

ผลกระทบของช่องทางการสื่อสารภายในโดยการใช้ไลน์ต่อการมีส่วนร่วม และความผูกพันของบุคลากร

The Impact of Internal Communication Channel Using Line on Employee Engagement

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บทคัดย่อ

ในปัจจุบันการใช้งานอินเตอร์เน็ต ได้กลายเป็นส่วนหนึ่งในชีวิตประจำวันของคนส่วนใหญ่ทั้งในเรื่องของการใช้ชีวิตส่วนตัวหรือเรื่องงาน ซึ่งมีแอพพลิเคชั่นหลากหลายที่ถูกนำมาใช้งานผ่านเครือข่ายอินเตอร์เน็ตเหล่านี้ โดยได้มีการศึกษาถึงการใช้งานสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ในการทำงานเป็นจำนวนมาก และยังมีงานวิจัยอีกจำนวนหนึ่งที่ศึกษาถึงการมีส่วนร่วมและความผูกพันของบุคลากร อย่างไรก็ตามการศึกษาถึงความเชื่อมโยงของการใช้งานสื่อสังคมออนไลน์ต่อการมีส่วนร่วมและความผูกพันของบุคลากรยังมีจำนวนจำกัด ซึ่งงานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาว่าบุคลากรมีแนวโน้มอย่างไรต่อของการใช้งานสื่อสังคมออนไลน์โดยเฉพาะอย่างยิ่งการใช้งานแอพพลิเคชั่นไลน์ทั้งในเรื่องของการทำงานและการใช้ชีวิตส่วนตัว รวมไปถึงศึกษาถึงผลกระทบของการใช้งานแอพพลิเคชั่นไลน์ต่อการมีส่วนร่วมและความผูกพันของบุคลากรในเรื่องของความตื่นตัว ความอุทิศตน และความมุ่งมั่นในงาน ซึ่งกลุ่มตัวอย่างในงานวิจัยนี้เป็นอาจารย์มหาวิทยาลัยทั้งในส่วนของมหาวิทยาลัยรัฐบาลและมหาวิทยาลัยเอกชนในพื้นที่กรุงเทพมหานคร โดยใช้การวิเคราะห์การคัดคุณภาพ ผลการศึกษาพบว่าการใช้งานแอพพลิเคชั่นไลน์ในการติดต่อสื่อสารส่วนบุคคลมีผลเชิงลบต่อการมีส่วนร่วมและความผูกพันของบุคลากร แต่การใช้งานแอพพลิเคชั่นไลน์ในการทำงานมีผลเชิงบวกต่อการมีส่วนร่วมและความผูกพันของบุคลากร

คำสำคัญ: การสื่อสารภายใน, การมีส่วนร่วมและความผูกพันของบุคลากร, ข้อความ, แอพพลิเคชั่นไลน์

Abstract

Nowadays, the Internet has become a part of our daily life. Internet-based applications play an integral role in our personal as well as work related matters. The research on the role of social media use in the workplace is of interest to many scholars. Employee engagement has also been studied extensively. However, little is known about the association between these two concepts. This research aims to explore whether the employees intend to use LINE, a social media application, for both personal and work purposes and to investigate the effect of social media use, particularly, LINE app, for work-related and personal-related matters on the employee engagement in term of their vigor, dedication, and absorption at work. The surveys were distributed to lecturers in both private and public universities in Bangkok. The results from the multiple regression analysis found that LINE app used for personal related internal communication has negative effects towards vigor, dedication and absorption, which means that the higher the lecturers use LINE app in sending personal communication, the lesser it has an effect on their performance of their jobs in terms of vigor, dedication and absorption. On the contrary, LINE app used for work-related matters has shown positive relationship towards the components of employee engagement. These findings suggested that the use of LINE app for personal use should not be done within the context of work to boost the engagement in the company.

Keywords: Internal Communication, Employee Engagement, Instant Messaging, LINE Application

1. Introduction

On the daily basis the contribution of internet-based applications has been flourishing. The use of social media and smartphones are always on-the-go. In this inventive era, we easily see people bowing their heads busy checking their social media maybe for personal or work related matters [1]. Undeniably, social media has been espoused as the key channel in internal communication especially in the workplace [2]. The proliferation of the use of messenger applications such as LINE has significantly changed the delivery of communication among colleagues, workmates and supervisors [1]. This is also true in educational institutions such as the Assumption University as more and more lecturers, administrators, staff and students make use of LINE application in their communication processes. Mishra et al. (2014) explained that having an

effective internal communication system is important in promoting employee engagement as transparency with the management is vital in building harmonious and favorable organizational culture to everyone [3].

