

Perceptions of Online Recruitment: The Case of Kuwait

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Abstract:

Background: *In both the private and public sectors, human resource (HR) departments are encountering the specific challenge of using an inherently impersonal job recruitment process to find the best candidates for positions in public service. Implementing an online application process aids in building a highly qualified talent pool while also enhancing the overall experience for the candidates. This arrangement facilitates the faster and more cost-effective appointment of candidates who are ready to serve their communities.*

Materials and Methods: *The literature on the current practices as well as advantages and disadvantages of online recruitment was reviewed. The perceptions of HR managers and personnel regarding online recruitment were explored using the case study of Kuwait. A quantitative methodology was employed via an online questionnaire developed in the study.*

Results: *The findings show wide acceptance of online recruitment practices, suggesting that both the private and public sectors have positive attitudes towards online recruitment compared to the conventional process.*

Conclusion: *This exploratory study examined HR managers' attitudes towards online recruitment in Kuwait. While they expressed that they used various social media platforms, the professional social media application LinkedIn was found to be less favored. The study shows that online recruitment is widely accepted and that its use can strengthen organizational capacity.*

Key Word: *Online recruitment, Recruitment, Human Resource, Employment, Perceptions*

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I. Introduction

The increasing pace of globalization and the advancement of new technologies have triggered rapid changes in job markets worldwide, not least in the relatively recent field of online recruitment. We here define recruitment as the process of identifying and attracting a pool of candidates with the aim of filling a specific position in the organization. Once sufficient candidates have been recruited, the selection phase begins, and both phases constitute the recruitment and selection (R&S) process – one of the areas in which organizational psychology intervention and research has had the greatest impact. A recent phenomenon in this field, online recruitment refers to recruitment via the internet that uses tools which facilitate the online reception, triage and feedback of applications from candidates [1]. The process can take place via websites, email, social media, or advanced recruitment systems [2], with the primary goal of attracting candidates whose profile is likely to be a good fit for the advertised job.

[3] revealed that candidates' responses to the details provided on the job advertisement are affected by how efficient and easy to use they perceive the application process to be. Specifically, if a candidate perceives that the job advertisement is understandable and that the application will be straightforward, they will apply. A variety of platforms are used in the online recruitment process, i.e. organizations might broadcast the job advertisement on their organizational website while maintaining a permanent system that accepts applications from job seekers even if it is not currently hiring. Indeed, the main communication channel between potential applicants and the organization is often its website [2]. Meanwhile, numerous job search websites exist, with the sole purpose of informing about job opportunities, taking applications from job seekers, and storing their relevant information, such as resumes.

The move online has allowed the recruiters to accumulate large and highly qualified talent pools, while the overall experience has also been enhanced for the candidates. Specifically, this new process allows HR managers to find the right candidates with a community-oriented service mindset more quickly and cost-effectively [4], while offering a more efficient and smooth application process for the prospective candidates. Thus, with the shift to the digital realm, talent acquisition is being increasingly performed via online recruitment. Nonetheless, there are some drawbacks to this new method of recruitment. For example, HR managers in both the private and public sectors are

currently facing the unusual challenge of having to use an impersonal recruitment process to identify the most suitable candidates for positions in public service [5]. Consequently, numerous organizations, both public and private, are focusing more on enhancing their online recruiting strategies, such as through Human Resources Information Systems (HRIS) and social media [6].

These organizations are thus migrating from conventional manual operations, which were costly and time-consuming, to exploit the advantages of online technologies, including online recruitment. This, according to [7], refers to using IT tools effectively and efficiently to introduce enhanced speed and accuracy into the process of recruitment. It is, therefore, considered to be adopting IT tools and the Internet to recruit suitable candidates for jobs rather than relying on manual recruitment processes [8]. Organizations may use various of online recruitment platforms to post a specific job advertisement, facilitating the process for potential applicants to find jobs that suit them. Social media in particular has emerged as a valuable channel through which candidates can be linked with online recruiters, with organizations beginning to take advantage of the large pools of highly skilled candidates offered by social networks [9]. However, while social media platforms can be useful, they may also contain hidden risks for both candidates and organizations, including ethical and legal considerations. For example, there is a risk of the misuse of candidates' personal information, which can affect their perception of ethics and privacy [10]. Regardless, it has been well established that online users, especially those who are most active on social media, tend to be aware of the risks, as well as the benefits, of such use [11].

