; (2) approves or disapproves of an action on the basis of the extent of pain or pleasure brought about by the consequences; (3) equates good with pleasure and evil with pain; and (4) asserts that pleasure and pain are capable of quantification (and hence 'measure'). Mill later modified the Bentham principles to make them more hedonistic. He states that (1) quality of happiness is the vital matter, not the quantity of pleasure; (2) quality of happiness cannot be measured because there is a difference between higher and lower pleasures; and (3) utilitarianism seeks to promote the capability of achieving happiness (higher pleasure) among people (Cavalier, 2002).

There are two types of utilitarianism: (1) act utilitarianism; and (2) rule utilitarianism (Cavalier, 2002). Act utilitarianism is the right act that gives the best result at the end but also reduces bad impact. Rule utilitarianism refers to moral principles, that is, rules of conduct. It particularly looks at the consequences that the person either follows or breaks the rules.

The Utilitarian Theory is suitable for this study to figure out work ethics and communication ethics practised among the administrative staff with the emergence of the social media. This is because the social media use at the workplace can be a distraction to employees if they do not utilise it wisely.

Social Media Use

Social media is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and it allows for the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010, p. 60). Social media is a necessary tool in human life nowadays. It becomes an important platform for the organisation to ease its management work in terms of social interaction (Cici, 2011), information-seeking (Lefteriotis & Giannakos, 2014), and information-sharing (Whitting & William, 2013). The existence of the social media is also a reason for the employees to use it for work-related activities. Employees are engaged with social media in order to create positive environment among colleagues (Diercksen, DiPlacido, Harvey & Bosco, 2013), to socialise and to find new networks (Waheed, Anjum, Rehman & Khawaja, 2017) besides to get information related to work (Schaar, Valdez, Ziefle, EraBme, Löcker & Jakobs, 2014). Hence, this study tries to investigate the motives of using the social media and internet surfing etiquette among administrative staff in an Islamic institution of higher learning.

Internet Surfing Etiquette

The internet surfing etiquette is also known as netiquette that is made up of two words: network and etiquette (netiquette). Tedre, Kamppuri and Kommers (2006) explain netiquette as "a body of conventions and manners for using the Internet as a tool for communication or data exchange, practised or advocated by a group of people." It includes laws, regulations as well as good manners

and practises. Similarly, Yarmohammadian, Iravani and Abzari (2012) define netiquette as a guideline for good manners in network communication and behaviour. Therefore, this study wants to look into the administrative staffs' behaviour in using the internet.

Work Ethics Practised

Ethics refers to the critical structure examination of how one should constrain one's self-interest when one's actions affect others (MacDonald, 2010). Wine and Napier (1992) define the term ethics as "the activity of applying the moral precept to concrete problems". Work ethics is the moral behavior that is being applied by the employees at the workplace. It is considered as the way employees work with their colleagues, superiors and other people ethically. In Islam, work is included as a part of *ibadah* by which every Muslim needs to do their best. According to Ibrahim and Kamri (2016) ethics in Islam refers to human behavior (*akhlaq*) that consists of several aspects: (1) goodness (*al-khay*r); (2) righteousness (*al-birr*); (3) equity (*al-qist*); (4) truth and right (*al-haq*); (5) justice (*al-'adl*); (6) known and approved *(al-ma'ruf)*; and (7) piety (*al-taqwa*). These characteristics should be practised by each employee in order to be a good Muslim as well as an ethical employee.