Employee engagement is defined as employee's capability and eagerness to support the company's goal to succeed [4]. Engaged employees are characterized as enthusiastic and very optimistic to accomplish tasks. For this reason, engagement can simply mean being buoyant, gratifying, and has work-related state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption [5]. Employee engagement is vital because it has positive relationship towards job satisfaction, slight turnover rate, low absenteeism, and high commitment towards the organization and performance [5]. Employee engagement is achieved through internal communication by the constant

exchanges of information or updates that are work-related as well as the informal chats on the grapevine or personal issues. Effective internal communication is decisive for successful organizations as it affects the capability of leaders to engage employees and attain organizational goals [6].

Nowadays, due to technological advancement, companies made use of social media application as social utility that connects colleagues to facilitate faster and better internal communication [7]. This is true with LINE application, in which most of the companies now consider this as one of the most convenient way in sending messages to their worker. With the upsurge usage of social media has change dramatically the way organizations communicate nowadays as the traditional communication process has shifted towards the digital form. The LINE application for one has become popular means of sending and receiving information to the employees of the organization. It has been used for work-related matters in as much as it is also used for personal communication [8]. The problem now lies of whether employees prefer to use LINE application for work-related communication or rather they keep it for personal purposes only. Moreover it is also not clear whether the use of LINE application for work-related matters and personal-related matters affect employee engagement. Thus, this present study aims to answer the following questions: Do the employees of Assumption University prefer to use LINE application for work-related matters, or for personal-related matters? Does the use of LINE application for work-related matters or personal-related matters affect employee engagement in terms of their vigor, dedication and absorption at work?

This present study is beneficial because if found to be effective, LINE application and other messenger apps could be endorsed as a means of communication within the organization as it encourages

employee engagement. Moreover, this study will also be useful in determining whether this present generations of workers are adaptive with technology. If found that employees prefer to use LINE app for work-related and personal-related communication, it means that instant messaging brings about change in the communication system. Finally, this study adds on to the body of knowledge that explores the use of social media, technology, applications and internet in the communication process of the organization. The literatures reviewed in this present study will be beneficial for future researchers who are interested in this particular topic in their future researches.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Internal Communication

Internal communication is the exchange of information within the workplace among its employees [9]. VerČiČ et al. (2012) mentioned that information exchanged in an organization shapes better understanding among co-workers [10]. This internal communication process aims at making the flow of communication more efficient in order to fasten productivity in the workplace. In this manner, employees will have more participation on important updates related to work. Most view this method as positive and can draw more cooperation and acceptance in the organization. Aktar and Pangil (2018) argued that in order for workers to get sufficient information needed for them to perform the job thoroughly, there should be smooth and very organized connections among employees in the organization [11]. Internal communication can be done formally or informally within the organization depending on the employees preferences [12]. Communications are defined as a system and technology in receiving and sending of messages in the organizations might it be in the form of

face-to-face meeting, using emails, newsletters, bulletin boards, telecast, videoconferencing, phone calls, using internet and intranet protocols, survey materials, memos inside the organization and letters outside the organizations, presentations, and reports [12]. At present internal communication in every workplace seems easy, fast and inexpensive as instant messaging becomes a very popular means to reach out to both employers and employees alike.

This innovation in internal communication is supported by the newest internal communication theory as proposed by Welch and Jackson (2007) the authors mentioned that the stakeholder approach, in which internal communication is separated into four segments according to stakeholders' notorious group such as the internal team peer communication, internal line manager communication, internal project peer communication and internal corporate communication. In this latest method, authors focused on the last aspect which is the internal corporate communication [6].

Internal corporate communication is the communication process between the company managers and the stakeholders to boost engagement to the company in such a way that employees feel that they belong to the community, and that they are mindful to the companies' changing environment at the same time appreciative of its goals. The main objective of internal communication is to cater to its goals which are the commitment, belongingness, awareness and adaptation of the employees to the business environment. Welch and Jackson (2007) added that the proper management of internal communication should be implemented as it should world in contrast with informal internal communication [6]. Informal international communication is similar to a "grapevine" in which people at work chat with each other of non-work issues.

But formal internal communication involves work/company related communication materials.

