HEB

Role of Social Media in Recruitment and Selection

CASS

Deepti Sinha[1], Sachin Sinha[2]

[1]Associate Professor, JIMS Greater Noida, India

[2]Associate Professor, Sharda University, Greater Noida, India

*Email ID-*serviceheb@gmail.com , *deeptisinha@jagannath.org*

ABSTRACT:

Of late social media has been recognized as one of the significant tools in employee recruitment and selection. But there has been a lot of confusion in the actual contribution made by the social media in the recruitment and selection of employees. In order to understand all these issues a qualitative survey of nine HR professionals who are involved in this role was conducted. The paper deals with the analysis of their responses, identification of relevant issues and challenges and other realities associated with social media and its role in employee recruitment and selection. After thorough discussion and analysis, the areas that were identified as major challenges were authenticity of information, legal issues, comprehensiveness of the information extracted through social media and so on. The experts also highlighted the factors which facilitate the recruitment process like easy cross-verification of information, ease in unearthing the hidden but relevant information, time & cost effectiveness. Finally the paper also highlights the pros and cons of using social media in employee procurement.

Keywords: **social media, selection, recruitment, authenticity, practical, ethical, legal**

Quick Response Code:

I. INTRODUCTION

Social media, defined as the set of internet-based platforms based on Web 2.0 that allow users to generate and exchange their own content [1], is playing an increasingly important role in human resource management in general and employee hiring in particular. The role of social media has changed from providing a cutting edge to the business to now occupying the mainstream status [2].

Defining social media is not easy. It is very complex and has a number of dimensions attached to it. It is the platform which allows users to create their public or partially profiles on web. Users can connect to others very easily and create their own list of connections, contents posted by the users on these platforms can be easily explored by others. Some of the most commonly used platforms are LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Other platforms like Research Gate, Google Scholar, etc. are used by the users who are into higher-order thinking. Other than these there are various blog sites, which allows the users to share their thoughts and ideas freely without inviting any unnecessary sanctions.

Social media has become an integral part and parcel of our day-to-day living. As per the data available at Hootsuite, a social media management platform, in January 2017 there were 3.773 billion internet users worldwide (10% growth from January 2016), out of which the number of active social media users was 2.789 billion (21% growth from January 2016).

Friedman (2007), in his book titled 'The World is Flat', which was a 'New York Times' bestseller, pointed out that almost 50% of American companies are making use of Google search while recruiting and selecting employees [3]. Kluemper & Rosen (2009) as well as Slovensky & Ross (2012) have also reported the same in their respective researches [4], [5]. 45% of 2,600 HR managers in the US were found to be actively using social-networking sites for digging up details of job applicants [6]. A senior manager working with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission reported that around 75% of recruiters are engaged in internet-based talent search [7,8]. It has been further found through research that the deployment of social-media search for personnel has gone up by almost 20% from 2010 to 2012 [9]. In fact, social media is now being perceived as "a new job hurdle" [7]. The new thinking in corporate circles is that organizations that do not make use of social media in their hiring process are losing out on something substantial [10] as the cost incurred in such search operations is minimal [11]. This new culture of social-media search for information related to job applicants is also being seen as a "gold rush" of sorts as the amount of available data is "alluring" [12].

Social media has pervaded the different aspects of the society not merely for personal or social reasons but also for the organizational and professional reasons. Organizations in general and HR professionals in particular are scouring these social platforms to verify the information shared by the prospective candidates. Techniques like big data analytics, content analysis etc, are used to screen and analyse the data obtained through the social networking sites and to use these information for various purposes namely selection, decision making, appraisal, etc.

A large number of business organizations are at present taking recourse to internet-based talent search. They are accessing the social-media profiles of job applicants to obtain particulars shared by them on social-networking sites. This information-digging supplements the applicant data already in possession of the prospective employer, obtained through conventional channels.

