

THE EVALUATION OF THE INTERNET USAGE HABITS OF PUBLIC EMPLOYEES IN KASTAMONU

Ersin KAVI*
Orhan KOÇAK*

Abstract

Changes in the last 10 years in information technology have increased the use of computers and internet. The changes brought about fundamental changes the way we do business and behave in social life from communication and reaching information to daily habits. Effective use of the information technology, which has become the main condition of being competitive at work, has required all employees in public and private sectors to improve themselves in the computer and internet usage. In addition, the public sector also encourages the use of internet via e-government applications. Thus, the computers and internet play a big part in the work of public sector and its employees as well.

The usage of computers and the internet in working places not only have changed the way we do business also have changed some ethical rules and issues. They brought some complicated problems for people, organizations and states. Online fraud, carelessness, negligence, viruses, system crashing, broadcasting personal information are among the most well-known ethical problems related to computers and internet and caused by employees. In addition to these, personal use of computers and internet by employees for their private usage during working hours create another problem.

The objective of the study is to reveal the internet usage habits and behaviors of public employees at work, using a field research that was carried out in Kastamonu that is a city of north of Turkey. It is especially of interest how and for what purposes the chat programs, which encourage the use of internet, are used. The results are analyzed from the point of view of public ethics. The data is collected from the state servants in Kastamonu and is analyzed on SPSS statistic program.

Keywords: *Ethic, Internet, Instant Mesa, public ethic, information technology*

I. Introduction

Today, to reach and have information technologies is easier than before because of technological advances. Everybody in every class and age in society is using computer and internet. When the Turkish Statistical Institute's databases are investigated, we see remarkable results. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute's databases, the rate of computer usage of people between 16-74 ages is 38% and the rate of the internet usage is 35% in 2008 (tuik.gov.tr,2008). These increasing rates show the same levels with the rates of the usage of

* Lecturer, Ph.D. Economics and Business Administration Faculty, Department of Labour Economics, Yalova University (e-mail: ekavi@yalova.edu.tr).

* Lecture, Ph.D. Economics and Business Administration Faculty, Department of Labour Economics, Yalova University (e-mail: okocak@yalova.edu.tr).

computer and the internet in businesses. Especially, the developments in services sector have been positively affecting the usage of computer and the internet or vice versa.

Computers, the internet and e-mail are modern communication techniques used in businesses to communicate and to deliver information rapidly to the workers and customers. By using these new technologies, current works will be finished so quickly and correctly that productivity will be better than before. As a matter of fact that many firms and companies are now using computers and the internet as a standard and necessity. In this sense, the opportunities the internet provides are increasing day by day are affecting individuals' daily life. The internet as a communication interface has become widespread and people started to reduce face to face communication and increase the usage of digital media. This process is seen not only between two people or group also between workers who work in the same workplace.

Also, with the increasing role of the usage of the computer and internet, doing jobs both in workplace and at home and the spreading of home-offices and teleworkings have made workplace-free working much easier. But this development has caused some discussions in terms of ethics in the work life. Our job environments generally offer the cheap, fast and easy internet. So, we can carry on any task which we started at home, at our workplace, or we can continue any task we started at workplace, at our home. For that reason, our private jobs and works related to business, will possibly be intermixed and be done both at workplace and home. For instance, while a teacher can be prepared for courses and enter students' marks from the internet at home, s/he can use the internet for his or her private investigations through internet at school. (Hartman, 2001:8). Because of online medium's difficulties, both private and public sectors' workers are going to be subjected some restrictions because controlling this process is not easy. Therefore, the way to deal with this process in an ethical point of view and the way for it to organize differs from one sector to another and from a profession to another. In this study, we generally examined the data of public servants.

II. Paper Content

1. The Ethics of Public Management and the Usage of the Internet

Ethics is defined as philosophy and science of morals and also considered as a discipline that tries to determine what is right and what is wrong (Arslan, 2001:7). In addition to that, ethics is completely related to the rules that explain or advice people what to do or what not to do. In this sense, the ethics of public management firstly means that public workers' behaviors should be in accordance with laws, the codes of ethics and rules and secondly it means that they should act by taking the individual and moral assets as reference (Özdemir, 2008:182).

Especially, the item 12 of the code 657 (The Civil Service Act) explains and organizes the individual responsibility of the state workers. Also, the item 125 arranges disciplinary punishments for the state workers and behaviors and actions which require disciplinary punishments. Namely, the items mentioned in the code 657 are related to the ethics.