Instant messaging

This era of technological advancement, workplace completely relies on internal communication that is effective, hassle-free and modernized. Instant messaging (IM) has been very popular in almost all corners in this world as long as one is connected to the internet. Users use IM to connect to anyone such as co-workers, family members and friends. IM provides a tool that users can do multi-tasking, which is really needed in the workplace, mostly to those workers who do many things at the same time [13]. Using IM in the office is faster compared to email as this application has notification system that calls the attention of the person quickly, thus messages can be read right away. In most cases, IM enhanced performance in different types of institutions in a way that it can help speed up processes in a more efficient and agile manner. Organizations should be able to maximize the use of IM to be more competent and technology savvy in relaying information towards employees. No matter wherever a person is situated in the city, different country or state as long as he is connected to internet, then instant messaging can cater this service.

In the year 2011, LINE was introduced by Naven Corporation in Japan. The name LINE came about from the long queues of people getting relief goods after a massive earthquake hit Japan in 2011. The inventors seemingly need a fast and light communication system that could connect people during that time who were affected by the catastrophe [14]. Japan prioritized and programmed public phones to connect with each other throughout and after the earthquake incident. Since then, LINE application became very popular, in which up to this day, organizations adopted it as a communication

system in the workplace. LINE messenger application enables users to send messages that are real time to any individuals or in a group or circle of friends with no cost at all [15]. In this present time, workplaces have adopted this internal way of communication to all employees to deliver quick and fast information. However, it is not yet known whether lecturers and staff in university prefer to use this application in work related and personal related matters.

2.2 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a multifaceted, extensive concept that incorporates a lot of different studies including human behavior, satisfaction at work, commitment and loyalty in the organization [16]. Correspondingly, employees of the company who are zealous are able to take initiatives, give total support to the company, and are committed, active, satisfied, and willing to make a difference in the organization [17]. Typically, companies define engagement as having pride of the work that they do, and being loyal to the organization. They go beyond the job description to show total dedication.

Several variables may help promote employee engagement such as career advancement, mentoring, rewards, recognition, safety, and values that are aligned with the organization's vision, well-being, decision making and autonomy [18]. Internal communication aids as a pathway to publicize, connect and support these variables [19]. The projected relation between internal communication and employee engagement could be identified through its effects on the three components of employee engagement, which are dedication, vigor, and absorption. Dedication is characterized by the sense of worth, passion, encouragement, challenge and pride at work. This could be gleaned from workers who devote their time regardless of how much work is required.

Vigor refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience while at work. It is the willingness of the employee to invest effort in his work, and his persistence in facing difficulties. On the other hand, absorption consists of the state of being fully concentrated on one's work, genuinely happy, and deeply enthralled in the performance of work. For the workers who possess this ability, time passes by so quickly as they find work as enjoyable [20].

2.3 Relationship between using LINE application and employee engagement

In this present study however, it is projected that the use of messenger app for personal use may malign the attainment of vigor, dedication and absorption as forms of employee engagement as this interrupts the process of delivering proper corporation communication. Herbsleb, Atkins, Boyer, Handel, and Finholt (2002) mentioned in their study that there are a lot of people who are exposed to interactive text messages just to chat or exchange rumors and gossips, which are basically not important [21]. Discussing personal whereabouts or sharing some mundane personal news have been common in IM messaging, in which if done in the workplace may disrupt the worker's performance of his job. Interactive text messaging in the workplace is somewhat time consuming, and in the worst-case scenario it's communally undesirable. On the other hand, Hayase (2009) purported that there is a positive rapport between components of employee engagement and internal communication in the workplace. In his study, Hayase (2009) claimed that communication channel preference and the combination of any type of communication tools were linked with employee engagement in certain organizations [19]. If this is so, the traditional communication method coupled with the use of IM such as LINE app may be preferred

by the workers, and may facilitate better communication process in their workplaces.

The contribution of using LINE application and employee engagement can also be supported by the study of Charoensukmongkol (2014), who found that both factors—job demands and employee support are associated positively with the intensity of social media use. The analysis revealed that there is a positive connection between job contentment and job performance and the use of social media at in the workplace [22]. In general, evidence showed that the social media usage at work does not have direct negative effect toward work engagement. This implies that establishments should allow workers to use social media because it can eliminate stresses related to work issues and can also help do their task in an efficient and effective way. This is also true to LINE application as a source of internal communication in the workplace. Therefore, this present study hypothesizes that:

H1: The use of LINE as personal related internal communication positively affects to vigor.

H2: The use of LINE as personal related internal communication positively affects to dedication.

H3: The use of LINE as personal related internal communication positively affects to absorption.

