



National
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Ireland

Navigating Ethical Challenges: Practices for Responsible Social Media Recruitment in the Digital Era

By:

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Abstract

In recent years, social media has changed the way people think. Impacting various industries, including recruitment practices. While this shift has expanded the opportunities, it has introduced ethical problems. This research study aims to explore those ethical dilemmas and provide A literature review covering the definition of recruitment, the digitalization of recruitment processes, the digital tools employed in recruitment, and the impact of social media on recruitment. This research addresses the ethical issues brought about by recruiting through social media. Through the integration of qualitative methods and interviews, and their analysis as a method, this study will unveil intricate moral dilemmas posed by social media. Findings and analysis therefore demonstrate the need for clear consent forms, transparent privacy governance, and ethical practices to mitigate the risks involved. Hence, a significant strength of this study lies in its integration of emerging empirical evidence with theoretical frameworks that can be used to develop recommendations while providing guidelines for responsible use of social media during hiring procedures. In conclusion, this research expands the existing studies, and this investigation offers insights into practical implications that should guide organizational policies and practices within an ever-changing digital landscape.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

An integral human resource management (HRM) component is recruitment, which involves attracting, engaging, and integrating suitable candidates into a firm according to its operational and strategic objectives. Recruitment thus forms an important part of organizational functioning. Recruitment has undergone significant changes within strategic human resource management (SHRM) over the last two decades, largely influenced by digital advancements. As a result, there have been improvements in efficiency, data orientation, and global reach in recruiting procedures, among other aspects. On the other hand, social media has emerged as a powerful tool for recruiting strategies. Nevertheless, incorporating social media into recruitment procedures raises significant ethical concerns, particularly regarding fairness and privacy, which are key considerations within ethical standards. Preliminary observations have called for a careful examination of the legitimacy and possible negative effects of social media usage for selection.

This research seeks to explore the dual role of social media in the recruitment process. It aims to address the significant challenges associated with using social media for employment recruitment in the current era of digitalization, while also highlighting best practices in this domain. This chapter begins with an overview of the background and context, leading to the introduction of the research problem. The chapter then formulates research questions and objectives, highlighting the significance of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with the structure of the study.

1.1 Study Background

The transition from traditional human resource strategies to digital ones has completely changed the recruitment environment (Moser, Tumasjan and Welpe, 2016). Previously, recruitment processes were mainly based on print advertising, personal contacts, and direct applications. This meant that only a limited number of people who knew about these openings could apply for them (Agrawal and Michael, 2010). The advent of new methods brought about a completely new approach to job-seeking, specifically the utilisation of internet services like social media networks. These services have gained widespread acceptance for their

convenience, mainly due to the growth of the Internet. Essentially, employers intensified their efforts to attract more potential employees, resulting in higher productivity levels due to the increased recruitment of staff from diverse backgrounds. According to Maurer's research on the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), nearly four-fifths, or 84%, of all businesses today use social media platforms as a tool for attracting candidates to job vacancies within their organizations (Maurer, 2016). In addition, other research findings by Zhang *et al.*, (2020) also showed that many employers check candidate profiles on different sites, like Facebook, while making final decisions during the hiring process.

The use of technology has made the hiring process easier. However, there are some moral issues involved. Some of these include privacy concerns and biases in selection processes, such as 'blurring professional and personal boundaries' (Malhotra and Sharma, 2016). Social media platforms have transformed the recruitment process by providing access to candidates' information. This may lead to judging applicants based on non-work-related standards, which can compromise their privacy and introduce prejudice in hiring. Examining various social profiles without any discrimination can lead to biased recruitment, particularly when personal hobbies, social interactions, or even irrelevant political views influence decisions (Vosen, 2021). The shift towards digitalization in recruiting practices necessitates a re-examination of ethical norms across the entire system to ensure fairness.

1.2 Research Problem

The integration of social media into recruitment processes introduces ethical concerns related to discrimination, privacy, and bias, necessitating a critical assessment of its use. Previous studies have highlighted the potential adverse impacts of social media on recruitment, including discrimination based on personal information and the challenge of ensuring fairness and privacy.

1.3 Research Question and Objectives

The primary aim of this research is to comprehensively investigate the ethical challenges associated with using social media in the recruitment process:

- 1 Examining the ethical implications of using social media for recruitment.
- 2 Identifying the advantages and disadvantages of social media recruitment, with a focus on its impact on candidates.

- 3 Exploring the ethical dilemmas arising from social media recruitment practices.
- 4 Develop comprehensive guidelines and best practices to ensure the ethical use of social media in recruitment processes.

1.4 Research Significance

This research is important because it analyzes the ethical issues that arise when incorporating social media during recruitment. The digitalization of job markets necessitates ethical recruitment best practices. This study addresses privacy concerns, bias, and fairness concerns that arise because of the use of social media for recruitment in HRM practices. This research looks to create an ethics-based approach to recruiting that will help firms adapt to changing norms surrounding hiring and mitigate potential discriminatory effects embedded in the technology. It seeks to develop a model for organizations navigating through the intricacies of digital hiring and enhancing their integrity in selection processes through the advancement of technologies rather than diminishing them.

1.5 Structure Outline

Introduction: Outlining the context and importance of digital transformation in HR and recruitment.

Literature Review: Review existing research on the impact of digital transformation on recruitment and the ethical considerations of using social media in recruitment.

Methodology: Describing the research methods used to investigate the research questions and objectives.

Findings and Analysis: Presenting the research findings and analysing them in the context of the study's objectives.

Discussion: Discussing the implications of the findings for practitioners and researchers.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Summarize the study's conclusions and provide recommendations for the ethical use of social media in recruitment.

References: Listing the academic and professional sources referenced in the research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Recruitment practices have already taken on a dynamic form, evolving from the traditional method of hiring to the digital platforms of this era. Technological advancements, particularly the extensive application of social media networks, have profoundly changed the recruitment landscape, leading to this development or evolution (Siddiqi and Alam, 2016). Digital recruitment presents numerous benefits, necessitating the careful handling of ethical questions. This literature review provides a narrative on how recruitment methods evolved, digital recruitment's emergence, and ethical issues related to social media recruitment.

2.2 Recruitment

Recruitment includes a series of activities to identify, attract, and choose qualified candidates for job vacancies. In other words, according to Phillips and Gully (2015), recruitment is the process of creating a talent pool of potential hires for an organization. Recruitment involves sourcing talent through both internal and external methodologies to identify the ideal candidate (Sinha and Thaly, 2013). This comprehensive approach involves finding job seekers through multiple sources, such as job boards, social networking sites, staff referrals, and employment agencies (Siddiqi and Alam, 2016). This comprehensive strategy reflects the changing face of recruitment, which includes responsibilities such as sourcing channel identification, applicant screening, and the final selection of the right people to join the firm's workforce.

Candidate screening is another important term that involves evaluating the applicant's eligibility, skills, and suitability. The various methods used in screening include resume reviews, interview assessments, and background checks (Gilch and Sieweke, 2021). Effective screening enables an organization to identify the most suitable candidates while minimizing the chances of hiring mismatches. Additionally, talent acquisition suggests a conceptualization of recruitment that aims to align hiring practices with organizational goals as well as workforce planning needs (Cappelli, 2001). Talent acquisition involves proactive sourcing techniques for

identifying and attracting talent pipelines, as well as anticipating future hires. In conclusion, we break down the major concepts of recruitment into the processes, steps, and strategies that shape them. After discussing recruitment, let's look at how traditional recruitment has evolved into digital recruitment.

2.3 Traditional Recruitment vs. Digital Recruitment

2.3.1 Traditional Recruitment

Traditional recruitment refers to the conventional methods used by firms to attract and select staff before the advent of digitalization. It started as informal practices in ancient civilizations and evolved into more structured processes during the Industrial Revolution. Newspaper ads, job fairs, and employee referrals were historically considered the backbone of sourcing candidates for various job openings under the traditional recruitment approach (Stone and Deadrick 2015). However, despite their widespread adoption, these methods had inherent design limitations. Newspaper advertisements, despite their widespread distribution, restricted potential employees to specific localities or regions. Job fairs also suffered from a similar drawback because, despite allowing face-to-face interaction with prospective applicants, they mainly attracted people who lived near where such events took place. Personal contacts could introduce many applicants, but they tended to be monotonous because they did not reach out to all parts where different talents existed (Okolie and Irabor 2017).

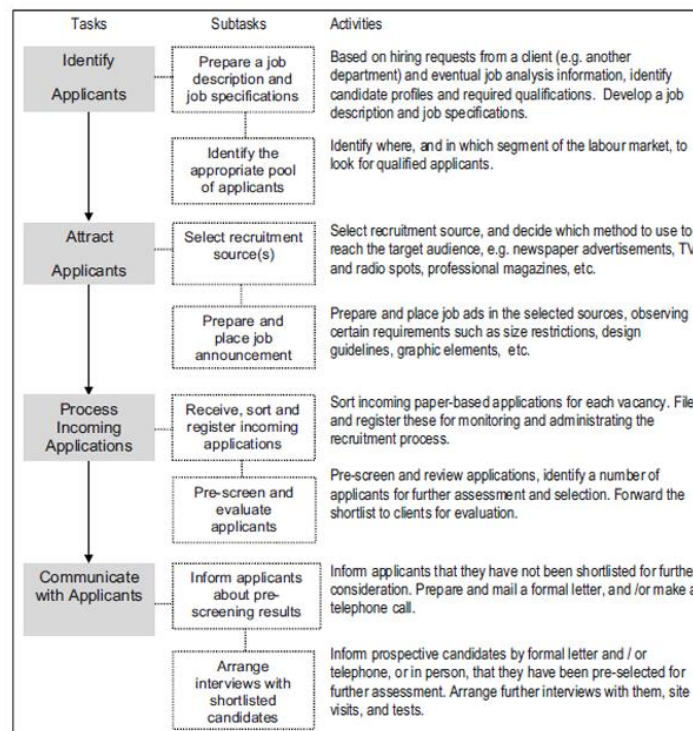


Figure 2. Anna Holm's visual summarisation of the traditional recruitment process (2012).

