



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Personality and Individual Differences

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/paid

“Give us your social networking site passwords”: Implications for personnel selection and personality ☆



Travis J. Schneider*, Richard D. Goffin, Kabir N. Daljeet

Department of Psychology, The University of Western Ontario, Canada

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 3 July 2014

Received in revised form 17 September 2014

Accepted 18 September 2014

Available online 10 October 2014

Keywords:

Social networking sites

Selection

Personality

Individual differences

Adverse impact

ABSTRACT

Recently, employers have begun asking applicants for their social networking site (SNS) password to access private information that could be job-relevant. However, the effect that this request can have on an organization's selection process and its selection of individual applicant traits has not been previously examined. Findings from the current study of 892 employed or previously-employed participants suggested that 57.87% of the sample would refuse the password request, thereby removing themselves from the applicant pool. Such a large reduction in the applicant pool could necessitate a drastic decrease in cutoff scores on subsequent pre-employment tests, which would lower workforce productivity and personnel selection utility. In addition, the SNS password request caused adverse impact for several minority groups, and affected the personality scores of the remaining applicant pool.

© 2014 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

It is becoming increasingly common among employers to look beyond traditional pre-employment evaluations to the internet as a source for collecting relevant pre-hiring information (Karl et al., 2010; Stoughton et al., 2013; Taylor, 2006). This trend has been increasing (CareerBuilder.com., 2009), to the extent that, as of 2011, up to 65% of organizations are estimated to use SNSs to screen job applicants (Levinson, 2011). In fact, according to the popular press, some employers have begun asking applicants for their personal social networking site (SNS) password in order to access private information that could be job-relevant (McFarland, 2012). Predictably, this practice has raised numerous legal, privacy, and ethical concerns (Levinson, 2011). Although legislation has been created in several U.S. states to ban this practice of requiring a SNS password in order to be considered for a job (Noble & Davis, 2014), it is still legal in many countries (Determann, 2012). In addition, even if only a few employers are engaging in or are considering using this practice, this is an important issue worthy of further study.

We investigated the implications that the SNS password request has regarding the individual differences of the applicants, and we

investigated questions relevant to the use of the SNS password request in employee selection. In particular, could asking applicants for their SNS password, and eliminating those who refuse the password request (see Noble, 2014), substantially reduce the applicant pool? Moreover, could this practice lead to discrimination associated with applicant characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, etc.)? Finally, a number of employers have adopted the practice of removing applicants from the applicant pool if they refuse the SNS password (Noble, 2014). Employers may presume that a refusal of the password request is indicative of personalities who would tend to have an abundance of undesirable material displayed in their SNS, and that this does not bode well for their future job performance. Accordingly, they might expect that those who remain in the applicant pool by complying with the password request will generally have personalities that will lead to higher job performance. Thus the question of whether the SNS password request will tend to improve the applicant pool by enhancing, in work-relevant ways, the personality scores of the remaining applicant pool, was of great interest. In particular, we looked at traits of the Five-Factor Model (FFM; McCrae & Costa, 2010), the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002), and Impression Management (IM; Paulhus, 1991). The hypotheses and research questions we formulated in order to address the above issues are developed below.

If a large number of applicants were removed from the applicant pool because they refused the password request, there would ultimately be fewer candidates to choose from. As a result, a less stringent cutoff score would have to be set on the subsequent selection tests, which would reduce the bottom-line value of

☆ Preparation of this article was supported by funds from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

* Corresponding author at: Department of Psychology, Social Science Centre, The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario N6A 5C2, Canada

E-mail address: tschnei3@uwo.ca (T.J. Schneider).

testing (Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). In a typical selection setting, such as the one reported by Ryan, Sacco, McFarland, and Kriska (2000), approximately 35% of applicants withdrew from the early stages of selection for a variety of reasons (e.g., negative perceptions of the organization, low commitment to obtain the job, need to relocate, less social support). Using Ryan et al.'s statistic as a baseline, if the proportion of applicants who refuse the SNS password request is significantly greater than .35, there may be grounds for inferring that the password request has caused an inordinate loss of individuals from the applicant pool. We predict that a sizable proportion of the sample will refuse the SNS password request because most individuals are concerned about the privacy of their personal information on the internet (see Joinson, Reips, Buchanan, & Schofield, 2010). Therefore, we predict:

H₁. The proportion of participants who would refuse the SNS password request will be significantly greater than .35.

Of course, if personality traits are associated with password-request compliance such that those who comply with the request tend to have noticeably superior scores on job-relevant traits, then a reduction in pool size could be beneficial. We explore this, and related implications, in a later section.

