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Social media and cybervetting in R&S processes: A study on candidate behavior and perception

As mídias sociais e o cybervetting nos processos de R&S: Um estudo sobre o comportamento e a percepção dos candidatos

Las redes sociales i el cybervetting en los procesos de R&S: un estudio sobre el comportamiento y la percepción de los candidatos

Autoria

Juliana Toczek

Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR)
jtoczek@outlook.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3071-199X

Jurandir Peinado

Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR)
jurandirpeinado@gmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4777-6984

Fernando Ressetti Pinheiro Marques Vianna

Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR)
fvianna2009@hotmail.com
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5698-477X

Francis Kanashiro Meneghetti

Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR)
francis@utfpr.edu.br
https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0327-2872

ABSTRACT

Goal: To analyze candidates' behavior regarding the use of social media platforms in Recruitment and Selection (R&S) processes, and how they perceive organizations' analysis of these platforms. **Methodology/approach**: Mixed-method research involving 483 job candidates enrolled in a public university located in the South of Brazil. **Originality/relevance**: Social media platforms have permeated nearly all organizational and social processes. In this regard, candidates and organizations are adopting new communication and information technologies for the R&S process, with one of the main ones being social media platforms. **Main findings**: Candidates increasingly use social media as a means to find employment, with differences in platform adoption depending on their field of study. Additionally, there is a group of candidates who agree with the use of social media in R&S processes, while another group disagrees. Finally, candidates may create content on their personal social media profiles solely to meet recruiters' and desired job positions' expectations. **Theoretical contributions**: The article contributes to R&S literature by highlighting the performativity in the R&S process on social networks. **Management implications**: The article underscores that organizations should pay attention to social media platforms as important R&S channels, as well as analyze the differences between platforms and how they can impact candidate search strategy.

Keywords: Recruitment and selection; social media; *Cybervetting*; mixed methods.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Analisar o comportamento dos candidatos em relação à utilização das plataformas de mídias sociais em processos de Recrutamento e Seleção (R&S), e como os mesmos percebem a análise dessas plataformas pelas organizações. **Metodologia/abordagem:** Pesquisa de método misto junto a 483 candidatos a emprego matriculados em uma universidade pública localizada no Sul do Brasil. **Originalidade/relevância:** As plataformas de mídias sociais alcançaram quase todos os processos organizacionais e sociais. Nesse sentido, candidatos e organizações vêm adotando novas tecnologias de comunicação e informação para o processo de R&S, sendo uma das principais, as plataformas de mídias sociais. **Principais resultados:** Os candidatos utilizam cada vez mais as mídias sociais como meio de buscar emprego, além de apresentarem diferenças de plataforma adotada a depender da área de formação. Há, ainda, um grupo de candidatos que concorda com a consulta das mídias sociais nos processos de R&S e outro grupo que discorda. Finalmente, há a possibilidade de os candidatos criarem conteúdo em seus perfis de mídias sociais pessoais com o objetivo exclusivo de atender às expectativas dos recrutadores e das vagas que almejam. **Contribuições teóricas:** O artigo contribui para a literatura de R&S ao evidenciar a performa no processo de R&S em redes sociais. **Contribuição para a gestão:** O artigo evidencia que as organizações devem atentar para as plataformas de mídias sociais como importantes canais de R&S, além de analisarem as diferenças entre as plataformas e como isso pode impactar na estratégia de busca de candidatos.

Palavras-chave: Recrutamento e seleção; mídias sociais; *Cybervetting*; métodos mistos.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar el comportamiento de los candidatos en relación con el uso de las plataformas de medios sociales en procesos de Reclutamiento y Selección (R&S), y cómo perciben estos la evaluación de estas plataformas por parte de las organizaciones. **Metodología/enfoque**: Investigación de método mixto con 483 candidatos a empleo inscritos en una universidad pública ubicada en el Sur de Brasil. **Originalidad/relevancia**: Las plataformas de medios sociales han alcanzado casi todos los procesos organizacionales y sociales. En este sentido, tanto los candidatos como las organizaciones están adoptando nuevas tecnologías de comunicación e información para el proceso de R&S, siendo una de las principales las plataformas de medios sociales. **Principales resultados**: Los candidatos están utilizando cada vez más los medios sociales como medio para buscar empleo, además de presentar diferencias en la plataforma adoptada según el área de formación. Además, hay un grupo de candidatos que está de acuerdo con la consulta de los medios sociales en los procesos de R&S y otro grupo que no lo está. Finalmente, existe la posibilidad de que los candidatos creen contenido en sus perfiles de medios sociales personales con el objetivo exclusivo de cumplir con las expectativas de los reclutadores y los puestos que aspiran. **Contribuciones teóricas**: El artículo contribuye a la literatura de R&S al evidenciar la performatividad en el proceso de R&S en redes sociales. **Contribución a la gestión**: El artículo subraya que las organizaciones deben prestar atención a las plataformas de medios sociales como canales importantes de R&S, además de analizar las diferencias entre las plataformas y cómo esto puede impactar en la estrategia de búsqueda de candidatos.