The above figure demonstrates the sequential nature of traditional recruitment methods and emphasizes the dependence on localized advertising and personal networks as the main channels to attract candidates. Nevertheless, such methods are often lacking in range and efficiency, necessitating the development of modern recruitment techniques.

The traditional method can attract a large and multifaceted crowd. Newspaper ads, for instance, can attract the attention of candidates who may not be searching for jobs online, resulting in a more diverse candidate pool and supporting organizations' diversity and inclusion objectives (Breaugh, 2013). People often criticize conventional recruitment strategies like printed ads and job fairs for their time-consuming processes. Print advertising requires a lot of time for preparation and distribution, which thus adds to the recruitment process (Thebe and Van der Waltdt, 2014). Furthermore, the traditional methods of campaigning enable the candidates to have a personal connection with the recruiters. Job fairs are examples of face-to-face interactions between employers and potential hires, which are very personal and can make a difference in the hiring process (Phillips and Gully, 2015). However, the organization of and participation in job fairs consumes much of the staff's logistical support and time, resulting in a decreased focus on their regular tasks. In addition, workers may be inefficient because of the delays in referring qualified candidates when using employee referrals as an alternative means of identification (Breaugh and Starke, 2000).

The limitations of traditional recruitment methods have sharply highlighted the need for better and more scalable ways of finding candidates. With technological advancement and the growth of digital platforms, organizations have begun to turn their attention to modern recruitment approaches. Echoing employer experiences of labour shortages and difficulties in hiring staff, (Parry and Tyson, 2008) identified intense competition within the UK's recruitment sector. This led to the popularization of (Lievens *et al.* 2002 cited in Parry and Tyson, 2008) concept known as 'war for talent', which substituted traditional selection models with talent acquisition paradigms. Furthermore, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2007 as cited in Parry and Tyson, 2008) supported this perspective by stating that 84 per cent of organizations struggled to recruit staff due to sustained tight labour market conditions over an extended period. Besides this, (Parry and Tyson, 2008) identify technology and the internet as key tools that organizations can use to expand their recruitment scope.

The growing competition in the sphere of organizations' attraction of top talent drives the implementation of more innovative recruitment strategies. It is a deliberate concentration on the individuals with unique skills and knowledge that are critical to the organization in terms of value addition, which will eventually lead to the redesign of recruitment practices. Job seekers predominantly utilise websites and social media platforms to acquire information regarding job opportunities and organizational culture (Breaugh, 2013). Digital platforms offer unparalleled reach and accessibility, enabling organizations to cast a wider net and engage with candidates beyond geographic constraints (Stone and Deadrick, 2015). On the contrary, the transition to digital media presents challenges for HR departments as they are required to strategize ways to sustain candidates' interest in their organizations (Sołek-Borowska and Wilczewska, 2018) and uphold favourable online reputations that set them apart from other employers to remain competitive in attracting top talent.

Additionally, the most recent developments in e-recruitment and online job portals are innovative means of reaching out to a wider range of candidates at a lower expense. Globalisation has made digital platforms increasingly essential for hiring from diverse locations. Technological advancements like artificial intelligence and data science support these platforms, automating and optimising recruitment processes, thereby enhancing decision-making efficiency (Martin Jayaraj, Gowrishankkar, and Sarasu, 2023). The latest findings from Jobvite's Recruiter Nation Survey show that attracting and hiring talent in a candidate-driven job market remains challenging for recruiters. The survey of 800 recruiters found that 74%

expect increased competition in hiring this year, while 67% cite a lack of skilled or qualified candidates as their largest obstacle (Maurer, 2016). The study also revealed that employers were able to use online job boards, professional networking sites and social media platforms successfully as strong channels for recruiting staff from different backgrounds, which highlights the increasing importance of digitization in recruitment efforts.

2.3.2 Rise of Digital Recruitment

The digital revolution has taken over recruitment practices, and the methods are no longer just the traditional ones; web-based platforms are being used for talent acquisition. Information technologies have brought into e-recruitment processes a transformation of traditional methods, thus making them more efficient and widening the pool of candidates (Vrontis *et al.*, 2021). Online employment websites and platforms, for instance, Indeed, Monster, and Glassdoor are instrumental parts of digital recruiting strategies. These websites give employers a single place where they can advertise job openings, look for candidates, and manage their recruitment campaigns (Chapman and Webster, 2003). In the beginning, the appearance of online job boards, like Indeed and Monster, changed the job recruitment landscape dramatically, as they were much more efficient and had a bigger reach than traditional methods like newspaper advertisements or job fairs (Marler and Boudreau, 2017).

The Internet has witnessed many changes over the years, and among these changes are social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter which have been adopted by recruiters as powerful recruitment tools (Dineen and Soltis, 2011). Through these channels, there is a chance for a more interactive and networked level that is not seen on traditional job boards. As soon as recruiters have acknowledged the power of social media, they have been using it not only to advertise job opportunities but also to directly talk with candidates, show company culture, and build relationships with them over time (Dineen and Soltis, 2011). LinkedIn became a revolutionary tool in the recruitment sphere, allowing it to expand its reach for candidate search and communication (Parry and Tyson, 2008). Also, Facebook and Twitter emerged as significant platforms for recruitment; they gave the organizations a chance to use their existing networks and interact with the candidates on a personal level.

Technology in recruitment has revolutionized traditional hiring methods, offering more advanced ways to streamline the recruitment process, improve candidate experience, and ensure evidence-based recruitment (Thebe and Van der Waldt, 2014). Many benefits have

come with the switch to social media recruiting, which has enabled recruiters and organizations alike to reach a wider audience, involve candidates more deeply, and enhance their branding (Marchington *et al.*, 1999). According to the Society for Human Resource Management's (SHRM) latest trend on social media recruitment, research shows that 84% of organizations are currently using it, compared to 56% in 2011 (Maurer, 2016). The main reasons why employers find social media recruiting appealing include attracting passive candidates (82%), building brand awareness (77%), and targeting individuals with specific skill sets (71%).

Social media recruitment, on the other hand, has helped organizations to be more time- and cost-effective, with the added advantage of easy and cheap recruitment of top talent (Koch, Gerber, and De Klerk, 2018). McKinsey is one of the companies that effectively utilises social media platforms for recruitment by showcasing a strong brand presence through engaging content and proactive networking. They use platforms like LinkedIn to connect with potential candidates individually, offering them unique opportunities. By fostering a sense of community and sharing insights, the company attracts top talent and maintains a competitive edge in recruitment (Jorgensen, 2023)

Digital recruitment tools and social media recruitment have changed the course of the entire hiring process, which is now driven by innovative recruitment solutions, enhanced candidate experience, and overall improved hiring results. Using these technologies and strategies, companies can maintain their leadership position and attract the best professionals in the job market, which has become very competitive.

2.4 Social Media Tools

In this age, the adoption of modern tools such as different software programs and internet platforms has changed how organizations do staff recruitment, making these methods more effective than before. These instruments enable a data-driven, automated web-based recruiting procedure that is efficient and inclusive (Bersin, 2018).

2.4.1 LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter

LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram have evolved into powerful recruitment tools, offering unique avenues to connect with talent. According to Koch *et al.*, (2018), LinkedIn is the most used social media platform for job recruitment in South Africa. The researchers found that employers prefer it because they can learn about applicants' work histories, educational

backgrounds, and career paths there better than on any other site. They also noted that this network plays a major part in finding people to fill important management positions at all levels within an organization, from senior executives down through mid-level managers. The breadth of its use demonstrates how essential this tool has become for locating high-quality candidates to fill critical roles within businesses, thus cementing LinkedIn's standing as South Africa's number one hiring resource. Facebook is used to look for more information about the applicant's background than traditional methods. Employers click on privacy settings to get useful data, they do this by checking out people's posts, comments, friends, and connections, which help them know who the person is beyond their qualifications and decide whether to hire them in this digital age (Vatamanescu and Manuc, 2013). Companies are increasingly using Twitter for recruitment, where it provides the most of its reach and engagement potential. They encompass the website for various purposes, such as posting jobs, connecting with candidates, and highlighting their company's image. The use of Twitter in the recruitment process can broaden the organization's reach and strengthen its brand image in a competitive job market (Dutta, 2014). These are the three major tools used by employers to hire potential candidates.

2.5 Advantages of Digital Recruitment

2.5.1 Enhanced Reach and Accessibility

Digital recruitment enormously extends the visibility of job advertisements, thereby allowing companies to focus on a wider range of potential applicants. Recruiters can connect with inactive job hunters who are not looking for new jobs but are willing to consider them through web-based bulletin boards for job postings, social networks, and professional networking services (Breaugh, 2013). In addition, digital recruitment gets rid of geographical boundaries, making it possible for organisations to attract employees from different regions and demographics (Parry and Tyson 2008). Wider exposure and ease of access facilitate more inclusive recruitment practices, leading to improved selection outcomes (Marler and Boudreau, 2017). However, the study conducted by the author (Singh, 2023) in which 35 % agreed that social media leads to limited diversity in the candidate pool.

2.5.2 Cost-Effectiveness

Digital recruitment offers significant cost savings for organizations compared to traditional recruitment methods such as print advertising and job fairs. According to Prakash (2018), online job postings, social media campaigns, and email outreach are not only cheaper but also

more scalable, thus enabling organizations to distribute their recruitment budgets better. When used effectively, social media can help organizations save time and money on recruitment, according to the author (Hosain, Manzurul Arefin, and Hossin, 2020).

2.5.3 Speed and Efficiency

Digital recruitment speeds up the hiring process by simplifying many stages, from candidate search to onboarding. Online job boards and applicant tracking systems (ATS) automate the screening and filtering of applications, allowing recruiters to swiftly identify potential candidates (Thebe and Van der Waldt, 2014). Moreover, digital communication tools like email, video conferencing, and chat platforms enable seamless communication between recruiters and candidates, cutting down on the time required to schedule interviews and provide feedback (Habachi *et al.*, 2022). Organizations are now able to fill vacancies quickly because of fast digital recruitment, which reduces time-to-hire and minimizes productivity losses (Pandita, 2019).