Although it can be said that social media is becoming a strategic tool in the hands of recruiters but the exact nature of the part played by social media in this regard is yet to be standardized. Many recruiters have been found to reject applicants on the basis of social-media exploration [13]. But very less empirical evidence is available to establish a standard operating procedure as far as the use of social media in employee selection is concerned. There are a number of grey areas owing to inadequate research surrounding the ethical and legal validity of this mechanism. It might be a relatively new instrument in employee procurement but the use of social media by corporates has been very prevalent for over a decade [14]. E-commerce, strategic planning, financial planning, marketing and promotions, etc. are some of the areas where the role of social media was recognized much earlier.

II. OBJECTIVES & METHODOLOGY

The paper mainly deals with identification of the role played by social media in employee selection and also the problems faced while using social media as a selection tool. An important objective of this paper in particular is to identify the existence of gaps when considering this tool. To identify these gaps, a two-pronged approach was adopted. Firstly, a set of nine HR practitioners who use social media in recruitment and selection were identified and surveyed in order to determine the extent to which consensus has been reached on a variety of key issues. Secondly, the opinions of the surveyed practitioners were integrated with an in-depth review of the research work carried out in this area to develop specific recommendations for both researchers working in this area and organizations using social media as a selection tool. The paper is mainly descriptive in nature and relies heavily on secondary data.

III. OPINION SURVEY OF HR PRACTITIONERS

In order to fill the research gaps in this area, a survey of HR practitioners was conducted to gather their opinion on the use of social-media platforms for recruitment and selection purposes. The gathered opinions have been summarized in the following table (Table 1).

TABLE 1: HR PRACTITIONERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A TOOL FOR RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION

S.N.	Issues	Opinion
1	Comprehen-siveness of information	The majority view of the HR practitioners was that social media is a useful repository of broad-based information regarding the applicant as it covers wide-ranging aspects of all spheres of the applicant's life.
2	Role of negative information	HR managers opined that the negative applicant information obtained from social media might veto the decision of final selection but this negative information may not be very accurate and reliable.
3	Trust and reliability	Most of the HR managers surveyed felt that despite its widespread prevalence, social media cannot be considered a "serious" source of information and, hence, employee selection decisions cannot be very greatly governed by social media as people generally project an exaggerated image of themselves on these platforms.
4	Invasion of privacy	Some HR practitioners are of the view that culling applicant information from their social-media profiles is tantamount to invasion of privacy, while others do not see any ethical transgression in this case.
5	Instrument for cross-verific-ation of information	Almost all HR managers interviewed were of a common opinion that social media can be used very effectively to corroborate the information supplied by the applicant in his/her CV.
6	Ease of accessibility of information	The general view of HR practitioners is that social media is a freely accessible and convenient search tool and serves as a time-saving device.
7	Role in initial screening	Use of social media is not advisable at the screening stage. It is always better to opt for this while taking the final decision of selection.

| 8 | Difficult to hide real image | Despite the doubts about the reliability of social-media-generated information and the ample scope for exaggerated self-projection on social media, HR practitioners feel that ultimately people do reveal their true identity on social media, which is reflected through their 'likes' and choice of friends and pages, etc. And also through their appearance on their friends' profiles. |
| 9 | Overall influence of social media in employee selection | Social media is increasingly gaining ground among HR executives as a favourite tool of recruitment and selection because of its ease of use and accessibility. Use of social media should be encouraged but only if it becomes more standardized, targeted and objective. |

As is easily evident from this survey, a few HR practitioners consider the use of social media in recruitment and selection as an established and accepted practice while a few of their counterparts are still toying with the idea. The biggest bottleneck in the adoption and deployment of social media in recruitment and selection is the doubt that HR managers have about the authenticity of applicant data culled from this source [4].

Hiring managers have gone ahead and made social-media search an integral part of their decision processes. It can also be said that a hiring culture of such a kind has developed that more and more HR managers are succumbing to the subconscious pressure of taking recourse to social media for obtaining information related to applicants. In a specific instance, one particular hiring manager spoke about their client insisting on the usage of social-media platforms for recruitment. Companies these days are obsessed with the fashionable trend of data analytics tied to social media. There is an ample amount of research data available that indicates that the personality-related information acquired by data-analytics tools from the social-networking profiles of people is more exact and reliable than the assessment of their kith and kin [15]. Archana, Nivya & Thankam (2012) have studied the swiftly escalating involvement of social networking sites in staffing [16]. They found that platforms like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Google+ are becoming increasingly instrumental in recruitment, as 36-50% of the use base of these sites consists of college students who are usually the target audience for job offers.

