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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN HUMAN RESOURCES EMPLOYMENT PROCESS*

SOSYAL MEDYANIN İNSAN KAYNAKLARI İŞE ALIM SÜRECİNDEKİ KULLANIMI
ÜZERİNE AMPİRİK BİR ARAŞTIRMA

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ABSTRACT

Social media is a recent phenomenon having a significant influence not only on individuals but also on businesses. In today's global and rapid business environment, businesses use social media in their operations in a variety of ways including advertising, marketing, customer service, etc. Businesses use social media not only in such business processes, but also human resources (HR) operations, including different stages in employment process. The objective of this study is to examine the use of social media in HR operations and its impact on HR performance. More specifically, the current study examines the impact of social media use in pre-employment, employment, and post-employment stages of HR operations. The findings of this study reveal that there is a positive and significant relationship between social media use in pre-employment as well as social media use in employment stage in HR operations, while post-employment stage social media use does not have a significant impact on HR performance.

Keywords: Social media, human resources, employment, recruitment.

ÖZ

Sosyal medya son zamanlarda ortaya çıkan sadece bireyleri değil işletmeleri de etkileyen bir fenomen olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Günümüzün küresel ve hızlı değişen iş dünyasında, işletmeler sosyal medyayı reklam, pazarlama, müşteri hizmetleri vb. başta olmak üzere birçok operasyonda kullanmaktadır. Uygulamaya bakıldığında, işletmeler sosyal medyayı sadece adı geçen işletme operasyonlarında değil, insan kaynakları (İK) işe alım sürecinin değişik safhalarında da kullanmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, sosyal medyanın İK operasyonlarındaki kullanımını ve İK performansı üzerindeki etkisini incelemektir. Daha da ayrıntılı belirtmek gerekirse, bu çalışma sosyal medyanın işe alım öncesinde, işe alımda ve işe alım sonrasındaki kullanımının İK performansı üzerindeki etkisini araştırmaktır. Araştırmanın bulgularına göre, işe alım öncesinde ve işe alımda sosyal medya kullanımı ile İK performansı arasında pozitif ve anlamlı bir ilişki vardır. İşe alım sonrası sosyal medya kullanımı ile İK performansı arasında anlamlı bir ilişki tespit edilememiştir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Sosyal medya, insan kaynakları, işe alım.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Accurate and effective communication has become one of the most important issues of today's contemporary world. Successes and failures are being linked to accurate and inaccurate communication. Rapid changes and developments in the technology and communication has led to the emergence of globalization, which created a competitive environment. In order to keep pace with this competitive environment, the use of internet and social media has become a necessity throughout the world. Social media, along with the new communication technologies, is one of the most important tools in communication. This phenomenon has affected entire world, albeit being a new concept.

Although there is no generally accepted common definition of social media, websites with social content are meant by the concept of social media. Özmen (2009) defines social media as the virtual environments that enable individuals to get together with other users by creating their own online spaces, to share various types of digital materials, such as videos, photos, new, etc., and to interact with each other. Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004) define social media as online and new information sources created, started, and used by consumers by the purpose of informing individuals with products, brands, individuals, and topics.

Emerging and increasingly pervading social media not only enables individuals to find and communicate with their friends and share information, but also becomes a platform for businesses to consider as a way of promote their brands, images, revenues, etc. In today's business environment, consumers are no longer taking action without reading consumer evaluations and comments on social media with respect to a certain product; and businesses are no longer making decisions and adjust their operations without the use of social media. Social media enables businesses to timely and directly contact with the end consumer with lower costs and larger effectiveness as compared to the traditional communication tools (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In particular, beginning from 2005, social media has become an indispensable communication tool for institutionalized corporates and brands, and the existence of businesses on the social media environment has become a necessity (Kara and Özgen, 2012). Today, it is imperative for businesses to use a social media tool in their operations in terms of prestige and reputation (Kara and Özgen, 2012).