2.5.4 Improved Candidate Experience

Digital recruitment enhances the candidate experience by providing greater transparency, accessibility, and interactivity throughout the hiring process. Online job portals and career websites offer comprehensive information about job roles, company culture, and benefits, empowering candidates to make informed decisions (Dineen and Soltis 2011). Moreover, digital communication channels enable recruiters to engage with candidates in real time, providing updates, answering queries, and soliciting feedback (Cappelli, 2009). This personalized and responsive approach fosters positive candidate perceptions of the organization, regardless of the final hiring outcome, leading to enhanced employer branding and talent attraction (Hosain and Liu, 2020).

2.5.5 Employer Branding

Employers can use social media to showcase their work culture and success, as well as attract top talent. By leveraging social media platforms, employers can present their company's values, culture, achievements, and benefits (Hosain, Manzurul Arefin, and Hossin, 2020). In contrast, it might work against the organization. The author (Kluemper, 2013) highlights that social media can lead to negative branding for the organization. If a company uses social media to screen job applicants unfairly, it could damage its reputation. This can make it hard for the company to hire good workers and hurt its reputation.

2.6 Disadvantages of Digital Recruitment

2.6.1 Information Overload

Among the first drawbacks of digital recruiting is that it may lead to too much information. A broad spectrum of candidates can easily see job postings because there are several online boards, social media outlets, and recruitment websites. In other words, while recruiters may have access to a larger pool of potential employees, they also must deal with applications from those who do not possess the required skills or qualifications for any given position (Bejtkovsky, Rozas and Hendrati, 2018). Thus, flooded with applications, hiring managers may fail to identify candidates truly fit for the role. Consequently, HR staff are forced to go through many applications, which could result in missing out on qualified individuals or making rushed judgements when selecting recruits.

2.6.2 Lack of Personalization

Most digital recruiting platforms put efficiency and scalability first, sometimes at the expense of personalization, which leads to generic candidate experiences. These standardized application forms and resume screening algorithms may ignore individual candidates' unique qualifications and skills (Wolfswinkel, 2009). Furthermore, human contact is lost in online recruitment when there are no face-to-face meetings, therefore making applicants feel like statistics but not people (Koch *et al.*, 2018). If organizations fail to personalize their recruitment process, it may affect how applicants perceive them as well as discourage high-potential candidates from applying.

2.6.3 Bias and Discrimination

Despite attempts to foster diversity and inclusion, the use of digital recruitment platforms in hiring can result in unintended bias and discrimination. This is supported by the study conducted through the quantitative method in which 22% believe that relying too much on personal preferences or assumptions based on social media profiles can lead to unconscious bias in the hiring process (Singh, 2023). Ruggs *et al.*, (2016) propose that algorithms designed for candidate matching or resume screening may disadvantage some demographic groups or favour certain candidates based on specific characteristics. Furthermore, the anonymity provided by these systems enables unconscious biases to affect selection decisions more easily

because recruiters might only consider superficial factors like name, educational background, or past employment (Pager, Bonikowski, and Western 2009).

2.6.4 Security and Privacy Concerns

Digital recruitment involves the collection and processing of sensitive personal data, which raises concerns regarding security and privacy. Job seekers may be hesitant to share personal information online due to fears of identity theft, data breaches, or unauthorized access (Maurer, 2016). Furthermore, privacy concerns raised by (Bamdad, Finaughty, and Johns, 2021) highlight candidates' reluctance to share confidential information on social media, potentially hindering online recruitment participation. Likewise, organizations must prioritize compliance with data protection regulations like the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to safeguard candidate information (Tufekci, 2007). Failure to address security and privacy concerns can break trust in the recruitment process and damage the reputation of both organizations and recruitment platforms.

After exploring the drawbacks of digital recruitment, becomes clear that these challenges extend beyond the topic's scope. The use of social media in the recruitment process is an additional ethical concern that requires more attention.

2.7 Ethical Challenges in Digital Recruitment

Digital recruitment has undoubtedly transformed the way organizations attract, evaluate, and select candidates for job openings. However, along with its benefits, it brings forth several ethical challenges that necessitate attention to uphold fairness, transparency, and accountability.

Transparency stands as a paramount concern in digital recruitment. Candidates must comprehend how their data is collected, processed, and stored by both organizations and recruitment platforms. Nonetheless, studies indicate that candidates often lack awareness regarding the extent of data processing, raising privacy and security apprehensions (Wolfswinkel, 2009). To address this, recruiters must offer clear information about their data practices.

Consent emerges as another critical ethical consideration. Candidates often share sensitive personal information through online platforms, necessitating explicit consent before data processing (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). However, consent processes in digital recruitment are often unclear, leading to concerns about data misuse and unauthorized access (Zarsky, 2016).

Recruiters must ensure informed consent and permit candidates to withdraw consent at any time.

Fairness presents a significant ethical challenge, requiring transparency and consistency in candidate evaluation. Biased algorithms can perpetuate inequalities in hiring outcomes, disadvantaging certain groups of candidates (Ruggs *et al.*, 2016). Recruiters must mitigate bias in recruitment algorithms to ensure fair treatment of all candidates.

Accountability is equally crucial. Organizations and platforms must be accountable for their data practices and decision-making processes (Barocas and Selbst, 2016). However, the lack of transparency and oversight poses challenges, limiting candidates' visibility into data usage (Lepri *et al.*, 2017). Recruiters must establish clear guidelines for ethical recruitment practices and hold organizations accountable for compliance.

Furthermore, False information spread on social media platforms can lead to inaccurate evaluations and poor hiring decisions (Okolie and Irabor, 2017). Legal implications also arise when employers use personal information from social media in hiring decisions (Acquisti and Fong, 2020). Ethical considerations, including obtaining informed consent and protecting anonymity, are crucial when using social media for recruitment (Arigo *et al.*, 2018).

The evolution of hiring practices from conventional methods to digital platforms has raised several ethical concerns, including discrimination, invasion of privacy, and social media recruitment bias. Literature reviews are important to address these problems. Although previous studies have pointed out the ethical implications of using social media during recruitment processes, they do not offer enough information about what should be done or provide comprehensive guidelines on the same. This study seeks to fill this gap by examining the ethical challenges associated with social media and practical recommendations for the organizations involved. Ultimately, this research aims to cultivate a deeper understanding of fairness, inclusivity, and transparency in recruitment practices, all while navigating the delicate balance between efficiency and ethical integrity.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Research methodology is instrumental in deciding the most suitable method, tools, and techniques to be used during the research process. It determines the scope of the research, the source, and the method of data collection, and interpretation of data. The level of reliability, validity and authenticity of the investigation is assured by tracking the standardized investigation methods which lead to the orderly accomplishment of the study's objectives. It ensures that there is a logical progression that forms the basis for its intended conclusion, as highlighted by Archer (2023). Meanwhile, Saunders (2019) offers a model known as the “research onion,” which provides a layer-wise structure for developing research methodology. Starting with philosophical underpinnings, this model leads researchers through numerous detailed steps, ranging from decisions made at an early stage to operational aspects related to data collection and analysis, thus creating a seamless link between theory and practice in research design.

3.2 Research Question and Objectives

What are the ethical challenges surrounding recruitment through social media, and how can organizations navigate these challenges effectively to ensure fair and responsible recruitment practices?

Objective 1: Identifying advantages and disadvantages.

This research aims to identify the advantages and disadvantages of using social media for recruitment.

Objective 2: Assessing the ethical considerations.

This objective involves evaluating the ethical dilemmas associated with the use of social media in recruitment.

Objective 3: Develop best practices and guidelines.

The aim is to discover the best practices and rules for organisations to ethically use social media in recruitment while minimising ethical concerns. This study will provide practical recommendations that HR professionals and organisations can adopt by combining results from previous objectives.

3.3 Research Philosophy

The foundation of research philosophy is critical in shaping researchers' fundamental beliefs and assumptions about knowledge and reality. This framework significantly influences an investigator's worldview, thereby guiding the conception, planning, and execution of studies. A clear research philosophy serves as a guide to ensure methodological consistency throughout the research process. According to Alan Bryman (2016), the underpinnings of research philosophy are essentially the beliefs and assumptions about knowledge and reality that researchers hold. Right now, we're acknowledging the huge impact social media has on recruitment, while also being aware of the tricky ethical questions it brings up. There are different research philosophies it is important to explore each philosophy before selecting the most suitable research philosophy.

Positivism, a well-known research philosophy in the social sciences, argues that there is an objective reality that can be known through systematic observation and measurement. It draws on empirical inquiry and scientific methods, characterized by hypothesis testing, and collects large amounts of data (Saunders et al., 2016). Positivism may not be suitable for our research on social media recruitment because it focuses heavily on objectivity, whereas our study needs to delve into the subjective experiences and interactions that are critical in this context.

Realism looks at things in a detailed way, understanding that there's a real world out there but also accepting that we humans might not fully get it (Scott, 2000). Direct realism asserts that our senses reveal the truth, while critical realism acknowledges the influence of our personal views (Putnam, 2016). However, for our research on social media recruitment, realism might not fit perfectly. Our study delves into the complexities of social media hiring. Realism focuses more on what's concrete, but our research is all about understanding the ethical challenges that HR faces during social media recruitment.

Pragmatism, known for its adaptable research approach that prioritises practical outcomes, allows researchers to embrace various perspectives and utilise qualitative or quantitative methods based on their research goals (Yvonne Feilzer, 2010). David L. Morgan underscores pragmatism as a philosophical approach to social inquiry, emphasising the practical aspects of beliefs and actions (Morgan, 2014). Despite its practicality, pragmatism may lack theoretical depth. For our research on social media recruitment, pragmatism may not be the most suitable

philosophical framework. The pragmatic approach may not fully address the ethical implications and subjective experiences, despite its flexibility and practicality.

