

## FACEBOOK CONTENTS AND JOB RECRUITMENT: AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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**Abstract.** This paper presents an experimental study exploring the effect of Facebook applicants' content on the recruitment decisions made by job recruiters. Facebook content is divided into professional and non-professional contents. We employ 40 participants in this experimental design. Our results show that the applicants' Facebook contents significantly affect the recruitment decisions which is indicated by the difference of choice from the first phase to third phase. Qualified applicants are associated with more professional contents on their Facebook accounts.

**Keywords:** Facebook, Content, Recruitment, Experimental Design

**Abstrak.** Penelitian ini menyajikan sebuah studi eksperimental yang mengeksplorasi pengaruh konten pelamar *Facebook* pada keputusan rekrutmen yang dibuat oleh perekrut pekerjaan. Konten *Facebook* dibagi menjadi konten profesional dan non-profesional. Penelitian ini menggunakan 40 peserta dalam desain eksperimental. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa konten *Facebook* pelamar secara signifikan memengaruhi keputusan perekrutan yang ditunjukkan oleh perbedaan pilihan dari fase pertama hingga fase ketiga. Pelamar yang memenuhi syarat dikaitkan dengan konten yang lebih profesional di akun *Facebook* mereka.

**Kata kunci:** *Facebook*, Konten, Rekrutmen, Desain Eksperimental

### INTRODUCTION

Social media has now significantly been employed in organizational process (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; El Ouiridi *et al.*, 2014A). For instance, it has become part of the employee selection mechanism (Gibbs *et al.*, 2015; El Ouiridi *et al.*, 2014B). Job recruiters make use of social media in filtering job applications, distribute job vacancies, know the characteristics and background of job applicants and then assess the applicants (Melanthiou *et al.*, 2015).

Social media-based assessments differ from conventional processes. A job recruiter conducts a search at social media not only to seek job-related information of applicants but also on personal matters that are not included in the applicants' curriculum vitae (Roth *et al.*, 2016). Social media contents provide additional information that job recruiters need to assess whether the job applicant is compatible with the organization and the job description (Chiang and Suen, 2015), and formulates a variety of issues relating to the applicants that may influence the questions asked during the interview session and the recruitment decision (Knouse, 1989).

We argue here that applicants with excessive non-professional contents will negatively be assessed by recruiters and on the other hands, applicants with more professional content will positively be assessed by recruiters. In this present paper, we therefore study the effect of Facebook contents on recruitment decisions made by recruiters in the job recruitment process.

We study the implementation of social media for consideration in the employee recruitment in the context of Indonesia for some reasons. According to the data gathered from the Indonesia Ministry of Communications and Informatics (*Kemenkominfo*), in 2016, internet users in Indonesia has been reached 63 million people with 95% of them use internet to access social networking in which Facebook and Twitter are the most accessed sites. Moreover, Indonesia is the 4th biggest Facebook users following USA, Brazil and India. Furthermore, of 65 million active Facebook users, 33 million are daily users.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

**Social Media for Job Recruitment.** Social media is a collection of internet-based application enabling the creation and exchange of user-generated content outside the professional context and are available publicly (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Facebook is a social media site which was established in 2004. Facebook users can create a profile that displays personal information, interests, photographs, like, and can make friends with other users. They can also participate in various activities such as writing on the wall of a friend, commenting on the link, participate in discussion forums, and like a brand. Facebook allows the users to build or maintain social capital, to communicate with others, to follow the lives of others, and to find rumors and gossip.

A study in 2013 finds that 93% of recruiters mention that they tend to look at the applicants' social media profile, and 43% have reconsidered applicants in both negative and positive based on applicants' social media (Jobvite, 2013). Some studies show that profiles on the social media account can be used by employers to help them make decisions during the recruitment and selection process (Karl et al., 2010). Other studies reveal that some employers have used the social media in the process of screening job applicants. Moreover, Facebook profile potentially provides a valuable information to the employers about the psychological characteristics of the applicants (Stoughton et al., 2013).