Online recruitment is becoming increasingly common with the increasing digitalization of real-world practices, including those of HR departments in organizations globally [12]. Nonetheless, it has been found that integrating social media into online recruitment is still somewhat limited. In particular, the process of online recruitment encompasses more than putting job advertisements online as it incorporates several technological tools, such as keeping a comprehensive and up-to-date database to assist the HR managers in their search for suitable candidates [4]. In addition, once an organization posts a job advertisement, it must ensure that the right tools are in place for job seekers to apply, such as online forms and automatic databases that keep the sent information. Further tools include specialized selection tests, the ability to give online feedback, and online procedures that can screen unsuitable candidates. In light of this, the prior research has generally found that social media is rarely the main online recruitment channel. However, the low-cost nature of social media posts and information searches means that it is increasingly playing a complementary role in online recruitment [12].

The State of Kuwait is classed as a developing country and despite numerous supportive initiatives in this direction, its integration of online recruitment continues nascent, as it was even prior to the COVID-19 crisis. Meanwhile, despite its high living standards, Kuwait is lagging behind other nations in terms of innovation and technological capabilities. Against this backdrop, the current study seeks to explore the perceptions towards online recruitment among the staff of HR departments in the public and private sectors of Kuwait. Due to the scarcity of previous research in this field in Kuwait, the current study is likely to contribute valuable knowledge to the body of literature and serve as a reference for HR officials by offering practical guidelines for the practice of online recruitment in Kuwait.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the literature review. Section 3 outlines the case study exploring the perceptions of online recruitment in Kuwait. The results are discussed in section 4, and section 5 presents the study's conclusions and recommend directions for future research.

II. Literature Review

Online recruitment refers to the integration of technology, especially Internet resources, into the process of identifying, attracting, evaluating, and hiring suitable candidates for a position [1]. Recently, organizations have begun to migrate a significant part of their recruitment process online as this offers them enhanced speed and accuracy in matching the best candidates with the positions. Tools such as online databases, search engines and online job advertisement boards now allow organizations to fill vacant positions far more quickly than before [6]. Furthermore, online recruitment systems enable HR personnel to not only efficiently find the right candidates by also rate their suitability [12]. It should be noted that online recruitment additionally necessitates the careful prior analysis of the target candidate population as not everyone is well-versed in the use of the internet. However, as highlighted by [6], online recruitment that incorporates selection procedures is likely to be impersonal, with almost no direct personal contact between the candidate and the prospective employer [13].

[14] were among the first to explore the perceptions of job applicants who took part in the online recruitment processes. They surveyed 1360 job seekers applying to global financial services firms for positions in the United Kingdom, Belgium, and the Netherlands. Regarding applicants' personal characteristics, they revealed that candidates who were external (rather than internal), Belgian (rather than Dutch), and familiar with the Internet

(rather than less familiar) expressed greater satisfaction with the online process of application. Meanwhile, [15] investigated job seekers' perceptions of job advertisement boards using a self-administered online questionnaire survey. The respondents were recent graduates with a bachelor or master's degree in business studies and were looking for jobs online. The authors found that the respondents' perceptions affected their intention to apply for jobs via this channel. Specifically, they revealed positive attitudes to online recruitment via job advertisement boards, with these being primarily shaped by the timelines and relevance of the provided information as well as the perceived risk of privacy violation. In contrast, the respondents' intentions to use job advertisement boards to apply for positions were mostly shaped by the accuracy and timeliness of the information provided as well as the perceived risk to privacy.

[16] explored the relationship between online recruitment and social media, specifically how the process is shaped by the digital environment [17]. They found that Facebook users with above-average activity on the platform tend to prefer using and have a positive attitude towards online recruitment platforms [18]. In addition, individuals who prefer recruitment platforms over conventional channels have a different perception of online activities in comparison to the other respondents.

