Social Media Addiction & Work-Life Balance
Suzanne Zivnuska, PhD, John R. Carlson, PhD, Dawn S. Carlson, PhD, Ranida B. Harris, PhD, and Kenneth J. Harris, PhD

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Danny P. Claro, PhD, Carla Ramos, PhD, Gabriel R. Gonzalez, PhD, and Robert W. Palmatier, PhD

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Sandra Pauser, PhD, Udo Wagner, PhD, and Claus Ebster, PhD

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Takuma Kimura, PhD, Belén Bande, PhD, and Pilar Fernández-Ferrín, PhD

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Alexander Bleier, PhD, Colleen M. Harmeling, PhD, and Robert W. Palmatier, PhD

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Maria Arauz, MBA

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Jacob Brenton, MDiv/MBA Candidate
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Internet addiction is regarded as a growing health concern in many parts of the world, with some studies estimating rates of addiction between 1.5% and 8.2% in the United States and Europe, and as much as 7% in some Asian countries. Social media usage in particular continues to grow in popularity and contributes to the rising rates of internet addiction.

The use of social media is becoming pervasive and rapidly bleeding into the real estate industry. Some of this use is positive, as it helps agents build their professional networks and obtain work-related information and feedback. However, although social media may be seen as a resource that can build social networks and aid in crowdsourcing information, it can also be a potential resource drain in the same manner as the other new technologies.

We hope to clarify our understanding of how social media can drain resources in the workplace by examining the impact of social media addiction and how employees react to social media posts by their colleagues and ultimately the impact of these social media interactions on job performance.

About our Study

Addictive behaviors are thought to be grounded in the social and environmental context of the dependent person and are associated with emotional distress. For example, studies show that a generalized addiction to the Internet, or even addiction to smartphones, may be accompanied by loss of interests, decreased psychosocial functions, social retreat, and psychosocial distress. Although not specific to social media addiction, Internet addiction and other addictive behaviors, such as pathological gambling, have been associated with depression and stress, deteriorating quality of life, and loneliness.

We investigate the intersection of social media and the workplace, focusing on job performance impacts of agents’ social media addictions and social media reactions through work-family balance and burnout. The research model is grounded in conservation of resources theory (COR), which suggests social media compulsions and emotional reactions to co-worker’s social media posts will deplete agents’ energetic and productive resources, making it difficult to achieve...
work-family balance, increasing the likelihood of job burnout, and ultimately degrading job performance.

**Impact of Social Media Addiction**

Social media can be defined as a technology platform facilitating “social interaction among people in which they create, share, or exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks.” Because social media is so interactive, it tends to be very reinforcing; people use it to stimulate online conversations and get feedback about their activities, interests, and opinions. For this reason, it can lead to habitual, or addictive, posting and monitoring behaviors. Therefore, we define social media addiction as “the excessive use and habitual monitoring of social media manifested in compulsive usage that comes at the expense of other activities.” We found that 65% of adults check Facebook every day, 1 in every 7 minutes is spent on Facebook, and smartphone users check Facebook 14 times a day on average. When normal use crosses the line into addictive behavior, the resource use itself creates more stress due to its demand on time, effects withdrawal, lack of control, and negative consequences associated with its use.

Our results show that there is a path of addictive behaviors that hinder the ability to achieve work-family balance. Lack of work-family balance ultimately leads to declining job performance. As an individual becomes more addicted to social media, the time and energy that would have otherwise been devoted to accomplishing expectations at work and at home are depleted in favor of spending that time and energy on social media. As a result, a real estate agent is less likely to be able to accomplish goals at work or in his or her family life, creating a distinct lack of balance in both domains.

**Impact of Social Media Reactions**

Social media users may experience emotional reactions when reading other people’s posts because people post on social media for the primary purpose of getting reactions from others in the form of likes, comments, and shares. Therefore, we define these social media reactions as the “emotions that people experience in response to reading other people’s social media posts.”

