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Social networking information and pre-employment background check: mediating effects of perceived benefit and organizational branding

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this empirical paper is to identify the role of social networking information (SNI) on job candidates' pre-employment background checking (PBC) process. SNI was further divided into three elements: perceived availability of information (PAI), perceived accuracy of information (PACI) and perceived reliability of information (PRI). In addition, the authors employed two mediating variables: perceived benefit (PB) and organizational branding (OB) to study the influence of each element of SNI on PBC.

Design/methodology/approach – The authors used primary data collected from a valid sample of 465 using a structured questionnaire survey selected through purposive sampling. For descriptive analysis, SPSS 24 and for testing the hypothesized relationships, structural equation modeling technique (with AMOS 24) were utilized.

Findings – The results indicated that only PAI had strong positive influence on PBC. The other two independent variables: PACI and PRI had insignificant positive influence on PBC. In case of mediators, OB was found to partially mediate the relationship between PAI and PBC while it did not mediate two other direct relationships. Further, PB did not mediate any relationship at all.

Research limitations/implications – The paper is expected to be useful for the academicians involved in investigating the role of SNI on PBC as a lucrative research topic.

Practical implications – The hiring professionals can utilize the findings of this primary research as the guidelines for formulating effective social media background checking policies.

Originality/value – Using SNI for different HRM practices is comparatively new but a growing practice. However, the empirical investigation covering this area is almost absent in academia. This paper as one of the very initial attempts to reveal the role of SNI on PBC can fill that severe gap to some extent and guide future research attempts. Furthermore, the HR professionals are expected to be benefitted from the empirical results in formulating and implementing an effective media policy that will help them in utilizing the SNI in an efficient and rightful manner.

Keywords Social networking sites, Social networking information, Pre-employment background check, Employers, Job candidates

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

The optimal performance of an organization is dependent mostly on how it is utilizing its competent human capital, rather than utilizing its best strategy or financial resources. Therefore, employees play a very crucial role in increasing organizational performance. As a result, organizations often try to recruit right people for the right positions as a foundation of

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key competitive advantage. In this regard, as an effective source of recruitment and selection, social networking sites (SNSs) like LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+ are particularly gaining attention of academicians, practitioners and HR professionals. SNSs can be termed as online communication and sharing platforms where it is possible to post and share the opinions, photos and videos. In addition, the users can comment on their own and others' posts, photos, messages and videos. Very recently, such online social sites are now increasingly been used as the common platforms for executing several HRM functions such as recruitment, selection and pre-employment background check (PBC) of potential employees.

A new shape of super-linked information world was evident after 2005 due to the rise of a number of SNSs such of Facebook, LinkedIn, Blogs, Google+, Twitter, Xing etc. (Aguado *et al.*, 2016). Using those social platforms, the users are able to post comments, share ideas, photos and videos. According to Internet Live Stats (2019), there is an astonishing amount of user rate of up to more than 2.5 billion for Facebook and up to 530 million and 370 million for LinkedIn and Twitter respectively while according to another source (Statista, 2019), as at the second quarter of 2019, there are 2.41 billion active Facebook users followed by 533 million LinkedIn and 340 million Twitter users respectively. Due to this large volume of users (mostly young people) and information produced, many organizations recently have started to utilize the social networking information (SNI) for various purposes such as promoting and selling products, organizational branding, recruitment and selection and even background check. In particular, SNSs have widely extended to HRM practices (Stopfer and Gosling, 2013).

As the sources of vast, cost-free information, SNSs are becoming popular among HR professionals as the recruitment and selection tools. However, solid empirical research in this particular domain is still scant. Moreover, even though a very limited number of theoretical studies were conducted based on the role of SNSs on HRM activities, majority of those took place in the western perspective. Further, such studies were limited to recruitment or examining the perceptions of candidates, rather than aiming at the issues like pre-employment background check. There is a huge and acute absence of such studies on developing or underdeveloped nations. Moreover, there is not any particular empirical study focusing on the influence of social networking information (SNI) on pre-employment background check (PBC) so far in the academia.

A limited number of theoretical papers are available in academia focusing mainly on the role of SNI on recruitment and selection in western countries (Villeda and McCamey, 2019; Holland and Jeske, 2017; Landers and Schmidt, 2016; Nikolaou, 2014; Ollington *et al.*, 2013; Kluemper *et al.*, 2012; Slovensky and Ross, 2012) with some exceptions in a few Asian countries (Hosain *et al.*, 2020; Hosain and Liu, 2020a, b; Aqeel and Siddiqui, 2019; Pramod and Bharathi, 2016). However, empirical research initiatives regarding the impact of SNI on PBC is absent both in western developed countries as well as developing or least developed countries (LDCs). Being inspired to reduce that gap as much as possible, the present study aims at identifying the role of SNI on job applicants' PBC in a South Asian country, Bangladesh.

In this study, SNI was divided into three elements: perceived availability of information (PAI), perceived accuracy of information (PACI) and perceived reliability of information (PRI). Moreover, this study added two mediators: perceived benefit (PB) and organizational branding (OB) to examine the mediating influence on the pre-assumed direct relationships. Being consistent with the background, the authors put forward the subsequent research questions:

RQ1. What is the role of SNI on PBC in the present job context of Bangladesh?

RQ2. How perceived benefit and organizational branding can mediate the relationships among the different components of SNI and PBC?

Thus, the intention of the authors is to reveal the tentative impact of SNI on the PBC in Bangladeshi job sector perspective. As the very first attempt on this latest issue, the study

findings are expected to contribute in reducing the existing literature gap as well as provide some concrete guidelines for the professionals in utilizing such big data into recent factual HRM practices such as selection and pre-selection background check effectively and efficiently satisfying both employers and candidates.

2. Literature review and development of theoretical framework

2.1 SNSs and SNI

SNSs indicate those online platforms which permit the users to generate web based individual profiles where they can interrelate to other similar users and distribute information accordingly (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). SNSs contain photo-sharing sites such as Timber, Internet Forums as well as communal profiles such as Facebook and Twitter (Lanham, 2010). In general, anyone can create a personal profile by signing up and start to contain a variety of contents like biographical information, images, videos, personal comments and many more (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). The account holders possess their personal networks of friend groups where they enjoy the right of entry to any profile they are associated with and view/like/comment on the contents posted popularly termed as "friending" by SNSs language. The extent of information a user can view depends on the sharing friend's privacy settings. Thus, some information can be publicly available (public), some information can be viewed only by friends and some contents or part of contents are not viewable at all other than to the profile owner (only me). SNSs can be solely oriented for recreational purposes (Facebook), work oriented (LinkedIn) and a kind of statement posting (Twitter). Such SNSs are the sources of vast information which is the central attraction of many other third party users such as organizations who want to promote their products or businesses, the Government agencies that want to observe and control the flow of information and very recently, the HR professionals who aim to recruit and select as well as check the candidates' background.