Palabras clave: Reclutamiento y selección; redes sociales; investigación cibernética; métodos mixtos.

INTRODUCTION

Recruitment and selection activities play a significant role in organizations, driving their competitiveness by more effectively filling job vacancies in both public and private organizations (Rynes & Cable, 2003; Cassiano et al., 2016; Matos et al., 2023). With the advancement of information and communication technologies, companies have begun incorporating digital tools into their recruitment and selection processes, such as algorithmic systems (Neves et al., 2021), artificial intelligence (Blumen & Cepellos, 2022), and social media analysis (Evertz et al., 2021; Yu et al., 2022).

It is important to highlight that social media platforms allow users a variety of forms of expression, such as "likes", content creation, photo posts, and comments (Alaimo & Kalinikos, 2019). Studies on the use of social media in recruitment and selection have explored key themes, such as recruiters' perceptions of the ethics involved (Jeske & Schultz, 2016) and the analysis of posts by recruiters (Hartwell & Campion, 2019). Additionally, the topic of Cybervetting, which examines the collection and analysis of data from social media platforms by recruiters (Berkelaar, 2014), has been primarily investigated from the recruiters' point of view, focusing on their perceptions of the practice (Sallach et al., 2024), how the practice is carried out (Backman & Hedenus, 2019), or the most effective ways to perform it (Backman & Hedenus, 2023). However, both in national and international literature, we observe that the theme is still in its early stages, with the candidates' perspective on the practice still presenting opportunities for further development. To fill this gap, this research investigated the behavior of candidates regarding the use of social media platforms in recruitment and selection processes, as well as their perceptions of the analysis of these platforms by organizations. Using a mixed-methods approach (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), combining quantitative and qualitative data, perceptions, experiences, and behaviors of 483 potential candidates from a federal public university in southern Brazil were collected through a survey.

The survey was structured into 6 questions related to control variables (seeking to identify the area of study, gender, age group, employment status, use of e-Recruitment tools), 15 Likert scale statements, 2 questions related to Cybervetting, and 1 open-ended question that sought to broadly explore the candidates' opinions.

The research results highlighted three significant contributions. Firstly, they revealed disparities in the choice of social media platforms by participants, with variations across different fields of study. Secondly, they highlighted a conflict of opinions among participants regarding the analysis of social media by organizations, with one group expressing disapproval of this practice. Finally, the third contribution concerns the online recruitment and selection process based on social media data, emphasizing its performative nature. Candidates demonstrated awareness of the Cybervetting phenomenon and, consequently, may act strategically and produce content that favors their professional goals.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Recruitment and selection

Recruitment and selection (R&S) in organizations represent a relevant research topic (Ryan & Ployhart, 2014), as it investigates the strategies and practices employed by organizations to attract, select, evaluate, and integrate the most qualified candidates for job vacancies (Nikolaou, 2021). Over the years, this activity has gained increasing importance in the field of human resources (Llorens, 2011; Markoulli et al., 2017), due to its potential to confer competitiveness to the organization (Melanthiou et al., 2015). Currently, there is a trend of enhancing R&S practices through the application of information technology tools to make them more effective and, consequently, more competitive (Shih et al., 2005; Nikolaou, 2021).

Recent studies indicate that organizations are adopting various technological tools in the recruitment and selection processes. An example is the use of artificial intelligence-based tools and automated decision-making systems, which are being implemented by large companies (Albert, 2019; Berkelaar, 2010) and may result in economic efficiency gains (Pillai & Sivathanu, 2020). However, research on the subject shows a certain skepticism among recruiters regarding the overall effectiveness of these technologies (Blumen & Cepellos, 2022), although they see potential in their use as a way to collect information more quickly (Si et al., 2023). Additionally, recruiters still express fear that such technologies could replace them in their jobs (Ore & Sposato, 2021).