There are several online recruitment platforms available for organizations that wish to outsource the recruitment process. For example, Careerbuilder.com is a leader in the online recruitment field, allowing employers to attract candidates from over 100 career sources. As found by [19], organizations using Careerbuilder.com can achieve a 70% reduction in their cost per hire thanks to reduced travel costs, in addition to a 60% reduction in the time taken to find a new employee. However, online recruiting can refer to a variety of practices that blend Internet tools with human capital recruitment [11]. For instance, corporations can manage profiles on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, utilizing them as tools to draw the attention of the right talent [20, 21]. Consequently, HR managers are increasingly active on social media [22], with increasing numbers of recruiters taking advantage of the benefits offered by social media for identifying and screening the right candidates [22]. It should still be noted that technological advancements also introduce the need to identify and deliberate the advantages and challenges from both a moral and a realistic perspective. Nonetheless, HR managers' increasing usage of social media platforms to assess applicants has become an increasing trend [23] as they aim to gather additional data that is not necessarily available on applicants' resumes and application forms to ensure that only the best candidates advance to the next stage [24].

Social media platforms are online sites and applications that first took shape under Web 2.0 and are ideologically and technically grounded in it. They permit the generation and sharing of content by the users [25]. Platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn have had a remarkable impact on the daily lives of people, and this effect extends to the sphere of online recruitment. Several scholars [11, 11, 26] have asserted that the systems that have become anchored in social networks will eventually lead to a surpassing of the limitations of conventional practices, allowing the end-user to take on a more active role. This also pertains to activities that were previously not available to development organizations.

The crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has suppressed earnings and has meant that employees are being increasingly laid off. As a result, organizations are not seeking candidates to fill some of their more important vacancies. This sharp increase in competition amongst employers in the job market has given employees a surprisingly strong voice in the recruitment process. In this context, online recruitment has emerged as a way to expedite that process, offering a somewhat more level playing field for organizations [15]. A good place to start is for the firm to consider online job applications as these provide access to a wider target population of candidates. Notably, however, employers must also consider the downsides of online job applications, as discussed by previous scholars such as [27, 9, 28, 6].

The primary advantage, and certainly most frequently cited one, is the ability of online recruitment to overcome geographical restrictions, meaning even distinct populations can be reached, thereby broadening the pool of potential candidates [29]. Moreover, online recruitment allows candidates to be exposed to a greater number of job advertisements while giving them an enhanced information flow on the respective positions [6, 27]. For example, candidates have unlimited access to the job advertisement regardless of time or place [11] and can easily find information on the recruiting organization. While Alves [28] underlined the safe nature of the online recruitment process, its pitfalls also merit consideration, including the fact that it can generate extraordinarily high numbers of applications. Furthermore, difficulties can arise when using the Internet to conduct recruitment. For example, the recruiting organization must ensure that it has the technical systems in place that will allow it to keep the incoming data organized in a database. Otherwise, it will be unable to process the large volume of applications that is likely to come in [6].

In the context of local government, [28] presented eight benefits of online applications, namely cost reductions, digital storage, applicant time-savings, company time-savings, the removal of barriers, qualified and tech-savvy candidates, qualified and mobile candidates, and qualified candidates who can perform online job searches. In a similar vein, [27] found several advantages of integrating an online recruitment process, including time-savings, cost-savings, streamlined information gathering, data that can be tracked for future vacancies, increased completed applications, wider candidates pools, and the ability to introduce dynamism in job advertisements. However, [27] also pointed out the disadvantages, such as the limitations that applicants may experience, the fact that excellent candidates may be missed, the large volume of responses, the potential for application fraud, technical issues, the risk of personal data breaches, and the generally informal approach to recruiting that the online environment encourages. Finally [6] outlined some of the benefits and challenges of online recruitment. The advantages included speed, flexibility, cost-effectiveness, wide scope, dynamism, durability, accessibility and confidentiality, while the disadvantages were swiftly increasing costs, technical issues, competition, misuse of HR labor, uncertainty in terms of effectiveness, the informal nature of the process, and the fact that unsuitable or fraudulent candidates can apply.