2.2 Pre-employment background check (PBC): the fundamentals

Pre-employment screening or pre-employment background check (PBC) is the process of looking up and compiling personal, criminal, financial and credit history as well as previous job records of a candidate. Background checks in many countries are frequently conducted by several outside agencies or third parties particularly competent in this. However, inside Bangladesh, in general, for public jobs, criminal and individual histories are investigated by respective police stations and the financial records are investigated by the Bureau of Financial Investigation. In case of private jobs, such investigations are typically conducted by the relevant organization that is going to present the job offer. Presently, PBC also includes personality, taste, working relationships, pre-employment history; and so many other factors related to personal and professional history of a job candidate.

PBC is necessary for several reasons. First, it is very obvious that employers will justify the information and facts provided on job applicants' CVs or resumes. As the candidates might be the potential future employees, it is imperative for the hiring professionals to be confident regarding provided information as true or correct. Next, any manager(s) who become unsuccessful to execute a systematic PBC regarding a candidate could be susceptible to the blame of neglectful hiring or employment bias (Levashina and Campion, 2009) Recruiters might be accountable for negligent hiring who fail to perform a pre-history check on a forthcoming staff later involves in any offense or causes any harm on a client or outsider during performing job responsibilities. Finally, some authors argue that if there are no background checks, recruiters possibly will exercise race and further apparent correlates of criminal actions to assess the possibility of a candidate's preceding negative convictions and issues into the employment judgment. Therefore, recruiters conducting PBCs are further

possibly to eradicate candidates based on exposed information, whereas those recruiters not doing so might eliminate job candidates based on apparent criminality (Levashina and Campion, 2009).

Therefore, PBC is essential to be conducted not only for a single but a number of reasons. Although, conducting PBC on a candidate does not guarantee that he/she will not commit something unusual or against the interest of the organization or perform well, it can at least make the sense that the candidate was properly screened and judged which helps the hiring professionals to be free of negligent hiring charges or accusations.

2.3 The role of SNI on PBC

The major aim of this empirical investigation is to reveal the role of SNI on PBC for job candidates. Due to the emerging popularity of SNSs like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter; an increasing number of HR professionals and employers are being interested to utilize the information accessible from such platforms (Hosain and Liu, 2019). Recruiters are utilizing SNSs more and more as the sources of background information for evaluating job candidates (Hosain and Liu, 2019; Elzweig and Peeples, 2008).

Employers use SNSs to enhance their employment efficiency (Waring and Buchanan, 2010). The practice appears to be omnipresent among employers. Approximately 93% recruiters use or are currently utilizing SNSs during hiring process and 55% have reconsidered applications based solely on the contents found on their social networking profiles (Smith, 2012). After scrutinizing such information obtained from SNSs, employers attempt to compile a more comprehensive profile of future employees than it would be available otherwise particularly as it relates to individual personalities (Kluemper *et al.*, 2012; Kluemper and Rosen, 2009). Moreover, many employers approach screening applicants using SNI as a further mean of assessing best fit with the organization or identifying "red flags" (Grasz, 2009). Such "red flags" might contain social networking contents of candidate's very personal and sensitive information such as consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs, profanity or involvement in sexually implicit behavior (Grasz, 2009). Employers often utilize such information to remove the candidates from additional consideration in hiring process. In fact, 89% HRM staffs reported a less likeliness to appoint an applicant having evidence of "unprofessional behavior" on his/her social networking profile (Waring and Buchanan, 2010).

Although organizations are expected to become fair and conscientious in hiring process to evade neglectful hiring, using SNI can raise the possibility of wrongful use of information obtained from SNSs (Waring and Buchanan, 2010; Elzweig and Peeples, 2008). Whether such misuses are intentional or unintentional, the hiring professionals are taking the danger of by making them susceptible to probable lawful consequences. By utilizing SNI for screening job candidates, which are generally considered as individual or personal information, organizations are possibly breaching privacy rights, attaining deceptive or wrong information regarding the candidates and obtaining tentative confined information a recruiter otherwise would not query about because of the pertinent service law (Slovensky and Ross, 2012; Brown and Vaughn, 2011; Waring and Buchanan, 2010; Elzweig and Peeples, 2008).

However, even being informed about the risks, the utilization of SNI by recruiters to explore candidates is a fast growing scenario (McCarthy *et al.*, 2017) as the hiring professionals require additional information not included on the of CV/resume/application form and desire to evade neglectful hiring accusations (Black *et al.*, 2015). A number of candidates were asked/requested to give their SNS particulars (such as IDs or passwords) in order to check their profiles (Berkelaar *et al.*, 2016). Although there might be some strong motivations for employers to use SNI, unregulated utilization of such reviewing procedure raises some ethical points that should be considered (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). Many employers applaud social networking PBC as it allows accumulating numerous information

regarding job candidates and it is convenient for them to forecast probable fitness between the candidate and job. On the contrary, commentators point that hiring professionals are required to be cautious in utilizing SNI to screen the candidates (Ebnet, 2012). Grave concerns regarding the trustworthiness and validity of information received from such platforms along with possible abuse, information scholars urge employers to search somewhere else for individual data rather than SNSs (Ebnet, 2012).

However, several factors relating the use of SNI on PBC needs to addressed that this study intends to cover. Therefore, for due purpose, SNI in this research was further divided into three related components: perceived availability of information (PAI), perceived accuracy of information (PACI) and perceived reliability of information (PRI). The following sections will discuss about those in brief. For investigation purpose, the authors considered two major SNSs that produce most of the job related information: personal or social (Facebook) and professional (LinkedIn). The authors argue that the professional one can provide job-related information such as skill, knowledge and experience, while the other one can help in gathering a wider range of individual information reflecting a person's true personality and behavior.

2.3.1 Perceived availability of information (PAI). A key issue relevant to the theoretical aspect of this study is whether or not the contents of social networking sites are available or not. A person might have a SNS profile without being an active user and therefore, does not post or share the pertinent information required to conduct PBC. Further, some information may not be available publicly or even to those who are "friend" or connected to those specific user(s). This is due to the fact that those specific users might lock some information or put the option "only me." As an example, in Facebook, publicly available information can be viewed by all whereas information termed as "only friends" can be viewed by friends or connected persons only. As an example, Facebook allows users to determine who are able to view specific contents, creating such become increasingly complex over time (Black *et al.*, 2015).

The users who suspect their profiles being screened by a tentative recruiter might become careful regarding the viewable contents. They may execute this in two diverse ways, either by increasing the difficulty of finding/accessing their profiles by changing their privacy settings or creating an alias or by actively monitoring their profile and selecting what is presented (Black *et al.*, 2015).

Therefore, even a candidate may have got a social networking profile; it is not certain for an employer to avail all the required information to screen a candidate for background checking process (Hosain *et al.*, 2020).

H1. There is a significant positive influential role of PAI on PBC.

2.3.2 Perceived accuracy of information (PACI). A possible uncertainty the hiring professionals may come across while searching SNI is gaining wrong or partial information (Slovensky and Ross, 2012; Dennis, 2011; Elzweig and Peeples, 2008). Such information may not be correct for a variety of causes. As an example, the profile might be fallacious or generated to show the profile holder look superior or inferior rather than what they actually are depending on the projected viewers. To express in another way, individuals might reveal themselves as "fake good" or "fake bad" on their SNS profiles based on the expected viewers (Davison *et al.*, 2011).