The emergence of the digital media has led to the changes in many fields of business life. HR departments are one of these fields. Today, traditional HR practices are replaced with new approaches in which strategies and tools of digital era are used. Social media management is one of the digital practices used in HR. Social media channels, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, are being used in business interviews and collecting information related to the job candidates. The most important reason of this choice is due to the economic and rapid access to the information via social media channels. There are millions of social media users on earth, so HR departments have to consider this phenomenon in their operations (Capital, 2013).

HR departments use digital and social media in line with their goals. Bakay (2013) states that HR use social media in their activities including, but are not limited to, reaching and hiring competent individuals, talent management, crisis management, and training. McClure (2013) mentions about the findings of a study of 300 HR department employees and reports that HR departments use social media in five categories: recruitment, personnel communication, training, orientation, and team formation. Özpehlivan (2014) articulates that HR professionals use social media for communication, branding, promoting and activity, controlling the past, employee activities, benefits communication, weekly HR blog, and research, recognition as well as emergency notifications.

The adoption of social media by HR departments are lagging behind the other departments in businesses. Because corporates throughout the world create an institutional social policy, it is a necessity for HR departments to rapidly adapt to this process. The most fundamental purpose of HR is to bring in qualified human resource and increase their commitment to the firm. That's why the adaptation of the social media into the HR is of utmost significance (Aydın, 2012).

The objective of this study is to examine the impact of social media use in HR operations, including different stages in employment process, on the performance of the HR department. More specifically, this study investigates the impact of social media use in pre-employment, employment, and post-employment stages in the employment process on HR performance. For this purpose, a structured survey was conducted to the businesses in Konya, Turkey.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, research model and related hypotheses have been provided. In the subsequent section, the methodological details of the paper have been explained, along with the findings of the current study. The paper ends with the conclusion section.

2. RESEARCH MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Social media is used in many of the tasks handled by HR departments in the employment process. According to Wolf et al. (2014) employment process in HR operations takes place in several stages, including attraction, application, selection, interview, on-boarding etc. This process, which is also known as employee life cycle, begins with an employee becoming a potential candidate in the talent pool, and ends with an employee terminating his/her employment as an alumni. Wolf et al. (2014) states that HR departments use social media in each of these stages in order to communicate with the employees.

In the context of the current study, we articulate that employment of the employees by HR departments takes place in three stages spanning over time: pre-employment, employment, and post-employment. We argue that the use of social media in each of these stages will have a positive contribution to the HR operations, and improve HR performance. The following figure summarizes our research model (Figure 1):

