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UNDERSTANDING WORKPLACE GADGET USE AMONG PHILIPPINE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY EMPLOYEES

Rachelle Ann B. Magat, Rcrim
Central Ilocandia College of Science and Technology, Lingsat, City of San Fernando, La Union, Philippines

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INTRODUCTION

The use of workplace gadgets among employees has become an integral aspect of modern work environments, influencing both personal and professional productivity, communication, and overall workplace efficiency. In the context of the Philippine College of Science and Technology (PhilCST), the integration of devices such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets plays a crucial role in facilitating professional tasks, streamlining administrative processes, and enhancing employee engagement (Johnson & Taylor, 2020). However, alongside these benefits, concerns arise regarding the balance between professional responsibilities and personal gadget use during work hours (Smith et al., 2019).

Workplace gadget use encompasses both professional and personal activities, ranging from official communication and task management to social media browsing and entertainment. Studies suggest that while technology can enhance professional efficiency, excessive personal gadget use may lead to distractions, reduced productivity, and ethical concerns regarding work discipline (Bennett & Shaw, 2021). Understanding how employees at PhilCST utilize gadgets during work hours is essential in identifying patterns of use, potential challenges, and strategies for optimizing workplace policies on gadget use (Santos, 2021).

Globally, organizations implement various policies and monitoring systems to regulate workplace gadget use, aiming to strike a balance between the professional benefits of technology and concerns about excessive personal usage (Williams & Cooper, 2018). The Philippine setting, particularly within educational institutions, presents unique challenges in regulating gadget use among employees due to the growing reliance on digital tools for academic and administrative functions (Santos, 2021). By examining workplace gadget use among PhilCST employees, this study aims to provide insights into the impact of gadget use on professional efficiency, employee engagement, and institutional productivity while addressing potential areas for policy development and workplace management (Miller & Davis, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study will employ a qualitative research design, specifically using phenomenological and thematic analysis approaches. Data will be gathered through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) to explore employees' experiences and perceptions regarding workplace gadget use.

Population and Locale of the Study

The study will be conducted at the Philippine College of Science and Technology (PhilCST), where participants are employed. Participants will include academic and non-academic employees who have direct student engagement, specifically faculty members, library staff, accounting personnel, registrar staff, and guidance counselors. They will be selected through purposive sampling to ensure diverse perspectives across different departments.

Data Gathering Instrument

The study will utilize semi-structured interview guides and FGD protocols. These tools will facilitate open-ended discussions, allowing participants to share their insights on how gadgets influence their work routines and behaviors. The instruments will undergo expert validation to ensure reliability and appropriateness for the study.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researchers will first establish rapport with the participants and formally seek their consent to participate in the study. Upon receiving approval, the researchers will provide each participant with a consent form explaining the study's objectives, the voluntary nature of participation, and the confidentiality of their responses. Scheduled interviews and FGDs will then be conducted, with the discussions recorded (with participant permission) and supplemented by field notes. This process will ensure an accurate and detailed representation of the participants' experiences and perspectives regarding workplace gadget use.

Data Analysis

Data from interviews and FGDs will be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. The collected data will be systematically coded to identify recurring themes and patterns, providing insights into employees' gadget-related behaviors, challenges, and benefits.

Ethical Considerations

The researchers will adhere to strict ethical guidelines to maintain the integrity of the study and protect participant confidentiality. Personal data and responses will be anonymized to prevent identification, and all collected information will be securely stored, accessible only to authorized researchers. Participants will be fully informed of their rights, including the option to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions. To ensure the credibility of the research, all data will be handled with transparency and authenticity, safeguarding the study's ethical and academic standards.

RESULTS

The findings from interviews and focus group discussions with selected employees of the Philippine College of Science and Technology (PhilCST) revealed significant insights into workplace gadget use. A total of ten (10) participants were purposively selected for the study, with one representative from each department, including both academic and non-academic employees. These included faculty members, registrar personnel, library staff, accounting employees, and guidance counselors. This selection ensured the inclusion of individuals from various functional areas who engage directly with students and are involved in institutional operations, making them appropriate sources of information on gadget use in the workplace.