Similarly, research has also viewed the role of algorithms in managerial decisions with skepticism, given the diffuse results of their use, including biases and problematic outcomes, such as prejudice (Neves, 2022; Neves et al., 2021). Thus, different perspectives on the adoption of these technologies in R&S processes are observed, with some authors highlighting the increase in their application and asserting that the processes can be transparent (Cheng & Hackett, 2021). Furthermore, studies on the topic point to the possibility of issues related to candidate discrimination in processes mediated by these systems (Köchling & Wehner, 2020).

Research on the adoption of technological and digital tools in recruitment and selection processes has explored various aspects, including the role of websites (Baum & Kabst, 2014) and the phenomenon of "electronic word of mouth" (e-WoM), where workers share information about employers on social media (Evertz et al., 2021; Yu, Goh, & Kawasaki, 2022). Given this scenario, the increased use of social media platforms in recruitment and selection demands a deeper approach and the continuous production of knowledge, given its complexity and dynamics (Hosain, 2023; Jeske & Schultz, 2016).

Social media in R&S

Social media platforms consist of systems composed of a owning company, users such as individuals and organizations, and developers responsible for system enhancements and upgrades (Cutolo & Kenney, 2021). Additionally, digital platforms connect different users who seek diverse goals, such as communication, information, products, or services (Gawer et al., 2023). In

this sense, the literature identifies two main types of platforms: transaction platforms, which serve as intermediaries for direct exchanges or transactions, and innovation platforms, which serve as a technological base for other systems and complementary innovations (Cusumano et al., 2019). Furthermore, some platforms can perform both activities, becoming hybrids, such as Google, Amazon, Instagram, and Facebook, as they serve as means for the transaction of information, media, business, among others, while others use their systems as a base for operation (Cusumano et al., 2019). In Brazil, recent research shows that the most used social media platforms are WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook, ranking first, second, and third respectively, with LinkedIn appearing in tenth place (Bragado, 2024).

Moreover, social media platforms have played a significant role in facilitating communication between users involved in recruitment and selection processes, allowing for the creation and sharing of various types of content (Wyrwoll, 2014). These platforms enable users to connect, like, and tag each other, promoting a new form of interaction (Alaimo & Kallinikos, 2019). As a result, the adoption of social media platforms by organizations is considered a resource to enhance processes and organizational performance (Hanafizadeh et al., 2021).

In this context, studies on the topic have explored aspects such as the use of social media platforms as a communication tool between workers and managers (Martin et al., 2015), as well as the management and sharing of knowledge among organizational members (Gibson et al., 2021; Leonardi, 2014; Oostervink et al., 2016).

Furthermore, social media platforms have been studied in the field of human resources, being considered tools for engaging workers (Martin et al., 2015) and for maintaining work in extreme situations (Hancock et al., 2021). Regarding the influence of these platforms on job searching, previous studies have shown that unemployed workers use these platforms to maintain their social networks and facilitate their return to the job market (Feuls et al., 2014).

In this context, research on the topic also indicates that social media platforms dedicated to the job market, such as LinkedIn, play the role of automated recommendation systems for candidates (Faliagka et al., 2014; Freire & De Castro, 2021). In the specific case of LinkedIn, studies indicate that newer generations of workers are already using the platform regularly for professional purposes, including job searching, widely exploring the available resources (Smith & Watkins, 2023). However, it was observed that many student profiles on LinkedIn are not adequately filled with enough information to compete with other candidates who maintain more complete profiles (Daniels et al., 2023).

Therefore, the practice of assessing candidates' profiles on social media platforms for evaluation raises important ethical considerations, including concerns about bias, discrimination, security, and privacy (Jeske & Schultz, 2016; Rahman et al., 2022), as well as a potential loss of organizational justice in relation to organizations that engage in this practice (Akbulut et al., 2024). As a result of this practice, recent studies have addressed the phenomenon of Cybervetting, which refers to the process by which recruiters search for online information to evaluate or vet job candidates (Berkelaar & Harrison, 2017).

In this context, candidates are evaluated not only by their formal resumes but also by the content they share and the image they project on their social media (Berkelaar et al., 2015). Cybervetting is not supported by a

formal data collection process but is a form of "extractive communication," often without the full knowledge of the candidates (Berkelaar, 2014).