The results of our study reveal that these emotional reactions, particularly in response to posts from colleagues, have the potential to influence work-related outcomes such as job burnout and ultimately job performance. This path is all about the emotional response to social media information and how that emotional response creates a cascading effect related to the depletion of emotional resources. For example, a strong anger reaction can increase blood pressure, heart rate, adrenaline, cortisol, and muscle tension, among other responses. Emotions may even have a
pervasive effect on mood. Respondents with strong reactions were more likely to report job burnout leading to decreased performance.

We also note a correlation between job burnout and work-family intersection. They operate both as predictors and consequences. As job burnout increases, work-family balance decreases, with the reverse also being true.

**Practical Implications**

Our findings stand to make important practical contributions to real estate agency managers and employees alike. Agents may use social media to distract themselves from stressful or boring work situations or to procrastinate on work projects. Studies on compulsive Internet use suggest that some users become overly attached to using web-based applications, which can result in impairment at several levels, including psychological, social, and professional.

The path of addictive social media use to lack of work-life balance and ultimately degraded job performance suggests that the harmful effects of social media use can be managed by simple time management strategies. For example, rather than checking social media on an ongoing basis throughout the day, constraining social media time or putting time constraints on it may help real estate managers and employees better devote their time and energy to work-related activities that enhance their job performance. Agencies could support these efforts by reserving some time at the beginning or end of each day for social media or installing timers that start when social media apps are opened and notify users when an amount of time has passed. Encourage agents to find productive outlets, such as going on an afternoon walk, to reduce stress and boredom.

Understanding the relationship between social media use and job performance is just the first step for both managers and employees to combat the deleterious effects discussed above; practical changes must be implemented.

**Recommended Reading**


**About the Authors**

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Dr. Suzanne Zivnuska (PhD – California State University), Director of the Professional Consulting Program at Chico State, combines more than a decade of academic and consulting experience in management with real world experience in the health care industry. Suzanne has published more than 20 articles in top journals in her field in outlets such as *Human Relations*,...
Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, and Career Development International. She maintains an active consulting practice in human resource management and is committed to providing her students with practical, active learning experiences in the classroom.

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Dr. John Carlson (PhD – Florida State University) teaches desktop and mobile app development and has a longstanding interest in the impacts of software design on users and organizations. His research interests include the effects of computer-mediation on communication, decision-making, and workplace deception as well as the effects of social networking in the organization. John’s recent work has appeared in Management Information Systems Quarterly, the Academy of Management Journal, and Computers in Human Behavior.

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Dr. Dawn Carlson (PhD – Florida State University) studies workplace issues, such as abusive bosses and working mothers. Her work has been published in numerous journals such as the Journal of Applied Psychology, Journal of Management, and the Journal of Business Ethics. She is co-author of a book “Beyond Juggling: Rebalancing Your Busy Life.” In 2009, Carlson won both the Outstanding Professor in Scholarship and Distinguished Professor awards from Baylor University. In 2018, she received the Distinguished Doctoral Alumna award from Florida State University, and in 2019, she was named one of the top extraordinary contributors to work and family research by Community, Work, & Family.

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Dr. Ranida B. Harris’ (PhD – Florida State University) research interests include the effects of computer technologies on communication, performance, and decision making. Her publications appear in journals such as Journal of Organizational and End User Computing, Journal of Information Systems Education, and Information Systems Education Journal. Dr. Harris’ teaching interests include business computer applications, business data analytics, Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) Systems, systems analysis and design, and database management systems

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Dr. Kenneth Harris (PhD – Florida State University) has developed a national and international reputation for his groundbreaking research in the areas of leadership and abusive supervisory behaviors, and he is shaping the course and development of research in these areas. His work focuses on the effect that abusive supervisory relationships have on job performance, coworkers
and the workplace as a whole. His research is published in major journals of his field such as *Leadership Quarterly* and *The Journal of Social Psychology*, and his work has been cited not only in scholarly publications but also in popular media, such as Forbes.