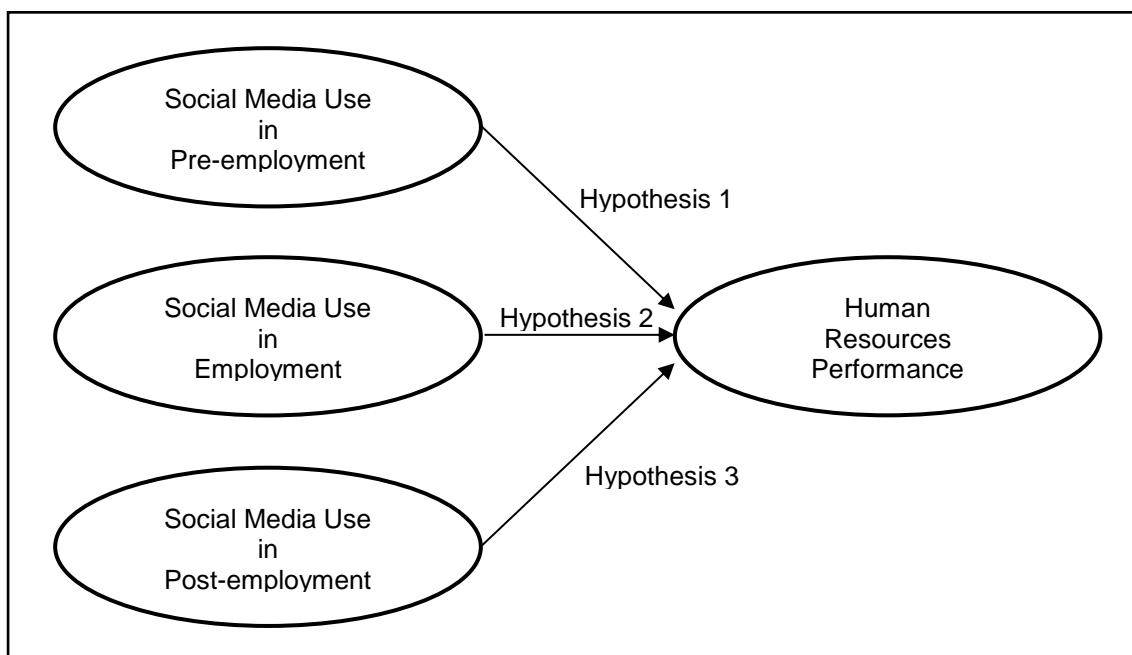


Figure 1: Research model on the use of social media in human resources employment process

Social media is widely used in pre-employment stage. According to the business and competences report published by English Commission in 2012, businesses use social media in various stages of recruitment process, including attracting potential employees and creating a positive corporate image. The findings of another study reveal that more than 90% of 500 global firms use social media for attracting potential job candidates (Broughton et al., 2013). In addition, it is also used to announce the open positions and to create a platform for discussing the sectoral and current topics. It is greatly likely that the use of the social media in pre-employment stage will improve the performance of the HR department in the employment process by increasing the quality and diversity of the people in the applicant pool. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Social media use in pre-employment stage in HR operations is positively related to HR performance.

Employment stage in HR operations benefits from the use of social media as well. Cülcüoğlu (2013) stresses that social media, LinkedIn in particular, has become a resume database. Businesses that need employees investigate the resumes in this platform and find the appropriate candidates at no cost. In addition, thanks to Facebook, businesses are able to obtain information about the candidates' personality, political view, friend environment as well as their preferences. The fact that the resumes are more honest on social media enables and encourages HR departments to use these tools (Cülcüoğlu, 2013). It goes without saying that the use of social media will positively influence the employment stage by saving time, cross-checking the information provided by the applicants, and facilitating the reference search process. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Social media use in employment stage in HR operations is positively related to HR performance.

After the employment of the employees (i.e., post-employment stage), social media is used in the business operations for several purposes in order to improve the effectiveness of the human resources. Social media technologies and communication channels enable a productive collaboration along with the participation of large communities. Businesses track and control their employees with regards to their use of social media tools. Businesses also use social media as a tool to manage global teams (Werner et al., 2012).

Social media also builds a bridge between employee attitudes and organizational culture by means of the analysis of communication models among the employees. For this reason, social media is effective for organizations to achieve their goals. Thanks to communication networks, organizations are able to have benefits by providing feedback and effective strategic position (Eisenberg vd, 2015: 147).

Based on the abovementioned discussion, we propose that post-employment use of social media will positively influence HR performance, which is summarized in the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Social media use in post-employment stage in HR operations is positively related to HR performance.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this section, we will provide details related to the research methodology, including data collection method, sampling procedure, demographic information, and data analysis.

3.1. Data Collection Method

We collected data via a structured survey in order to test the present study's hypotheses. Survey questionnaire was developed based on a comprehensive examination of relevant national and international studies. After creating the first version of the survey, feedback from the business managers as well as HR professionals have been received. The final version of the survey included three sections: (1) demographic questions, (2) statements with respect to the use of social media in HR operations, and (3) statements with respect to the HR performance. The responses from the second section are collected by the use of 5-point Likert Scale ("1" being *never* and "5" being *always*); and the responses from the third section are collected by the use of 5-point Likert Scale ('1' being *strongly disagree* and '5' being *strongly agree*).

3.2. Sampling Procedure

We conducted the abovementioned survey to HR professionals in businesses located in Konya, Turkey. In order to identify the minimum sample size, we used the procedure and table proposed by Hair, Jr. vd. (2014). As can be seen in Table 1, the minimum sample size required by the current study should be thirty.