Communication Ethics Practised

Communication ethics is part of work ethics (Wok & Yusof, 2002). Communication is an important matter in the management of the organisation. It is a powerful factor in organisational performance because communication becomes an agent among the employees to interact with their colleagues, superiors and clients either through speaking, reading, listening or writing (Wok & Yusof, 2002). Communication at the workplace is essential to make every part of the organization function well. It is a medium to ensure every segment of the organisation plays its roles to achieve the objectives of the organisation. Effective communication among colleagues at the workplace facilitates employees to do their jobs (Gbadamosi, 2015). This leads to the practise of communication ethics by employees to complete their tasks well. Communication is important in helping an organisation attain its goals, promote motivation, and generate sources of information (Tulkajl & Fosic, 2010).
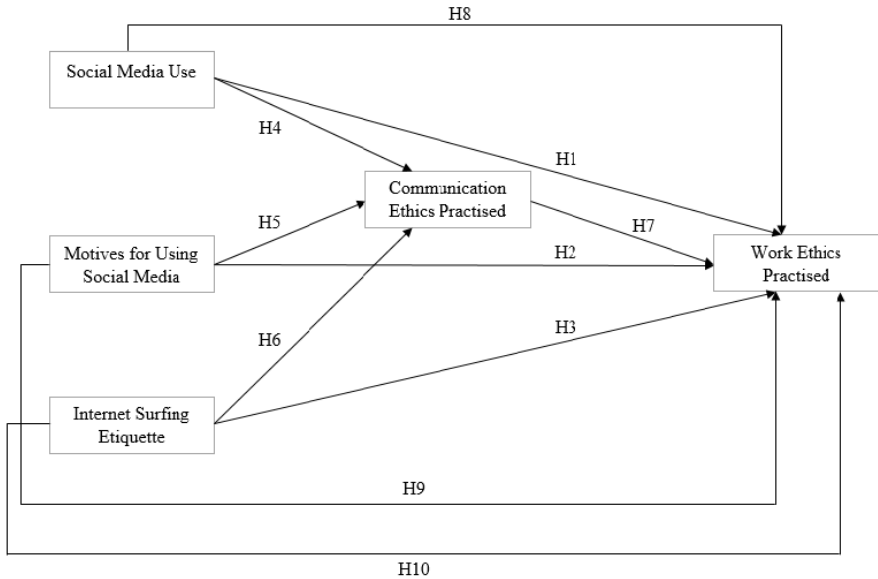
Conceptual Framework

FIGURE 1 Conceptual framework on mediating effect of communication ethics practised between social media use, motives for using social media and internet surfing etiquette towards work ethics practised

Hypotheses Testing

There are ten hypotheses for this study:

H1: There is a positive relationship between social media use and work ethics practised;

H2: There is a positive relationship between motives for using social media and work ethics   practised;

H3: There is a positive relationship between internet surfing etiquette and work ethics practised;

H4: There is a positive relationship between social media use and communication ethics practised;

H5: There is a positive relationship between motives for using social media and communication ethics practised;

H6: There is a positive relationship between internet surfing etiquette and communication ethics practised;

H7: There is a positive relationship between communication ethics practised and work ethics practised;

H8: Communication ethics practised mediates the relationship between social media use and work ethics practised;

H9: Communication ethics practised mediates the relationship between motives for using social media and work ethics practised; and

H10: Communication ethics practised mediates the relationship between internet surfing etiquette and work ethics practised.

METHODOLOGY

This study applies the quantitative research design using a survey method. The stratified random sampling is used as the sampling procedure. A total of 344 respondents participated in the study. The population of this study is the IIUM administrative staff at the Gombak Campus.

This study uses a self-administered questionnaire to collect information from the administrative staff of the *kulliyyah*, centre, institute, division and office (K/C/I/D/O). Data were collected from October 2, 2017 until November 10, 2017.

The questionnaire consists of eight sections: Section 1 – Demographic information (gender, nationality and marital status); Section 2 – Work-related information consisting of eight questions (work experience in IIUM, work experience prior to joining IIUM and basic income per month); Section 3 – Social media use consisting of five questions; Section 4 – Motives for using social media consisting of 28 items such as communication motives, information motives and religious motives; Section 5 – Internet surfing etiquette made up of 26 items; Section 6 – Work ethics practised consisting of 20 items; Section 7 – Communication ethics practised consisting of 15 items; and Section 8 – Open-ended questions on recommendation and suggestion on how to improve work ethics practised and communication ethics practised among the IIUM administrative staff.

All variables are reliable (Table 1). Cronbach's alpha value for motives for using social media is $\alpha = .960$, internet surfing etiquette is $\alpha = .948$, work ethics practised is $\alpha = .964$, and communication ethics practised is $\alpha = .950$.

TABLE 1 Reliability test

Section	Variables	No. of Items	Reliability
			Actual
4	Motives for using social media	28	.956
5	Internet surfing etiquette	26	.948
6	Work ethics practised	20	.964
7	Communication ethics practised	15	.950

Collected data were keyed into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. The analysed data are presented in descriptive and inferential statistics to answer the research objectives to test the hypotheses of the study. The descriptive statistics are used to indicate frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation while inferential statistics used are the one-sample t-test, zero-order and partial correlations and hierarchical regression analysis.