However, recent studies indicate that candidates are aware that what they share on their social media can affect their future job opportunities, leading them to be present on platforms specifically geared towards professional life, such as LinkedIn or Lattes (Melton et al., 2018). On the other hand, among recruiters, the practice of Cybervetting is recognized and legitimized (Sallach et al., 2024), with even definitions of which information is considered relevant for collection (Backman & Hedenus, 2019) and how such practices can be conducted more effectively (Backman & Hedenus, 2023).

Despite studies investigating how social media are used by organizations in recruitment and selection processes, there is still a research gap on the use of these platforms by candidates and their perceptions of the analysis of these platforms by organizations in these processes.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

In order to analyze candidate behavior regarding the use of social media platforms in recruitment and selection processes, as well as their perceptions of how organizations analyze these platforms, the authors opted for the adoption of the methodological approach known as "pragmatic" or "mixed methods" (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). In this context, a single-strand approach was chosen, with the data collection and inferences developed in a single phase (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). This methodological approach integrates the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative methods, leveraging them for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study (Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). The combination of qualitative and quantitative data allows for the identification of patterns and characteristics through qualitative data (Duncan & Edwards, 1997), while quantitative data enables an interpretative analysis of the phenomenon (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

Data Collection Procedures, Population, and Sample

The data were collected in September 2022, using the same instrument to gather both quantitative and qualitative data in a single strategy (within strategy) (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), which combined closed-ended Likert scale questions and an open-ended question to explore participants' perceptions (Huston, 2001; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). For the operationalization of the research, the researchers distributed the questionnaire via email to all 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students (master's and doctoral programs) enrolled at a federal university in the southern region of Brazil. As a result, 483 valid responses were obtained, representing a simple mixed-methods and non-probabilistic sample (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Bickman & Rog, 2008), considered appropriate for investigating independent groups.

The authors chose a sample composed of undergraduate and graduate students from a federal university because it represents a universe of individuals interested in job market opportunities. This group is preparing for these opportunities throughout their courses, making them potential candi-

dates for job positions that utilize social media in recruitment and selection processes. It is worth noting that the sample represents a universe of individuals who have easy access to and familiarity with the digital environment. The questionnaire was structured as follows:

a) 4 general questions related to control variables: gender, age, field of study, and course level;
b) 9 Likert scale statements with five points, ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree," related to the use of social media for job search;
c) 2 statements with a three-point scale, (1) "yes," (2) "unsure," and (3) "no," related to candidates' perceptions of cybervetting in the recruitment and selection process;
d) 1 open-ended space for participants' comments, with no size limit: "Share your opinion on the topic proposed by the research."

Following the guidelines of Netemeyer et al. (2003), the validation of the data collection instrument was sought concerning content, by having 2 experts in the field analyze the questionnaire. For face validation, the questionnaire was subjected to a pre-test with an initial sample of 48 university students, aiming to identify any difficult-to-understand points or doubts regarding the instrument (Bortoluzzi et al., 2020).

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

The analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data was conducted separately to achieve more robust inferences (Bryman, 2007; Creswell & Tashakkori, 2007). In this sense, to utilize the potential of mixed methods research, we followed the guidance of Creswell and Tashakkori (2007) regarding the steps to be adopted. According to their guidance, the first step is to present quantitative and qualitative data separately; next, the analysis and inferences of the data should be separated and appropriately tailored to the characteristics of quantitative and qualitative data; finally, inferences should be presented in the discussion and conclusion that integrate the previous results and inferences. For example, in this case, the presentation and analysis of quantitative data reveal that almost 80% of participants believe they could be harmed by posts on social media. Qualitative data showed, for instance, that participants reported having felt harmed by posts related to their sexuality or being cautious about their posts. Thus, when highlighting the contributions of this paper, it is suggested that, unlike previous studies that observed aspects such as ethnicity as possible motivations for cybervetting, this study addresses the issue of sexuality.

Presentation and Analysis of Quantitative Data

To facilitate the calculation of means, the ordinal scale data from responses (Likert scale) were converted into an interval scale, from 1 to 5, and the data were subsequently analyzed using Excel® spreadsheets and SPSS software (Lapponi, 2000). Continuous variables were subjected to descriptive statisti-

cal analysis, reliability analysis, and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha). Once the results were obtained, they were subjected to parametric tests to analyze the relationship between independent categorical variables through ANOVA comparisons and t-tests between groups with subsequent Tukey tests. These tests allow for the determination of significant differences between the means of dependent variables and the categories within the same independent variable (Pallant, 2013).

