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The Relationship between Recruiter Characteristics and Applicant Assessment on Social Media

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Abstract

Given the growing practice of social recruiting, this study is an investigation of how job applicant assessment on social media differs based on recruiter characteristics. In particular, this study touches upon how the assessment of non-professional and professional content on job applicants' social media differs by recruiters' gender and national culture, and whether these characteristics and how recruiters view non-professional content on social media are associated with the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants from the recruitment process. The theoretical foundations of this study were based on the selectivity model and the existing literature on national culture. The analysis of data collected from 256 Italian and Dutch recruiters using ANCOVA and logistic regression indicated that assessment of job candidates' non-professional content differed by recruiters' culture but not by their gender, whereas the assessment of job candidates' professional content on social media differed by recruiters' gender but not by their culture. Factors related to the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude candidates from the recruitment process were also identified. The findings of this study provide practical implications for recruiters and job seekers, and present new suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Selectivity model; job applicant assessment; recruiter characteristics; social media; social recruiting, national culture.

The Relationship between Recruiter Characteristics and Applicant Assessment on Social Media

1. Introduction

The rise of social media technologies has led to their use in several organizational functions (A. El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2015; Khang, Ki, & Ye, 2012). Social media, with their different categories (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and their diverse user base (M. El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2014a), are also increasingly becoming an integrated part of the recruitment process (Gibbs, MacDonald, & MacKay, 2015; M. El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2014b). Recruiters employ social media to actively source candidates, disseminate job ads, tap into a large pool of talent, and assess applicants among other uses (Caers & Castelyns, 2010; Klier, Klier, Rebhan, & Thiel, 2015, Melanthiou, Pavlou, & Constantinou, 2015).

Social media-based assessment of job candidates is different from more traditional practices in several ways. First, employer searches on social media do not necessarily actively elicit job-related information; second, there is a potential mismatch between the purposes of some social media and an organization's use of data drawn from these platforms; and third, it is difficult to structure or standardize social media-based assessments (Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, & Thatcher, 2013). Additionally, recruiters find both professional and non-professional content on social media in larger amounts than usually contained on an applicant's CV. Social media content gives recruiters an additional source of information to assess a candidate's fit with the organization and the job (Chiang & Suen, 2015), and to formulate applicant-related dispositional attributions that may influence interviews and subsequent hiring decisions (Knouse, 1989). Existing research has shown, for example, that relevant education produces more positive perceptions of competence and potential and predicts salary (Knouse, 1994), and that detailed work experience is associated more with employability compared to activities and educational experiences (McNeilly & Barr, 1997). Little is known, however, about the assessments of both non-professional and professional social media content of job applicants, how they differ by recruiter characteristics, and whether they are associated with the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude candidates from the recruitment process.

The primary research questions addressed in this study are therefore as follows: 1) do the assessments of non-professional and professional content on job applicants' social media profiles differ by recruiters' gender and national culture?; 2) is the recruiters' tendency to exclude applicants from the recruitment process related to how the former assess non-professional content on social media?; and 3) does the recruiters' tendency to exclude applicants from the recruitment process differ by the former's gender and national culture? The answers to these research questions make a number of contributions to the literature. First, this study contributes to filling an overall gap that exists between practice and research on social media-based assessments (Roth et al., 2013; Van Iddekinge, Lanivich, Roth, & Junco, 2013). Second, this investigation covers various items of both non-professional and professional content on social media which were not combined in previous studies on the topic. Third, this study investigates the possible linkage between social media-based assessment and the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants from the recruitment process, though without making any causality claims.

This article is structured as follows: a brief overview of the literature on screening job candidates' social media profiles is presented first, followed by a section presenting the research hypotheses pertaining to the associations between recruiter characteristics and applicant assessments on social media, as well as to the factors associated with the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants from the recruitment process. Next, the methods section details survey design and dissemination, followed by data analysis and the discussion of the findings. This article is concluded with highlights of its limitations and implications, as well as suggestions for future research.