Former researches have recognized that the social standard of majority SNSs is to highlight overstatement and eccentric actions whereas posting by candidates might replicate such custom (Slovensky and Ross, 2012). SNI can further be out-of-date and might symbolize what a candidate was seemed to be at various stages of his/her life thus might or might not stand for how he/she is at the present time (Slovensky and Ross, 2012). Thus, information that is sought today might be misleading for the employers to be used for PBC. Using information from SNSs might guide to inequitable inferences as a result of tentative of intended or unintended inaccuracy (Waring and Buchanan, 2010). The usability of such information will be legally and ethically questionable and might require more study to conduct (Davison *et al.*, 2011).

H2. There is a significant positive influential role of PACI on PBC.

2.3.3 Perceived reliability of information (PRI). To be used as the basis of checking a candidate's background, the information must be reliable and valid irrespective of the sources. It is sometimes difficult to determine whether the candidate is the same person who posted the contents on his/her profile (Dennis, 2011). Furthermore, it is sometimes complicated to make sure whether the profile the recruiter is viewing belongs to real candidate or someone else's having the identical name (Dennis, 2011). Due to the growing popularity of SNSs, it might be likely that a SNS profile being screened does not in fact belongs to the proposed candidate rather to someone who having the identical name (Slovensky and Ross, 2012; Sronce, 2011). In such cases, incorrect or false identity is fairly an ordinary occurrence within social networking platform and is also an opportunity for cloning accounts to damage some other candidates' chances to be employed at a reputed organization and highly reputed and attractive rank (Slovensky and Ross, 2012). In fact, there is the existence of individuals termed as "profile poachers" generating bogus profiles with the same name using that chance to be active nastily against the real profile holders (Sronce, 2011). A candidate who is informed previously that his/her competitors might try for a job can attempt to damage their likelihood of getting the job offer through poaching their SNSs (Sronce, 2011). All these confusions make the SNI irrelevant and unreliable for an employer and may lead to incorrect and dangerous conclusion.

H3. There is a significant positive influential role of PRI on PBC.

The above incidents and debates are starting to appear in academic domain and legal world. Such issues are expected to continually grow with the use of SNI further. Due to such controversies, it is imperative to discuss those issues in academic field and further researches are needed.

2.4 Perceived benefit (PB)

If PBC can be thought as a part of hiring process, SNI can provide some obvious benefits for any organization such as reaching to the mass candidates and a huge source of available data, of course, free of cost. While the traditional media such as print or electronic forms are very expensive to advertise, recruit and background checking, performing the same functions through SNSs are almost free. Moreover, the data are readily available and it is huge. It is more and more noticeable from the literature that organizations that embrace SNI can potentially add an extra layer of efficiency to the process (Breaugh, 2013; Broughton *et al.*, 2013; Cavico *et al.*, 2013; Heidemann *et al.*, 2012; Caers and Castelyns, 2011; Madia, 2011). Particularly, for conducting PBC, SNSs can aid by providing readymade information already available for the employers to screen job candidates.

For example, Facebook intended initially to offer a medium for establishing individual relationship, communal and societal communication. At present, the recruiters want to enter and utilize the information contents of this site for screening job candidates. The argument of employers regarding this is that SNSs are a kind of public social databases that provide an exceptionally advantageous and cost-saving instrument for any organization for hiring and/or conducting PBC. Such statement might be particularly accurate for countries with high unemployment rate such as Bangladesh where it may be difficult and challenging for the organizations to hire the most competent and qualified candidate from among the large pool. The scholars are clearly divided in their opinions regarding whether or not to utilize SNI as the sources for conducting PBC. The recruiters who decide to utilize SNI as a source of information to conduct screening process of job candidates are motivated to do so for a number of causes. For example, ready information regarding a candidate can be attained effortlessly from a public domain. Such information is cost effective, quick and proficient way

for evaluating candidates to possibly stay away from expensive negligent hiring accusations and penalty. Furthermore, information gathered may present imminent to the personality, ethics, principles, lifestyle, actions and interests of a person that could be used to judge job-fit and organization-fit. This study incorporated perceived benefit (PB) to investigate whether it can mediate the positive influence of the three elements of SNI on PBC.

The above literature have highlighted on the PB of using SNI can help to develop three hypotheses to test how PB can mediate the positive influence of three independent factors on PBC. Thus, the authors assumed the hypotheses as:

H4. PB can mediate the positive influence of PAI on PBC.

H5. PB can mediate the positive influence of PACI on PBC.

H6. PB can mediate the positive influence of PRI on PBC.

2.5 Organizational branding (OB)

Employer branding or organizational branding as a topic has emerged from organizational branding theory typically based on the use of thoughts on impacting consumers to HRM and to its ability over potential and existing employees. Presently, scholars are emphasizing on the power of the employer brand externally in attracting competent employees (Rampl and Kenning, 2014) achieving recruitment efficiency (Hosain and Liu, 2020a) and reducing cost (Gultekin, 2011). Studies regarding OB have established that an organization's corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions can influence its image to potential job seekers (Dögl and Holtbrügge, 2014). Organizations have noticed that a powerful and successful brand can produce some sustainable competitive advantages making it convenient to draw and retain competent employees. Research confirms that companies that undertake efforts to establish their positive image are seen by candidates as a first-choice employer brand (Rampl, 2014). This term signifies that a company having a strong and recognized brand offers a possibility of first-rate employment (Aboul-Ela, 2016).

Therefore, there are reasons to believe that an organization with a powerful brand in the job market can have higher appeal towards potential employees. As a result, OB can have positive influence on the use of SNI for PBC due to high reputation on the job market. Employers can also take this privilege of asking SNS information from candidates for background checking based on powerful influence of OB.

The literature presented above highlighted on the OB motivated the authors to develop three more hypotheses to test how OB can mediate the positive influence of three independent factors of SNI on PBC. The authors assumed the hypotheses as:

H7. OB can mediate the positive influence of PAI on PBC.

H8. OB can mediate the positive influence of PACI on PBC.

H9. OB can mediate the positive influence of PRI on PBC.

2.6 Development of theoretical framework

By being consistent with the literature survey, the authors proposed the following theoretical framework for this study (Figure 1).