Interpretivism is like looking at the world through different lenses than positivism does. Instead of saying there's one objective truth, interpretivism says reality is different for everyone and is shaped by our experiences and the societies we live in (Walsham, 2006). Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) talk about how things like culture and history influence how we see the world, and they think research should take all these different viewpoints into account. This way of thinking challenges the idea that there's one truth for everyone and says we should use methods like interviews or observations to understand how people see things (Ryan, 2018). Interpretivism is more suitable for my research, as this research needs the experience of HR professionals at different levels and their viewpoints on the use of social media as a recruitment tool.

3.4 Research Approaches

There are two research approaches, the inductive approach, and the deductive approach. Inductive research, characterized by qualitative analysis, involves drawing theories from observed data, allowing for the exploration of complexities within natural contexts, such as ethical concerns in social media recruitment (Thomas, 2009). It prioritizes understanding emerging themes within the data landscape. On the other hand, deductive reasoning, synonymous with quantitative research, assesses existing theories against empirical data, ensuring their validity through systematic measurement (Bryman, 2016). For our study on ethical issues in social media recruitment, inductive reasoning is the best approach. We will draw conclusions based on the experience of the HR professional, allowing us to explore the different aspects of social media recruitment.

3.5 Research Methods

Research methods refer to the systematic procedures, techniques, and tools used by researchers to conduct investigations, gather data, analyze information, and draw conclusions in a structured and reliable manner. The research methodologies are broadly categorized into qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods, each offering different lenses through which to explore and understand research phenomena. Quantitative research deals with numbers and statistics. It's all about collecting numerical data and using statistical analysis to test hypotheses and measure attitudes or behaviours across large populations (Creswell, 2003). This method

relies on structured tools like surveys and questionnaires to gather precise measurements and answer what and how questions in measurable terms (Goertzen, 2017). Despite producing quantifiable and objective results that are suitable for generalisation, this research method does not meet the in-depth requirements for this study.

Qualitative research, on the other hand, dives deep into understanding people's perspectives and experiences. It's like painting a detailed picture by gathering personal accounts and exploring complex social phenomena (Yin, 2018). Unlike quantitative methodology, qualitative research seeks to collect rich, detailed information rather than measure variables or predict future outcomes by examining how people or groups describe various social or human concerns (Richards and Morse, 2012). By using methods like interviews with professionals who are in the recruitment industry and using social media for recruitment daily, it captures rich, detailed information about individual experiences and attitudes, giving a more holistic view. Due to time efficiency and ethical considerations, most authors relied on existing literature and secondary data collection methods to conduct comparative analyses and examine trends over time. However, Bamdad, Finaughty, and Johns (2021) employed the qualitative method to delve deeply into complex issues and conducted interviews to gain in-depth perspectives and experiences.

To explore the ethical landscape of social media recruitment and address the central question of this investigation, a qualitative method was chosen which aligns with your interpretivism philosophy. Understanding personal involvement, beliefs, and experience is essential to addressing the central question of this study. By adopting an interpretive approach, this research recognises the importance of subjective realities and aims to explore the complexities of ethical concerns in social media recruitment through qualitative methods like interviews or content analysis. This approach allows you to delve deep into the real experiences of individuals involved in social media recruitment, providing valuable insights.

Mixed-methods research combines both qualitative and quantitative approaches to get the best of both worlds. It uses numerical and textual data to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2007). By blending different data collection methods, researchers can fill in gaps and explore complex issues more thoroughly, increasing the validity and reliability of their findings (Sadan, V., 2017).

3.6 Research Strategies

Research strategies refer to the overall approach or plan that guides the researcher in conducting a study. These strategies outline the general framework within which the research will be carried out and provide a roadmap for achieving the research objectives (Bryman, 2016). Researchers need to carefully consider their research questions and design to ensure that their chosen strategy aligns with their goals and the nature of the study.

According to the author (Creswell, 2003), researchers choose the most appropriate based on their research questions and objectives and the nature of the data that needs to be collected. Various research strategies are commonly used, such as surveys, case studies, interviews, experimental research, and action research, and each of the strategies has its weaknesses and strengths. A case study strategy involves an in-depth exploration of a single case or a small number of cases to gain detailed insights into complex phenomena. Commonly used in the social sciences, psychology, business, and education to investigate specific cases in real-life contexts. Surveys are another research strategy used to gather data from a large number of participants. Through a set of structured questions, surveys collect information from individuals in various formats such as online, paper, or face-to-face interviews. Surveys are valuable for obtaining quantitative data on attitudes, opinions, behaviours, and demographics from a diverse sample of participants (Creswell, 2003).

Another popular research strategy is qualitative interviews. Qualitative interviews involve engaging with participants conversationally to gather in-depth insights, perspectives, and experiences related to the research topic. These interviews are typically semi-structured or unstructured, allowing for flexibility in exploring various themes and issues based on the responses of the participants. Qualitative interviews are valuable for capturing rich, detailed data that can provide a deeper understanding of complex phenomena and human experiences. Researchers often use qualitative interviews to explore subjective viewpoints, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours, making them a powerful tool for qualitative inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln, 2020). For this study, qualitative and semi-structured interviews were conducted with recruiters, allowing me to explore different perspectives. Despite the set question, I asked follow-up questions to enhance my understanding of the topic.

3.6 Data Collection Method

According to Archer (2019) and Paradis et al. (2016), primary data collection is defined as obtaining first-hand information that meets the research objectives through specific means such

as surveys, interviews, observations, and experiments. This approach enables researchers to have a significant domain of control over the availability, meaning, and reliability of data, thus making it highly relevant to the research questions or hypotheses being explored. In contrast, secondary data collection involves obtaining existing data from different sources, including previous studies, government databases, and industry reports, among others, to gain wide-ranging datasets or historical facts at a lower cost (Saunders et al., 2019). While secondary data can be used for trend analysis, comparison purposes, and validation of primary research without incurring expenses associated with collecting primary data and consuming much time, it may lack the exactness and applicability directly relating to the researcher's study. Thus, depending on the needs of the study in question, its goals, and its limitations, one may choose between primary and secondary data collection, striking a balance between the specificity and control options offered by the primary type of gathering information and the more general yet less targeted alternatives available through secondary sources (Mazhar et al., 2021).

Focus groups, as described by researchers like (Harrell and Bradley, 2009), are pivotal for qualitative research in generating rich, detailed insights into how respondents perceive, opinions, think about, or feel towards a range of topics, from products to services to concepts. Qualitative research is based on qualitative interviews, which are primarily used to explore some of the finer points of respondents' experiences and opinions. According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), these interviews could be in the form of structured, semi-structured, or unstructured depending on their approach to questioning and conversation flow. The structured interview approach involves asking a predetermined set of questions to maintain uniformity among all interviews, while the unstructured type resembles a chat, allowing for responses from participants to guide the conversation. However, there is another form called semi-structured interviews because they follow a guide but allow respondents to answer spontaneously and at length. This methodology underscores the need for open-ended questions that allow researchers to delve into various dimensions and complexities of participants' ideas and experiences.

This research uses a semi-structured interview as its primary data collection method due to its flexibility in questioning and conversation flow. To explore the various aspects of the topic, it was important to use a semi-structured interview. This approach strikes a balance between the guidance of a predetermined set of questions and the spontaneity of participant's responses, thereby facilitating a deeper exploration of their ideas and experiences.

3.7 Sampling Strategies

The sampling strategies are particularly important in research methods that include both qualitative and mixed methods various scholars have emphasized the significance of purposeful sampling, which involves selecting participants based on specific criteria relevant to the research questions and objectives (Creswell, 2003; Braun and Clarke, 2006). This approach ensures that the collected data are robust and pertinent to the study, facilitating validity and deeper research discoveries. Theoretical sampling, on the other hand, gets a high spot in the literature. It is used for the selection of participants who are based on emerging theories or concepts to strengthen and validate the theoretical frameworks (Creswell, 2007). These sampling strategies, which comprise the critical component in participant selection, highlight how the best approach ought to support the research design and objectives.

With the suggested approach, HR professionals were identified as the target sample for this research. Participants were sourced through LinkedIn networking, and an email was sent to potential participants explaining the research objectives, emphasizing the significance of their contribution. Fourteen recruitment professionals were contacted via email. Out of those contacted, 10 responded, and ultimately, eight agreed to participate in the research.

Below is a table detailing participants' roles, and work experience interviewees.

Participant's	Job position	Work experience
Subject 1	Human Resources Generalist	5 Months
Subject 2	Junior Recruiter	1 year
Subject 3	HR Executive	4 years
Subject 4	HR Associate	2 years
Subject 5	Senior HR EXECUTIVE	5 years
Subject 6	Zonal HR Executive	4 years
Subject 8	Human Resource Partner	10 years
Subject 7	Head Recruitment and Talent	15 years

3.8 Data Analysis Method

The analysis of qualitative data has always been one of the most important stages in research, which is very complicated and affects its outcomes greatly. The paper's goal is to present a thematic analysis for interpreting the findings from semi-structured interviews, highlighting ethical concerns in social media recruitment among HR professionals. As Braun and Clarke (2006) explained, thematic analysis is a methodical approach that facilitates the identification, analysis, and presentation of patterns within a dataset, thus enabling the understanding of complex phenomena from multiple perspectives. the process of carrying out thematic analysis will follow several steps: levelling with the data development of the themes, re-evaluating the themes concerning the total dataset, naming the themes clearly and finally, writing down the summary.

Through the semi structured interviews, various themes emerged regarding the research topic of ethical concerns in social media recruitment among HR professionals. These themes include privacy and data protection. Bias and discrimination in candidate selection, Transparency in using data that is easily available and existing practices and guidelines on social media recruitment.

In qualitative research, reliability and validity are the two important terms. Reliability refers to the consistency and trustworthiness of the results. It's like making sure that if someone did the same study again, they'd get similar results. This is important because it shows that the study is reliable and the findings are solid, as explained by the author (Creswell, 2003). The extent to which the research findings accurately represent the phenomenon under study is known as validity in qualitative research. It is about the credibility, trustworthiness, and accuracy of the interpretations and conclusions drawn from the data. Researchers employ various strategies to enhance validity, such as triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing, to ensure the rigour and reliability of their findings (Denzin, 2009).

The interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams and Zoom calls, and to ensure reliability, the calls were recorded with the consent of the participants. All the interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word. These call recordings were referred to again and again to ensure the reliability of the results. For validity, it was critical to choose HR professionals who had a certain level of experience, and the most valuable insights were provided by HR professionals who had worked in the recruitment industry for the longest.

3.9 Ethical Consideration

In qualitative research, ethical considerations are of the utmost importance. Researchers should make sure that the volunteers are conscientious of the study's aims, the risks involved, and their right to withdraw from the study at any moment. It needs clear conversations so that participation is voluntary, which will be based on the agreement devised after a shared understanding of the research. According to (Denzin, 2009) it is not sufficient to just provide the participants with the consent forms, there needs to be constant communication to affirm that they understood properly and that they're still agreeing to participate.

Confidentiality and anonymity must always be maintained. Researchers must ensure they use pseudonyms and save the information in a secure way that guarantees the privacy of the data and participants' identities. This results in trust-building that ensures the safety of individuals under review. Furthermore, researchers must avoid harming participants throughout the study. They should anticipate risks, make the safety of participants their primary concern, and handle interviews with respect. The participants should know that they can skip questions or stop the interview at any time (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004; Malterud, 2001).

In this research, participants were informed using a consent form and an information sheet provided in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2. These documents were sent via email to all participants before the interview. Participants were also told they could stop interview participation at any time without any negative consequences.

3.10 Limitation

In reflecting on the research process, several limitations have been identified.

1. The scope of this study was constrained by the small number of participants, who do not represent the entire recruitment sector.
2. Participants' work experience levels differed, which affected their involvement in recruitment processes, thus introducing bias and influencing data from another angle.
3. Furthermore, the rapid pace at which technology is advancing may limit findings as they can become outdated or incomplete over time. The insights gathered do not fully capture emerging tools and practices within the ever-changing technological environment for recruitment.

Chapter 4 Finding and Analysis

The goal of this chapter is to highlight the outcome of primary research, which was based on semi-structured interviews among the human resources-related areas. To conduct this research, the experience and interaction of HR professionals currently and earlier involved in recruitment through social media platforms are explored. Theme analysis was used as an instrument to extract significant understandings and distinctions of data from individual participants, making it possible to classify and analyse the recurring themes.

The first theme concentrates on the link between social media recruitment and other features. This covers the advantages and disadvantages. The second theme deals with the need for ethical discussion related to recruiters who use social media in the hiring process. The third theme focuses on ethical guidelines, learning, and the future of recruitment. For reference, the interview guide employed for data collection can be found in Appendix 3, and transcripts are available upon request.

4.1 Social Media Recruitment

The integration of social media into the recruitment process shows a major shift in the way employers and job seekers connect. This evolution presents numerous opportunities. However, we will discuss the challenges that accompany these benefits in detail.

4.1.1 Opportunities

4.1.1.1 Recruitment Efficiency

As discussed in the literature review, the emphasis on social media in recruitment practices has been centred on enhancing the recruitment process. The findings suggest that the primary benefit of social media integration is improved time efficiency. This conclusion is consistent with prior research conducted by (Balasubramanian, Vishnu and Sidharth, 2016) highlighting the substantial efficiency enhancement of social media in the recruitment process. The data indicates that the real-time nature of social media enables rapid distribution of job postings and prompt responses from candidates. This capability empowers recruiters to improve productivity and efficiency in the hiring process timelines. In a highly competitive market, time is identified as the most important asset for recruiters, as indicated in the primary research conducted among participants (Koch *et al.*, 2018). Subject 5 supports this statement by commenting.

“Before the recruitment process was very lengthy it was like the process was completely very slow as compared to the current time and social media saves so much time for recruiters”.

Subject 7 states that

"Now, with the introduction of AI, it has become easy to post or write a post, and the repetitive task is completely cancelled out. Everything is automated. With minimal effort, I get maximum output."

Furthermore, another significant aspect that arises from the use of social media in recruitment is its cost-effectiveness. Social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook provide recruiters with the opportunity to access a large pool of potential candidate information at minimal or no cost. By utilizing these platforms, recruiters can substantially decrease costs linked to conventional recruitment approaches, such as placing advertisements on job boards or participating in career fairs (Thebe and Van der Waltd, 2014). The transition to cost-effective recruitment strategies is in line with the overarching trend of digital transformation, illustrating the transformative impact of social media on candidate sourcing and the financial dimensions of recruitment processes. Most participants acknowledged this advantage.

"I can attract candidates from all around the world. I can approach them easily, and it's free; I don't need to pay anything. Easy Access to information."

4.1.1.2 Wider Candidate Reach

Through social media, candidates can widen their horizons and find a job that fits them globally. Social media, with its borderless nature, extends traditional limitations and thus helps recruiters attract potential candidates from different worldwide locations. In addition, social media platforms, which are available and approachable, allow job seekers to get in touch with potential employers or applicants without spending money (Parry and Tyson, 2008). In addition, the customisation options of social media sites such as Subject 7 make it possible for recruiters to tailor their outreach based on exact job descriptions and specific target demographics with ease.

"It's borderless. It's global. I can attract candidates from all around the world. I can approach them easily, and it's free; I don't need to send any payment or anything. Social media can be easily customized."

The assertion that social media offers a wider candidate reach is supported by Subject 1, Subject 5 and Subject 7:

“I find social media to be a valuable tool for finding candidates, especially considering its wide reach and ability to target specific demographics.” (Subject 1)

“Second it gives you vast opportunities to connect with people. The best part is that you get a broad scope of candidates here, as per your own requirements.” (Subject 5)

“If I used to like a profile of a candidate I used to like, message them if they are interested in the role, and then they used to respond.” (Subject 8)

Alternatively, it is said that not only HR people are taking the initiative to contact candidates, but also candidates themselves, who can actively communicate with HR managers about job openings and ask for extra information regarding the side of the job. The double channel of communication that enables social media platforms serves the purpose of candidates interacting actively with employers (Cappelli, 2009). This engagement enables them to acquire information and make choices based on facts regarding the career they would want to adopt. Additionally, social media plays an important role in getting closer interaction and dialogue between the employer and the applicant, which results in quicker communication and feedback. In traditional recruitment, no one knew who met the candidates or whether it was the manager himself or herself or the HR team conducting the interview.

The Subject 7 and Subject 5 statements support this.

“You get solid candidates that as most happened experience and it even gives chance for the candidate to connect with the HR’s and get feedback and show interest in the role.” (Subject 7)

“Candidates can make connections and bond with recruiters. It’s beneficial for both parties because they need each other for their work, as per the requirement.” (Subject 5)

4.1.1.3 Enhanced Employer Branding

Through social media, the company will have the opportunity to build its employer brand and showcase its culture, values, and workplace (Dineen and Soltis 2011). Organisations can promote their employer brand in different ways, such as using pictures, videos, and helpful reviews, among others, to allure top talent and stand out from the competition. This kind of honest disclosure not only humanises the business but also forges a connection as well as a sense of belonging among the concerned employees. Consequently, the companies can build a

believable brand for the employer by matching people who have common values with them in the long term, which helps in recruitment and retaining the best staff.

This is supported by the statements in Subject 2, Subject 4, and Subject 1.

“The exciting part is the opportunity to engage with passive candidates and showcase the company culture.” (Subject 4)

“The employers can promote their work culture and the company's brand.” (subject 1)

“The most exciting aspect for me is the opportunity to engage with passive talent and showcase our company culture authentically.” (Subject 2)

4.1.1.5 Data Analytics

Social media platforms make available to recruiter's data analysis features that can enable them to assess how well job postings are being measured (Habachi *et al.*, 2022) and the level of candidate engagement, where successful decisions can be made concerning this data. The literature review did not explore the advantages of social media, which were explored through qualitative research. The analysis of data points, e.g., watches, clicks, and candidates completing application forms, will allow recruiters to measure the efficiency of the efficiency of their recruitment strategies and then make the necessary adjustments. Through social media analytics, recruiters can determine the depth of candidate engagement, and from there, they can refine their messaging and content to make sure it evokes the optimal response from their target audience. Finally, the use of data analytics in the social media recruitment process enables the organisers to achieve a higher rate of success and efficiency in attracting and drawing top-skilled individuals.

“Based on the post I made I can see the analytics like what works and what does not work. Next time I know what exactly I need to post and which post works better and gives me more applications and everything is automated with minimal effort I get maximum output. It's a great tool for information.” (Subject 7)

“Through looking at social media analytics, I can see which job posts are doing good and which ones aren't so great “. Subject 4

The new advancement arising from interaction with HR practitioners demonstrates how social media platforms can radically change modern recruitment techniques. Unlike the traditional

methods, these sites give recruiters advanced data analysis tools that enable them to have a close look at job postings and candidate involvement in ways never seen before. Recruiters are now able to optimise their strategies more accurately than ever by using views, clicks, and application completion tracking, among others, so they may achieve better results.

4.1.1.6 Tailored Approach

The usage of social media platforms offers a tailored approach to recruitment, allowing organizations to adapt their strategies based on the specific requirements of the role being filled. Recognizing that the effectiveness of social media varies depending on the nature of the role, recruiters can leverage these platforms selectively to target relevant candidate demographics and industries (Panditha, 2019). Therefore, the decision to utilize social media in recruitment should be guided by an understanding of how its usage aligns with the unique characteristics and demands of the position.