1.1. Discrimination and SNS password requests

In addition to reducing the number of available applicants, the request for a SNS password may also be problematic as a screening device if it results in discrimination. The doctrine of disparate impact holds that if a selection test disproportionately and adversely affects a protected group (e.g., based on age, race, sex, marital status, or religious affiliation), its use must be discontinued unless it can be adequately demonstrated that it is necessary to ensure the success of a business (Catano, Wiesner, & Hackett, 2012). We speculate that those who are not members of the majority group may be less likely to divulge their SNS password because their SNS information could confirm and even exacerbate their outsider status or certain biases against them. For instance, women might not release their SNS password for fear of not being hired if their SNS information reveals that they are, or wish to be, pregnant.

If requiring job applicants to provide their SNS password leads to a disproportionate number of protected group members being removed from the selection process, adverse impact could result, which could have serious legal implications. Adverse impact occurs when a protected group is hired at less than 80% of the rate of another group (see the four-fifths rule in Cascio & Aguinis, 2011). Therefore:

RQ₁. Will the SNS password request result in evidence of adverse impact for gender, age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or religious affiliation?

1.2. Personality differences and complying with or refusing the password request

The Five-Factor Model of personality. FFM traits are important and useful predictors of job performance (Ones, Dilchert, Viswesvaran, & Judge, 2007) and personality could play a role in complying with or refusing a SNS password request. Thus, it is important to examine whether employers who limit their choice of applicants to those who comply with the password request may be systematically affecting the FFM scores of the remaining applicant pool. Because compliance with the SNS password request could be associated with personality, and because personality

scores are related to job performance, organizations could be improving or worsening the personality scores of the subsequent applicant pool when they require one's SNS password as a precondition for hiring.

Junglas, Johnson, and Spitzmüller (2008) found a significant, weak, but positive (standardized path coefficient of .11) relation between Openness to Experience and concern for privacy. Junglas et al. described open individuals as being more aware, and therefore, more sensitive to threatening situations. However, other characteristics of Openness, such as the Actions facet (see McCrae & Costa, 2010), might make high scorers more willing to release their information because they are more open to trying and experiencing new things. Thus, we propose this non-directional hypothesis:

H₂. Individuals who would agree to divulge their SNS password will have a significantly different mean level of Openness to Experience than those who would refuse.

Individuals high in Agreeableness are more likely to trust and less likely to appraise others' actions as harmful (Junglas et al., 2008). Also, agreeable individuals may reveal their SNS password as a way of avoiding conflict and maintaining harmony (see McCrae & Costa, 2010). Moreover, Agreeableness had a weak but significant negative standardized path coefficient (–.22) with concern for privacy in Junglas et al. (2008). Therefore:

H₃. Individuals who would agree to divulge their SNS password will have a significantly higher mean level of Agreeableness than those who would refuse.

On the one hand, Junglas et al. (2008) reported that Conscientiousness had a significant, positive, albeit weak (.12), standardized path coefficient with one's concern for privacy. On the other hand, conscientious individuals are likely to be more careful about the content they allow on their SNS accounts in the first place, meaning that they have less to fear by allowing access to their SNSs. Thus, as with Openness, we propose a non-directional hypothesis:

H₄. Individuals who would agree to divulge their SNS password will have a significantly different mean level of Conscientiousness than those who would refuse.

Based on the definition of Extraversion (McCrae & Costa, 2010), and the fact that Exhibition can be an important component of Extraversion (Jackson, Paunonen, Fraboni, & Goffin, 1996), extraverted individuals should tend to display their social, outgoing nature via their SNS content. Therefore:

H₅. Individuals who would agree to divulge their SNS password will have a significantly higher mean level of Extraversion than those who would refuse.

Neurotic individuals tend to experience more negative affect, including fear and anxiety (McCrae & Costa, 2010). Therefore, they may have heightened concerns about employers accessing their SNS content. Accordingly:

H₆. Individuals who would agree to divulge their SNS password will have a significantly lower mean level of Neuroticism than those who would refuse.

The Dark Triad. The Dark Triad is a commonly-studied set of personality traits that falls outside the FFM, but is linked to job performance and counterproductive work behaviors (O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). *Machiavellianism* describes individuals who are manipulative and cold (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). *Psychopathy* describes individuals who lack empathy for others, engage in antisocial behaviors, engage in risk-taking, and are callous (Williams, Paulhus, & Hare, 2007). Finally, *Narcissism*

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/890290>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/890290>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)