3. Research method

3.1 Sampling design, data collection and determination of sample size

The study was conducted using primary data collected from the hiring professionals working at different organizations in Dhaka and Chittagong, Bangladesh. The rationale of choosing

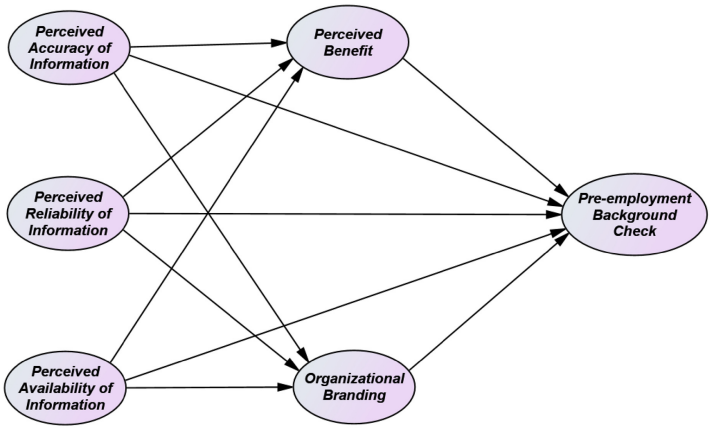


Figure 1.
Theoretical framework (All the relationships were hypothesized to be positive)

Source(s): Authors' own elaboration

those two cities was that most of the corporate head offices of various organizations are located in those two cities.

The study was based on primary data collected using a well-designed questionnaire. By using the purposive sampling method, 500 questionnaires were sent out to the selected respondents and 480 were returned to the authors (96% response rate). Out of those, 15 were incomplete, susceptive and abnormally filled and hence discarded through scrutinizing procedure. Finally 465 samples were used for the analysis.

The total number of respondents was calculated using the subsequent formula recommended by Yamane (1967):

$$n = \frac{N}{(1 + Ne^2)}$$

here,

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = Level of precision (Here $e = 5\%$)

However, in determining the sample size, the subsequent assumptions were taken into consideration.

$n = 400$ (Here, $n = 465$)

N = Population size is >100,000

3.2 Measurement tool

As part of measurement tool, a structured questionnaire (Table 1) was used to collect data from those respondents utilizing a Likert scale of 5-points. The 5-point scale had the range between 1 and 5 where 1 stood for "strongly disagree" and 5 stood for "strongly agree." Table 1 indicates the number of items before and after the reliability and validity tests.

The respondents were properly guided and introduced with the constructs presented on the survey instrument for easy and quick understanding. The comprehensive questionnaire along with literature sources has been presented as Appendix 2.

3.3 Demographic information

The respondents were selected intentionally from different organizations leading a variety of sectors. It was done to make a sample group that well represents the whole job market scenario in Bangladesh. Appendix 1 highlights industry–wise sample distribution used for the study investigation. Table 2 indicates the distribution of sample respondents on the basis of demographic factors included on the questionnaire such as age, gender, education, possession of social media account, the kind of social media account in possession (Facebook or LinkedIn), organizational social media background check, frequency of social media background check and possession of having separate human resource departments.

Latent variables	Number of items	
	Before	After
PAI	4	3
PACI	5	5
PRI	5	5
PB	4	4
OB	5	4
PBC	5	3
Total	28	24

Source(s): Descriptive statistics (SPSS 24) and structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Table 1. Number of items before and after the reliability and validity tests

Aspects	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	313	67.31
Female	152	32.69
Age		
30–39	76	16.35
40–49	147	31.61
50–59	200	43.01
60 and Above	42	9.03
Education		
Undergraduate	33	7.10
Graduate (Master)	315	67.74
Postgraduate (PhD)	117	25.16
Social networking background check		
Often	404	86.88
When needed	31	6.67
Rarely	30	6.45
Organizational social networking site		
Facebook	103	22.15
LinkedIn	292	62.80
Both	70	15.05
Possession of separate HRM department		
Yes	461	99.14
No	4	0.86

Source(s): Survey instrument

Table 2. Demographic information of respondents on the basis of questionnaire

Table 2 indicates that majority of the respondents (43.01%) were aged between the range of 50–59 years and two-thirds of them were male. 67.74% of them were graduates and all of them had organizational SNSs (LinkedIn, Facebook or both). A very large portion of the respondents (86.88%) conducted SNS background checks for job applicants frequently while only 6.45% did it rarely. Almost all of their organizations (99.14%) had separate HRM departments.

3.4 Common method bias

Harman's single factor test can be used to identify if the majority of the variance can be explained by a single factor. If single factor will not explain the majority of variance, it can be assumed that the CMB has not been occurred.

Table 3 indicates that one factor can explain only 21.33% variance of this study which means that CMB did not occur in this investigation.

3.5 Collinearity assessment

Variance inflation factors can range from 1 to 10 and upwards. The VIF numerical tells us what percentage the variance is inflated for each coefficient. A rule of thumb for interpreting the variance inflation factor is that 1 represents not correlated, between 1 and 5 is moderately correlated, and greater than 5 represents highly correlated.

The influence of multicollinearity of the variance inflation factors (VIF) were calculated and found to have a maximum value of the 1.5 as shown in Table 4 that is at a permissible limit as recommended by Hair *et al.* (1998).

3.6 The coefficient of determination:

Cohen (1988) suggested R^2 values for endogenous latent variables are considered as 0.26 (significant), 0.13 (reasonable) and 0.02 (insignificant) whereas Chin (1988) recommended R^2 values for endogenous latent variables as 0.67 (significant), 0.33 (reasonable) and 0.19 (insignificant). On the other hand, Hair *et al.* (2013, 2011); and Tabachnick and Fidell (2001) suggested in their investigations that the R^2 values of 0.75, 0.50 or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables can, as a general rule, correspondingly explain as significant, reasonable or insignificant.

Table 3. Common method bias (CMB) test

Total variance explained						
	Initial eigen values			Extraction sums of squared loadings		
Component	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of variance	Cumulative %
1	7.293	26.047	26.047	5.972	21.330	21.330
2	3.930	14.035	40.082	4.158	14.850	36.181

Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Table 4. Variance inflation factor and tolerance in multicollinearity

Construct	OB	PAI	PRI	PACI	PB
Variance inflation factor (VIF)	1.542	1.268	1.009	1.117	1.496
Tolerance	0.649	0.789	0.991	0.895	0.668

Note(s): Dependent variable: PBC

Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Initially, three independent factors: PAI, PRI, PACI could together explain more than 18% and 19% variations of PB and OB respectively (Table 5). This value is accepted by Cohen (1988). On the other hand, the model's R square value was 0.40. It indicates that the three independent variables: PAI, PRI, PACI as well as two mediating factors PB and OB could together explain 40% variations of pre-employment background check for Bangladeshi organizations.

4. Model evaluation

4.1 Measurement model

To ascertain exploratory factor analysis (EFA), four frequently utilized themes (Field, 2000; Hair *et al.*, 1998) such as (1) sampling adequacy (Kaisers–Mayesolkin) calculated greater than 0.5; (2) the minimum Eigen value for each factor; (3) taking into the consideration of the sample size, factor loading of 0.40 for every item was assumed as the upper value for keeping items to make sure greater confidence; and (4) promax rotation was used as it is considered as a fairly combined common technique simplifying the interpretations of the items (Field, 2000).

Table 6 highlights the outcomes of EFA. Hair *et al.* (2010) recommended that the factor analysis can be performed when Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity are usually significant. An indicator of Kaiser's measures of sampling sufficiency (Overall MSA = 0.871) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity χ^2 (p = 0.000) recommend that the EFA results of this investigation was suitable for further analysis. Following the examination of EFA pattern matrix, this study found that all the constructs had the factor loadings greater than 0.40.