In light of the above, the previous literature has generally found that online recruitment tends to lead to increased efficiency and a reduction in costs [11]. This is intuitive as online advertisements are generally free or extremely low cost, in contrast to physical advertisements in print, which can be costly. By moving the recruitment process online, employers can further reduce the amount of paperwork significantly. Meanwhile, some systems can also enable candidates to receive automatic feedback, which not only improves the recruitment process but also better communicates the image of the organization to the candidates [30]. The details of prospective candidates, such as their resumes, can furthermore be organized as part of databases, allowing the most suitable to be picked for any given vacancy [31], streamlining the process for HR personnel [21]. The above literature review has found that the still somewhat nascent field of online recruitment is relatively underexplored, particularly with regard to the characteristics of the candidates who are using the online recruitment process [32]. The current study aims to fill this gap by examining the profiles of candidates who use online job applications through the lens of HR theories.

III. Case Study: Online Recruitment in Kuwait

Purpose and Sample of the Study

The following section presents the research design and methodology. This explorative study aims to examine the perceptions of HR managers and personnel regarding online recruitment in the state of Kuwait. To do so, it elicits the opinions and attitudes of the study participants (499 male and female) regarding online recruitment, seeking to assess its effectiveness and examine the challenges in the context of online recruitment in Kuwait.

Evaluation Tool

The study data were gathered using a quantitative methodology and an online questionnaire survey adapted from a number of previous studies in the field [33, 34, 35]. The survey was disseminated electronically, aiming to reach members of HR departments, including managers and other staff. The three-part questionnaire was constructed using appropriate questions and scales. Part 1 gathered participants' demographic data, part 2 explored the frequency of their use of common social media platforms, and part 3 measured the study variables involving online recruitment. The questions in part 3 used 5-point Likert-type scales with 1 for "Strongly Disagree", 2 for "Disagree", 3 for "Neutral", 4 for "Agree", and 5 for "Strongly Agree". The questionnaire's feasibility was assessed during a pilot survey, whereby the initial results were also validated. Based on the pilot survey, some improvements were made to the questionnaire. The questionnaire's reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha, calculated in SPSS, which has a total score of 0.93. This demonstrates that this questionnaire can be generalized to the basic study sample, and that the results are trustworthy.

Results

1. Participants' Background Information

The study participants comprised 499 male and female HR managers/personnel working in public and private sectors in Kuwait, as shown in Table (1).

Table no 1 : Characteristics of the participants (499 respondents)

Characteristics	Number	Percentage %
<i>Q1. Gender</i>		
Male	160	32.1%
Female	339	67.9%

Q2. Working		
Public	356	71.3%
Private	143	28.7%
Q3. Age		
20-30 years	336	67.3%
31-45 years	116	23.2%
More than 45 years	47	9.4%