FINDINGS

Demographic Information

Out of a total of 344 respondents, seven in ten of the respondents (71.8%) are females and 28.2% are males. Almost all respondents are Malaysians (97.1%) and the rest of 2.9% are international staffs, who are either married (73.5%), single (23.5%), and 2.9% are divorced or widowed. The respondents are mostly aged around 31-40 years old (31.4%), followed by 41–50 years old (29.4%), and 21–30 years old (25.0%). The least groups are those beyond 51 years old (13.1%) and those less than 20 years old (1.2%). The respondents have either STPM/Certificate/Diploma (36.6%), SPM/SP/MCE/SC (27.0%) or 26.2% Bachelor's Degree. Only a small number of them are with Master/ PhD degree (8.1%).

Work-related Information

Results show that 27.9% of the respondents have less than 5 years working experience in IIUM, followed by 16–20 years of work experience (18.3%), and 15.7% have 6-10 years and 11–15 years of work experience in IIUM

respectively. The rest (22.4%) have 20 years and above of working experience in IIUM. In addition, more than half of the respondents (59.6%) have less than 3 years of working experience before joining IIUM, followed by 4–6 years (13.4%) and the rest (27.0%) have more than 7 years of working experiences with other companies before working in IIUM. Their basic income per month is around RM2,001–RM4,000 (60.6%), followed by less than RM2,000 (21.8%) while the rest (17.8%) have more than RM4001 per month. The majority (83.4%) are permanent staffs and almost all (92.4%) are on a full-time basis. The respondents do administrative work (67.7%), and financing/accounting/auditing (11.9%). Some are IT/technician (8.5%), support staff (7.7%), and safety/security (3.5%).

One-sample t-test

A one-sample t-test with a test value of 3 is used to determine the level of motives for using the social media, internet surfing etiquette, communication ethics practised, and work ethics practised. Results show that two-thirds of the respondents (67.8%) use social media for many reasons such as communication, information and task motives (M=3.389, SD=0.646; t(343)=11.173, p=.000). In terms of the internet surfing etiquette, the majority of the respondents (82.5%) are ethically surfing the Internet safely (M=4.126, SD=0.582; t(343)=35.878, p=.000). The results indicate that the majority of the respondents (85.3%) are ethically communicating with each other (M=4.263, SD=0.513; t(343)=45.695, p=.000). The majority of the respondents (89.2%) are doing their job ethically (M=4.461, SD=0.485; t (343) =55.895, p=.000).

Hypotheses Testing

In order to answer the research objectives of the study, a zero-order and partial correlations are used to test the relationships between social media use, motives for using social media, internet surfing etiquette, communication ethics and work ethics practised. In addition, a hierarchical regression is used to analyse the mediating effect of communication ethics practised with social media use, motives for using social media, Internet surfing etiquette and work ethics practised.

Zero-order and Partial Correlations

Table 2 shows results on zero-order and partial correlations between work ethics practised with social media use, motives for using social media, Internet surfing etiquette and communication ethics practised. The results indicate that there is a positive weak relationship between work ethics practised and social media use (r=.139, p=.005). Motives for using the social media also show a positive weak relationship with work ethics practised (r=.179, p=.000). Internet surfing etiquette has a moderate positive relationship with work ethics practised (r=.556, p=.000). Communication ethics practised has a strong positive relationship with work ethics practised (r=.696, p=.000). Social media use has a positive weak relationship with communication ethics practised (r=.180, p=.000). Motives for using social media also has a positive weak relationship with communication ethics practised (r=.202, p=.000). However, Internet surfing etiquette has a strong positive relationship with communication ethics practised (r=.652, p=.000). Therefore, all hypotheses (H1 until H7) are supported.

TABLE 2 Zero-order and partial correlations between work ethics practised with social media use, motives for using social media, internet surfing etiquette and communication ethics practised

Control Variable	Variable	WE	SMU	M	ISE	CE
Zero	Work ethics	1				
	Social media use	r=.139, p=.005	1			
	Motives for using social media	r=.179, p=.000	r=.427, p=.000	1		
	Internet surfing etiquette	r=.556, p=.000	r=.261, p=.000	r=.362, p=.000	1	
	Communication ethics	r=.696, p=.000	r=.180, p=.000	r=.202, p=.000	r=.652, p=.000	1

Communication ethics	Work ethics	1			
	Social media use	$r=.019$, $p=.364$	1		
	Motives for using social media	$r=.055$, $p=.153$	$r=.405$, $p=.000$	1	
	Internet surfing etiquette	$r=.188$, $p=.000$	$r=.193$, $p=.000$	$r=.311$, $p=.000$	1

The results on partial correlation show that social media use has been reduced from $r=.139$ ($p=.005$) to $r=.019$ ($p=.364$), from a significant to not significant results. This means that communication ethics practised fully mediates the relationship between social media use and work ethics practised among IIUM administrative staff. Therefore, H8 is supported.