2. Background

2.1. Recruitment Practices in Italy and the Netherlands

Italy and the Netherlands have several similar recruiting practices. According to recent reports, 61% of Italian recruiters consider online professional networks as the most effective tools for employer branding, and 42% find these networks to be an essential and long-lasting trend (LinkedIn, 2016). Between 2012 and 2015, LinkedIn's yearly reports indicated increased rates of Italian recruiters who consider online social networks as the most important source of quality hires (LinkedIn, 2016). Similarly, social professional networks accounted for 76% of white

collar hires in 2015 in the Netherlands, while other Internet job boards were the source of 50% of such hires. Furthermore, in the same year, 48% of Dutch recruiters reported recruiting passive candidates, versus 53% of Italian ones, and in both countries this practice was below the global average of 61% (Linkedin, 2015). Also, in both countries, recruiting is increasingly becoming like marketing (Linkedin, 2015).

Italy and the Netherlands also have other mutually different recruiting practices. For example, while 71% of Dutch organizations recruit students as young professionals, versus a global average of 79%, Italy has the highest rate of student recruiting amounting to 90% (Linkedin, 2015). Also, 43% of recruiters in Italy find that the biggest obstacle to recruiting talent was compensation (LinkedIn, 2016), while 57% of Dutch recruiters believe that competition was their biggest challenge in the war for talent (Linkedin, 2015).

2.2. Social Media in Pre-Employment Screening and Assessment

In the existing literature on social media use in recruitment, empirical research remains scant on their use in applicant screening in particular (Ollington, Gibb, & Harcourt, 2013). Existing research on social media-based screening has covered three main points: the advantages of this practice, the types of social media content noticed and assessed by recruiters, and the legal and ethical aspects related to screening candidates on social media.

First, social media-based screening has several advantages. Recruiters who use social media in screening report that it takes little time and effort and provides more information than résumés do (Tufts, Jacobson, & Stevens, 2014). Recruiters also associate transparency with screening job applicants on online social networks, where personal data are readily available for all to see (Ollington et al., 2013), and where the applicant's real person could be discovered instead of the excessively managed or deceptive self presented in résumés and job interviews (Berkelaar, 2014). Additionally, social media enable recruiters to approach potential candidates and ask for relevant information for a specific job, thus allowing the latter to either choose to be included in the recruitment process by providing the requested information, or opt out by not answering the recruiters back (Ollington et al., 2013).

Second, recruiters notice and assess several types of social media content on candidates' profiles. Previous research indicated that job seekers share both professional and inappropriate content on their social media profiles, despite having online professional image concerns (M. El

Ouiridi, Segers, El Ouiridi, & Pais, 2015). Both practitioner and academic literatures seem to converge on the favorability of professional content on an applicant's social media account, and the negativity of non-professional content even when it is not work-related. For instance, a job applicant with either a family-oriented or a professional-oriented social networking page receives more favorable ratings from recruiters than an applicant with an alcohol-oriented profile (Bohnert & Ross, 2010). Conversely, recruiters gave the lowest ratings to individuals with Facebook profiles that contained profane language, or photos that showed them at parties or drinking (Van Iddekinge et al., 2013). Furthermore, individuals with unprofessional social media content tend to have lower chances of being hired and receive lower salary offers (Bohnert & Ross, 2010).

Third, scholars have discussed several legal issues and ethical dilemmas related to social-media based pre-employment screening. Researchers primarily discussed potential discriminatory practices by employers during the recruitment process, and privacy invasion concerns as a result of accessing personal information of job candidates on social media, especially under U.S. laws (Brown & Vaughn, 2011; Davison, Maraist, & Bing, 2011; Elefant, 2011; Slovensky & Ross, 2012). As a result, researchers provided managers and recruiters with legal and practical guidance for appropriate use of social media in screening and hiring decisions (Davison, Maraist, Hamilton, & Bing, 2012), including resorting to third-parties to perform social media-based screening (Ebnet, 2012).

3. Recruiter Characteristics

The present study focuses on two main recruiter characteristics, namely gender and national culture, and examines their relationships with the assessment of applicants' non-professional and professional social media content, as well as with the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants from the recruitment process. The association between this tendency and the recruiters' assessment of applicants' non-professional social media content is also examined.