Across all departments, participants emphasized that gadgets such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets are vital in accomplishing daily tasks. Faculty members frequently use gadgets to prepare lessons, manage online class materials, communicate with students, and monitor attendance through digital platforms. Administrative staff similarly rely on gadgets for encoding records, processing student documents, checking emails, and

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coordinating with other departments. Participants agreed that technology contributes positively to their efficiency and productivity, especially in tasks requiring speed, accuracy, and real-time communication.

Despite these benefits, participants acknowledged the commonality of personal gadget use during work hours. Activities such as browsing social media, replying to personal messages, or watching short videos during idle time were openly admitted. Most considered these as short mental breaks rather than distractions, although some recognized that frequent personal use can occasionally disrupt workflow. Nevertheless, participants maintained that their personal gadget use did not interfere with essential responsibilities or cause significant delays in work output.

A recurring theme was the increased accessibility provided by gadgets, which many viewed as both a benefit and a burden. Employees shared that students often reach out through messaging apps beyond official hours, and being connected through their gadgets enabled quick and convenient responses. While this improved service delivery and student satisfaction, some staff experienced difficulty separating work from personal life due to the constant digital communication, leading to occasional stress or burnout.

Workplace culture and leadership style also influenced gadget-related behavior. In departments where supervisors actively modeled responsible gadget use and set clear expectations, employees reported higher levels of discipline and focus. Conversely, in workspaces with minimal monitoring, personal use was more frequent. This highlighted the role of departmental leadership and peer influence in shaping employee behavior related to gadget use.

Lastly, participants across departments expressed a need for clearer institutional guidelines regarding gadget use during work hours. While there are currently no strict policies in place, employees suggested implementing measures such as scheduled breaks for personal use, digital wellness workshops, or formal advisories on responsible gadget behavior. These recommendations were rooted in the desire to maintain a healthy balance between productivity and well-being.

Overall, the study revealed that workplace gadgets are deeply embedded in the professional routines of PhilCST employees. However, with effective management, leadership guidance, and institutional support, gadget use can be optimized to enhance both performance and well-being across departments.

DISCUSSION

This study explored gadget use during work hours among ten employees of the Philippine College of Science and Technology (PhilCST), with one participant selected from each department involved in direct student engagement—faculty, registrar, library, accounting, and guidance services. This purposive sampling ensured balanced representation from both academic and non-academic staff who regularly interact with students.

Findings show that gadgets such as smartphones, laptops, and tablets are integral to employees' daily tasks. Faculty members use them for lesson preparation, class management, and student communication, while administrative staff rely on gadgets for encoding data, processing documents, and interdepartmental coordination. These uses support Johnson and Taylor's (2020) view that gadgets enhance efficiency and job performance.

However, all participants acknowledged using their gadgets for personal activities during work hours. Tasks like browsing social media, watching short videos, or replying to personal messages were common during idle periods. While most considered these mental breaks harmless, some noted that excessive use could reduce focus—reflecting the findings of Smith et al. (2019) and Bennett and Shaw (2021), who linked non-work gadget use to lowered productivity.

A key concern raised was the difficulty in separating work and personal life due to the accessibility provided by gadgets. Employees shared that students frequently message them beyond working hours, expecting immediate replies. This constant connectivity often leads to stress and blurred boundaries between work and rest—consistent with Santos' (2021) study on digital burnout in educational settings.

Leadership and workplace culture also played a significant role in gadget behavior. Participants noted that departments with proactive supervisors and clear expectations showed more disciplined use, while those with limited monitoring experienced more frequent personal gadget use. This highlights the influence of leadership in shaping responsible behavior.

Lastly, participants emphasized the lack of formal policies on gadget use at PhilCST. They suggested introducing simple guidelines such as scheduled breaks for personal use, digital wellness workshops, and formal advisories on responsible gadget behavior. These recommendations aim to balance productivity with employee well-being and promote a healthier digital work environment.

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