When the recruiters assess the applicants' social media profiles, they generate positive and negative impressions based on information that they obtain. Recruiters' impression depends on information obtained from the applicants' Facebook account as this is an assessment of the skills and abilities associated with the job applicants (Cole et al., 2007). Negative evaluations and the possibility to resign from jobs, can be predicted by contents for instance alcohol consumption and gambling behaviors contained in applicants' social media account (Weathington and Bechtel, 2012). Based on the positive-negative asymmetric effect, positive information is less influential than negative contents in the filtering process (Madera and Chang, 2011).

Screening process based on social media has some benefits. Recruiters employing social media in such process require less effort, however, it provide much more information than a resume or curriculum vitae of applicants (Tufts et al., 2014).

Various benefits associated with the use of social media in recruitment include cost savings, increase the number of applicants reached, and the ability to reach the recruitment of certain groups (Davison *et al.*, 2011). As a screening tool, social media is able to create a public forum for assessing job applicants at a minimal cost, even allowing small businesses to get involved in the process of screening using the social media. Prospective employers can access more detailed information that allows them to make conclusions related to the character or personality of applicants that is less expensive compared to traditional processes (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). Recruiters are also benefitted by transparency of information where the personal data provided could be seen by everyone (Ollington *et al.*, 2013), where the personalities and characteristics of the applicants could easily be analyzed (Berkelaar, 2014).

**Social Media Content.** Job recruiters observe and assess multiple contents and types of social media on the applicants' profile. Previous studies show that applicants still share contents both professional and nonprofessional social media in their accounts, although they have realized that it could reflect their professional picture (El Ouiridi *et al.*, 2015).

Previous studies show when there are applicants with family-oriented or professionally oriented contents receive a better assessment than applicants with alcohol-oriented profile (Bohnert and Ross, 2010). Moreover, assessors rate the lowest score to individuals with Facebook profiles that contain disrespectful and rude speech, or photographs showing the applicants were in a party or associated with alcoholic beverages (Van Iddekinge *et al.*, 2013).

Facebook content types are divided into non-professional content and professional content (El Ouridi *et al.*, 2016, Peluchette and Karl, 2009, and Karl *et al.*, 2010). Measures used for non-professional content includes four types which are selfie photos or informal photograph (e.g wear a bathing suit); selfie photo or controversial photo (e.g air-alcoholic drink); comments on controversial topics (e.g drugs); comment in an activity that violates the policies of the university or the workplace. The measurements of the professional items contained in the applicant's profile, among others: personal information (age, gender); personality picture that emerges from the profile (photos, work experience, number of friends, hobbies and personal activities, prizes and professional awards, references and comments posted by others, and the content posted by the applicant). This item is intended to capture the initial appropriateness with the organization or job; assess social capital and human capital for the applicant (i.e the number of friends, education); and provide an assessment of the applicant's character.

Previous studies have revealed that job recruiters explore the personality of applicants through social media (Berkelaar *et al.*, 2014), due to their facility in assessing the personality of applicants by observing content of social media (Kluemper and Rosen, 2009), and instinctively evaluate the personality through the Facebook account (Kluemper *et al.*, 2012).

## METHOD

We design a quasi-experimental study, one group pretest - posttest design to address the research question (Trinugroho *et al.*, 2017). Participants are employees and

small business owners who hold at least bachelor degree and have a Facebook account. Participants who meet the criteria and have agreed to participate in this experimental research were invited to come to the class being used for the experimental study. Further, they were distributed questionnaires already contain various phases of the experiment and asked to fill out the questionnaire within 30 to 40 minutes.