Table 1: Minimum sample size recommendation table (Hair, Jr. vd., 2014: 21)

Maximum number of arrows pointing at a construct	Sig. level = 0.05			
	Minimum R ²			
	0.10	0.25	0.50	0.75
2	110	52	33	26
3	124	59	38	30
4	137	65	42	33
5	147	70	45	36
6	157	75	48	39
7	166	80	51	41
8	174	84	54	44
9	181	88	57	46
10	189	91	59	48

The survey was conducted in Konya, Turkey in December 2015. The surveys were distributed to 96 businesses located in this province. We received usable responses from 45 businesses.

3.3. Demographic profile of the responders

The detailed demographical information is provided in Table 2:

Table 2: Demographic profile of the responders

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	30	66,7
Female	15	33,3
Age		
20-29	11	24,4
30-39	24	53,3
40-49	7	15,6
50 and older	3	6,7
Education		
High school	3	6,7
Vocational school	5	11,1
Undergraduate	26	57,8
Master's	11	24,4
Position		
General director	2	4,4
Director	20	44,4
HR manager	11	24,4
HR representative	9	20,0
Other employees	3	6,7
Industry type		
Manufacturing	12	26,7
Service	21	46,7
Trade	12	26,7
Years of operation		
1-5 years	5	11,1
6-10 years	6	13,3
11-15 years	11	24,4
16-20 years	8	17,8
More than 20 years	15	33,3
Which unit is involved in HR operations?		
No HR	1	2,2
Personnel department	6	13,3
HR department	35	77,8
Administrative tasks department	3	6,7

33,3% of the survey responders are female, whereas 66,7% are male. The majority of the sample (53,3%) is composed of people aged 30 to 39, with 24,4% of the sample between 20 to 29, with 15,6% of the sample between 40 to 49, while 6,7% of the sample is 50 years and older. 82,2% of the survey responders holds an undergraduate or higher degree, while the remaining responders hold a high school or vocational school degree. Of the survey responders, 48,8% is the director or general director of the business, 44,4% is HR manager or representative, while 6,7% of the survey responders possess other positions at their businesses. As for the industry type, 26,7% of the survey responders work at a manufacturing business, 46,7% works at a service business, while 26,7% works at a trade business. In the sample, the majority of the businesses (33,3%) have more than 20 years of operation, while 11,1% has 1-5 years, 13,3% has 6-10 years, 24,4% has 11-15 years, and 17,8% has 16-20 years of operation. 77,8% of the survey responders report that their firm has an HR department, while 13,3% of the firms have personnel department and 6,7% of the firms have administrative tasks department that are involved in HR activities. 2,2% of the firms report that they do not have a department involved in HR activities.

3.4. Data Analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test the measurement and structural models. To evaluate the psychometric properties of the measurement scales and to test the research hypotheses presented in Figure 1, the component-based partial least squares (PLS) approach was used. The PLS approach was selected because it is well suited for predicting data and for exploratory research models. This approach is also very suitable when the distribution of the data is non-normal. The SmartPLS software package (Version 2.0.M3) was used to estimate the parameters of the research model (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005).

According to the reliability results from testing the measurement model, the measures are robust in terms of their internal consistency reliabilities as indexed by their Cronbach's Alpha values. Cronbach's Alpha values of different measures in the research model range from 0.87 to 0.94, which exceed the recommended threshold level of 0.70 (Gefen & Straub, 2005; Nunnally, 1978). In addition, in accordance with the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981), the average variance extracted (AVE) for each measure exceeds the value of 0.50. Thus, the constructs in the research model have adequate reliability assessment.

Convergent validity of the scales was tested using SmartPLS by extracting the factor loadings and cross loadings of all the measurement items to their respective constructs. The results presented in Table 3 reveal that all of the measurement item loadings on the intended constructs were between a lower bound of 0.61 and an upper bound of 0.96 and were at least 0.10 less on their loadings on other constructs (Gefen & Straub, 2005). In addition, each item's factor loading on its respective construct was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, the loadings and cross-loadings of the measurement scales confirm the convergent validity of the measures for research constructs.