3.1. Assessment of Job Applicants' Social Media Content

3.1.1. Gender Differences: The Selectivity Model

According to the selectivity model, women are comprehensive information processors who consider both subjective and objective information and respond to subtle cues; conversely, men are selective information processors who tend to use heuristics processing and miss subtle cues (Meyers-levy & Sternthal, 1991). Several studies provided general support for this model in different contexts including information processing (Meyers-Levy & Maheswaran, 1991), promotional communication processing (Hallahan, 1995), advertising response (Darley & Smith, 1995), and academic intervention (DiDonato, Johnson, & Reisslein, 2014). Moreover, females are more responsive than males to negative stimuli in their environment (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015). Therefore, given women's comprehensive information processing style and their responsiveness to negative stimuli, female recruiters were expected to assess both non-professional and professional content on a job applicant's social media profile more strongly in comparison to male recruiters.

H1: Compared to male recruiters, female recruiters will a) assess non-professional content more negatively, and b) assess professional content more positively on a job applicant's social media profile.

3.1.2. National Culture: Italy and the Netherlands

Despite the recognized impact of national culture on many managerial and organizational behaviors, there is still need for more research on why human resource practices differ from country to country (Aycan, 2005). Cross-cultural differences impact staffing practices (Ryan, McFarland, Baron, & Page, 1999), and there is reason to believe that cultural values may also influence the effectiveness of recruitment practices in different cultures (Ma & Allen, 2009).

Research is particularly scant on the effect of recruiters' national culture on the evaluation of job applicants (Schmid Mast, Frauendorfer, & Popovic, 2011). Existing studies indicated that culture affects recruiters' assessments of job candidates in many ways, as it influences their interpretations, triggers stereotypes causing stronger inclination to see certain qualities in candidates (Lim, Chavan, & Chan, 2014), and makes recruiters favor a presentation style that is in line with their culturally valued characteristics (Schmid Mast et al., 2011).

The focus of the present study is on recruiters from two countries: Italy and the Netherlands. One of the main differences between Dutch and Italian cultures is that the former relies mostly on low-context communication whereas the latter uses high-context communication

(Meyer, 2014). Context differences were first introduced by Hall (1976), making the distinction between low-context cultures where compartmentalized relationships drive the need for background information, and high-context cultures where extensive information networks reduce the need for background information (Hall & Hall, 1990). Low-context communication occurs mainly in rule-based cultures that are marked by a preference for frankness, logic-based arguments, and judgments that conform to universal standards; whereas high-context communication occurs in relationship-based cultures, where networking works through pre-established connections with family and friends to cultivate new partners and build trust relationships (Hooker, 2012).

In addition to communication styles, selection practices also differ between Dutch and Italian recruiters. Aycan (2005) proposed that recruitment and selection are based on ‘hard criteria’, such as competencies and technical and cognitive skills, in cultures that are high on performance orientation or universalism, such as the Netherlands (Chhokar et al., 2013; Hoppe, 2007), and on ‘soft criteria’, such as social class and age, in cultures that are particularistic or oriented towards ascribed status, such as Italy (Chhokar et al., 2013; Hoppe, 2007).

Taking all the above into consideration, Dutch recruiters were expected to be stricter in their judgment of social media content on applicants’ profiles, and to consequently assess non-professional content more negatively and value professional content more. Coming from a culture that is both relationship-oriented (Meyer, 2014) and higher on power distance compared to the Netherlands (Hofstede, 1983), Italian recruiters, on the other hand, were expected to be more likely to value connections over merit in the recruitment process, and therefore be less likely to give importance to social media based-screening.

H2: Compared to Italian recruiters, Dutch recruiters will a) assess non-professional content more negatively, and b) assess professional content more positively, on a job applicant’s social media profile.

3.2. Recruiters’ Perceived Tendency to Exclude Applicants

When assessing an applicant’s profile, recruiters form positive and negative impressions based on different information. Recruiters’ impressions of applicant hireability depend generally on the assessment of information such as academic qualifications, work experience, and extracurricular activities, because they form causal judgments regarding the applicants’ work-related skills and

abilities based on this assessment (Cole, Rubin, Feild, & Giles, 2007). Negative evaluations and the likelihood of quitting a job, on the other hand, are predicted by content such as alcohol consumption and gambling habits on the applicants' personal web pages (Weathington & Bechtel, 2012).