Pretest done by providing a curriculum vitae (CV) of applicants to the participants, where CVs have been controlled in term of physical appearance (handsome or beautiful, height and weight) and level of education (education history, colleges, and year of graduation) of applicants making it identical. After assessing the first phase, the participants were provided a treatment by showing the applicants' Facebook page that contains non-professional and professional contents. Then, participants were asked to reassess the applicants to decide whether they qualify for the next steps or not.

**Table 1.** Distribution of Participants

Characteristics of Participants	N	Groups	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	40	Male	20	50.0%
		Female	20	50.0%
Age	40	22 - 25	10	25.0%
		26 - 29	27	67.5%
		30 - 33	3	7.5%
Job	40	Employee	30	75.0%
		Owner	10	25.0%
Work Experience (years)	40	1 - 3	22	55.0%
		4 - 6	13	32.5%
		7 - 9	5	12.5%

In this experimental design, we create ten applicants applying for the job distinguished based on their Facebook contents. For instance, applicant A has 50% professional content and 50% non-professional content. Applicant B has 75% professional content by 75% and 25% non-professional content. We scale a value of 1 for qualified applicants and a value of 2 for unqualified applicants.

This experimental study consists of three phases to determine the effect of the applicants' Facebook content on recruitment decisions. Participants serve as a HR manager of a company that would select applicants for the position of marketing staff.

a. First Phase

In this phase, participants were provided with a resume or curriculum vitae (CV) of the ten job applicants. We only distinguish applicants by GPA and gender, while age, college, department, and graduation year of applicants are designed to be identical. Names and photos of the ten applicants are not included in the questionnaire

b. Second Phase

In this phase, participants were provided with information from Facebook content which is divided into 1) photos and 2) postings contained in the Facebook wall.

Photo contains all the photos on their Facebook accounts which are uploaded and tagged to friends. Facebook wall provides status updates, shared links, like, and comment. Content of photos and posts are divided into professional and non-professional content based on M. El Ouridi *et al.*, (2016).

**Table 2.** Content Classification of Facebook photos

Professional Content	Non-Professional Content
with Families (Parents, Brothers/Sisters, of Selfie Husband/Wife, Children, etc.)	on the activities of the Organization raphs that are not appropriate accordance to the norms that prevailed in the community or controversial (Hacking, Wearing bikinis, Liquor, Firearms, etc.)

Source: El Ouridi *et al.*, (2016)

**Table 3.** Content Classification of Facebook wall

Professional Content	Non-Professional Content
it posted on interests and hobbies. (Movies, Sports, Automotive, etc.)	it that includes post about something that is not appropriate accordance with the norms prevailing in the community and controversial (Alcohol, Firearms, LGBT, Crime, etc.)
it posted on daily activities (Family, Lecture activities, Organization, etc.)	it which contains news or untrusted information source so as to generate debate. (Hoaxes, racist, etc.)
it posted by others that provide a picture of someone's personal (congratulations race, when winning the race, etc.)	

Source: El Ouridi *et al.*, (2016)

### c. Third Phase

In this phase, participants were given information in the form of a combination of a resume or curriculum vitae and the Facebook content.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

As the data is not normally distributed, we employ Kruskal-Wallis test which is a non-parametric statistical tool for mean difference for independent samples. The five qualified applicants are those having smallest mean rank value.

**Table 4.** Kruskal-Wallis Test Result

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	Mean	Std. Dev	Min	Max
Recruitment Decision	400	1.50	0.501	1	2
Applicants	400	5.50	2.876	1	10
Test Statistics					
Recruitment Decision	Chi-Square	df	Asymp. Sig.		
First Phase	159.201	9	1.089E-29		
Second Phase	253.365	9	1.943E-49		
Third Phase	236.408	9	7.350E-46		

**Table 5.** Kruskal-Wallis Test Result

Recruitment Decision	N	Mean Rank		
		First Phase	Second Phase	Third Phase
Applicant A	40	125.5	140.5	110.5
Applicant B	40	275.5	115.5	115.5
Applicant C	40	250.5	105.5	125.5
Applicant D	40	125.5	245.5	135.5
Applicant E	40	185.5	295.5	285.5
Applicant F	40	275.5	115.5	145.5
Applicant G	40	235.5	285.5	285.5
Applicant H	40	125.5	135.5	220.5
Applicant I	40	265.5	270.5	290.5
Applicant J	40	140.5	295.5	290.5
Total	400			

In the first phase the information provided to the participants is limited to the applicants' CVs. In the second phase, participants were given information of applicants' Facebook content. In the third phase, participants were provided with a combination of the information contained in the CV and the applicants' Facebook content.