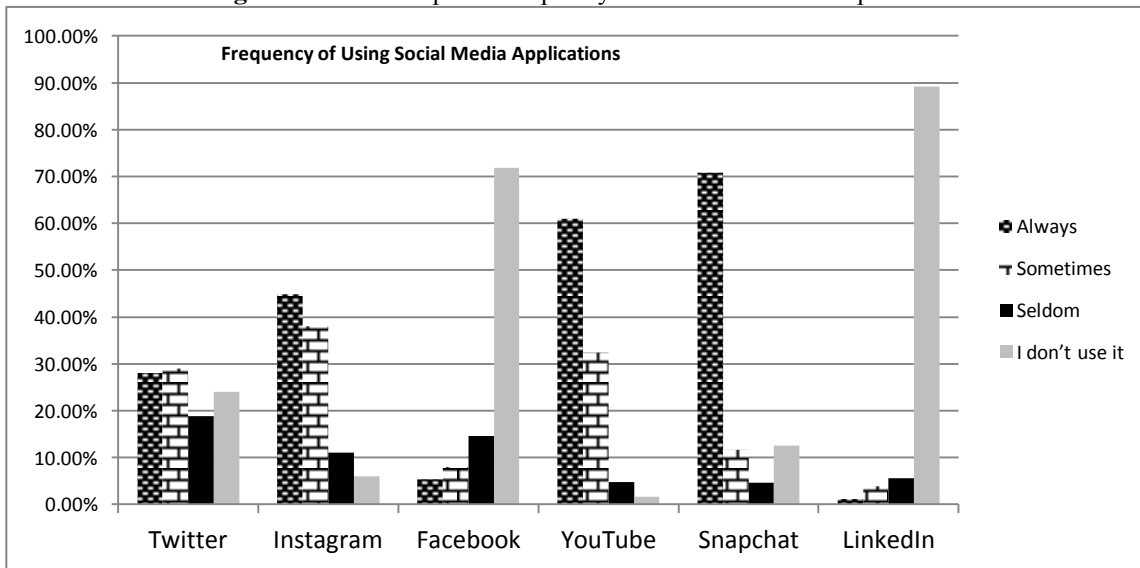
2. Participants’ Frequency of Use of Social Media Platforms

Part 2 of the questionnaire examined the participants’ frequency of use of social media platforms, namely Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, Snapchat, and LinkedIn, as shown in Table (2) and Figure (1).

Table no 2 : Participants’ frequency of use of social media platforms

No.	Application	Always	Sometimes	Seldom	I don’t use it
1.	Twitter	28.1%	29.1%	18.8%	24.0 %
2.	Instagram	44.9%	38.1%	11.0%	6.0%
3.	Facebook	5.4%	8.0%	14.6%	71.9%
4.	YouTube	61.1%	32.5%	4.8%	1.6%
5.	Snapchat	70.9%	11.8%	4.6%	12.6%
6.	LinkedIn	1.2%	4.0%	5.6%	89.2%

Figure no 1 : Participants’ frequency of use of social media platforms



3. Participants’ perception of online recruitment

The online questionnaire was completed by 499 participants. The data were quantitatively analyzed using SPSS with the results presented as percentages, means, and standard deviations (SD). Table 3 gives the results for the HR managers/personnel, reflecting their perceptions of and attitudes towards online recruitment.

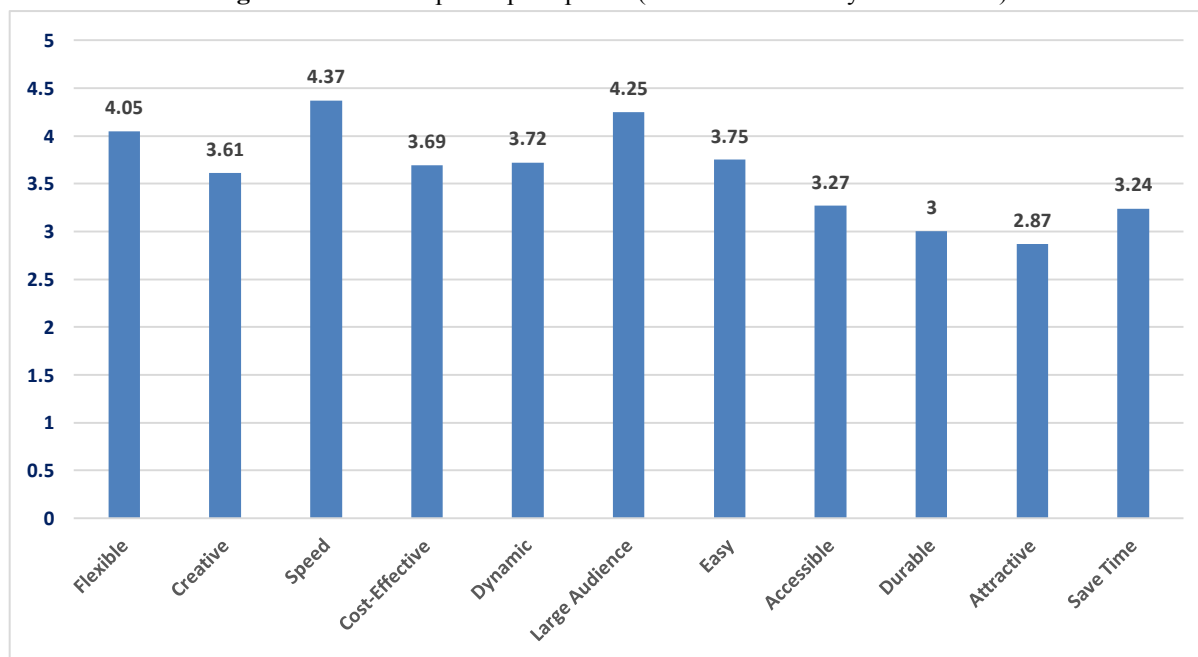
Table no 3 : Participants’ perceptions and attitudes regarding online recruitment