Table 3: Loadings and cross-loadings

Constructs/Items	SMUPE	SMUEM	SMUPO	HRPER
<i>Social Media Use in Pre-Employment (SMUPE)</i>				
1. Applicant pool is filled with appropriate and qualified employees by getting access to their profiles and resumes.	0,78	0,39	0,54	0,68
2. Potential applicants are reached by sharing content reflecting the corporate culture and working environment.	0,92	0,50	0,66	0,73
3. New things regarding the business are shared.	0,90	0,52	0,76	0,68
4. Information with respect to the open positions is provided.	0,84	0,60	0,54	0,66
5. A platform for discussing the sectoral and current topics is created.	0,61	0,31	0,67	0,37
<i>Social Media Use in Employment (SMUEM)</i>				
1. Social media profiles and posts of the job applicants are controlled.	0,56	0,93	0,56	0,68
2. Consistency of the the information in the resume is verified with the information in social media.	0,52	0,94	0,62	0,69
3. An impression about the personality (area of interest, friend profile, political view etc.) is gained through the examination of the profile of	0,55	0,96	0,61	0,74

applicants.				
<i>Social Media Use in Post-Employment (SMUPO)</i>				
1. A social environment is created among employees.	0,69	0,50	0,87	0,60
2. Employees are informed of the posts related to the training opportunities (seminar and conference announcements, sector related news etc.).	0,73	0,55	0,93	0,64
3. It is used for improving the coordination and collaboration among employees.	0,72	0,56	0,96	0,72
4. Posts of the employees are controlled with respect to how they represent the business.	0,53	0,60	0,75	0,66
<i>Human Resources Performance (HRPER)</i>				
1. The use of social media makes a positive contribution to increase the quality and diversity of the people in the applicant pool.	0,72	0,61	0,67	0,89
2. The use of social media provides significant cost savings in employee recruitment.	0,62	0,51	0,50	0,82
3. The use of social media provides time savings.	0,67	0,62	0,60	0,90
4. The use of social media positively affects employee commitment and satisfaction.	0,71	0,66	0,82	0,87
5. The use of social media improves the effectiveness and accuracy of reference research and control.	0,68	0,82	0,65	0,89

The research model presented in Figure 1 was created based on the assumption that there are four different constructs in the model which measures *Social Media Use in Pre-Employment*, *Social Media Use in Employment*, *Social Media Use in Post-Employment*, and *Human Resources Performance*. In order to test whether these variables measure different concepts, we established the discriminant validity via Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios of the research constructs. HTMT ratios have to be less than 0.90 in order to confirm the discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015). HTMT ratios among the constructs are provided as a matrix in Table 4. According to the findings shown in the table reveal that all of the HTMT ratios are below 0.90. Therefore, discriminant validity is confirmed, indicating that the research model constructs are empirically different.

Table 4: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratios for discriminant validity

	SMUPE	SMUEM	SMUPO	HRPER
SMUPE				
SMUEM	0,63			
SMUPO	0,88	0,68		
HRPER	0,85	0,79	0,81	

$p < 0.01$

5. RESULTS

The results from testing the research model is presented in the following figure (Figure 2):