Motives for using social media also show similar results, where the correlation has declined from $r=.179$ ($p=.000$) to $r=.055$ ($p=.153$), that is, from significant to a non-significant relationship. This implies that communication ethics practised fully mediates the relationship between motives for using social media and work ethics practised. Thus, H9 is supported.

Internet surfing etiquette has been reduced but is still significant from $r=.556$ ($p=.000$) to $r=.188$ ($p=.000$). However, their relationship is still significant. Hence, communication ethics practised partially mediates the relationship between internet surfing etiquette and work ethics practised. Therefore, H10 is partially supported.

Hierarchical Regression Analysis

Hierarchical regression analysis is used to compare the contribution of the dependent variable (work ethics practised), independent variables (social media use, motives for using social media and internet surfing etiquette) and the mediating variable (communication ethics practised).

The results (Table 3) show that the Beta value of social media use is not significant ($\beta=.002$, $t=0.047$, $p=.963$). The Beta value of motives for using the social media ($\beta=-.026$, $t=-0.507$, $p=.613$) is also not significant. However,

the Beta value of Internet surfing etiquette (β=.565, t=11.602, p=.000) is significant. In Model 1, Internet surfing etiquette is the only variable, that is, significant to work ethics practises.

In Model 2, communication ethics practised has been added. The results indicate that the Beta value for social media use is $-$.014 (t=$-$0.333, p=.739), motives for using social media (β=.003, t=0.069, p=.945), are not significant. Internet surfing etiquette (β=.180, t=3.383, p=.001) and communication ethics practised (β=.581, t=11.486, p=.000) are significant. Internet surfing etiquette and communication ethics practised are the significant contributions towards work ethics practised.

TABLE 3 Hierarchical regression analysis on work ethics practised with independent variables followed by mediating variable

Model	Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.580	.173		14.900	.000
	Social media use	.001	.028	.002	0.047	.963
	Motives for using social media	−.018	.036	−.026	−0.507	.613
	Internet surfing etiquette	.471	.041	.565	11.602	.000

F=50.924, *df*=3, *p*=.000, *R*=.557, *R²*=.310, *R²adj*=.304, *F change*=50.924, *df1*=3, *df2*=340, *p*=.000

Model	Variable	Unstandardized Coefficient		Standardized Coefficient	t	p
	(Constant)	1.523	.174		8.775	.000
2	Social media use	−.008	.024	−.014	−0.333	.739
	Motives for using social media	.002	.031	.003	0.069	.945
	Internet surfing etiquette	.150	.044	.180	3.383	.001
	Communication ethics	.549	.048	.581	11.486	.000

F=85.883, *df*=4, *p*=.000, *R*=.709, *R²*=.503, *R²adj*=.497, *F change*=131.930, *df1*=1, *df2*=339, *p*=.000

It shows that communication ethics practised partially mediates the relationship between social media use and work ethics practised, where the Beta value in Model 1 has been reduced from .002 (p=.963) to $-$.014 (p=.739) in Model 2. However, the relationship is not significant. In addition,

communication ethics practised also partially mediates motives for using social media and work ethics practised. The Beta value on motives for using social media in Model 1 is −.026 (p=.613) to .003 (*p*=.945) in Model 2, where it is also not significant. In addition, the results also show that communication ethics practised partially mediates the relationship Internet surfing etiquette and work ethics practised. There is a reduction of Beta value from .565 (*p*=.000) in Model 1 to .180 (*p*=.001) Model 2 and it is a significant. Therefore, H8 and H9 are not supported meanwhile, H10 is partially supported.

The results imply that communication ethics practised is a significant contributor to internet surfing etiquette towards work ethics practised. Positively utilised, the internet usage can give good impact among the administrative staff at the workplace.

CONCLUSION

The results show that ethically using the social media and the internet at the workplace can increase work ethics among the administrative staff. This is aligned to the Islamic teaching, that is, to encourage the believers to practise good deeds in every aspect of life. As an employee, communication is an essential role to deal and to provide good service to other people. This is because the Utilitarian Theory emphasises the maximum benefits of social media use in order to achieve the organisation's objectives. Hence, the Utilitarian Theory holds true for work ethics at an Islamic institution.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTION

This study is conducted in an Islamic institution with mainly Malays. In future, other research can be conducted at other institutions that involve respondents from different backgrounds as the Chinese and Indians.

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