It has also been opined by hiring managers that the right set of job-seekers can be targeted through social media and they can be motivated to apply [17]. These managers feel that this is a much safer option than covertly culling applicant data from their social-media profiles. This is a two-way traffic. Potential recruiters and recruits can interchange information [18]. There is no conclusive evidence to suggest how job-seekers can use the information that they acquire about their potential employers in

forming their opinion about them but there is no denying the significance of social media in recruitment and selection [19][20].

The whole picture may not be very rosy. There are certain other viewpoints that represent the other side of the story. Some HR practitioners hold the opinion that it may not be highly advisable to opt for the deployment of social media in hiring as an absolute choice, and it should be done only on a case-to-case basis. At the same time one cannot be completely dismissive of new practices in the hiring of employees just on the basis of the fact that these practices have not yet stood the test of time. The behaviour exhibited by people on social-media platforms should be studied with interest by recruiters as it can create newer avenues of bringing potential employers and employees together. The main reason behind the stigma associated with deploying social media in hiring operations is that it is perceived as risky and there is lack of evidence of positive results in its favour.

A sizeable fraction of the present research on the usage of social media in recruitment and selection is concerned with demonstrating the promise it holds out for employers. In spite of the inclination showed by recruiters in opting for this method and the potential benefits of information obtained from social media, this theme has not been subjected to much of empirical investigation. Kluemper et al (2012) discovered that the ratings of the applicant's personality, based on the five-factor model, when arrived at by rating social-media profiles, were found to have a positive correlation with job performance . Evaluators were required to rate applicants on the basis of their social-media profiles, using a variety of variables. They were asked to focus particularly on the social-media content and on how it was mapped with personality traits [4].

Van Zoonen, Verhoeven & Vliegenthart (2016) tried to investigate and create a classified compendium of work-related tweets of a selected sample of people [21]]. It was found in their research that 36.5% tweets were concerned with work and 86% of the people who participated in the study had posted at least one work-related tweet. This was proof enough of the widespread nature of Twitter as a rich source of applicant data. The researchers categorized these tweets into seven groups of work-related themes. Tweets that were found to overlap across two categories were included in both the categories. Therefore, the total of percentage figures exceeded 100. The maximum percentage (41%) was of tweets in which people talked about their profession or line of work and not about their employer organization. 24.7% tweets were about employer organization. 8.5% posts were in the form of communication addressed to the general public. The fourth set of tweets (9.4%) were pieces of persuasive communication. 24.6% tweets were concerned with specific tasks performed by people in their jobs. 12.6% tweets were general comments on work-related themes. And, lastly, 22.3% tweets were in-group communications.

It is also possible that organizations sometimes are not cautious and careful enough while hiring people and may end up selecting recruits who later prove to be a liability. This may also subsequently invite legal repercussions for the employer organization. Social media can prove to be hugely instrumental in this regard [22].

There is widespread concern across organizations related to applicant faking. Driven by this concern, some companies go to the extent of asking applicants for the passwords of their accounts on social-networking sites [22]. This practice, outrageous as it sounds, has been declared illegal in twenty states of the US [23][24]. Hada and Gairola (2015) have also tried to examine the merits and demerits of the deployment of social media in hiring operations [25].

Standardized and fair hiring processes usually lead to a judicious use of applicant data acquired from social media [26]. This may necessitate the establishment of standard operating procedures for use of social media in hiring, which should be strictly adhered to by the staff responsible for collecting applicant data from social-media platforms. Well-documented policies regarding this should be properly laid down and conveyed to both the existing and potential employees.

IV. RELATIVE MERITS AND DEMERITS OF USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN HIRING

The deployment of social-media search in the hiring process helps us obtain an insight into how the applicant is in his "other" spheres of life. It is quite natural to expect that the candidate would be exhibiting his "best" face at the interview table. Social media comes in handy when the recruiters want to look at how the applicant is when he is not under the constraints of a formal interview situation. The nature of the posts written or shared by the person on social-media platforms as well as the nature of his online interactions with people gives a fair inkling of the kind of person the applicant actually is.