Emergence of the ICT and the Internet, not only offered a lot of opportunities for the people and states, but also created some problems. Especially, the usage of the internet and ICT with the private aims is an important one. According to the investigations, done in different countries, 90% of the workers also use the internet in the workplace for private aims and its cost for companies is about 50 billion Euros. The private usage of the internet can be restricted since it takes work time

of the workers and causes some problems such as virus and software and hardware in computers (Okur, 2005:48).

Also, one of the most important aims is the communication by using e-mail and other methods on the internet. Gallup is an investigation company, has done a survey related to e-mail usage and it shows that a worker spends his or her time between 49 minutes and 4 hours for e-mail transactions and the most of these e-mails are about private life or humour (Keser, 2005:65).

When we look at the state workers in the state workplaces, there is no any direct restriction about the subject mentioned above. On the other hand, in the item 125 of the code 657 it is explained that "using the official car, tools and such things which belong to the state for private aim requires disapproval punishment". Therefore, the usage of the computers and the internet which belong to the state institutions can be commented in the same manner.

However, putting the issue in order technically requires some regulations in the related codes and instructions which explain the rules of working in the state institutions. Insomuch as that, some public institution use their special packet software belongs to the state. It is not applicable or legal to use some extra software which belongs to the workers. In the same manner, the private internet usage is possible by workers in the public institutions. This may be restricted by using some methods such as filtration and blocking so that state workers can enter only some sites which are allowed by the institution.

Moreover, the workers can be traced as online by using logs which save what the user does or clicks or computers can be checked after work hours. But, tracing the usage of the net or checking the computers mean the intrusion of the privacy of private life which is not a good behavior and can't be acceptable in terms of ethics and laws. Also, while trying to determine the faults or wrong transactions on online medium, it is possible to be an offender.

As a result, that kind of restrictions or prohibitions may not be put for every public worker or may not be necessary for all workers. Some of the workers make analysis as decision makers and they have high education level, qualifications and position. For that reason, it is not practicable to restrict or forbid the internet and computer for qualified workers since the productivity and motivation will go down. Consequently, some measures should be considered regarding the functions of the department, the qualifications of the workers and the type of the occupations.

There are a lot of reasons which increase and encourage the usage of the internet and computers for the workers of public institutions privately. One of the reasons is virtual chat which provides communication with other people around the world and on the internet. According to the Turkish Statistics Institution's investigation, 70% of internet freaks use it for instant messaging programs such as windows live messenger and skype (tuik.gov.tr, 2008:1). They may use the internet not only for the benefit of their works but also for individual aims. That is why, it needs to be investigated whether they use for work or for individual aims. After the determination of the usage aims, some restrictions can be done without prevention of the workers' independency and work necessities. For example, virtual chat which is one of the means of communication is much cheaper, faster and than the other means so that it increases the productivity and the efficiency. For that reason, every public institution should investigate in that way to regulate the internet usage by workers in the public institutions. But the regulation should be in terms of the departments, functions and qualifications otherwise it may harm the productivity and efficiency in the public institutions.

2. Research

2.1.1. General Framework of The Research

The Aim of The Research

To determine the tendency of the usage of the internet and instant messaging softwares by the government employees in Kastamonu and to associate this topic with the ethic of the public in this context is the aim of this work.

2.1.2. Content and The Limit of The Research

The related research has been done upon nearly 1000 people chosen among 10.120 public servants who work in Kastamonu city through the method of exemplification. Among these surveys, 300 of them which are received and approved for evaluation are included for the work. The research has been implemented on the workers who are in the boundaries of Kastamonu city. The reason is that, we want to form a judgement revealing the ethical behaviour related to this topic in this city. Also it is possible that, it can have similarities with the other cities as a lot of public servants in this city have come from different cities. On the other hand, the effect of the place they live shouldn't be disregarded.

2.1.3. The Method of The Research

Qualitative method has been used for the research. An survey for of the 19 questions has been executed on the test subjects. Multiple questions have taken place in the survey form. The first six questions include personal information, seven questions of the remaining 13 includes the usage of computer and internet; six of them are related to the usage of instant messaging softwares

2.2 Analysis of the Research

2.2.1. Demographic Results

Table1: The Gender of Respondents

Sex	Valid Percent
Male	74,7
Female	25,3
Total	100,0

$\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents of the research are males and $\frac{1}{4}$ of them are females.

Table 2: The Age Range of Respondents

Age	Valid Percent
20-30	8,7
31-40	44,0
41-50	39,7
51 and over	7,7
Total	100,0

Considering the age range, %84 of the respondents are middle ages.

Table 3: The Graduation of Respondents

Graduation	Valid Percent
Primary School	2,0
Secondary School	3,3
High School	39,0
College	50,3
Undergraduate	5,3
Total	100,0

When considering their educational state, they are to a great extent high school and college graduates. The percentage of university graduates are lower than expected.