Applicants who pass the recruitment process are those who passed the second treatment which is the combination of CV and Facebook content. Qualified applicants are applicants A, B, C, D, and F. Applicants E, H, and J only qualify in the first phase, while applicants G and I do not qualify in the three phases of the experiment.

Only Applicants A qualify in all three phases of the experimental design. Applicants B, C, and F do not pass the initial stage but pass the first and second treatments. Applicant D passes in the first phase and the third phase but does not qualify in the second phase. Applicants E and J only qualify in the first phase but do not qualify in the second and third phases. Applicant H passes in the first and second phases but does not pass the second treatment. Applicants G and I do not qualify in all the three phases.

Characteristics of applicants who pass the recruitment process indicates that Facebook content affect the assessment process. There are some qualified applicants having lower GPA than unqualified applicants, such as the Applicants B and F (GPA 3.30) or Applicant C (GPA 3.35) have a lower GPA than Applicants E and G (GPA 3.40), Applicant H (GPA 3.50) Applicant I (GPA 3.35) and Applicant J (GPA 3.45).

**Table 6.** Characteristics of qualified applicants

Applicant	Characteristics
Applicant A	Male, GPA 3.50, posts 50% professional photos contents and 100% professional wall contents
Applicant B	Female, GPA 3.30, posts 75% professional photos contents and 75% professional wall contents
Applicant C	Male, GPA 3.35, posts 100% professional photo contents and 75% professional wall contents
Applicant D	Female, GPA 3.45, post 50% professional photo contents and 100% professional wall contents
Applicant F	Male, GPA 3.30, posts 75% of professional photos contents and 50% professional wall contents

**Table 7.** Characteristics of unqualified applicants

Applicant	Characteristics
Applicant E	Male, GPA 3.40, posts 25% professional photo contents and 0% professional wall contents
Applicant G	Female, GPA 3.40, posts 25% professional photo contents and 0% professional wall contents
Applicant H	Female, GPA 3.50, posts 75% professional photo contents and 50% professional wall contents
Applicant I	Female, GPA 3.35, posts 0% professional photo contents and 25% professional wall contents
Applicant J	Male, GPA 3.45, posts 0% professional photo contents and 25% professional wall contents

According to the results, qualified applicants are mostly those having Facebook accounts with more professional content which is indicated by the percentage of their professional content which is more than or equal to 50% ( $\geq 50\%$ ). Qualified applicants have professional content more than or equal to 50% ( $\geq 50\%$ ), while unqualified applicants have professional content less than or equal to 50% ( $\leq 50\%$ ). An exception is the applicants H (75% professional photo content and 50% professional wall content) .

According to the results which have been described above, it can be concluded that the content of Facebook has a significant impact on recruitment decisions which confirms our hypothesis.

## CONCLUSION

Our experimental study shows that a job applicant should not only rely on GPA and other academic record in winning job market. Job recruiters nowadays also consider what contents are posted by job applicants in their social media account, more

particular Facebook. Job applicants should therefore be more cautious and wiser in sharing something in Facebook and other social media accounts. However, some limitations are acknowledged. First, we only use Facebook as the proxy of social media. Second, some contingency factors could be added as a moderating variable such as gender, race, alma mater, and religion. Third, to combine with the experimental design, it might also be good to employ a survey addressed to job recruiters using questionnaire or in-depth interview.

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