“It depends on the kind of role. I have been hiring for corporations, and now I work in the social sector. If I am hiring for a role that requires an educated candidate or if I need a candidate from a particular background or degree, like management, then it becomes easy to hire through social media. The use of social media as a hiring manager depends on the many aspects of the role. For example, if I am hiring a very senior person like a VP, then social media does not help me because someone who is at that position won't be using Instagram or LinkedIn. In that case, I won't be using the social media approach; instead, I will be investing time and money in paid ads. I will be using social media if I am hiring someone in the age group of 30–50. Then, use social media like LinkedIn, Instagram, and Glassdoor. Say If I am hiring for intern and freshmen positions, then I will be using TikTok, graduate programmes, and career fairs. If I am hiring non-technical jobs, then I won't be using social media at all.”(Subject 7)

“Use of social media also depends on the type of role. But if you're hosting for management graduates or sourcing for them, you know the best social media is the best form of sourcing.”
(Subject 8)

4.1.2 Challenges and Ethical Dilemmas

4.1.2.1 Candidate Accessibility

In addition to the vast pool of candidates that social media offers, recruiters often encounter difficulties in navigating through the sheer volume of profiles to identify suitable candidates.

This challenge is compounded by the fact that not all individuals maintain active or up-to-date social media profiles. Consequently, recruiters may face limitations in reaching specific demographics or populations who are less active on social media platforms or who may not have a presence at all (Davison *et al.*, 2011). Moreover, the reliance on social media as a primary recruitment tool may inadvertently exclude qualified candidates who prefer to maintain a low profile online or who excel in roles that do not necessitate a strong social media presence.

"One good thing I liked about social media recruitment is that it provides an automated Excel sheet with candidate profiles, making shortlisting easier. However, due to the sheer volume of applicants, especially for junior-level positions, it's essential to consider whether the target market is adequately represented on social media. Many potential candidates may not be active on these platforms or may not have a presence at all. You know you are ignoring a large amount of people who are outside LinkedIn, but also very well suited for the job but they are not able to apply because they are. They are not very active on LinkedIn, or they are not very active on social media."(Subject 8)

The utilization of social media for recruitment offers convenience through automated processes like candidate profiling and simplifying initial screening tasks. However, its efficacy is hampered by the exclusion of candidates who either maintain a minimal online presence or are not active on social platforms, limiting the pool of talent available to recruiters. This heavy reliance on social media as the main tool for recruiting might even mean that good applicants, who, for example, do not manage to achieve results in social media or prefer low visibility on the Internet, will be overlooked. Hence, it is crucial to think about the employee recruitment strategy in a broader way and ensure the diversity of profiles and backgrounds.

The perspective suggests that relying solely on social media to fill vacancies may not be effective. This viewpoint is supported by considering the diverse requirements of different roles, as articulated by subjects 8 and 7. It is worth noting that the suitability of social media for recruitment depends on such circumstances as the type of position level, target groups of people, and the specifics of the respective jobs.

"It depends on the kind of role. I have been hiring for corporates, and now I currently work in the social sector. If I am hiring for a role that requires an educated candidate or I need a

candidate from a particular background or degree like management, then it becomes easy to hire through social media. The use of social media as a hiring manager depends on so many aspects of the role. For example, if I am hiring a very senior person like a VP, then social media does not help me because someone at that level won't be using Instagram or LinkedIn. In that case, I won't be using a social media approach; instead, I will be investing time and money in paid ads. I will be using social media if I am hiring someone in the age group of, say, 30 to 50, then I would use platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, or Glassdoor. If I am hiring for intern and fresher positions, then I will be using TikTok, graduate programs, and career fairs. If I am hiring for non-technical jobs, then I won't be using social media at all." (Subject 7)

"I think social media is, but also it actually depends on the type of role. But like, if you're looking for management graduates or if you're sourcing for IT graduates, you know, the best social media is the best form of sourcing. In my last company, we also used Facebook because a lot of our candidate profiles were on Facebook, as we were hiring a lot of field staff. So we were also using Facebook, and apart from this, a lot of job portals were there like Naukri.com and all, but you could post the link on LinkedIn as well because it gives you a better reach. So it was being used in terms of sourcing, something which we tried or something I think which the companies tried, not just in my company but the companies tried, was video interviewing tools. I would say the reliance on video interviews had increased as compared to face-to-face interviews."(Subject 8).

4.1.2.2 Information Accuracy

There is the possibility of running into the wrong candidate's social media page with inaccurate or misleading information, which can cause problems in the recruitment process. The reliance on information sourced from candidates' social media profiles introduces a significant risk of encountering inaccuracies or misleading details (Jeske and Shultz, 2015). Recruiters must contend with the challenge of discerning between genuine qualifications and embellishments or falsehoods presented online. This risk is exacerbated by the subjective nature of interpreting social media content, where individuals may curate their profiles to project a desired image rather than an accurate reflection of their professional capabilities. As a result of such job applicants posting misleading or inaccurate information, recruiters may form biased impressions or make misjudgements that may imperil the process of recruitment integrity and fairness.

This is supported by the experience that Subject 6 had during the hiring of one of the candidates.

"I have experienced situations where a candidate wrote very good experiences on LinkedIn, and based on that experience alone, I invited him for an interview. However, I quickly learned that the experience on LinkedIn was completely different from what he was doing." (Subject 6).

4.1.2.3 Privacy Concerns

Privacy concerns in social media recruitment revolve around the ethical and legal considerations associated with accessing and utilizing personal information from candidates' social media profiles without their explicit consent (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). Recruiters may encounter dilemmas regarding the appropriate boundaries for accessing and using candidate data, balancing the need for information with candidates' rights to privacy. This includes considerations such as the potential for inadvertently accessing sensitive personal information, the risk of unauthorized data sharing or misuse, and the ethical implications of making judgments or decisions based on information that candidates may not have intended for professional evaluation.

"The challenges might be maintaining professionalism and respecting the privacy of both employees and employers." (Subject 6)

"I believe that it's the responsibility of the candidate not to share something that can go against them and if they made their profile public then they have already given consent to the recruiter to view their profile. There is Instagram to share your personal views, Twitter to share views on politics and LinkedIn for professional life. If you mix then it's a problem, the candidates themselves allow bias to happen and pass extra information that might go against them. If an employer goes and checks Instagram and mixes Instagram and LinkedIn, then the employer is at fault." (Subject 7)

Most of the recruiters said even though recruiters should take only related information from social media profiles they also said that along with the recruiters, it is also the responsibility of the candidate to not mix up personal views to the professional life on the forum.

4.1.2.4 Bias and Discrimination

Unconscious biases are inherent preferences or prejudices that individuals hold without being consciously aware of them. In the context of recruitment, when recruiters review candidates' social media profiles, they may unintentionally allow these biases to influence their perceptions and decisions. For example, seeing a candidate's photo or noticing details about their personal

life on social media may trigger biases related to factors such as gender, race, age, or socioeconomic background (Ruggs et al., 2016). These biases can lead recruiters to make unfair judgments or discriminate against certain candidates. For instance, they may favour candidates who share similar interests or backgrounds, while unconsciously overlooking or negatively evaluating candidates who are perceived as different. This can result in qualified candidates being unfairly rejected or marginalized in the hiring process based on characteristics that are unrelated to their ability to perform the job.

“The problem with social media is that it has good off also bad things to offer. It's linked with everything. If you're applying through LinkedIn and if I look for his name on Google then everything comes up like their Facebook profile, and Instagram profile which is not professional front. What happens is that you start making images of that person even before talking to a person or shortlisting that person. Then that can lead to anything based on the pictures that you share, posts that you like, Views that you share and people that you follow. If a person keeps their profile, I can't see but otherwise, I create a bias and when I get into the interview room with that person then My mind, I know lot about that person and I form about that person it's not a good thing because it creates lot of unconscious bias. It distracts you from the professionalism of that person. Whatever you do on your social media have nothing to do with your professional life. So, it becomes mixing of professional and personal life.” (Subject 7).

4.1.2.5 Negative Brand Perception

Recruiting candidates via social media platforms, if mishandled, can badly impact a brand's reputation and image. In worse cases, candidates might consider the process undesirable or unethical. When recruiters violate the confidentiality of candidate profiles by digging into candidates' profiles on social media beyond job-related relevance, it causes discomfort and smears the organisation as disrespectful and untrustworthy. Another twist is in the online negative information spread, which grows rapidly on a large scale among the organisation's poor reputation among not only potential candidates but also existing workers and stakeholders. It also subsequently weakens the brand of the company and renders it unattractive to visionary leaders and partners. Accordingly, carrying out the hiring process in a fair and open-access way will contribute to maintaining the company image and a bright brand name. This was supported by the Subject 4 statement.

“As a recruiter, I've found that using social media for hiring requires careful handling. One mistake can hurt a company's reputation and make it harder to find good candidates.” (Subject 4).

4.1.2.6 Potential for Misinterpretation

Recruiters should realise a possible misunderstanding when analysing candidates' social media profiles since the existing information might not be a complete picture of their professional performance or suitability for the position. Therefore, this can lead to unfair judgements and a failure to see the best candidates, especially in some contexts (Jeske and Shultz, 2015). This should remind you of the need to consider complete information and make sound judgements for the best staff recruitment (Baykal, 2020). Furthermore, a candidate evaluation based only on social media content without additional identification methods can increase confusion and emphasise a more structured and comprehensive evaluation method.

“Even for that matter, there are people who are there on LinkedIn, but they are not active or up to date like not updating their profile photo so then I will be thinking why is that person up to date, that person might be lazy to update, or person does not care, that's another kind of social media dilemma.” (Subject 7).

4.2 Ethical Guidelines and Learning

Ethical norms should be followed when social media recruiting and involving constant self-learning are recommended ways to tackle emerging issues effectively. Recruiters need to carry out more ethical conduct to prevent any breach of fairness and respect for the candidates. This also involves fighting against biases or misinterpretations. Learning more new things is paramount to refining and tailoring the strategies to fit the social media circumstances and guaranteeing propriety in the recruitment process.

4.2.1 Ethical Considerations

The ethical issues are the most important factors in this recruitment through social media. Recruiters must also keep in mind that their activities are done with a high standard of ethics, and candidates should be entitled to their privacy and fair treatment as discussed in the Literature review.