H4: The use of LINE as work related internal communication positively affects to vigor.

H5: The use of LINE as work related internal communication positively affects to dedication.

H6: The use of LINE as work related internal communication positively affects to absorption.

3. Methodology

3.1 Sample and data collection

This paper made use of approximately 1,000 lecturers of Assumption University as its respondents. A convenience sampling method was employed as it is easy and convenient to gather the data from the respondents [23]. The 25-item questionnaire was distributed online via e-mail, Facebook and LINE application. A total of 113 lecturers responded to the survey. It reflected 11.3 % response rate. The demographic and job characteristics of the participants were reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Descriptive statistics of the sample

Demographic factor	Descriptive statistics
Gender	Male: 55 (48.7%) Female: 58 (51.3%)
Age	Mean: 38.6 Standard deviation: 9.3
Marital status	Single: 61 (54.0%) Married: 52 (46.0%)
Education Level	Master's Degree: 82 (72.6%) Doctoral Degree: 31 (27.4%)
Job Title	Part-time: 17 (15.0%) Full-time: 90 (79.6%) Deputy/Assistant to Chairperson: 4 (3.5%) Dean/Chairperson/Program Director: 2 (1.9%)
Work Experience (years)	Mean: 8.6 Standard Deviation: 8.3
Department	Management: 56 (49.6%) Marketing: 40 (35.4%) Accounting: 8 (7.1%) Mathematics: 7 (6.2%) ACCSC: 2 (1.7%)
Duration per day spent in using LINE (minutes)	0-20: 33 (29.2%) 21-40: 30 (26.5%) 42-60: 14 (12.4%) More than 60 Min: 36 (31.9%)

3.2 Measures

The main independent variables, the LINE application used for work related and personal matters were measured using the questionnaire created by the authors for this purpose. Six questions were determined in order to assess the use of LINE app for work related matters and two questions were included for personal related matters. Responses ranged from 1 – almost never, 2 – rarely, 3 – sometimes, 4 – very often, and 5 – always. Respondents were also asked to indicate the amount of minutes per day that they normally spend on LINE application both for work and personal related matters. This indicates the intensity in which the respondents use LINE application for both work and personal related matters. They are represented by such dummy variables as 1 (0-20 minutes), 2 (21-40 minutes), 3 (41-60 minutes) and 4 (60 minutes and above). Furthermore, the demographic and professional profiles of the respondents were included in the conceptual framework as its control variables in case certain association could be identified from them. The control variables such as gender was measured as a dummy variable (females=0; male 1). Age was measured in years, marital status was measured as dummy variable (single=0; married=2, divorce=3). Educational level was measured using ordinal scale (1=Bachelor's degree; 2= Master's degree; 3= Doctoral degree). Job title was measured using ordinal scale (1=Part-time;2=Full-time;3= Deputy Chairperson / Assistant to chairperson; 4= Dean / Chairperson / Program Director). Work experience was measured as the number of years that the respondents had rendered service in the university. Department was measured as ordinal scale (1=Management; 2=Marketing; 3= Accounting; 4=Mathematics; 5=ACCSC).

The three main dependent variables—vigor, dedication and absorption—were measured by the scale made by Salanova (2005) [20]. The scale consists of 17 items which were answered through a five-point Likert scale rating, in which 1 indicates never to 5, which means always.

3.3 Estimating technique

The data analysis was performed using multiple regression analysis. Multiple regression analysis is implemented in the prediction of value of one variable based on the value of two or more other variables [24].

4. Results

There are few steps needed to be performed before executing the multiple regressions analysis. Firstly, the reliability of the concepts that are measured using multiple item scales must be evaluated using Cronbach alpha's coefficient. It shows that the reliability of all concepts is satisfactory with higher than 0.7 Cronbach alpha [24]. The summated scales of each concept are created for further regression analysis. In the second step, the variance inflation factor (VIF) analysis was conducted to check for multicollinearity. The result indicates that VIF values ranges from 1.406 to 7.137, which are lower than maximum threshold limit of 10. This supports the reliability of all concepts are satisfactory. Finally, bivariate correlations among variables were analyzed using Pearson correlation coefficients. This correlation analysis was conducted in order to explore one-on-one relationships between the key concepts.

Regressions analysis was performed and the summarized results are shown in Figure 1. Hypothesis 1 predicts that the use of LINE for personal related internal communication has a positive effect towards vigor.