This result indicates that the factor analysis was appropriate. After confirming research constructs, maximum likelihood (ML) and the promax method (PM) were specifically used to extract factors from 28 items. According to Hair *et al.* (2010), each item must have more than 0.40 values to be considered highly significant. On the basis of Eigen value higher than 1, a six-factor model was identified explaining 62.959% of the overall variance of data set. As a whole, 28 items were grouped (based on Eigen value) under six different factors: (1) Perceived Accuracy of Information, (2) Organizational Branding (3) Perceived Benefit, (4) Perceived Availability of Information, (5) Perceived Reliability of Information; and (6) Pre-employment Background Check. The EFA result also showed 0.407as the lowest and 0.965 as the highest factor loadings of the variables. The outcomes of the factor analysis show that as a whole, all the factors considered were acceptable for further analysis (Table 6).

4.2 Test of validity

For checking the discriminant validity, this study adopted Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion of comparing AVE value with equivalent correlation and other variables. The square-root of AVE is required to be higher than the corresponding correlation values and other variables (Hair *et al.*, 2014; Henseler *et al.*, 2009). The discriminant validity of the factors is also shown in Table 7.

Table 7 indicates that all the values were within the acceptable limit as per Hair *et al.* (1998), Henseler *et al.* (2009), and Fornell and Larcker (1981).

Table 5. Squared multiple correlations

Factor of determination	Estimate
PB	0.186
OB	0.193
PBC	0.400

Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Factors and items code	EFA	CFA	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
Factor 1: perceived accuracy of information					
PACI1: I think most of the information on Facebook are inaccurate but LinkedIn information are correct	0.871	0.87	0.901	0.649	0.891
PACI2: Before use, information got from SNSs should be cross-checked	0.916	0.91			
PACI3: It is risky to take any decision based on unchecked information	0.902	0.89			
PACI4: SNS information should not be used for PBC as they might be inaccurate	0.679	0.63			
PACI5: My organization takes all possible measures to cross-check SNS information before using for PBC	0.643	0.89			
Factor 2: organizational branding					
OB1: Organizational branding helps to attract candidates and screening their background	0.640	0.76	0.896	0.683	0.878
OB2: The strong the organizational brand, the higher is its attractiveness	0.883	0.87			
OB3: If an organization has strong brand and reputation, candidates easily provide their SNS passwords to the employer	0.877	0.87			
OB4: Candidates do not consider their privacy and ethical concerns when they apply to an organization with strong brand reputation	0.407	Deleted			
OB5: As an employer of a reputed organization, I try to make the PBC fair and impartial	0.702	0.80			
Factor 3: perceived benefit					
PB1: Information on SNSs are beneficial for conducting PBC	0.868	0.84	0.905	0.706	0.901
PB2: Due to cost and time effectiveness, organizations should utilize SNS information for PBC	0.965	0.90			
PB3: There are more benefits of using SNS information than the risks	0.675	0.75			
PB4: My organization tries to take the maximum benefits of using SNS information	0.773	0.86			
Factor 4: perceived reliability of information					
PRI1: Most of the SNS information are not reliable	0.830	0.84	0.871	0.577	0.875
PRI2: Personal information are not reliable but job-related information are reliable if they match with CV/resume	0.769	0.78			
PRI3: SNS information should not be used for PBC as they are not reliable	0.829	0.84			
PRI4: I consider only those information endorsed by others as reliable	0.661	0.62			
PRI5: My organization takes necessary measures to test the reliability and validity of SNS information	0.741	0.70			
Factor 5: pre-employment background check					
PBC1: Social media is a good platform to get ideas of candidates' behavioral information that are not otherwise available	0.673	0.76	0.819	0.536	0.811
PBC2: I am well aware of the risks of using information in social networking sites for background check	0.612	Deleted			

Table 6.
Test of convergent validity of measurement model

(*continued*)

Factors and items code	EFA	CFA	CR	AVE	Cronbach's α
PBC3: My organization has established policies and guidelines on when social media checks will be conducted, by whom, at which sites, for what information, and how will that information be evaluated	0.650	0.78			
PBC4: My organization prohibits anyone besides authorized employees from conducting background checks	0.773	0.80			
PBC5: My organization conducts social media background check only after taking substantial precaution	0.569	Deleted			
Factor 6: perceived availability of information					
PAI1: The information in social networking sites are insufficient for background check	0.824	0.73	0.821	0.605	0.812
PAI2: People often provide inaccurate information in social media regarding age and job experience	0.794	0.85			
PAI3: I do not believe the information provided in social networking sites	0.509	Deleted			
PAI4: The information in social networking sites may be sometimes misleading	0.671	0.75			

Note(s): Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy = 0.871, Significant value = 0.000, AVE > 0.50; Composite Reliability>0.70
Source(s): Descriptive statistics (SPSS 24) and structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Table 6.

Factors	Mean	SD	PACI	PBI	PBC	OB	PAI	PRI
PACI	2.43	0.83	*0.806*					
PB	3.80	0.76	0.136**	*0.840*				
PBC	3.72	0.72	0.129*	0.449***	*0.732*			
OB	3.65	0.79	0.184***	0.665***	0.629***	*0.826*		
PAI	2.91	0.80	0.439***	0.291***	0.297***	0.299***	*0.778*	
PRI	3.79	0.63	−0.021	−0.027	0.012	0.041	0.042	*0.760*

Note(s): Italic value on the diagonal of the correlation matrix are the square root of AVE (Discriminant validity); †$p < 0.100$, *$p < 0.050$, **$p < 0.010$, ***$p < 0.001$; PACI = Perceived accuracy of information, PB = Perceived benefit, PBC = Pre-employment background check, PAI = Perceived availability of information, PRI = Perceived reliability of information; and OB = Organizational branding
Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Table 7.
Measurement model's correlation matrix and descriptive statistics

4.3 Measurement model (for confirmatory factor analysis)

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is one statistical tool that can verify the structure of a group of experimental variables. It permits the investigator to examine a hypothetical relationship of observed variables and their fundamental latent constructs. Chi-Square value for this model was 3.502 that was smaller than 5.0 as recommended by Marsh and Hocevar (1985). Other fit indices as well indicated a satisfactory robustness for the measurement model (Table 8). The GFI of the model was 0.872 which was higher than the suggested value of 0.80 (Baumgartner and Homburg, 1996; Doll *et al.*, 1994). On the present study, the AGFI was found to be 0.836 which meets the recommended value of (>0.8) hence deemed to be a good fit and acceptable supported by Baumgartner and Homburg (1996). In addition, the non-incremental fit index like comparative fit index (CFI) was found as 0.916 exceeding the suggested cut-off level of 0.90 according to Bentler (1990). The root means square residual, a