Levene's test was also processed to check if the dependent variables met the assumption of equal variance ($p > 0.05$), followed by analysis of bilateral significance ($p < 0.05$) between the means of the analyzed categories (Pallant, 2013).

The sample of individuals surveyed was predominantly composed of participants aged between 18 and 25 (52.1%) and between 26 and 40 years (35%). Regarding the field of study, the majority were from exact sciences (53.8%) and human sciences (39.5%). Additionally, the division between men and women was equitable (49% women and 51% men).

In the following sections, the constructs formed by the continuous variables are presented and discussed: (i) *use of social media platforms for job search*, and (ii) *awareness of Cybervetting*.

Use of social media platforms for job search

The group of questions had a Cronbach's alpha consistency index of 0.715, and two variables were discarded due to their negative contribution to the reliability of the group. Table 1 shows the mean values and standard deviations found.

Table 1

Use of Social Media Platforms for Recruitment and Selection: Means and Standard Deviations

Social Media Platforms Used for Job Search	Mean	Standard deviation
P1 Facebook	1,84	1,17
P2 Instagram	1,97	1,19
P3 Twitter	1,34	0,77
P4 Linkedin	3,71	1,37
P5 WhatsApp groups	2,23	1,34
P6 Telegram groups	1,48	0,95
P7 Tik Tok	1,12	0,43

The data in Table 1 show that LinkedIn is the most frequently used platform for job searching among respondents, with a mean score of 3.7. The other platforms had mean scores lower than 2.2 in this regard.

Subsequently, the relationships between the four categorical independent variables (Gender, Age Range, Field of Study, and Level of Study) and the 7 dependent variables representing social media platforms (P1 to P7) were analyzed. Table 2 presents the results of the analysis, highlighting

the variables that met the assumption of homogeneity of variance and the bilateral statistical differences between groups.

Table 2

Use of social media platforms in R&S: ANOVA Tests

Question	Gender		Age		Science field		Study level	
	Levene sig. p > 0,05	Two-tailed sig. p < 0,05	Levene sig. p > 0,05	Two-tailed sig. p < 0,05	Levene sig. p > 0,05	Two-tailed sig. p < 0,05	Levene sig. p > 0,05	Two-tailed sig. p < 0,05
P1	,121	,044	,164	,197	,456	,000	,065	,119
P2	,003	,000	,030	,002	,702	,004	,218	,038
P3	,319	,635	,147	,380	,043	,493	,151	,646
P4	,450	,554	,462	,948	,777	,001	,779	,788
P5	,257	,002	,011	,043	,436	,015	,059	,282
P6	,239	,477	,087	,378	,465	,792	,639	,841
P7	,000	,077	,000	,069	,651	,903	,487	,845

Note. P1 Facebook; P2 Instagram; P3 Twitter; P4 LinkedIn; P5 WhatsApp; P6 Telegram e P7 Tik Tok

The analysis of the data in Table 2 indicates that variables P1, P2, P4, and P5 meet the assumption of equal variance ($p > 0.05$), followed by the analysis of two-tailed significance ($p < 0.05$) between the means of the "Field of Study" variable. Thus, the means obtained for each of the groups within the "Field of Study" variable were subsequently analyzed, as this was the only variable that met the assumptions. Table 3 presents the obtained results.

Table 3

Use of Social Media Platforms for Recruitment and Selection: Means by "Field of Study" Categories

Variable	Field of Study		
	Biological	Humanities	Exact
P1	2,82	1,84	1,73
P2	2,59	2,05	1,85
P3	1,36	1,28	1,37
P4	2,75	3,73	3,79
P5	2,89	2,27	2,12
P6	1,43	1,44	1,50
P7	1,08	1,11	1,12

Nota. P1 Facebook; P2 Instagram; P3 Twitter; P4 LinkedIn; P5 WhatsApp; P6 Telegram e P7 Tik Tok

The results indicated that Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp are more frequently used by individuals working in the field of biological sciences. Additionally, these individuals in the biological sciences use LinkedIn less frequently compared to respondents from the fields of humanities and exact sciences.

Cybervetting

To assess the perception that individuals in the sample have regarding the practice of Cybervetting by recruiting companies, a cross-tabulation was performed using Pearson's chi-square test (χ^2) along with Phi and Cramér's V tests. The two variables used were: (P8) "I believe that I could be disadvantaged in a recruitment and selection process if I post something inappropriate on my social media profile," versus (P9) "I am very careful with my posts on social media platforms," both of which had three response categories (no, don't know, yes). Table 4 presents the results obtained.