"The first approach is to not delve deeply into people. It's a rabbit hole; once you start seeing things, there's no going back. You kind of need to restrict yourself and only view things that

the person has allowed you to view, like if a person has sent you their CV, then you need to stick to the CV. Don't go checking that person's profile, what they have liked, and who they follow, like their opinions on politics and religion, which have nothing to do with their professional life." (Subject 7)

"If a person is, like, you know, doing XYZ thing in their private time, and is, like, let's say, politically inclined towards something and they are posting about it on their social media. How is it relevant to us? You know, of what they're doing in their private life, unless they are, like, really into some anti-social behaviour."(Subject 8)

The hiring managers spend a good deal of time analysing candidates' qualifications, skills, and professional backgrounds. The use of social media is certainly an additional source of information about the candidate's character, but it is of utmost importance to be careful and to limit the scope of research to those data that are directly related to the job. Using extensive scrutiny of the personal data not connected with the role, there is a chance of bringing biases and unfairness into the recruitment process. Thus, our methodology should focus on professionalism and objectivity, making sure that the decisions are based on job-related requirements.

4.2.2 Consent and Transparency

Recruiters should prioritize obtaining explicit consent from candidates before accessing and utilizing their personal information from social media profiles. Transparent communication regarding the purpose and scope of data usage fosters trust and accountability in the recruitment process. When the question was asked on what improvements required for social media recruitment Subject 6 stated that

"Not all companies obtain signed consent before reviewing a candidate's profile. Now, LinkedIn offers an 'easy apply' option, and all companies need to request consent. If LinkedIn could provide this feature, I believe it would be beneficial."

The above observation emphasises to media platforms the need to improve consent procedures to broaden transparency and ethics within the social recruitment process in the media. The research also highlights the fact that there are platforms specifically utilised for professional purposes, and therefore, one ought to access them while at the same time picking out valuable information when it comes to non-professional platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and

TikTok that are also used for recruitment efforts. As such, this knowledge for recruiters is the most important takeaway from this case, whereby there is a need for a balanced approach between platform selection and situational appropriateness to compliance with recruitment ethics.

4.2.3 Training and Awareness

Consistent training and communication campaigns should be at the core of the recruiter's toolbox (Baykal, 2020) to ensure recruiters have the relevant ethical knowledge as well as the ability to solve dilemmas confidently. Comprehensive training programmes on ethics in recruitment and data privacy laws give recruiters the necessary insights and ability to eliminate risks.

Even though there are trainings given to the HRs on unconscious bias and discrimination as stated by Subject 8

"Restrict yourself from accessing unnecessary information and refresh your knowledge with training on unconscious biases, neutrality, and how to ensure your personal opinions do not influence professional decisions. Even if you're familiar with the concepts, it's beneficial to revisit them periodically to maintain objectivity in your decision-making."

Most of the subjects stated that there are no guidelines regarding recruitment through social media hiring.

"We don't have any specific guidelines, but every company I've worked with has provided training on unconscious bias, which includes addressing biases related to social media. Typically, we don't have a social media recruitment policy, but we do have a recruitment policy. This policy outlines procedures for shortlisting, parameters to consider during shortlisting, and factors to bear in mind." (Subject 8)

The Subject 6 company diligently follows its established policies outlined in the employee recruitment handbooks, ensuring adherence to regulations such as salary confidentiality. This practice serves as a commendable model for other companies to adopt similar robust protocols, promoting fairness and professionalism in their recruitment processes.

"I did have the policy to follow. Like, we had employee recruitment handbooks, which had all the policies written in them. It also mentioned what we can do and what we cannot do, no

matter how important the role is. For example, we had a clause stating that no matter how important the role is, we cannot disclose salary because salary completely depends on the person's experience and skills. We can give an average bracket, but we cannot mention the exact salary."(Subject 6)

In conclusion, ethical rules and continuous education are two of the pillars of a good social media recruitment strategy. Ethical considerations, individual and collective rights protection, qualification level enhancement, compliance with ethical principles, protocols, and guidelines, as well as resilience and adaptability, are the main factors. Ethical hiring decisions come about when one maintains strict adherence to the rules and guidelines as well as continuously seeking improvement.

Chapter 5 Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to critically examine the findings and implications of the research conducted on social media recruitment. The aim is to evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of integrating social media into recruitment practices, analyse the ethical issues inherent in this approach, and offer strategies to avoid negative impacts on candidates. Also, this chapter pursues a proposal of guidelines for the ethical utilisation of social media in recruitment. Via this discussion, the intention is to help develop the comprehension of ethical aspects in social media recruitment and encourage fairness and honesty in the recruitment context.

5.1 Objective 1: Exploring the Advantages and Challenges of Using Social Media

The primary objective of this study is to find out how recruiters perceive using social media for recruiting and explore its advantages and challenges. Social media has transformed recruitment by enabling recruiters to connect with people worldwide, breaking down geographical barriers. Unlike traditional methods, where job applications feel like shots in the dark, social media allows direct interaction between recruiters and candidates, reducing confusion. Similarly, recruiters can use data analytics to determine which job postings are effective and successful in attracting candidates. Furthermore, it is more cost effective than traditional hiring methods and allows recruiters to showcase their company culture, attracting a broader pool of candidates. However, despite HR's ability to attract a diverse range of candidates, a study using the quantitative method (Singh, 2023) found that 35% of respondents agreed that social media leads to limited diversity in the candidate pool. Information accuracy is one of the drawbacks that need to be discussed. The findings of this research reveal that the false information updated by the candidate on their profile can be challenging, potentially resulting in data misinterpretation. For instance,

The study also reveals that, despite the advantages, recruiters haven't fully embraced social media due to concerns about the accuracy of the information available. The results also indicate that the effectiveness of social media varies across job roles and target audiences, primarily targeting graduates and junior positions.

5.2 Objective 2: Assessing the Ethical Implications of Using Social Media for Recruitment

The Second objective of this research was to identify how ethical is to hire candidates through social media where along with the professional life candidates also share information and viewpoints and personal lives. The findings reveal a complex landscape wherein recruiters must navigate various ethical dilemmas.

Firstly, it is essential to notice that the candidate's personal and professional lives frequently overlap because of the merging of social media. On one hand, this gives social media platforms the ability to acquire a deep understanding of candidates' characters and interests, but on the other hand, it leaves us with uncertainty regarding the morality behind the evaluation of people based on work-related criteria. This is supported by the study (Singh, 2023) as discussed in the literature review and the findings of this research that social media recruitment can increase the risk of bias in the hiring process. Ethical and fair evaluation dictates that recruitment officers should be independent and stick to professional opinion while selecting workers. It is also worth mentioning that it is necessary for candidates not to share anything on professional platforms that might lead to bias and discrimination.

Secondly, the issue of candidate consent emerges as a significant ethical consideration. Accessing information from candidates' social media profiles without their explicit consent can violate their privacy rights. To minimise any chances for legal conflict, recruiters should ensure that they are transparent enough to seek candidates' permission before using their social media content in the selection process. However, credibility would be lost if an employer ignored communication procedures or any form of consent leading to legal action.

Moreover, these results indicate why we must maintain professionalism even in our use of social media platforms during recruitment processes. Recruiting officers must always follow the ethical standards available and must never allow themselves to take any steps that can compromise the integrity of the hiring process. It also implies no discrimination whatsoever among employees, respect for privacy, and ensuring all recruitment decisions.

5.3 Objective 3: Developing Comprehensive Guidelines for the Ethical Use of Social Media in Recruitment Processes

The last objective is to research focused on developing comprehensive guidelines to govern the ethical use of social media in recruitment processes. The findings underscored the critical need for clear and standardized protocols to ensure ethical practices and uphold candidates' rights throughout the recruitment journey. The results show that there are no guidelines for social media recruitment the recruiters follow the recruitment guidelines. Consent acquisition, transparency guarantee, privacy protection, prejudice and discrimination reduction, accountability promotion, and fostering improvement on an ongoing basis are among the various ethical considerations that should be covered by these guidelines. Such a structured system can help businesses direct their recruiters towards responsible and ethical behaviour when dealing with social media recruitment complexities.

Key components of these guidelines include establishing clear procedures for obtaining explicit consent from candidates before accessing their social media profiles. This ensures that candidates are aware of how their information will be used in the recruitment process and can provide or withhold consent accordingly.

Furthermore, the guidelines should outline measures to safeguard candidates' privacy rights throughout the recruitment process. Recruiters must handle candidates' personal information with care, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations and taking steps to secure sensitive data from unauthorized access or misuse.

Mitigating biases and discrimination is another critical aspect addressed in the guidelines. Recruiters should undergo regular training to raise awareness of unconscious biases and develop strategies to minimize their impact on hiring decisions. By promoting diversity and inclusion in recruitment practices, organizations can create a more equitable and fair hiring process.

Accountability is essential for ensuring adherence to ethical standards. The guidelines should establish mechanisms for monitoring and enforcing compliance with ethical practices, as well as consequences for non-compliance. By holding recruiters accountable for their actions, organizations can reinforce the importance of ethical behaviour in social media recruitment.

Ultimately, the rules must stress continuous improvement in ethics. Recruiters should always be reviewing and revising their procedures as regulations change, technology evolves, and new ethical questions arise. Organisations need to continuously learn from their mistakes; this way, they can anticipate ethical dilemmas and keep their hiring processes honest.

In conclusion, developing comprehensive guidelines for the ethical use of social media in recruitment processes is essential for promoting fairness, transparency, and accountability. By providing clear standards and guidance, organizations can empower recruiters to navigate ethical dilemmas effectively and uphold candidates' rights throughout the recruitment journey. Along with developing best practices, it is important to follow them and adopt them to navigate the evolving landscape of social media recruitment effectively.

5.4 Recommendations for Future Research

In future research, it is advisable to examine increasing the sample size to get a deeper feel of recruiters' perceptions. In this regard, the inclusion of recruiters from different cultural backgrounds and sectors will help to grasp the social media recruitment practice. In addition, future research could explore the long-term effects of social media recruitment on organisational diversity and inclusion efforts. This will allow us to obtain an understanding of the role social media platforms play in forming the workforce and implementing diversity in hiring.