Table 4: The Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Valid Percent
Married	86,0
Single	14,0
Total	100,0

The respondents of the survey are majorly married. This is parallel to the age range.

Table 5: The Tenure of Office of Respondents

Tenure of Office	Valid Percent
1-5	12,7
6-10	15,0
11-15	13,7
16-20	19,7
21-25	20,7
More than 25	18,3
Total	100,0

Tenure of office of the respondents are similar to each other. But nearly %50 of them have 16 years of service.

Table 6: The Titles of Respondents

Title	Valid Percent
Civil servant	66,7
Chief	10,0
Asistant manager	1,3
Manager	3,0
Worker	19,0
Total	100,0

2/3 of the respondents are civil servants. Also almost %20 of them are workers. Consequently %85 of the respondents have lower titles.

2.2.2. The Results Related to The Usage of Computer at Workplace.

Table 7: The Usage of Computer at Workplace

Do you use computer at your workplace?	Valid Percent
Yes	94,3
No	5,7
Total	100,0

A great ratio as %94 of the employees use computer at workplace as expected.

Table 8: The Usage Status of Computers

The status of the computer been used	Valid Percent
Institution computer given for personnel use	81,4
Institution computer given for joint use	15,8
Personnel computer used at work	2,7
Total	100,0

Nearly %82 of the workers use computer given for personal use. This lets most of the employees feel comfortable when using internet and instant messaging software.

Table 9: The Usage of Computer at Home

Do you use computer at your home?	Valid Percent
Yes	74,3
No	25,7
Total	100,0

%74 of the respondents use computer at home too. This result shows that the respondents are interested in using computers.

Table 10: The Status of Internet Connection at Workplace

Is there an internet connection at your workplace?	Valid Percent
Yes	98,0
No	2,0
Total	100,0

%98 of the respondents have internet connection at their workplace. This shows that usage of internet is widespread and can cause some ethical problems.

Table 11: The Status of Internet Restriction at Workplace

Is there any restriction on the internet used at your workplace?	Valid Percent
Yes	34,0
No	66,0
Total	100,0

It is interesting that nearly 1/3 of the internet connection at workplaces have got restrictions. Public institutions are also gradually being sensitive about these regulations.

Table 12: The Places That Are Connected to Internet

Where do you usually connect the internet from?	Valid Percent
Home	33,1
Workplace	65,2
Internet Cafe	0,7
Other	1,0
Total	100,0

A major part like %65 of the respondents connects the internet usually from home. This makes it necessary to arrange some regulations related to the usage of internet.

Table 13: The Length of Connection of Internet at Workplace

How often use the internet at your workplace?	Valid Percent
0-2 hours	51,6
3-4 hours	32,5
5-6 hours	2,4
More than 6 hours	13,5
Total	100,0

The length of the usage of internet at workplace is usually less than 4 hours for %84 of the respondents. This makes the half of the working hours taking the 8 hours of working into account.

Table 14: The Purpose of Internet Usage

What is the main purpose of your internet usage?	Valid Percent
For work and professional use	76,8
To gather information about personal interests	7,2
For e-learning	1,7
Only for communication	2,7
To read the news	11,6
Total	100,0

The purpose of the internet usage is usually for work and professional use. So, this result shows that internet is used in accordance with its aim.

2.2.3. Results Related To The Usage Of Instant Messaging Software

Table 15: The Ownership of Instant Messaging Account

Do you have instant messaging account?	Valid Percent
Yes	78,9
No	21,1
Total	100,0

%79 of the respondents have instant messaging accounts.(msn,yahoo etc) This show that employees use internet for social reasons when needed.

Table 16: The Frequency of Instant Messaging Usage

How often do you instant messaging?	Valid Percent
Every time I use my computer	11,7
Everyday but not often	23,0
Sometimes	16,7
Only when I need to	48,5
Total	100,0

%48 of the ones who have instant messaging accounts mentioned that they used instant messaging software when needed. However the ones who use it frequently have a ratio of %35 which cannot be undervalued.

Table 17: The Purposes of Instant Messaging

What is the main purpose of chatting?	Valid Percent
For personnel problems	27,2
For my profession and business	61,9
For meeting new people	2,1
Other	8,8
Total	100,0

As instant messaging is carried out for professional and business reasons, it may not be necessary to restrict it. However this ratio is not satisfactory. Its being used for different purposes may make it necessary to restrict it.