However, as the results show, LINE for personal use has a negative effect towards vigor ($\beta = -0.914$; $p = 0.22$). Thus, hypothesis 1 is not statistically supported. Hypothesis 2 predicts the use of LINE as personal related internal communication has a positive effect towards dedication. The results reveal that there is a negative relationship between these two variables and it is not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.598$; $p = .014$). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is not supported. Hypothesis 3 predicts the use of LINE as personal related internal communication has a negative effect towards absorption. The results reveal that there is negative relationships between these two variables and it is not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.631$; $p = .053$). Therefore, hypothesis 3 is not supported. Hypothesis 4 predicts that the use of LINE as

work related internal communication has a positive effect towards vigor. The results reveal that these two variables are positively related and it is also statistically significant ($\beta = 0.337$; $p = .003$). Therefore hypothesis 4 is supported. Hypothesis 5 predicts that the use of LINE as work related internal communication has a positive effect towards dedication. The results turn out that these two variables are positively related but it is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.139$; $p = .071$). Thus, hypothesis 5 is not supported. Hypothesis 6 predicts that the use of LINE as work related internal communication has a positive effect towards absorption. The results turn out that these two variables are positively related but it is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.243$; $p = .077$). Thus, hypothesis 6 is not supported.

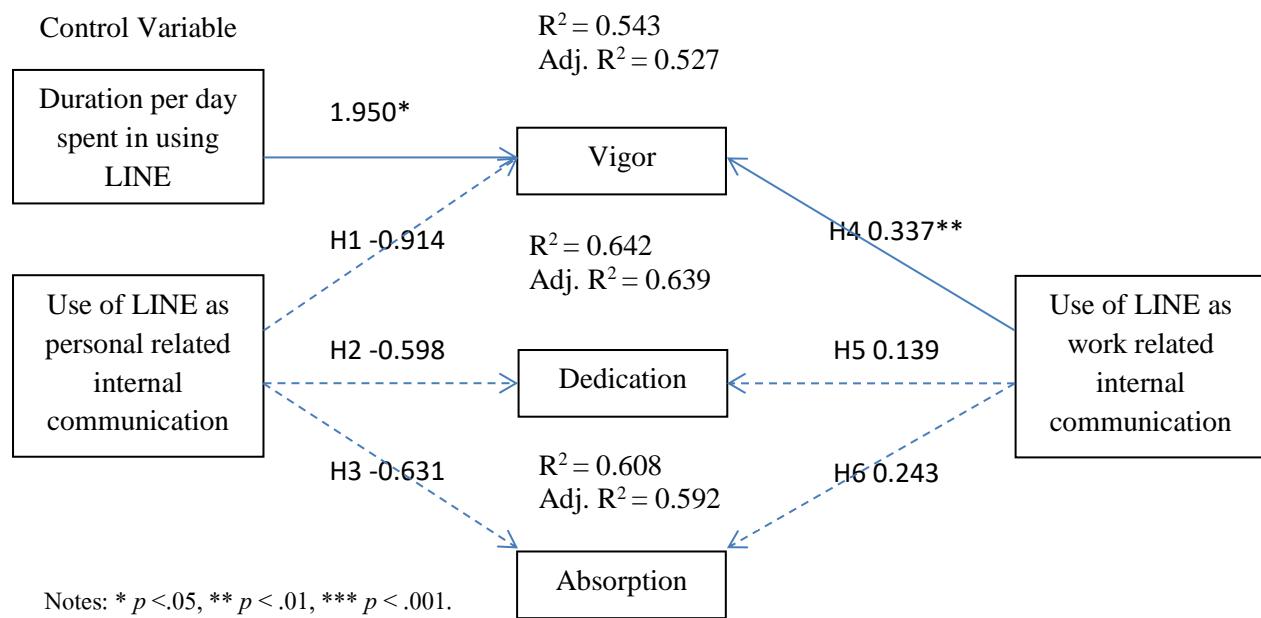


Figure 1 Regression Results

The R-square suggests that all independent variables in the regression model can explain vigor, dedication and absorption by 54.3 percent, 64.2 percent and 60.8 percent. R squared modified for the number of explanatory terms in a model or Adjusted R squared is 0.527, 0.639, and 0.592 in order. Moreover, one control variable, namely duration per day spent in using LINE, shows significant effect on vigor ($\beta = 1.950$; $p = .012$), on the other hand dedication and absorption shows no significant effects ($\beta = .723$; $p = .096$), ($\beta = .714$; $p = .30$).

