

A Qualitative Method Analysis

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Reference: Kwok, L., & Muñiz, A. (2021). Do job seekers' social media profiles affect hospitality managers' hiring decisions? A qualitative inquiry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 46, 153–159.

Institutional Support

Regarding funding sources, Kwok and Muñiz clearly state in their article that “This research received no support from any funding sources” (p.158). However, this does not mean there is not any institutional support. The universities that the researchers work for also count as institutional support. The article identifies the universities as “The Collins College of Hospitality Management” and “California State Polytechnic University Pomona” (p.153). The explicit purpose of the research is about “how businesses may use social media in employee selection” (p.154) and about how “in the hospitality industry types of information on job candidates' social media profiles (SMPs) may affect their hiring decisions” (p.153). Moreover, this research also “. . . responds to the call for more relevant research” (p.154) and attempts to fill the gap within the literature regarding the topic.

I believe my chosen article has an implicit purpose. The information gathered through this research can be used when looking at a company's hiring trends. Also, the article cites research that suggests that assessing Social Media behaviours does not help predict a candidate's job performance and looking at the profiles of potential hires should be stopped (p.153). Therefore the implicit goal could be to provide information regarding this proposal. In addition, the researchers suggest providing feedback when talking about their research methodology; they write, “allowing us to make specific recommendations for hospitality and tourism companies from the in-depth, narrative results” (p.154). Moreover, one of the

researchers is from The Collins College of Hospitality Management, and this article looks explicitly at the hospitality industry by choosing participants only from there.

As mentioned before, the research was done to try and fill a gap within the literature. Therefore, universities may have wanted to push their researchers to indulge in this topic as it would increase the respect of the institution as they are also part of the hospitality industry.

Research Design

The researchers used in-depth interviews within my chosen qualitative research article, specifically semi-structured interviews. The article states, “We collected the qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with a protocol of 28 questions. . .” (p.155). The 28 questions used by the researchers revolved around answering two main questions for the study, what personality traits or information on social media profiles get hiring managers’ attention, and how does the personality or information shown on social media profiles affect the hiring decision (p.154).

Despite being one of the better research methods within qualitative research, in-depth interviews still have some limitations. Firstly there may be doubt if the interviewee is presenting accurate information or being hesitant and providing vague answers. This can occur due to wanting to appear socially acceptable or keep their company’s hiring practices secret. For example, in my chosen article, the participants are all in managerial positions or higher. Therefore, they could lose well-paying jobs if companies find out they leaked hiring practices. This idea has support as the article writes that many respondents answered that they do not view the social media profiles of potential hires due to privacy concerns. However, this statement contradicts prior research within the field and the conclusion from my chosen article (p.156).

Another limitation within semi-structured interviews can be the time constraint and commitment. Using probing and follow-up questions and transcribing interviews, as done within my

chosen article, adds more time to the process. For example, within the research article, the time ranged from 45-60 min per interview. This is also expensive as the interviewee might have to be compensated for their time.

Selection Strategy

The researcher selected a non-probability sampling technique, specifically purposive sampling. The researchers write, “We used a criterion-based purposefully-sampling procedure to choose 11 informants for this study” (p.155). There was only one sample of participants collected, meaning there was only 11 participants total for the study. Purposive sampling is a subjective method in which the researchers choose participants they think will provide rich information.

Limitations associated with purposive sampling are selection bias and lack of representativeness. These limitations are only magnified in a small sample size. Selection bias can occur as participants may create connections within the data due to personal or professional characteristics. For example, since people tend to know others that think like them, the researchers might have chosen many hiring managers with the same type of thinking. In addition, if the researcher has high moral standing, chances are that people they know do too. Therefore their sample of participants may think that looking at social media profiles is an invasion of privacy which is an idea that may not be shared by the population they are studying.

Moreover, lack of representativeness is another significant limitation of purposive sampling. With a sample of only 11 participants, it is hard to get a good representation of the group you want to study. This can create connections and trends within the sample without it being true in reality, and the generalizations drawn by the researchers are not trustable.

Key Concepts

From the multiple concepts used within the study, I think the most important are the “Big Five personality traits” and “hirability” (p.154). These two concepts are related and revolve around each other.

The concept of Big Five personality traits refers to five traits that can be revealed through one’s social media profiles. The traits are extroversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stabilities, and openness. These traits are used to predict “long-term success and potential for workplace deviance” (p.154) in potential hires. Hiring managers dissect a potential hire’s social media platforms to see if they have any of the five traits and if it will positively or negatively affect their performance. Therefore, these traits play a massive role in the hiring manager’s decision. Moreover, subjectivity from the interviewee’s point of view could create limitations. The researchers based their questions around the five traits but did not mention if they defined them for the participants. This can be problematic as participants may conceptualize the traits differently and may answer accordingly, making it hard for researchers to draw genuine connections and generalizations.

Another concept is that of “hirability.” The article uses this concept to represent how well of a fit someone is and how likely they are to be hired. This concept is measured through the Big Five personality traits mentioned before and by variables like education, experience, and others usually looked at on one’s resume. This concept is crucial as the study aims to determine how “hirability” is affected through an applicant’s social media platforms. One limitation is that participants of the study were not told about this concept and the attributes that contribute to it; instead, they were asked question surrounding it. This may be a limitation as hiring managers may consider attributes other than those considered within the study’s measure of “hirability.”

Research Implementation

Research implementation within my chosen article was carried out through one-on-one semi-structured interviews with 11 participants who were asked 28 questions. The article states, “We collected the qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with a protocol of 28 questions” (p.155). Of the 28 questions asked, 11 were short answer questions. However, the researchers also used probing and follow-up questions for a clear, in-depth, rich response. Furthermore, all interviews were between 45 - 60 min long and were recorded before being written out as a script to be used during coding (p.155).

Moreover, in-depth interviews often encourage interviewees to speak their minds and even go off-topic. Therefore, it is crucial to have an interviewer who can lead the conversation without going entirely off track while also not shutting down and losing important thoughts or ideas that the interviewee may have. Validity concerns may arise as it is hard to compare different interviews because the interviewer may have gone one way with one interviewee and another with other participants and may have asked incomparable questions.

The study participants were kept confidential as the article states, “. . . we ensured the informants that their identities were protected through the use of pseudonyms and by the guidelines governed by the Institutional Review Board” (p.155). Moreover, there are ethical issues related to this type of research implementation. The role of the interviewer is considered as they are placed within a position of power during the interview and can affect the authenticity of the interviewee. Consent also comes into play, especially when the interviewees are being recorded. Consent forms, if in written formats, should be simple as possible, and verbal consent should be used where needed.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study is reliable but is not without flaws. Despite using appropriate methods like semi-structured interviews, the purposive selection strategy is poor. It is hard

to draw generalizations from interviews, but using only one small sample of 11 participants weakens it even more. However, it does fill a gap within the literature and asks questions using correct techniques such as probing and follow-up. Furthermore, the researcher received in-depth and rich responses through qualitative methods, which formerly used quantitative approaches could not get. Therefore this study is reliable as it fulfils its goal of creating conversation regarding social media and its use in hiring decisions through a qualitative approach.