Social-media space is also the right avenue for verifying the antecedents of the applicant and this method is fairly cost-effective and very less time-consuming also.

The testimonials posted by professional acquaintances and associates of the applicant on social-networking sites can serve as strong endorsements of the applicant's candidature and potential worth.

Social media has become the centre stage of public acknowledgement of one's presence these days. It is not just a platform for self-expression but also a pedestal on which one places oneself for others to see and perceive. And it is a mechanism in which one can skilfully and adroitly control the perceptual processes of people vis-à-vis oneself.

If we try to explore the other side of the picture, the use of social media for the purpose of hiring may not appear to be a very wise and advisable choice. First of all, it is tantamount to an intrusion into the private domain of the individual. Although it may be argued that one ceases to be a private person once he marks his presence in the online space but still trying to gather inputs about one's informal behaviour with friends and family without one's knowledge and using those inputs for job-related purpose does not appear to be an ethically and professional justified course of action.

Information collected from social media have gaps or inconsistencies in it. Social-media behaviour is marked by mood swings and the visible forms of such behaviour cannot be taken as true indices of one's personality.

This can lead to the collected data being inaccurate and unreliable. Also, social-media screening can be biased and judgmental as the recruiters can be governed by their own personal likes and dislikes vis-à-vis the contextual factors of the social-media situations from which the information has been collected.

V. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

There appears to be a general consensus among HR practitioners on the increasing significance of using social media in recruitment and selection. Adoption of this practice can help keep organizations abreast with the rapidly changing psycho-graphics of the workforce. Use of social media in the recruitment and selection of the employees is relatively new. It is still an emerging tool, which is fraught with a number of potential pitfalls. There is also a general acknowledgement of the fact that social media is being used by organizations in an unsatisfactory manner, which can prove detrimental to the organizational interest. HR practitioners can be expected to be a bit more enthusiastic than HR academicians as far as proceeding with the use of social media in recruitment and selection is concerned. HR academicians are more likely to adopt a "wait and watch" policy and would require more research-based evidence before they can endorse this practice. But, by and large, there are reservations about this form of hiring, which have been voiced by the people who were surveyed in this study. Some HR experts summarily reject the idea while others feel that it is slightly premature to discard it and there can be some merit in it which will be witnessed in times to come.

Social media is a sensitive tool that hiring managers need to tread softly and carefully. Going to the extent of extracting all possible forms of personal information related to the applicants can be a perilous exercise. Also, going to the extent of asking job applicants to share the passwords of their social-media accounts is taking things to an abnormal limit. Hiring managers should know where to draw the line and not overstep their limits.

One of the main reasons for using social media in employee selection is its reach. Compared to the traditional tools of recruitment, job ads on social platforms have much higher reach, especially in the target audience. It is also highly cost effective. After recruitment, social media has been found to play an equally significant role in screening, data verification and final selection of the prospective candidates. Although issues like fairness, masking of information, legal aspects, incomplete and misleading information, etc. are also there but in spite of these limitations it is continuously gaining in importance since it has tremendously simplified the process of selection and the yield ratio has also risen remarkably.

VI. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

It is aptly said that there is no end to research. The study presented here relies mainly on the qualitative approach and banks upon literature support to verify the issues raised in the opinion survey. Researchers can further make this study quantitative and thoroughly analyze the data using

appropriate statistical tools to make the results of the study more valid and authentic. The expanse of the study can also be enhanced by broadening the sample. Further, a comparative study can be undertaken and data from different countries can be compared and analyzed.

REFERENCES

[1]   Kaplan, A.M. & Haenlein, M. 2010. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business Horizons.* 53, 59-68

[2]   Segal, J.A. 2014. LEGAL TRENDS Social Media Use in Hiring: Assessing the Risks. https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0914-social-media-hiring.aspx. Accessed on 12.01.19

[3]   Friedman, T.L. 2007. The World is Flat: A Brief History of the 20th Century, New York: Picador/Farrar, Strauss/Giroux

[4]   Kluemper, D. H., Rosen, P. A. & Mossholder, K. W. (2012). Social networking websites, personality ratings, and the organizational context: More than meets the eye? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 42,* 1143-1172.