According to the positive-negative asymmetry effect, negative information is more influential than positive content on social media in the screening process (Madera & Chang, 2011). Therefore, an association was expected between the recruiters' negative assessment of non-professional content and their perceived tendency to exclude job applicants from the recruitment process.

Gender and culture are also expected to play a role in the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants. First, in line with hypothesis 1 building on the selectivity model, female recruiters were expected to have a higher perceived tendency to exclude applicants during the social media-based screening compared to male recruiters. Moreover, a study on the impact of friendship ties between candidates and recruiters on the latter's assessment of applicants found that women were harsher on non-qualified applicants and were more reluctant to give them a job offer despite shared friendships (Nguyen, Allen, & Godkin, 2006). Second, in line with hypothesis 2 building on cultural differences, Dutch recruiters were expected to have a higher perceived tendency, compared to Italian recruiters, to exclude applicants from the recruitment process due to their strict judgment, especially for non-professional content, and due to their rule-based cultures.

H3: Recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants during the social media-based screening will be associated with a) the negative assessment of non-professional content on job applicants' social media; b) gender; and c) culture. In other words, recruiters who assess non-professional content more negatively, female recruiters, and Dutch recruiters are more likely to report a perceived tendency to exclude applicants.

4. Methods

Data were collected using an online survey between March and June 2014 as part of a large social recruiting research project conducted in collaboration with an international recruitment agency. A call for participation was sent by email to the agency's mailing list of recruiters, and a link to the survey was disseminated on the agency's online social networks. The survey used for

this data collection was composed of several sub-sections, the first of which included questions about the recruiters' use of various social media including personal networking sites (e.g. Facebook), professional networking sites (e.g. LinkedIn), and others (e.g. blogs), to ensure that all respondents had a common understanding of what was meant by social media.

4.1.Measures

Respondents were asked, on a 5-point scale (1 = very unlikely, 5 = very likely), how likely they were to negatively assess four non-professional content items on a job applicant's social media profile. Inspired by the problematic profile information items' list and the faux pas scale suggested by Peluchette and Karl (2009), and Karl, Peluchette, and Schlaegel (2010), the measure used in this study for non-professional content included four items: informal selfie or tagged photo (e.g. wearing a swimsuit); controversial selfie/tagged photo (e.g. drinking alcohol); comments on controversial topics (e.g. illegal drugs); and comments on participation in activities which are in violation of university or workplace policy. Cronbach's alpha score for these items was 0.83.

Recruiters were also asked, on a 5-point scale (1 = not at all, 5 = a lot), how much they noticed the following professional items on an applicant's profile: personal information (age, gender...); personality emerging from profile; pictures; professional experiences; number of contacts; hobbies and personal interests; professional prizes and awards; references and comments posted by others; and content posted by the applicant. These items were aimed at capturing initial fit with the organization or the job (e.g. professional experiences); assessing the applicant's social and human capitals (e.g. number of contacts, education); and providing an assessment of the applicant's personality as previous research indicated recruiters' interest in job applicants' personalities online (Berkelaar, Scacco, & Birdsell, 2014), and their ability to accurately identify personality traits by viewing social media content (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009), and to intuitively assess personality cues emitted on Facebook profiles (Kluemper, Rosen, & Mossholder, 2012). Cronbach's alpha score for these items was 0.84.

Respondents were asked whether they ever excluded an applicant during the social media-based screening (yes/no). Since the exclusion of a job applicant from the recruitment

process can be due to several reasons, this question was aimed at filtering out all other possible reasons by asking recruiters whether they have already linked job applicants' social media content to their decision to exclude them. This question measured recruiters' perceptions and not their actual behaviors, and did not claim any causality between the applicants' social media content and the recruiters' exclusion decision.

4.2. Covariates

To account for additional factors that might affect recruiters' assessment of applicants' social media content, respondents were asked about their age (1 = after 1981; 2 = between 1965 and 1981; and 3 = between 1946 and 1964), education level (1 = high school or less; 2 = 2- or 3-year college degree; 3 = 4- or 5-year college degree; 4 = master or doctoral degree), and work experience (1 = 2 years or less; 2 = 3-5 years; 3 = 6-10 years; 4 = 11-20 years, and 5 = more than 20 years).

