

## Chapter 3

# Digital Social Networking Use Effect on Individual Job Performance

**Marwa Mallouli Ben Zouitina**

*Faculty of Economics and Management of Sfax, Tunisia & PRISME Laboratory, Tunisia*

**Zouhour Smaoui Hachicha**

*PRISME Laboratory, Faculty of Economics and Management of Sfax, Tunisia*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to explore the impact of social networking sites (SNS) usage on individual work performance (IP). A literature review revealed contrasting results. A multiple-case study on 15 employees from eight Tunisian firms has been conducted to highlight the SNS effects on IP in the specific context of democratic transition. Data have been collected by semi-structured interviews and coded using the Nvivo 10 software. The analysis shows that, depending on the level of SNS usage, three types of effect are identified on IP at work: positive, negative, or null. This result invites researcher to consider the usage intensity when analyzing SNS effects on IP. Understanding the different types of SNS usage by actors and their effects on IP could help managers to take appropriate decisions to take profit from this usage. This research suggests also that organizational policy moderates the relationship between SNS usage and IP.*

### INTRODUCTION

The social networking sites (SNS) usage has recently become one of the most social popular activities around the world (Ifinedo, 2016; Cao et al., 2018). Their penetration is expanding in all geographic areas. All continents are affected. SNS have the highest penetration rate in North America with 70% and 53% in Western Europe compared to a penetration rate of 40% in North Africa and 24% in South Asia (Statista, 2019). In 2019, Facebook site comes out on top with a monthly number of 2.45 billion active users. Indeed, there are 1.013 billion visitors in Asia, 387 million in Europe, 247 million in North America and 802 million in the rest of the world (Coëffé, 2020). These few figures show the extent

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of SNS phenomenon, which constitutes an emerging field of study. Various aspects related to SNS usage have attracted researchers' attention. However, most of these previous researches were mainly conducted in educational institutions and used students as subjects (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Köffer et al., 2014). The study of the impact of SNS usage in organizations constitutes a little explored field (Charoensukmongkol, 2014).

Recently, SNS such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn have become essential for companies (Corre, 2011). These platforms help employees to communicate, cooperate, and get information or document. Also, they allow to create a social structure and an information transfer between employees (Heidemann et al., 2012). The impact of SNS usage on employee's work is one of the major managers' concerns (IACE, 2016). Besides, the access to different SNS by employees during working time is expanding (Nazir et al., 2016). There is a debate about SNS usage value for organization members. North (2010), Van Zyl (2010) and Ashraf and Javed (2014) found that social networking platforms can lead to difficulties associated with interference between function-related activities and social media activities. Others authors concluded that SNS can improve employee work performance (Hassan et al., 2011; Xi Zhang et al., 2015; Nazir et al., 2016; Kishokumar, 2016). In addition, the SNS impact on IP has been studied in different contexts such as the United States (Moqbel et al., 2013), Greece (Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014) and China (Cao et al., 2016). The question of SNS usage in Arabic countries has not yet been investigated (Mallouli et al., 2017). Particularly, democratic transition countries, like Tunisia employed some information control models including social media to ensure opinions' harmonization (Koch, 2015). These practices may affect the way SNS are used by employees.

This research introduces SNS use as a potential determinant of IP at the workplace. On the one hand, the study of this relation is motivated by the increasingly intensive use of these tools in the contemporary organizational context (Charoensukmongkol, 2014; Leftheriotis & Giannakos, 2014; Xi Zhang et al., 2015; Kishokumar, 2016). On the other hand, this choice is driven by the controversial result presented in studies investigating the relationship between SNS usage and IP (Wickramasinghe & Nisaf, 2012; Moqbel et al., 2013).

Therefore, we address the following question: What is the impact of SNS usage at work on individual job performance?

First, this chapter aims to present an overview of key concepts namely SNS, usage and individual performance. Second, the relationship between SNS usage and individual performance is clarified. Then, the methodological choices related to the qualitative study research are described. Finally, the data analysis results are detailed.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

### **Media Synchronicity Theory (MST)**

In this chapter, the Media Synchronicity Theory (MST) presented by Dennis and Kinney (1998) was mobilized to explain the impact of SNS usage on IP at work. Synchronicity of the media means that two people work together on the same task, at the same time and have shared concentration (Chevrin, 2006).

For Dennis and Kinney (1998), MST states that work tasks are based on a communication process which is composed of two fundamental processes. It is mainly about the information transmission process, maintained by media with low synchronicity and convergence process, based on media of high

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