[5]   Slovensky, R., & Ross, W.H. 2012. Should Human Resource Managers use social media to screen job applicants? Managerial & Legal Issues in the USA, *Info,* 14: 55-69

[6]   Stamper, C. 2010. Common mistakes companies make using social media tools in recruiting efforts. *CMA Management,* 84(2): 12-14

[7]   Preston, J. 2011. Social media becomes a new job hurdle, New York Times, July 20:1

[8]   Sinar, E.F. & Winter, J. 2012. Social Media & Selection: How online information helps and hurts your hiring process, *DDI Directions*, 1-9

[9]   Winter, J. L. 2013. Social media and talent acquisition: Emerging trends and implications. In R. F. Miguel (Chair), The promise and perils of social media data for selection. Symposium presented at the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Houston.

[10]   Hunt, K. G. 2010. Finders keepers: Social media strategies help find top talent hunt. *Journal of Property Management,* 75: 36-40.

[11]   Aarts, D. 2010. It's a GR8 way 2 hire. *Profit*, 29(6): 59-60.

[12]   Miguel, R. F. 2013. LinkedIn for hiring decisions: A content validity framework. In R. F. Miguel (Chair), The promise and perils of social media data for selection. Symposium presented at the Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology, Houston

[13]   Landers, R. N. & Schmidt, G. B. 2015. Social media in employee selection and recruitment: An overview. *Social Media in Employee Selection and Recruitment.* Cham, Switzerland: Springer

[14]   Oravec, J. A. 2003. Blending by blogging: Weblogs in blended learning initiatives. *Journal of Educational Media, 28.*

[15]   You, W., Kosinski, M. & Stillwell, D. 2015. Computer-based personality judgments are more accurate than those made by humans. *Proceedings of the National Academies of Science, 112,* 1036-1040.

[16]   Archana L, Nivya V G, Thankam S M. 2012. Recruitment through social media area: Human Resource, *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, 37-41, www.iosrjournals.org

[17]   Kelly, E. & Dobbin, F. 1998. How affirmative action became diversity management: Employer response to antidiscrimination law, 1961 to 1996. *American Behavioral Scientist, 41,* 960-984.

[18]   Landers, R. N. & Goldberg, A. S. 2014. Online social media in the workplace: A conversation with employees. In M. D. Coovert & L. F. Thompson (Eds.), *Psychology of Workplace Technology* (pp. 284-306). New York: Routledge Academic.

[19]   Henderson, A. & Bowley, R. 2010. Authentic dialog? The role of "friendship" in a social media recruitment campaign. *Journal of Communication Management, 14,* 237-257.

[20]   Doherty, R. 2010. Getting social with recruitment. *Strategic HR Review, 9*(6), 11-15.

[21]   Van Zoonen, W Verhoeven, JWM & Vliegenthart, R 2016 'How employees use Twitter to talk about work: A typology of work-related tweets' *Computers in Human Behavior,* Vol. 55, pp. 329-339.

[22]   Schmidt, GB & O'Connor, K.W. 2015. Fired for Facebook: using NLRB guidance to craft appro- priate social media policies.' *Business Horizons*, Vol. 58, pp. 571—579.

[23]   Pate, R. 2012. 'Invisible discrimination: Employers & social media sites.' WCOB Working papers. Paper 12. Available from http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/wcob_wp/12. [11 January 2019]

[24]   Drouin, M., O'Connor, K.W., Schmidt, G.B., & Miller, D.A. 2015, 'Facebook fired: Legal perspectives and young adults' opinions on the use of social media in employment decisions,' *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 46, pp. 123-128.

[25]   Hada, B.S., & Gairola, S. 2015. Importance of Social Networking Sites in E-Recruitment. *International Journal of Technology Enhancements and Emerging Engineering Research,* 3(7): 91-95.

[26]   Black, S.L., Stone, D.L., & Johnson, A.F. 2015. 'Use of social networking websites on applicants' privacy.' *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, Vol. 27 No. 2, pp. 115-159.