5. Results

5.1. Sample Characteristics

The sample consisted of 256 recruiters from Italy (N = 135) and the Netherlands (N = 121) (Table 1). Over two thirds of the sample consisted of women, and more than half of the respondents were born between 1965 and 1981. Most recruiters (87.5%) had at least a college degree, and the majority (85.5%) had at least 3 years of work experience. On five-scale points, the responding recruiters had average ratings of 3.21 for non-professional content (SD = 1.05), and 3.59 for professional content (SD = 0.72). A proportion of 36.30% of all responding recruiters reported their self-perceived tendency to exclude candidates during the social media-based screening.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents (N=256)

Variable	Descriptive	Frequency	%
Gender	Female	176	68.8
	Male	80	31.2
Year of birth	1946-1964	29	11.3
	1965-1980	133	52.0
	After 1981	94	36.7
Education	High school or less	32	12.5
	2- or 3-year college degree	49	19.1

Work experience	4- or 5-year college degree	142	55.5
	Master or doctoral degree	33	12.9
	2 years or less	37	14.5
	3-5 years	53	20.7
	6-10 years	72	28.1
	11-20 years	80	31.2
Country	More than 20 years	14	5.5
	Italy	135	52.7
	The Netherlands	121	47.3

5.2. Data Analysis and Findings

First, the general assumptions that apply to parametric techniques, including normality, homogeneity of variances, and linearity, were verified prior to testing the hypotheses, and no major violations were found. Next, to test hypotheses 1 and 2, two-way between-groups analyses of covariance were conducted to examine the variance in the assessment of non-professional content and professional content separately based on gender and national culture as fixed factors, with age, education level, and years of experience as covariates.

Results indicated that there were no significant differences in the assessment of non-professional content based on gender ($p > 0.05$), whereas the difference was significant based on national culture ($p < 0.01$) (Table 2). In this test, only age was significant among the covariates. In terms of professional content assessment, significant differences were found based on gender ($p < 0.05$) but not based on national culture ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3). In this second test, none of the covariates made a significant difference. These findings provide support for H1b and H2a, and no support for H1a and H2b.

Table 2. Tests of between-subjects effects for recruiters' gender and national culture on non-professional content assessment

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	21.299 ^a	6	3.550	3.424	.003	.076
Intercept	102.513	1	102.513	98.882	.000	.284
Age	6.516	1	6.516	6.285	.013	.025
Education	.463	1	.463	.447	.505	.002
Experience	3.320	1	3.320	3.202	.075	.013
Gender	.019	1	.019	.019	.891	.000
National culture	8.713	1	8.713	8.405	.004	.033
Gender * National culture	1.873	1	1.873	1.807	.180	.007
Error	258.144	249	1.037			
Total	2910.813	256				
Corrected Total	279.443	255				

a. R Squared = .076 (Adjusted R Squared = .054)

Table 3. Tests of between-subjects effects for recruiters' gender and national culture on professional content assessment

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	3.845 ^a	6	.641	1.257	.278	.029
Intercept	135.295	1	135.295	265.295	.000	.516
Age	.537	1	.537	1.054	.306	.004
Education	.005	1	.005	.009	.924	.000
Experience	.775	1	.775	1.519	.219	.006
Gender	2.214	1	2.214	4.341	.038	.017
National culture	.179	1	.179	.351	.554	.001
Gender * National culture	.000	1	.000	.001	.978	.000
Error	126.985	249	.510			
Total	3441.074	256				
Corrected Total	130.830	255				

a. R Squared = .029 (Adjusted R Squared = .006)

To further examine these differences in job applicants' social media content assessments based on recruiters' gender and national culture, independent-sample t-tests were used. Results indicated that while non-professional content was assessed slightly more negatively by male recruiters ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.03$) compared to female recruiters ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.06$), this difference was still not significant (see Table 4). Dutch recruiters, on the other hand, assessed non-professional content ($M = 3.40$, $SD = .94$) more negatively than Italian recruiters did ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.11$), and this difference was significant. As for professional content, female recruiters valued significantly more categories ($M = 3.67$, $SD = .70$) compared to male recruiters ($M = 3.44$, $SD = .73$), whereas there was no significant difference between Dutch and Italian recruiters on this front. These t-test results are in line with the ANCOVA results discussed above.