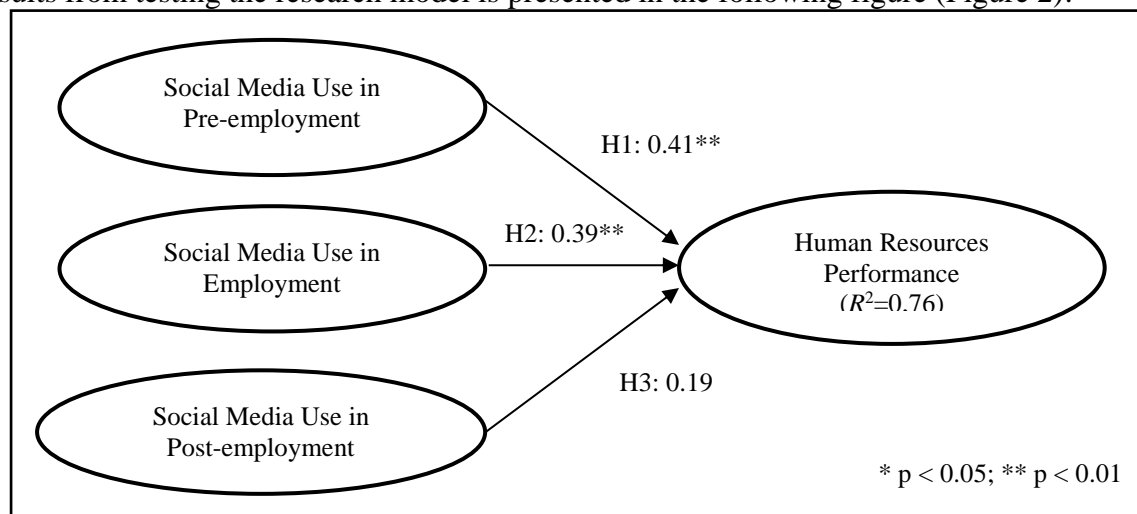


Figure 2: Results from testing the structural model

The results from testing the structural model reveal that *Social Media Use in Pre-Employment* ($\beta = 0.41, p < 0.01$) is positively related to *Human Resources Performance*. The results also show that *Social Media Use in Employment* is positively related to *Human Resources Performance* ($\beta = 0.39, p < 0.01$). Finally, the results show that no statistically significant relationship exists between *Social Media Use in Post-Employment* and *Human Resources Performance*. R^2 value of *Human Resources Performance* is at an acceptable level ($R^2 = 0.76$). Therefore, we conclude that Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 are supported, but Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

Table 5 shows the effect size values of the association between independent and dependent variables. Effect size (f^2) values indicate the level of the association between each independent variable with the dependent variable. f^2 values can be between 0 and 1. Values between 0.02 and 0.15 reveal a low impact; 0.16 and 0.35 reveal a moderate impact; and greater than 0.35 reveal a high impact (Cohen, 1988). The table shows that the the association between *Social Media Use in Employment* and *Human Resources Performance* has a high effect size value, while the association between *Social Media Use in Pre-employment* and *Human Resources Performance* has a moderate effect size value.

Table 5: Effect size (f^2) values

Association between variables	f^2 value
SMUPE → HRPER	0,28
SMUEM → HRPER	0,36
SMUPO → HRPER	0,06

6. CONCLUSION

Social media is a recent phenomenon not only attracts millions of individuals, but also becomes a platform for businesses to communicate with their consumers, employees, etc. In recent years, businesses are using social media in their human resources (HR) operations as well. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of social media use in different stages of employment process on the performance of the HR department. The current study investigates the impact of social media use in pre-employment, employment, and post-employment on HR performance. For this purpose, a structured survey was conducted to the businesses in Konya, Turkey.

The findings of this study show that the use of social media in pre-employment and employment stages of HR operations in businesses have a positive impact on the performance of HR operations. The findings also reveal that social media use in post-employment do not have an impact on HR performance.

According to the findings, HR departments should use social media even before recruiting the employees. HR departments may use social media for creating a candidate pool as well as attracting potential candidates by sharing photos and other content to show the cultural and working environment of the business. They may also announce open positions and create a platform to share ideas and make discussions of sectoral and current topics. Findings also show that HR departments should use social media during employment process. For example, one of the best ways to use social media is to check the social media profiles as well as the postings of the candidates. In this way, it is possible to have an idea about the job candidates with respect to their personality, interest fields, friend profile, political view, etc. The last but not least is that HR departments have the opportunity to use social media to check whether or not the information provided in the resumes holds true.

As for the limitations of the current study, we have to mention that it was difficult to locate businesses containing a department and employees devoted to HR operations in Konya. This fact was a major problem which limited us in the data collection process. Also, conducting the survey in only one province was a limitation in the current study. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted with caution.

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