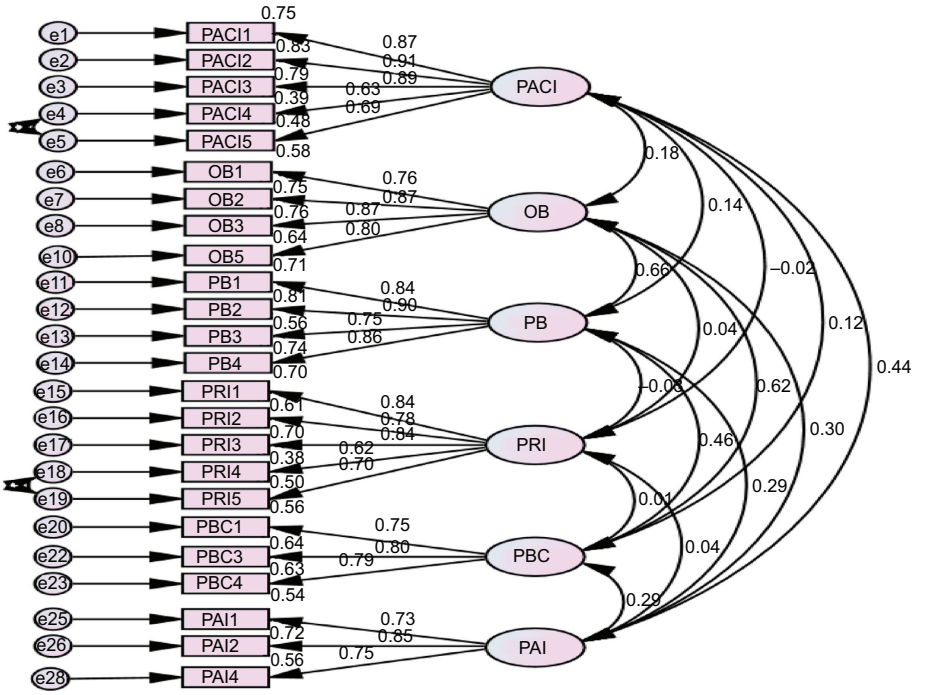
Index	Chi-square/ df	CFI	RMR	GFI	AGFI	RMSEA	SRMR
Measurement model	3.502	0.916	0.061	0.872	0.836	0.073	0.0654
Threshold value	<5.0	>0.90	<0.08	>0.80	>0.80	<0.08	<0.08
Recommended by	Marsh and Hocevar (1985)	Bentler (1990)	Hu and Bentler (1999)	Baumgartner and Homburg (1996)		Browne and Cudeck (1993)	Hu and Bentler (1999)

Table 8. Model fit indices and cut-off thresholds

Note(s): AGFI can range from 0 to 1 (the higher the better). RMSEA: The lower the better. NFI, TLI and CFI can range from 0 to 1
Source(s): Literature survey

"badness of fit" index (higher numbers indicates worse fit) values of standardized RMR (<0.08) generally considered adequate. In the CFA, the RMR value was found to be 0.061 (less than 0.08) that is commonly recommended as acceptable (Hu and Bentler, 1999). The root means square error of approximation (RMSEA) here was 0.073 that was also less than the recommended superior fit to the data (Browne and Cudeck, 1993). Finally, the standardized means square residual value was 0.0654 being less than 0.08 as the prescribed value (Browne and Cudeck, 1993) (see Table 8.)

The CFA results have been shown in Figure 2 while the summary of the measurement model has been highlighted in Table 8. The fit indices indicated a good model fit to the data.



Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Figure 2. Measurement model (Confirmatory factor analysis)

4.4 Structural model

A multivariate analysis technique such as covariance-based structural equation modeling was utilized to discover the significance of relationships among three independent and two mediating latent variables: (1) PAI (2) PRI (3) PACI, (4) PB, (5) OB; and the dependent construct PBC (see Table 9).

The path diagram of this study revealed that PAI had significant and positive influence on the dependent variable: PBC while such influence were not significant in case of PRI and PACI. The corresponding p-values indicate that H1 ($p < 0.05$) had been accepted whereas H2 ($p > 0.05$) and H3 ($p > 0.05$) had been rejected (Table 10).

4.5 Mediation effects

The influence of the mediating variables on the correlations among the dependent and independent variables have been highlighted in Table 11. In terms of mediating factors, it can

Model	Chi-square/df	GFI	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	AIC
Hypothesized model	3.655	0.870	0.912	0.896	0.076	984.056
Alternative model 1	26.483	0.314	0.000	0.000	0.234	7357.410

Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Table 9. Structural model fitness and comparison

Hypothesis	Path impact	Estimate	S.E	C.R	p-value	Decision	R^2
	OB←PACI	0.058	0.049	1.190	0.234	Not Supported	
	OB←PRI	0.035	0.056	0.618	0.536	Not Supported	
	OB←PAI	0.267	0.061	4.392	***	Supported	
	PB←PACI	0.007	0.048	0.144	0.885	Not Supported	
	PB←PRI	0.042	0.055	0.769	0.442	Not Supported	
	PB←PAI	0.284	0.060	4.756	***	Supported	
	PBC←OB	0.511	0.068	7.568	***	Supported	
H2	PBC←PACI	0.038	0.041	0.936	0.349	Not Supported	0.12
H3	PBC←PRI	0.015	0.047	0.311	0.755	Not Supported	0.19
H1	PBC←PAI	0.117	0.052	2.227	0.026	Supported	0.40
	PBC←PB	0.057	0.061	0.934	0.350	Not Supported	

Note(s): SE = Standard error; C.R. = Critical ratio
Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Table 10. Structural model coefficients' weights

Hypothesis	Parameters	Estimate	95% confidence level Lower	Upper	p-value	Comment
Mediation effect of perceived benefit (PB)						
H4	PAI and PB	0.016	−0.017	0.054	0.283	Not Supported
H5	PACI and PB	0.000	−0.006	0.010	0.902	Not Supported
H6	PRI and PB	0.002	−0.021	0.003	0.387	Not Supported
Mediation effect of organizational branding (OB)						
H7	PAI and OB	0.137	0.086	0.241	0.005	Supported
H8	PACI and OB	0.030	−0.005	0.077	0.167	Not Supported
H9	PRI and OB	0.018	−0.030	0.063	0.612	Not Supported

Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

Table 11. Mediation effect of PB and OB

be observed that only OB could partially mediate the relationship between PAI and PBC. The same mediator (OB) did not mediate other two relationships. On the other hand, perceived benefit did not mediate any relationship at all (see Figure 3).

Such results validated only hypothesis H7 while rejecting all the remaining hypotheses related to the mediators (H4, H5, H6, H8 and H9).

5. Discussion of results linking previous findings

In this study, the authors tried to identify the influence of components of SNI on PBC. It was identified that the recruiters were keen to avail the information from SNSs at both the personal and professional levels. As it was observed, PAI had a noteworthy positive influence ($\beta = 0.117$; $p < 0.05$) on PBC accepting of the first hypothesis. This result is consistent with the previous theoretical arguments since numerous authors reported that the hiring managers seek more information available from SNSs (Hosain *et al.*, 2020; Hosain and Liu, 2020a; Pramod and Bharathi, 2016; Ebnet, 2012). On the other hand, PACI had positive influence ($\beta = 0.038$) on PBC (consistent with previous literature) although the influence was not significant ($p > 0.05$) which is also supported by Drake *et al.* (2016) where the authors revealed that the hiring managers, in many cases did not pay much attention to information accuracy. In case of third hypothesis, PRI had also been proved to have positive ($\beta = 0.015$) (consistent with previous literature) but insignificant ($p > 0.05$) influence on PBC duly supported by a number of authors (Villeda and McCamey, 2019; Slovensky and Ross, 2012; Dennis, 2011) who argued that the employers do not emphasize on information reliability as much as they should.