Table 4. Independent sample t-test for non- professional and professional content assessment based on recruiters' gender and national culture

	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Country	N	Mean	SD
Non professional content assessment	Female	176	3.18	1.06	Netherlands	121	3.40**	.94
	Male	80	3.27	1.03	Italy	135	3.03**	1.11
Professional content assessment	Female	176	3.67*	.70	Netherlands	121	3.59	.61
	Male	80	3.44*	.73	Italy	135	3.60	.80

* $p < 0.05$, two-tailed t-tests

** $p < 0.01$, two-tailed t-tests

To test the hypotheses 3a, 3b and 3c, a direct logistic regression was performed to examine the likelihood of recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude job candidates from the recruitment process (Table 5). The model contained seven independent variables, namely the assessments of non-professional content and professional content on job candidates' social media, and the recruiters' gender, age, education, work experience, and national culture. The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant, $\chi^2 (7, N = 256) = 47.95, p < .001$, indicating that it was able to distinguish between recruiters who reported their perceived tendency to exclude job applicants and those who reported their perceived tendency to not exclude job applicants. The model as a whole explained between 17.1% (Cox and Snell R square) and 23.4% (Nagelkerke R squared) of the variance in recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude job applicants, and correctly classified 73.4% of cases. Only the two types of social media content assessment made statistically significant contributions to the model, with non-professional content assessment being the strongest predictor of recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude job applicants, recording an odds ratio of 2.04 compared to 1.75 for professional content assessment. This finding indicated that, after controlling for all relevant covariates, recruiters who assessed non-professional content negatively were twice more likely to report their perceived tendency to exclude job applicants from the recruitment process than those who assessed this content less negatively. This finding provides support for H3a. Recruiters' gender and national culture made no contributions to the model, thus providing no support for H3b and H3c.

Table 5. Logistic regression predicting the likelihood of recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude job candidates from the recruitment process

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Non-professional content assessment	.713	.175	16.606	1	.000	2.039	1.447	2.873
Professional content assessment	.559	.258	4.708	1	.030	1.749	1.056	2.899
Gender	-.316	.327	.936	1	.333	.729	.384	1.383
Age	-.579	.315	3.375	1	.066	.561	.302	1.039
Education	-.143	.172	.695	1	.405	.866	.619	1.214
Experience	.308	.161	3.633	1	.057	1.360	.991	1.867
National culture	.494	.326	2.292	1	.130	1.638	.865	3.105
Constant	-4.534	1.238	13.408	1	.000	.011		

a. Variable(s) entered on step 1: Non-professional content assessment, Professional content assessment, Gender, Age, Education, Experience, National culture.

6. Discussion and Implications

This study was set to investigate the associations between recruiters' gender and national culture and their assessments of job applicants' non-professional and professional social media content. Additionally, this study was also aimed at examining the factors associated with recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicant from the recruitment process, namely in terms of the assessment of non-professional content on candidates' social media profiles and the recruiters' gender and national culture.

First, the recruiters' gender was found to be associated with the assessment of professional content on applicant's social media profiles, but not with the assessment of non-professional content. In other words, as expected, female recruiters were found to value more categories of professional content on job applicants' social media profiles compared to male recruiters, indicating that they were possibly indeed driven by their need to process professional information on job applicants' social media profiles more comprehensively compared to male recruiters. Contrary to expectations, however, the results of this study showed that female recruiters did not assess non-professional content on job applicants' social media more negatively compared to male recruiters, indicating that regardless of their gender, all recruiters seem to largely agree on what is deemed unprofessional to post on a job seeker's social media profile, thus suppressing any variability in this assessment. This finding can be justified by the alternative explanation provided by the selectivity theory itself which states that gender differences are conditional and will not always occur especially when information is either too blatant or too obscure (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015).

Second, the recruiters' national culture was found to be associated with the assessment of non-professional content on applicant's profiles, but not with the assessment of professional content. As expected, Dutch recruiters assessed non-professional content on social media more negatively compared to Italian recruiters, indicating that they were indeed assertive and rule-based. On the other hand, however, no differences were detected between Dutch and Italian recruiters in assessing professional content on job applicants' profiles.