Table 18: The Instant Messaging Environment

With whom do you usually chat with?	Valid Percent
With my family members	24,3
With my colleagues	55,2
With my relatives	3,8
With my friends	15,9
With a person who I met in the internet	,8
Total	100,0

%55 of the respondents mentioned that, to a great extent, they use this software in order to talk to their colleagues. The result is parallel to the result that they use instant messaging software for professional and business purposes.

Table 19: The Time for Instant Messaging at Workplace

When do you chat at your workplace?	Valid Percent
When I am working	21,3
After finishing my work	51,0
Only in breaks	7,9
I never chat at work	19,7
Total	100,0

Nearly %79 of the employees either don't instant message or they instant message after finishing their work. Consequently, as this won't impede the job, it can be seen positive.

Table 20: The Status of Instant Messaging Restriction at Workplace

Are there any restrictions about chat at your workplace?	Valid Percent
Yes	24,3
No	75,7
Total	100,0

%24 of the respondents mentioned that there are restrictions related to the usage of internet and instant messaging software. This result is a lower ratio compared to the restriction of internet usage. Perhaps, because instant messaging programs are used for communication, they are not restricted.

2.2.4. Results of Cross-Tabulation and Mann Whitney U Tests

2.2.4.1. The Relationship Between Personal Features and The Purpose of The Usage of The Instant Messaging Software

Table 21: Gender and Purpose of Internet and Instant Messaging Usage

Gen-der	For work and professional use		For personal interests		For e-learning		Only for communication		To read the news	
	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Inter-net	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.
Male	74,4%	61,5%	8,2%	27,4%	2,3%		2,3%	8,4%	12,8%	
Female	83,8%	63,3%	4,1%	26,7%	,0%		4,1%	10,0%	8,1%	

It's seen that women use internet for work and profession a bit more than the men, taking the gender into account for the purpose of the internet usage. On the other hand, men use internet for researching about personal interests, education, education and reading the news more than the women do. As for the instant messaging software, they are used less for professional reasons compared to the internet usage, however, it brings up an interesting result that both groups use instant messaging software to get information about their personal interests.

When we subject the related factors to Mann Whitney U test, the value of Asymp.Sig (2 tailed) for internet usage is 0,112 and for instant messaging it is 0,994. This, as a result shows that, taking the gender factor into account, there is no significant difference between internet and instant messaging software usage.

Table 22: Age and Purpose of Internet and Instant Messaging Usage

Age	For work and professional use		For personal interests		For e-learning		Only for communication		To read the news	
	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Inter-net	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.
20-30	61,5%	54,2%	15,4%	33,3%	,0%		7,7%	8,3%	15,4%	
31-40	80,2%	65,5%	7,6%	25,0%	,8%		,8%	7,8%	10,7%	
41-50	76,3%	61,8%	5,9%	28,1%	2,5%		4,2%	7,9%	11,0%	
More than 50	77,8%	40,0%	,0%	30,0%	5,6%		,0%	30,0%	16,7%	

Taking the age and the instant messaging usage into account, generally all the age groups use it for work and profession. However, the interesting result is that, the employees who don't use internet for personal interests may prefer instant messaging software. Also, it is again interesting that none of the respondents of 20-30 age range use internet for educational purposes. Despite that fact, that ratio is high among the ones over 50.

Table 23: Graduate Level and The Purpose of Internet and Instant Messaging Usage

Graduate	For work and professional use		For personal interests		For e-learning		Only for communication		To read the news	
	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.	Internet	Inst. Mes.
Primary School	83,3%	75,0%	,0%	,0%	,0%		,0%	25,0%	16,7%	
Secondary School	71,4%	,0%	14,3%	57,1%	,0%		14,3%	28,6%	,0%	
High School	75,2%	69,1%	8,8%	23,5%	3,5%		3,5%	4,9%	8,8%	
College	76,2%	59,5%	6,6%	28,2%	,7%		2,0%	10,7%	14,6%	
Undergraduate	93,8%	68,8%	,0%	31,3%	,0%		,0%	,0%	6,3%	

When we look at the relationship between the usage of internet and instant messaging software in parallel with the graduate level, we see that undergraduates use them for work and profession much more than the others do. Also we see that instant messaging software is used by the secondary school graduates remarkably for personal interests. Consequently the usage of differs according to the graduate level and this, from the institutional angle makes it necessary arrange some regulations.