Table 4

Perception about Cybervetting

Conciouseness about ***Cybervetting***		P8 I believe that I could be disadvantaged in a recruitment and selection process if I post something inappropriate on my social media profile			**Total**
		No	**I don't know**	**Yes**	
P9 I am very careful with my posts on social media platforms	**No**	28	14	38	**80**
	I don't know	5	31	59	**95**
	Yes	12	13	274	**299**
	Total	**45**	**58**	**371**	**474**

The Pearson chi-square tests, likelihood ratio (Likelihood Ratio), and linear-by-linear association tests all showed bilateral significance (sig. = 0.000). The obtained Phi and Cramér's V values indicate a moderate correlation (= 0.534) and are significant (Sig. = 0.455).

Thus, the results from this phase of the research show that nearly 80% of participants believe they could be disadvantaged by inappropriate posts on their social media profiles and, therefore, are very careful with what they post. Additionally, even among those respondents who claim not to be cautious about their posts, nearly 50% believe they could be disadvantaged

Presentation and Analysis of Qualitative Data

The data collection instrument included a final open-ended question, allowing participants to provide an opinion or comment on the research topic. Out of the participants, 138 responded to this question, and 45 responses related to participants' perceptions of the use of social media platforms in recruitment and selection (R&S) were identified. The analysis of these 45 responses was conducted through a line-by-line coding process. This process involved two rounds of coding by each author until the codes that formed the subcategories were identified. Subsequently, subcategories and categories were defined, following the guidelines of Charmaz (2006), as presented in Figure 1.

The line-by-line analysis resulted in 132 coded excerpts categorized into 28 codes, generating 9 subcategories. These subcategories were then grouped into 3 categories: *positive aspects*, *negative aspects*, and *LinkedIn*.

For example, the process was operationalized as follows: participant P14 reported believing that "recruitments involving social media for selection exceed the amount of information needed about the candidate." This line was linked to the subcategory "Inadequate Oversight" and assigned to the category of negative aspects, as it represents a negative point raised by the respondent.

Negative aspects

The "Negative Aspects" category highlights how participants refer to the use of social media platforms in recruitment and selection processes with negative assessments. Thus, the subcategories and analysis codes related to this category are presented in Figure 2 and analyzed as follows.

Figure 1

Negative aspects

Subcategory	Code	Code example
Inadequacy	Negative surveillance	There is a scrutiny over what is posted that is not positive (P1)
	Organizational abuse	Companies cross professional boundaries and invade areas that are illegal in a selection process (P152)
	Inappropriate tool	Relying solely on social media evaluation would not provide an accurate reflection of the candidate's profile (P86)
	Disagreement on use	Except for LinkedIn, other platforms should not be considered by the recruitment team (P31)
Coercion	User docilization	"Professionals replicate a pattern of behavior on social networks" (P4)
	Behavioral coercion of the user	"The connection between a social profile and a selection process can coerce people into feeling restricted in what they post on platforms" (P14)
	Conditional posting	"Posts can be manipulated to project an image that may not reflect reality." (P37)
Separation between people and personal	Informal environment	"They are not a good means of profile analysis, as platforms like Facebook and Instagram are personal, and people are more relaxed there." (P64)
	Personal x professional	"What a person does and posts in their personal life does not define whether they will be a good professional." (P8)
Negative consequences of postings	Sensitive	"People should be mindful of what they share on social media." (P46)
	Curtailment	"I deleted my social media profile." (P19)
	Setbacks	"Recently, I believe I may have been disqualified from a selection process for openly identifying as LGBT on LinkedIn.". (P220)

Some respondents view the practice as inappropriate, describing it as a form of negative and abusive surveillance by organizations. For instance, participant P152 notes that such resources "are not true to the candidate's profile," while participant P16 considers the monitoring of platforms as a form of policing. This situation imposes a type of coercion on candidates, making them feel restricted in what they post, as stated by participant P87. Additionally, this coercion affects participants' practices on social media platforms, leading them to manipulate their posts to "project an image" (P37) that aligns

with the requirements of the desired job or to refrain from posting to avoid compromising their chances.