It is interesting to observe that the one of the two mediators (PB) did not mediate any direct relationships. Such a finding is very abnormal and does not support any previous findings. It is a well-established fact that the most attractive and strong reason for hiring managers to use SNI is to mine the opportunities of huge data readily available free of cost. However, the other mediator, (OB) could partially influence ($\beta = 0.137$; $p < 0.05$) the relationship between information availability and pre-employment background check that is consistent with a few previous theoretical studies (Gultekin, 2011) although it had no mediating effect on two other direct relationships. In case of last two relationships too, the findings are inconsistent with previous literature.

It should be noted that this is the first of this kind of study to examine the influence of SNI on PBC. The results indicated that only PAI had the significant influence on PBC.

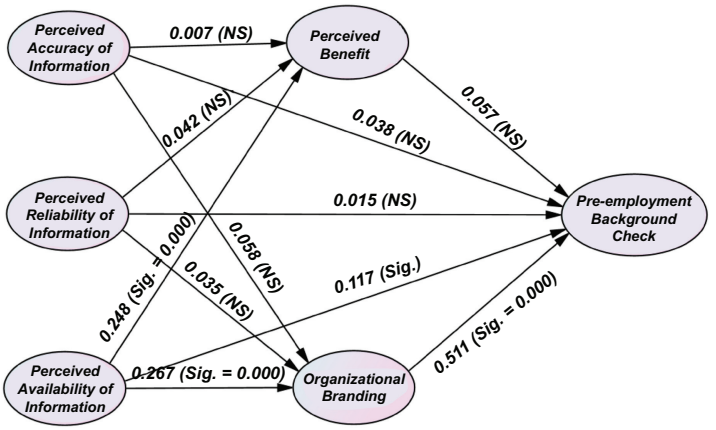


Figure 3.
Relational model with hypotheses testing results

Source(s): Structural equation modeling (AMOS 24)

The other two independent factors: PACI and PRI interestingly lacked any significant influence on PBC. Therefore, it seems from this study that in Bangladesh, the HR professionals (respondents) emphasize only on the availability of information rather than reliability and accuracy. It might be because the practice of utilizing the SNI for PBC has just started as a new fashion in Bangladesh and there is still a long way to get this practice to reach the maturity level. The practice is not developed and organized enough similar to the organizations in western developed countries. Thus, it will be worth observing the upcoming track of this interesting phenomenon in this highly populated country.

6. Theoretical and practical implications

The practice of utilizing social networking information for the job candidates' background check is comparatively a new practice. Particularly in South Asian countries, it is entirely a new phenomenon. Even there are quite enough practices evident of using SNI for recruitment and selection in many western countries, it is a very rare case in South Asia. However, such practice is getting popularity and is becoming a rapidly emerging phenomenon around the glove because of simple accessibility and cost efficiency. There is no published empirical research regarding the use of SNI for background check especially. Therefore, this first empirical study is expected to fill that gap and further widen the possibility of using such dig data for different unique purposes such as pre-employment background checking. Further, it is expected to contribute to this rare field of theoretical knowledge.

The HR professionals are interested in using social networking information for a number of purposes such as employee search, recruitment and selection, and very recently, for background checking. Unfortunately, there is a lack of strategy or a set of guiding principles on how to do it and to what extent of information to search and utilize. The lack of transparent and clear policies might make the recruiters confused and biased. Therefore, an apparent, integrated social media policy for using SNI for PBC is a quite necessity. The authors expect that the results of this empirical investigation can direct them to formulate such policies to be used in organizations.

Therefore, the authors expect that the paper can contribute to the academic and practical arena on the following manner:

(1) First, it can provide some theoretical guidelines to fill the academic gap on using SNI for the overall selection process, particularly pre-employment background checking process.

(2) Second, the paper can open further windows by being a base for future investigations.

(3) Third, the findings can help the policymakers to create a complete and transparent social media policy.

(4) Fourth, the findings can help the scholars to get informed regarding the influencing factors in using SNI for PBC.

(5) Lastly, as the first empirical study in a least developed country with a high unemployment rate, the paper can shed some new lights on the existing literature available.

In a coherent summary, the authors claim that as one of the initial attempt to highlight the utilization of social networking information for pre-employment background checking, this empirical paper will be the theoretical and policy guidance to the academicians and practitioners alike. For the researchers, the paper will hopefully brought about an issue which is severely under-researched but a popularly growing practice among the HR

professionals. On the other hand, as authors, we further hope that the empirical results of this paper can contribute in selecting and developing the right bundle of manpower for an organization.

7. Limitations and further scope of study

The study has several obvious limitations that are needed to be pointed out. It was conducted in a particular culture where the unemployment rate is very high. A cross cultural study might have been provided different and more representative results. Secondly, the practice of using SNI has just started in Bangladesh. Therefore, organizations are not mature enough to handle such big data in an efficient manner. Further investigations should consider such limitations and try to decrease the difference between academia and practice especially in conducting empirical studies employing different variables and techniques.

8. Conclusion

The results of this empirical investigation identified an overall positive influence of the three components of SNI on PBC in Bangladeshi job context. However, it provided some interesting and unique insights regarding the accuracy and reliability of SNI. Therefore, the employers in Bangladesh seem to be more concerned regarding the information availability rather than accuracy and reliability. Furthermore, organizational branding mediated only one direct relationship between SNI and PBC. Most interestingly and surprisingly, perceived benefit did not mediate any of the three direct relationships. Such results, particularly the last one, are completely contradictory to the arguments of scholars.

Despite the relationship between SNI and PBC process for job candidates' is not yet been well-known due to the lack of adequate empirical investigations, the usage of such information is getting slow but steady popularity amongst the recruiters/employers owing to trouble-free availability and cost effectiveness. But in reality, such practices have raised growing and strict debates among the researchers, policymakers and even the job candidates. In particular, the issue of pulling out SNI by the recruiters has generated lawful and political controversies in many countries resultant from privacy and ethical issues. However, even after those debates and controversies, it is obvious that the practice will keep on growing in near future. As a result, it is robustly suggested that organizations should protect themselves from such controversies by complying uniformity with the existing national and state legal guidelines concerning the issue. Furthermore and most importantly, organizations need to devise and execute a clear-cut social media policy (SMP) and correspond with the job applicants from the very initial stage of hiring process in order to evade any unanticipated outcomes.