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This present study aimed at investigating the effects of LINE application used for work-related and personal-related internal communication towards the components of employee engagement namely vigor, dedication and absorption. Results from the regression analysis that LINE app used for personal related internal communication has negative effects towards vigor, dedication and absorption, which means that the higher the lecturers use LINE app in sending personal communication the lesser it has an effect on their performance of their jobs in terms of vigor, dedication and absorption. This implies that when employees use LINE app in sending personal messages to friends and families about non-work related issues, it may interrupt the performance of their respective job assignments and may not be as productive. This is contrary to the study made by Charoensukmongkol (2014), which showed that the use of social media aids employees in the performance of their job [22]. These contradicting results indicate that messenger apps are now used to be a venue in which people at work exchange rumors and gossips around, which malign the workers intention of completing a certain job assignment [21]. Exchanging

information about one's personal whereabouts or sharing some mundane personal news over messenger apps have become disruptive at work since it is time-consuming and distracting.

On the other hand, LINE app used for work-related matters has shown positive relationships towards the components of employee engagement. Results reveal that LINE application used for work-related matters has positive effect towards vigor, dedication and absorption, which means that the higher the employees use LINE app in sending, sharing and receiving work-related information, the higher they engage in their work, thus showing vigor, dedication and absorption in the process. This implies that employees will be motivated to work when information send to them will be as fast as it is sent in LINE app. Moreover, the use of LINE application will develop loyalty and sense of worth in the workplace. Employees will feel fully concentrated on his work, genuinely happy, and deeply involved in the performance of work. This result is supported by Charoensukmongkol (2014), who said that the social media at work facilitates better job performance and job contentment [21]. This may be similarly true with the use of LINE app at work as it facilitates better job performance and contentment by the quick exchange of information.

This study therefore resolves that LINE apps have positive and negative effects toward employee engagement when used for work-related and personal-related internal communication respectively. This means that as a method of internal communication, messenger apps and other technological advancement in communication may be applied as it facilitates faster and better delivery of messages. With the use of digital technology nowadays, it is apparent that organizational communication could achieved in a much faster manner

compared to the traditional means some years back. This faster exchange in communication helps organizations to motivate workers to do their jobs better by having better engagement such as developing more loyalty towards the company, being happy with work and have the full energy to perform tasks. However, it should be noted that this result is only limited to work-related matters and not with personal-related issues. As the results show, the use of LINE app for personal-related matters creates negative effect towards employee engagement as it may interrupt the workers in the process of completing their job. This means that there is supposed to be a regulation within the company that messenger app should only be limited to work-related exchange of information during office hours, and not to be used for chit-chatting some personal stuff. The use of LINE app for personal use should be done not within the context of work and should not be used as a rumor mill. The use of technology, as it is inevitable, should work in favor of the organization, and LINE app along with other messenger apps and social media platforms available nowadays should be used wisely and accordingly.

This study proves beneficial to the company as it shows that LINE app, if used accordingly, could promote employee engagement by making them be more dedicated to their job, to become more energetic and to be happier. This may also provide additional knowledge to researchers who are interested in exploring the effects of new technologies in line of communication, organizational set-up, and job performance among others. This study also adds on the body of knowledge regarding the use of technology in organizational communication and specifically the use of LINE app along with other messenger apps available nowadays.

Despite the interesting findings of this study, several weaknesses of this research should be tackled. Firstly,

the number of respondents is not enough to make general and meaningful conclusions about the results of the study. Future study should employ more than thirty respondents to establish better reliability and validity of the results. Secondly, the future study should focus on other interesting communication issues, such as information sharing, as suggested by Aunyawong et al., (2018), including different dimensions of engagement, as revealed by Phrapratanporn et al. (2019) [25][26]. There is no internal control as to their behavior in using LINE app in their line of work. Thirdly, this study is only limited among the lecturers in the university. The study did not investigate its relevance and applicability in other organizations such as in business corporations, government agencies and the like. Finally, the qualitative method should be applied to collect depth information from the respondents [27].

This present study is beneficial because if found to be effective, LINE application and other messenger apps could be endorsed as a means of communication within the organization as it encourages employee engagement. Moreover, this study will also be useful in determining whether this present generations of workers are adaptive with technology. If found that employees prefer to use LINE app for work-related and personal-related communication, it means that instant messaging brings about change in the communication system. Finally, this study adds on to the body of knowledge that explores the use of social media, technology, applications and internet in the communication process of the organization. The literatures reviewed in this present study will be beneficial for future researchers who are interested in this particular topic in their future researches.

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