No.	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean	SD
Q1	Online recruitment is flexible. (Flexibility)	202	183	66	32	16	4.05	1.040
		40.48%	36.67%	13.23%	6.41%	3.21%		
Q2	Posting a job online or via social media	127	150	140	64	18	3.61	1.106

	platforms gives you a chance to be more creative with your ad. (Creativity)	25.45%	30.06%	28.06%	12.83%	3.61%		
Q3	Online recruitment speeds up the recruitment process. (Speed)	272	166	44	9	8	4.37	.844
		54.51%	33.27%	8.82%	1.80%	1.60%		
Q4	job advertisement online is cost-effective. (Cost-effectiveness)	144	161	117	50	27	3.69	1.148
		28.86%	32.26%	23.45%	10.02%	5.41%		
Q5	Online recruitment is dynamic. (Dynamism)	142	175	108	49	25	3.72	1.127
		28.46%	35.07%	21.64%	9.82%	5.01%		
Q6	Online recruitment can reach a bigger audience. (Scope)	238	184	55	8	14	4.25	.918
		47.70%	36.87%	11.02%	1.60%	2.81%		
Q7	Job advertisement online makes the process clear, easy to understand and user-friendly. (Ease)	119	220	95	48	17	3.75	1.030
		23.85%	44.09%	19.04%	9.62%	3.41%		
Q8	Online recruitment is accessible. (Accessibility)	103	124	133	84	55	3.27	1.270
		20.64%	24.85%	26.65%	16.83%	11.02%		
Q9	Online recruitment is durable. (Durability)	74	95	161	97	72	3.00	1.248
		14.83%	19.04%	32.26%	19.44%	14.43%		
Q10	Job advertisements online attract good candidates. (Attraction)	49	97	167	114	72	2.87	1.175
		9.82%	19.44%	33.47%	22.85%	14.43%		
Q11	Online applications save candidates' time. (Time-savings)	75	136	162	86	40	3.24	1.14
		15.03%	27.25%	32.46%	17.23%	8.02%		

Figure 2 illustrates the factors that reflect the perceptions and attitudes of HR managers/personnel towards online recruitment, as investigated and listed in Table 3. These factors are flexibility, creativity, speed, cost-effectiveness, dynamism, scope, ease, accessibility, durability, attractiveness, and time-savings.

Figure no 2 : Participants' perceptions (factors measured by mean values)



IV. Discussions and Conclusion

Concerning participants' frequency of use of social media platforms, the results revealed that Snapchat was ranked first, YouTube second, and Twitter third. Surprisingly, Facebook and LinkedIn, which are considered professional social media sites, were ranked last. This is especially remarkable for LinkedIn as it is the main platform on which job seekers post their resumes and professional profiles. As highlighted by [10], LinkedIn, like many other professional networking platforms, offers a targeted and easily available pool of talent that recruiters can search for the best candidates in line with the profiles provided. Indeed, numerous organizations already maintain Facebook and LinkedIn pages, utilizing them as tools through which to advertise jobs and attract the right talent [21].