2.2.4.2. Institutional Features and Results Related to the Usage of Internet and Instant Messaging Software

- Considering both the usage of instant messaging account and the people who are messaged, we see that %74 of talks realized for exchange of vocational knowledge, to a great extent. This result shows that instant messaging software is used mainly for work and exchange of vocational knowledge with colleagues.
- When considering the title, purpose of internet and instant messaging software usage and their usage length doesn't differ significantly.
- Considering the tenure of office, as long as the tenure of office increase, the frequency of internet usage varies. In other words, it is possible to act more comfortably.
- Considering the restrictions related to both the usage of computers and the internet together, it is mentioned by the %86 of the respondents that there is unrestricted connection and there is no restriction related to instant messaging. So, the regulations in the institutions are parallel to each other.
- %30 percent of the ones who connect internet mostly at home, use internet mostly for more than 6 hours at workplace. This result should be dwelt on from an ethical point of view.

III. Conclusions

The result of the research study is that it is inevitable to use computer and internet nowadays. In so much as that, almost all of the test subjects use internet at work place and more

than %80 of the respondents have instant messaging account. These results, therefore, as we mentioned before, cause some ethical problems.

In this context, ethic is the science that tries to determine what is right and what is wrong and so, at first sight, it seems that it is wrong to use internet for personal reasons at workplaces. However we can see some positive effects when we deeply think about it. It has been determined that the usage of internet for personal interests makes the employees concentrate on their job, otherwise they lose their enthusiasm for their jobs. Consequently, it is beneficial for employers to show flexibility for their employees. (Okur, 2005;71). A similar idea must be valid for the government employees too, because the internet environment gives different opportunities to the individuals. Reading the news, having information about a topic, could make the public service be realized better.

However, taking the research results into account we see that government employees use internet instant messaging software for work rather than personal interests. So, if restrictions take place, they won't be used for these purposes either and it will cause productivity fall. Also when they physiologically feel that their right is taken away this will affect their productivity in a negative way.

At the same time, if the instant messaging software is nonstop online and they correspond, it leads to great advantages. However even the usage of it for their personal interests might be effective to decrease the work stress of the employees. Because sharing the problems relaxing effect for people.

The results also show that the majority of the workers (%51) chat after finishing their work. In this context, the right thing that should be done is checking whether the employees have done their assigned duties or not. Also, this can make the employees who want to have more free time for them to work faster and more effectively. So it can be taken as a way of rewarding.

Also, as long as it doesn't affect the performance, there is no restriction or prohibition in most of the public corporations which also support our idea. Insomuch as that, if there were any negative effects, there would absolutely some restrictions.

At the same time, in accordance with the age, gender, tenure of office and title, the internet and instant messaging software usage may have some differences. Especially regarding the age group, it is possible that the younger ones use it more frequently. Also according to the tenure of office and title, differences may appear as the superiors may take their ease. In terms of gender, men sense a stronger bias to chat over internet. In one research, the ratio of the women who chat over internet is %50 and the %70 of men chat over internet. (Tarcan 2005;59)

However, we didn't come across significant differences in terms of these factors, so the ones who work in public sector showed different results from the general impression. This can be the result of public pressure.

On the other hand, these results shouldn't make us feel too comfortable about this issue. Insomuch as that, there may be costs and damages causing by the usage of internet and instant messaging software for personal interests.

Consequently, it is not possible to speak clearly about and pass judgement on the usage of internet and instant messaging software in public service environment or their personal usage. The thing that should be done is determining a policy in accordance with the features of the institution, professions, works and employees. Objective evaluation should be done about the reasons it should be allowed, the employees for whom it should be prohibited. For example, no restrictions could be made for the academicians, whereas it could be applicable for the administrative personnels.

References

- Arslan Mahmut, *İş ve Meslek Ahlakı*, (Ankara:Siyasal, 2001), 7-8.
- Hartman, L.P., “Technology and Ethics:Privacy in The Workplace”, *Business and Society Review*, Vol.:106, No:1, (2009):1-27.
- TUIK(Turkish Statistic Institution),
<http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=2055> (27.08.2008)
- TUIK(Turkish Statistic Institution),
http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreIstatistikTablo.do?istab_id=42 (04.03.2009)
- Keser, Aşkın, “Elektronik Postanın Örgütlerde Kullanımı ve Çalışanların Elektronik Posta Kullanımlarına Yönelik Bir Araştırma”, *İş-güç*, Cilt:7, Sayı:1,(2005):59-80.
- Okur, Zeki, “İşyerinde İşçinin Bilgisayar ve İnterneti Özel Amaçlı Kullanımının İş İlişkilerine Etkisi”, *Kamu-İş*, Cilt:8, Sayı:2.,(2005):47-75.
- Özdemir, M.,“Kamu Yönetiminde Etik”, *Z.K.Ü.Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, Cilt:4, Sayı:7, (2008):179-195.
- Tarcan, Ahmet, *İnternet ve Toplum*, (Ankara:Am, 2005), 59-70.