However, despite of all criticisms of using social networking information for HRM particularly for selection and background check, there is a growing possibility of using this source of big data in upcoming times. But the appropriate, ethical and successful use of such information will mostly depend on the controlled and well-guided policies and practices formulated by experts and perhaps the Government agencies mutually. Organizations can work together on this point with the Ministry of Information of Bangladesh who is basically responsible to guide and control social networking policies.

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Appendix 1

Table A1.
Sample distribution of the respondents

List of industrial sector	Number of firms	Number of respondents
Manufacturing	41	71
Telecommunication	34	65
Bank and insurance	33	59
Education	31	44
Information technology	27	41
Transport	25	39
Shipping	22	37
Postal service	19	33
Print and electronic media	17	29
Food and beverage	14	27
Hotel and tourism	11	20
Total	274	465

Appendix 2

Construct	No. of items	Item codes	Latent measures	Literature sources
Perceived availability of information	4	PAI1	The information in social networking sites are insufficient for background check	Villeda and McCamey (2019), Landers and Schmidt (2016)
		PAI2	People often provide inaccurate information in social media regarding age and job experience	
		PAI3	I do not believe the information provided in social networking sites	
		PAI4	The information in social networking sites are sometimes misleading	
Perceived accuracy of information	5	PACI1	I think most of the information on Facebook are inaccurate but LinkedIn information are correct	Villeda and McCamey (2019), Landers and Schmidt (2016)
		PACI2	Before using, information got from SNSs should be cross-checked	
		PACI3	It is risky to take any decision based on unchecked information	
		PACI4	SNS information should not be used for PBC as they might be inaccurate	
		PACI5	My organization takes all possible measures to cross-check SNS information before using for PBC	
Perceived reliability of information	5	PRI1	Most of the SNS information are not reliable	McCarthy *et al.* (2017), Ollington *et al.* (2013)
		PRI2	Personal information are not reliable but job related information are reliable if they match with CV/ resume	
			SNS information should not be used for PBC as they are not reliable	
		PPI3	SNS information should not be used for PBC as they are not reliable	
		PRI4	I consider only those information endorsed by others as reliable	
		PRI5	My organization takes necessary measures to test the reliability and validity of SNS information	
Perceived benefit	4	PB1	Information on SNSs are beneficial for conducting PBC	Villeda and McCamey (2019), Ollington *et al.* (2013), Kluemper *et al.* (2012)
		PB2	Due to cost and time effectiveness, organizations should utilize SNS information for PBC	
		PB3	There are more benefits of using SNS information than risks	
		PB4	My organization tries to take maximum benefits of using SNS information	

(*continued*)

Table A2. Survey measures' specification

Construct	No. of items	Item codes	Latent measures	Literature sources
Organizational branding	5	OB1	Organizational branding helps to attract candidates and screening their background	Kluemper *et al.* (2012)
		OB2	The strong the organizational brand, the higher is its attractiveness	
		OB3	If an organization has strong brand and reputation, candidates easily provide their SNS passwords to the employer	
		OB4	Candidates do not consider their privacy and ethical concerns when they apply to an organization with strong brand reputation	
		OB5	As an employer of a reputed organization, I try to make the PBC fair and impartial	
Pre-employment background check	5	PBC1	Social media are a good platform to get ideas of candidates' behavioral information that are not otherwise available	Berkelaar *et al.* (2016), Landers and Schmidt (2016)
		PBC2	I am well aware of the risks of using information in social networking sites for background check	
		PBC3	My organization has established policies and guidelines on when social media checks will be conducted, by whom, at which sites, for what information, and how will that information be evaluated	
		PBC4	My organization prohibits anyone besides authorized employees from conducting background checks	
		PBC5	My organization conducts social media background check only after taking substantial precaution	

Table A2.

Appendix 3

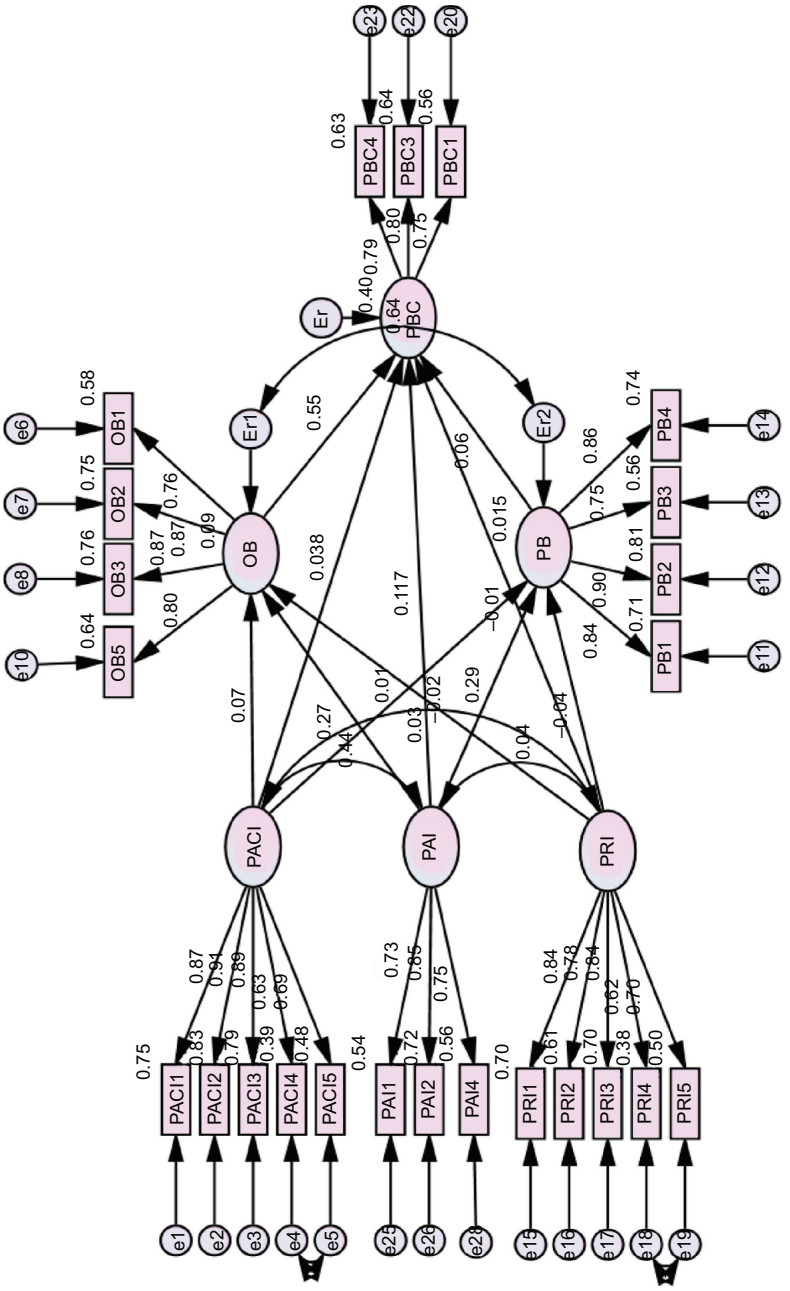

Figure A1.
Path model estimation (AMOS 24)