As shown in Table 3, the first statement, "Online recruitment is flexible" elicited positive opinions from the participants concerning "Flexibility", with a mean value of 4.05. This finding is in line with that of [6], who revealed flexibility as one of the main advantages of online recruitment. The second statement, "Posting a job online or via social media platforms gives you a chance to be more advertisement" elicited marginally positive opinions from the participants, showing that they have a less positive attitude towards "Creativity", with a mean value of 3.61. Meanwhile, the participants were highly positive towards the third statement, "Online recruitment speeds up the recruitment process", showing their highly positive attitude towards the "Speed" of online recruitment, with a mean value of 4.37. This finding is consistent with that of [27]. The participants' response to the statement "job advertisement online is cost-effective" showed that they to a certain extent agree with the advantage of "Cost-effectiveness", with a mean value of 3.69. Similarly, the statement "Online recruitment is dynamic", indicating their attitudes towards "Dynamism", received a similar response from the participants, with a mean value of 3.73.

The statement "Online recruitment can reach a bigger audience", demonstrating the participants' attitudes towards "Scope", showed that it was highly appreciated by them, with a mean value of 4.25. Hence, they consider that online recruitment can allow a wider pool of applicants to apply, which provides support to the findings of [28]. Meanwhile, the statement "Job advertisements online make the process clear, easy to understand and user-friendly" received agreement from the participants, showing that they believe in the "Ease" of online recruitment, with a mean value of 3.75. Concerning the statement "Online recruitment is accessible", it received marginal agreement from the participants, reflecting their views on the "Accessibility" with a mean value 3.27. However, the participants were neutral about the "Durability" of online recruitment, with a mean value of 3.0, which contradicts the findings of [28, 6]. Similarly, the participants did not consider online recruitment to have "Attractiveness"; their opinions towards the statement "Job advertisements online attract good candidates" were between disagree and neutral, with a mean value of 2.87. Regarding "Time-savings" the participants responded to the statement "Online applications save your candidate time" with marginal agreement, with a mean value of 3.24.

These findings strongly indicate that most of the participants, whether HR managers or personnel, perceive the process of online recruitment to be overall appealing as provides freedom in the recruitment process. For example, they can easily retrieve the profiles of applicants when necessary regardless of time or place, thereby saving time and costs. Hence, the crucial value of mobility is highly appreciated by the main actors in the process [32]. Eleven factors were investigated in this study, namely flexibility, creativity, speed, cost-effectiveness, dynamism, scope, ease, accessibility, durability, attractiveness, and time-savings. Of these, speed, scope, and flexibility were ranked first from the perspectives of the participants, while durability and attractiveness were ranked last.

In summary, this paper explored the attitudes and perceptions of HR managers/personnel towards online recruitment. The author has found a variety of results concerning the relationships between the use of social media platforms and the success factors of online recruitment. It should be noted that individuals who are more likely to intensively use social media platforms tend to have different views about websites offering online recruitment services. Hence, the study participants are likely to share similar perceptions concerning the efficiency inherent in the online recruitment process as well as in their intentions to use such platforms and tools. It should be noted here that while the majority of the participants held a positive attitude towards online recruitment, they preferred to not use professional social media platforms, such as LinkedIn. The analysis of the evolution of the Internet underlines that the conventional strategies of recruitment are being replaced with digital tools and methods, with most individuals demonstrating a positive attitude that encourages them to embrace this shift. Online recruitment offers numerous opportunities to greatly enable and streamline job applications as well as the hiring process. In light of this, this paper has made its contribution by highlighting the perceptions towards online recruitment held by HR managers and personnel in Kuwait, which can be used by professionals to improve their organizations' online recruitment processes.

Future work in this area should continue to focus on online recruitment while incorporating an investigation into whether differences in participants' age and gender have an impact on their perceptions of this issue. Moreover, the perceptions of HR managers may also differ between the public and private sectors; this is a crucial point that requires further investigation. Finally, there is a need for more work on how to design and deliver effective online recruitment systems based on usability factors, i.e. the user experience, while taking the local cultures and traditions into account.

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