The discussions of the findings offer into HR professional perspective on the topic of how ethical it is to hire through social media. Additionally, the research uncovered the advantages and drawbacks of using social media for recruitment. The results also reveal that recruiters do not solely rely on social media for recruitment. Overall, the results contrast with the literature, which suggests that it is the recruiter's responsibility to gather information relevant to their professional work. Even though recruiters follow recruitment guidelines, there are none, particularly for social media recruitment. The next chapter will highlight the results and their importance and significance.

Chapter 6: Conclusion And Recommendation

6.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a complete summary of previous chapters and the research results. As per the CIPD requirement, this chapter will provide practical recommendations.

6.2 Overall Conclusion

Recruitment is a major part of an organisation which involves attracting and selecting the most qualified candidates for various positions within the company. Effective and Innovative recruitment strategies are crucial for ensuring a strong talented workforce that can contribute to the organization's overall success, which has undergone tremendous transformation over the years from traditional methods to digital platforms. Even though the processes were streamlined, they came with ethical challenges.

The primary aim of this study was to investigate HR professionals' perspectives on using social media as a recruitment tool, while also examining the associated advantages, disadvantages, and ethical considerations. The findings unveiled numerous benefits associated with leveraging social media for recruitment, simplifying the hiring process for HR practitioners. However, it was evident that most HR professionals do not rely solely on social media for recruitment, but rather consider factors such as the nature of the role and the level of experience required. These platforms serve as invaluable tools for showcasing organizational culture and attracting a diverse pool of candidates.

Furthermore, the study shed light on the evolving nature of the recruitment process, transitioning from a unilateral approach to a more interactive and collaborative endeavour. Social media platforms facilitate two-way communication, enabling candidates to engage with HR representatives in real time and receive timely feedback on their applications. This dynamic interaction fosters transparency and strengthens the relationship between candidates and HR personnel.

Despite the benefits, the study also delved into the ethical dilemmas inherent in social media recruitment. HR professionals grapple with the challenge of navigating candidates' personal lives while gathering relevant and professional information. The absence of clear guidelines tailored to social media recruitment exacerbates these ethical quandaries, emphasizing the need for comprehensive ethical frameworks to guide HR practices in this domain.

In conclusion, while social media offers myriad advantages as a recruitment tool, its ethical implications cannot be overlooked. HR professionals must exercise caution and discretion when leveraging these platforms, ensuring that their practices adhere to ethical standards and respect candidates' privacy. Moving forward, the development of robust guidelines tailored to social media recruitment will be crucial in promoting fairness, transparency, and integrity in the hiring process with the advancement of technology.

6.3 CIPD Requirement

Based on the findings and analysis, the following practical recommendations are proposed to ensure ethical and effective social media recruitment practices.

6.3.1 Recommendation 1

Recruitment stands as a significant function within organizations, crucial for attracting top talent aligned with organizational objectives. In this pursuit, recruiters use diverse channels, including social media. However, it's important to acknowledge and address the ethical challenges associated with this approach. Recruiters should be careful, gathering only relevant information essential for professional evaluation. Social media profiles should only be examined when the nature of the role necessitates such scrutiny. Establishing clear protocols delineating when background checks or social media screenings are warranted becomes paramount. Recruiters must prioritize obtaining explicit consent from candidates before accessing and utilizing their personal information sourced from social media profiles. Emails could be sent to potential candidates stating that their social profiles could be checked after interviewing the candidate so that there is no unconscious bias during the interview process and the email should contain what information will be checked from the social media. Transparent communication regarding the purpose of data usage builds trust and ensures accountability in the recruitment process. Adhering to these guidelines not only upholds ethical standards but also safeguards candidate privacy and promotes fair and unbiased recruitment practices. Additionally, the recommendation stresses the importance of adhering to clear protocols for background checks and social media screenings, promoting fair and unbiased recruitment practices.

Regarding the potential increase in recruitment time, it's important to weigh the benefits of ethical practices against the potential time investment. While it may prolong the recruitment

process slightly, the benefits of upholding ethical standards and ensuring fairness outweigh the associated costs.

6.3.2 Recommendation 2

Recommendation 2 emphasizes the critical role of ongoing training and staying updated with relevant information within every department, particularly in HR (Baykal, 2020). Training programs should be comprehensive, addressing various ethical challenges and raising awareness among HR professionals. These training sessions and guidelines should be mandatory for HR staff every three months to ensure continuous learning and compliance with new rules and regulations. Additionally, HR professionals should regularly refresh their knowledge to stay abreast of developments in the field. Each training session should conclude with an assessment to gauge understanding, particularly focusing on scenarios involving bias and discrimination. Moreover, a handbook outlining which information is permissible for consideration and which should be avoided should be developed and distributed.

Regarding the timeline, quarterly training sessions could increase the recruitment timeline marginally due to the time allocated for training. However, this investment in training is essential for maintaining ethical standards and ensuring HR professionals are equipped to handle recruitment processes responsibly. As for costs, while there may be expenses associated with designing training materials and conducting sessions, the long-term benefits of having a well-trained and ethically aware HR team outweigh these costs. Additionally, the handbook can be developed internally to minimize external costs.

6.4 Personal Learning Statement

Writing this dissertation and conducting this research has been a challenging task from beginning to end. With no prior experience in the recruitment industry and lacking connections with HR professionals, I faced additional hurdles throughout this journey. My research began with a single question in mind: how ethical is it to hire through social media, where individuals blend their personal and professional lives, and the platform is designed to foster connections and reduce distance between people? As I explored further into the subject, I gradually learned more about the different aspects of the recruitment industry. I made connections with experienced HR professionals through LinkedIn and engaged in discussions about social media recruitment. However, this journey was not without its challenges. Conducting research for the first time, coupled with the rollercoaster of emotions, especially while being away from my

parents and family, took a toll on my mental health. Nevertheless, these challenges strengthened my resolve and determination to pursue my dreams and explore new paths.

Throughout this research study, I have developed analytical, critical thinking, and interpretive skills, as well as improved my writing abilities, which will be helpful to me in my future career as an HR professional. Additionally, the opportunity to study abroad allowed me to learn different perspectives from individuals with diverse cultural backgrounds, improving both my personal and professional life.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1 – Participant information sheet

Title of the Study: Navigating Ethical Challenges: Practices for Responsible Social Media Recruitment in the Digital Era

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you make your decision about participating, it's essential to grasp the purpose behind this research and how it pertains to you. Please take a moment to review the following information carefully. If anything isn't clear or if you need further clarification, don't hesitate to ask questions. Take all the time you need to consider whether you'd like to be involved.

WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT

Hello, my name is Gladys Merlyn Dsouza, a master's Student in Human Resource Management at the National College of Ireland. My research is dedicated to crafting ethical guidelines for using social media in recruitment processes. This involves examining the complexities surrounding privacy, bias, and discrimination. Your insight is crucial for the depth and breadth of this study.

WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?

If you agree to participate, you will be involved in a digital interview that is expected to last no more than one hour. This interview will be conducted through Microsoft Teams. During this session, we will discuss your professional experiences and perspectives concerning the use of social media in recruitment processes.

WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?

Your expertise and experience in recruitment, and HR have identified you as a valuable contributor to this study. Your perspectives are vital for navigating the ethical challenges in social media recruitment.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Joining this study is completely voluntary. You have the liberty to withdraw at any time or skip any questions during the interview, with no penalty.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?

While there is no direct personal benefit from participating, your contribution will significantly influence the development of ethical recruitment practices. The risks associated with your participation are minimal, focusing mainly on the discussion of professional experiences.

WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?

We prioritize your privacy and the confidentiality of the information shared. With your permission, the interview will be recorded, and all identifiable data will be anonymized to ensure your privacy is maintained.

HOW WILL THE INFORMATION YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?

The data gathered will serve academic purposes, contributing to my dissertation and possibly future scholarly articles, adhering strictly to data protection standards. Your data will be securely stored and handled with the utmost confidentiality.

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a secure location on a personal laptop until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legalisation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?

The results derived from this study will culminate in a dissertation for my Master's degree and aim to contribute to broader academic discussions on ethical recruitment practices.

WHO SHOULD YOU CONTACT FOR FURTHER INFORMATION?

Researcher

Gladys Merlyn Dsouza

Email: x22186808@student.ncirl.ie

Appendix 2 – Consent Form

Navigating Ethical Challenges: Practices for Responsible Social Media Recruitment in the Digital Era

Consent to take part in research.

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves a brief interview where I will be asked 10 – 12 questions and it will take 45 min – 1 hour.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the dissertation.

- I understand that if I inform the researcher that I or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on a personal laptop until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the submission of the dissertation to the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legislation, I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

Signature of research participant

Signature of participant

Date

Signature of researcher: Gladys Merlyn Dsouza, EMAIL: x22186808@student.ncirl.ie

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

Signature of researcher

Date

Appendix 3 – Interview guide

Preliminary Questions

1. How long have you been working in recruitment?
2. What is your role? What are your main/primary responsibilities?

Social Media Recruitment

3. What's your take on using social media to find candidates? What do you find exciting or challenging about it?
4. Have you bumped into any ethical dilemmas while using social media in your recruitment processes? I'd love to hear your thoughts or stories on this.
5. How do you tackle privacy when looking at candidates' social media? Are there certain boundaries you try to keep?
6. In your experience, how do you keep things fair and unbiased when using social media for recruitment?
7. How do you keep things transparent with candidates regarding their social media information? Do you ask for their consent?
8. From what you've seen, what are some of the best ways to ethically use social media for recruitment?"
9. Does your company have guidelines for using social media ethically in hiring? How do you learn and stay updated on these?
10. How do you check and make sure your social media recruitment practices stay on the ethical side? Are there tools or habits you use?

Future of Recruitment

11. How do you see the use of social media in recruitment changing in the future? Any changes or improvements you'd personally like to see?