Participants also mention that "platforms like Facebook and Instagram are personal" (P64) and used "for leisure" (P201), which makes users more relaxed when posting. They further suggest that these social media platforms are spaces where people are "more comfortable, where we share photos with our families, of parties, and social gatherings" (P254). Therefore, this informal environment is not considered "a good means of profile analysis" (P31). However, participants note concrete negative consequences of using social media in recruitment and selection processes, ranging from voluntarily leaving the platforms, as stated by participant P19, to being disqualified from a selection process due to personal views rather than professional capability, as noted by participant P220, who identified as "LGBTQ on LinkedIn."

In summary, participants end up behaving differently from how they would on social media platforms due to the perceived risk of being adversely affected by personal and intimate issues during recruitment and selection processes, given the ease with which organizations can access their profiles. This indicates that organizational access to platforms may lead candidates to manipulate their profiles.

Positive aspects

The category "Positive Aspects" highlights how participants view the use of social media platforms in recruitment and selection processes in a positive light. Thus, the subcategories and analysis codes are presented in Figure 2 and analyzed as follows.

Figure 2

Positive aspect category

Subcategory	Code	Code example
Deepening	Personal profile	It's another way for the employer to get to know the candidate on a more personal level. (P3)
	More information	"They are an amazing tool that facilitates the collection of data about the candidate." (P150)
	Real profile	"Social media shows the real profile of the candidate." (P150)
Adequação	Company's right	"I believe that companies have the right to review the social media profiles of their recruits." (P36)
	Favourable opinion	"I don't think it's inappropriate for companies to request Facebook or Instagram profiles as part of recruitment and selection." (P61)
Uso ferramental	Important tool	"Social media platforms facilitate the entire recruitment process, as it is easier to find information." (P88)
	Assistant tool	"They (platforms) can assist in the selection process, but they should not be the sole method for these processes." (P48)
	Candidate tool	"I believe that the use of social media in the recruitment process also benefits the candidate who is seeking a specific position." (P88)

Participants consider that access to social media platforms by organizations is appropriate and that "companies have the right to review the profiles (on social media) of their recruits" (P36). In this regard, participants see positive aspects for the organization, such as the ability to use social media profiles "as an additional way for the employer to get to know the candidate more personally" (P3), "facilitate data collection," and provide a space that "shows the candidate's real profile" (P150).

It was also observed that participants view social media platforms as important tools for organizations because by monitoring "what the candidate usually posts," they can "understand whether this person is a good fit for the role or not" (P215). However, participants also state that the analysis of these technologies should be an auxiliary tool in "selection processes but should not be the sole method for these processes" (P48). From a positive perspective on the use of platforms in recruitment and selection processes, participants also mention that their analysis "also helps the candidate who is seeking a specific position," as it is "easier to find information" in this space (P88).

In summary, some participants believe that analyzing social media platforms is an organization's right in recruitment and selection processes, especially as it provides more real information about candidates. This would be important for finding the candidate who best fits the position and for the candidate to secure the desired role.

LinkedIn

The LinkedIn category highlights how participants refer to the LinkedIn platform in their written responses and its relationship with the recruitment and selection (R&S) process. To analyze this category, Figure 3 includes the subcategories and analysis codes.

Figure 3

LinkedIn Category

Subcategory	Code	Code example
Sufficiency	Focused tool	Only LinkedIn is Focused on Professional Purposes (P181)
	Complet	On LinkedIn, we can see academic achievements and professional experiences(P3).
Maintenance	Updated	"I have my LinkedIn profile due to the corporate emphasis on the platform and keep it updated." (P19)

Initially, it is relevant to mention that LinkedIn is the preferred platform among participants when searching for job vacancies, as presented in the quantitative phase of the research. In this sense, participants evaluate this social media as the most suitable for use in recruitment and selection processes because it is a platform "focused on professional purposes" (P181). This focus, to which participant P181 refers, is related to the fact that LinkedIn allows candidates to include and present "academic and professional experiences," as reported by participant P3. It is also noted that participants understand

LinkedIn as a platform constructed as a professional space by corporations, leading them to keep their profiles updated, as participant P19 affirms.

In summary, participants consider the use of LinkedIn in recruitment and selection processes as appropriate, given its primary focus and the ability for users to present and share specific and relevant information for these processes. This is supported by participants' statements that they update their profiles on the platform with the purpose related to their professional domain.

DISCUSSION

This article aims to analyze candidates' behavior regarding the use of social media platforms in recruitment and selection processes, as well as their perceptions of organizations' analysis of these platforms. These technologies have become important tools for recruiters in recent years, providing efficiency and broad access to various information for free.