Third, the assessment of non-professional content on job applicants' social media profiles was found to be associated with recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude candidates from the recruitment process as expected. Contrary to expectations, however, neither gender nor culture

were found to be significant predictors of this tendency. These findings mean that women were not more likely to report perceived tendency to exclude job candidates during the social media-based screening compared to male recruiters, nor did Dutch recruiters report a higher exclusion tendency compared to their Italian counterparts. One of the possible reasons for these non-significant findings could be that non-professional content assessment had a stronger effect on recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude candidates than any personal characteristic of the recruiters. Indeed, even the assessment of professional content on job candidates' social media profiles was found to have a significant association with the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude job applicants from the recruitment process. It should be noted, however, that the positive impact of professional content assessment on the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants may simply indicate that recruiters who value more categories of social media content are more critical of job applicants and may tend to exclude candidates more due to lack of professional information on their profiles.

The results of the present study have implications for both job seekers and recruiters. From the applicants' perspective, the presence of some content deemed non-professional on their social media is detrimental to their image in the recruiters' eyes across genders and cultures. Job seekers could benefit more from strongly highlighting professional content on their profiles, and decreasing all content that might be perceived as non-professional as it weighs more heavily than professional content in their overall assessment. Individuals who engage in careful impression management and personal branding would be more likely to be assessed positively in social media-based screening. Applicants should also bear in mind the specificities of the cultural context in which they are applying for a job, given that certain cultures like the Dutch judge non-professional content on job seekers' profiles more severely than cultures like the Italian. For recruiters, it is particularly important to design standard screening procedures to ensure fairness and impartiality, by determining the weight of individual professional and non-professional items in an applicant's overall social media-based assessment.

7. Limitations and Future Research

Despite this study's contribution to the literature by bringing new knowledge to the topic of social media-based assessment in the recruitment process, it still has a few limitations that need to be pointed out. The main limitation of this study was reliance on self-reported data with its

common shortcomings such as the consistency motif and social desirability (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Furthermore, the measurements of the recruiters' assessments of job candidates' social media content and the recruiters' perceived tendency to exclude applicants from the recruitment process mainly reflected self-assessed perceptions of the recruiters, based on their memories of past experiences, and not actual behaviors. To counter these limitations in future research, experimental designs with methods such as scenarios are recommended in order to include both assessments of applicants' profiles and directly link them with the potential subsequent decisions of exclusion in relevant social media-based recruitment situations. Such designs will provide evidence on the actual behaviors of recruiters when assessing social media-related content and subsequently deciding whether to retain or exclude a certain candidate, and will therefore make a distinctive contribution to the literature.

A second limitation pertained to the operationalization of gender with sex. Rather than assuming that sex determines gender, future research may use frameworks such as the self-concept orientation model to distinguish between the two, and measure gender-related aspects of the self-concept (Hupfer & Detlor, 2006). Another limitation of this study was the use of countries as a proxy for culture. For future studies, researchers are advised to operationalize cultural dimensions with more robust constructs.

Several avenues for future research are possible. Research is needed on the possible interactions between the genders of recruiters and recruits in social media-based assessments, using theoretical frameworks such as the attraction-similarity paradigm, the relational demography theory (Roth et al., 2013), gender role theory, and gender stereotyping literature (Cole, Feild, & Giles, 2004); and on the gender of the target market using the theoretical framework of the access and legitimacy paradigm (Pinar & Hardin, 2005).

In addition to the selectivity model, three other major theoretical frameworks can be employed in future research to investigate gender differences in recruiters' behaviors, namely socio-cultural theory, evolutionary theory, and hormone and brain science approaches (Meyers-Levy & Loken, 2015). Other avenues for future research include examining how recruiters weigh applicant information obtained from social media relative to other information in the recruitment process (Van Iddekinge et al., 2013), and investigating the moderating impact of external factors such as the size and quality of the applicant pool, and the constraints of the selection task (Knouse, 1989).

In conclusion, this study contributes to the body of knowledge that stresses on the importance of recruiters' individual characteristics in recruitment practices. Given the non-significance of some of the hypotheses advanced in this study, additional research is needed to provide further theoretical explanations and empirical investigations.

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