The data analysis revealed differences in how students from different scientific fields perceive various social media platforms. LinkedIn was identified as the most used platform by participants for professional matters, while they are also aware of other platforms being used by organizations to access additional information.

The first contribution of the study is related to the literature on recruitment and selection. Although previous studies have highlighted the relevance of social media for R&S processes, the focus has been on aspects such as information collection about candidates and its effectiveness (Blumen & Cepellos, 2022; Si et al., 2023). However, this study advances this investigation by analyzing the characteristics of candidates that influence their choice of platform. For example, participants linked to the biological sciences field showed a preference for platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp for job searches, possibly due to the less professional nature of these areas.

The second contribution of the article is related to the access and use of social media in recruitment and selection processes, specifically the topic of cybervetting. In this sense, the literature on the subject has shown that candidates are aware that platforms focused on professional life, such as LinkedIn and Lattes, are being analyzed (Melton et al., 2018). Furthermore, foreign literature has observed that candidates believe aspects such as ethnicity and appearance can be evaluated in recruitment processes (Berkelaar et al., 2015) and noted a potential compromise in organizational justice when adopting such practices (Akbulut et al., 2024). In contrast, this study shows a different perspective, as candidates themselves acknowledge being aware that their personal social media networks, like Instagram, can be analyzed in R&S processes. Another aspect highlighted by this study is the candidates' perception of issues that may be considered in R&S processes and were not mentioned in previous studies, such as the potential harm in recruitment processes due to posts addressing issues of sexuality.

The third contribution of the article is also related to R&S literature, specifically on cybervetting. The literature had already presented analyses of this practice as an established practice among recruiters (Backman & Hedenus, 2019; Sallach et al., 2024), including discussions among professionals suggesting more effective practices (Backman & Hedenus, 2023). However,

this study highlights that among the participants, the practice is also subject to questioning and condemnation. In this sense, the relevance of considering all parties involved in R&S processes, their concerns, and expectations is observed.

Finally, we contribute by suggesting the concept of a performative online recruitment and selection process. In this sense, studies addressing R&S and cybervetting have analyzed candidates' perceptions quantitatively (Akbulut et al., 2024) or how publications on professional platforms can influence the process (Melton et al., 2018). Thus, this study advances the topic by presenting a practice where candidates produce content to increase their chances of hiring or avoid being vetoed in selection processes. In this way, candidates, recognizing that they may be evaluated based on their posts on personal social media platforms, create content performing what they believe aligns with the desired behavior by organizations and recruiters. This behavior underscores the need for candidates to exercise caution when using social media, considering the potential impact of their posts on their job opportunities.

These contributions provide important insights into understanding the role of social media in recruitment and selection processes and highlight the need for an ethical and conscious approach to using these platforms by both candidates and organizations.

FINAL REMARKS

This study was motivated by the objective of analyzing candidates' behavior and perceptions regarding the use of social media in recruitment and selection processes. It was observed that recent research has primarily focused on recruiters' perceptions of this practice (Blumen & Cepellos, 2022; Ore & Sposato, 2021), leaving the candidates' perspective as a secondary concern. The study was conducted with candidates of various ages and fields of study at a federal university in Southern Brazil.

Qualitative responses revealed differing perceptions among the participating candidates regarding the use of social media by recruiters, particularly those considered personal, such as Facebook and Instagram. Thus, the categories identified in the qualitative analysis indicated both candidates who find the analysis of these social media by organizations appropriate, viewing it as an organizational right, and candidates who perceive the practice as inappropriate due to the personal nature of these platforms.

Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature on recruitment and selection by highlighting social media as significant means of candidate referral and legitimization. Additionally, it suggests the concept of performative online recruitment and selection, where candidates craft performances on personal social media with professional objectives.

From a managerial perspective, the study points to the need for a better understanding of the aspects involved in organizations consulting candidates' personal social media, aiming to balance organizational demands with candidates' expectations. It also emphasizes the importance of developing discussions and policies that address the topic of cybervetting,

considering its ethical implications not only in the workplace but in society at large.

A limitation of the study is that it was conducted at only one public university, but this also opens possibilities for future studies encompassing other fields of study. Regardless of the methods used to understand the use of social media in recruitment and selection processes, it is crucial that such initiatives continue to stimulate debate and reflection on the subject. The discussion carried out in this study was relevant not only for the results obtained but also for promoting questioning about the use of social media in these processes.

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