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Opus Citation

Michelle Drouin, Kimberly W. O'Connor, Gordon B. Schmidt, and Dan A. Miller (2015). Facebook Fired: Legal Perspectives and Young Adults' Opinions on the Use of Social Media in Employment Decisions. *Computers in Human Behavior*.46, 123-128. Elsevier. http://opus.ipfw.edu/ols_facpubs/86

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Facebook fired: Legal perspectives and young adults' opinions on the use of social media in hiring and firing decisions



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Keywords:

Social networking
Young adults
Job terminations
Psychological characteristics
Social media

ABSTRACT

In this exploratory study, we examine young adult undergraduates' ($n = 448$) opinions regarding the use of social media for employment decisions, a practice that has been highlighted in the popular press and recent legal cases. Most of the young adults in our sample were not in support of this practice (only one third were), and most expressed a liberal view of what should be permissible for posting on social media without the threat of job termination (e.g., less than half believed that posting illegal sexual behavior online should result in termination). Additionally, those who were most opposed to using social media in employment decisions were older, had less self-control, were more endorsing of the hookup culture, and were more open to experience. We discuss these findings with regard to current social media/work life issues, suggesting that: (1) these opinions may affect companies and legal entities who are developing social media policies, but also (2) that young adults need to be aware that regardless of their opinions on the practice, their social media use could have long-term effects on their careers.

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1. Introduction

In a recent Pew survey, 73% of American adults reported using the internet to engage in social networking (Duggan & Smith, 2014). Among young adults (18–29), the percentage of users is even higher: Recent surveys show that 83% of young adults use social media sites (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). And trends show no signs of a social media slow-down. In 2013, more American adults were using the most popular social networking sites (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, and LinkedIn) than had in 2012, 42% of internet users indicated they used at least two of the most popular sites, and many visited the sites daily (Duggan & Smith, 2014).

Research indicates that the motivation behind individuals' use of social media is often to develop or maintain social or romantic relationships, to feel connected to others, to gain information, or to gain social capital (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010; Gangadharbatla, 2008; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Sheldon, Abad, & Hinsch, 2011; Smith, 2011). Because of the range of motivations, diversity of social relationships, and the vast quantity of subscribers, personal social media usage has inevitably become intertwined with the workplace. One recent study indicated that 60% of employees report having one or more co-worker "friends" on Facebook, and

25% of employees report that they are Facebook friends with their supervisor (Weidner, Wynne, & O'Brien, 2012). Significant issues therefore arise when content that is not professional is seen by supervisors, co-workers, or other types of professional contacts. Those issues can result in serious consequences for social media users, as well as the organizations that employ them, as evidenced by the growing number of employment disputes related to social media that have resulted in litigation.

In this exploratory study, our goals were to: (1) measure young adults' perceptions of fairness of employers' use of social media for making employment decisions, and (2) examine how personality, individual differences, and personal social media use impacts such fairness perceptions. To contextualize these findings, we include a legal perspective on the social media and work cases that have emerged in the courts, and then focus our discussion on the implications of these results for employees and organizations, emphasizing the effect these perceptions may have on future law and policy.

1.1. Social media's increased role in employment decisions: a legal perspective

Social media has had an increasingly significant impact on human resource practices and has been the basis for many recent employment decisions that have resulted in litigation. A 2013 study by Jobvite found that 93% of recruiters said they were likely

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to look at the social media profiles of applicants, and 43% have reconsidered a candidate (both in the negative and positive direction) based on the candidates' social media profile (Jobvite, 2013). With regard to existing employees, 17% of organizations report they have had issues with employees' use of social media, and 8% say they have actually dismissed a worker for a social media behavior (Ostrow, 2009).

Public opposition to this type of scrutiny often occurs when an organization fires an employee for social media conduct that appears to be unrelated to the workplace. For example, high school English teacher, Ashley Payne, was asked to resign after she posted a picture from her European summer vacation on Facebook. The picture depicted Payne smiling and holding two drinks while in an Irish pub (Payne v. Barrow County School District & (Super. Ct. Ga., 2009). Meanwhile, middle school teacher, Anna Land, was fired after a picture of her was posted (and subsequently taken down) by an unknown third party. The picture showed Land in a simulated sexual act with a male mannequin while at a bachelorette party (Land v. L'Anse Creuse, 2010). These are just two of a number of incidents where employees have been fired for posts that have been placed on social media sites. The popular press has coined the term, "Facebook Fired," to refer to the growing number and type of incidents that have arisen across all professions (Hidy & McDonald, 2013). However, K-12 public school teachers, such as Ashley Payne and Anna Land, have been particularly hard hit as a profession, since the general perception is that teachers should be held to a higher moral standard than other types of professionals (Fulmer, 2010; McNee, 2013; Miller, 2011).

There is very little legal protection afforded to teachers' online communication under the First Amendment in these cases. As public sector employees, the long-standing legal standard is that their speech is protected from adverse employment action only if it involves a matter of "public concern" (matters of political, social, or other concern to the community) (Pickering v. Bd. of Ed., 1968). Meanwhile, private sector employees have almost no First Amendment protection from employer discipline for their online communications, though some protection to discuss the terms and conditions of their employment comes from the National Labor Relations Act (Fulmer, 2010; Raphan & Kirby, 2014).

Negative reaction from the public has resulted in some legal protection for employees by way of state law. For example, a common practice had emerged where employers were asking employees' and/or recruits for their social media usernames and passwords (McFarland, 2012). Legislatures in nearly twenty states have recently enacted laws to prohibit employers from engaging in this behavior, and many more states have legislation pending on this issue (Stinson, 2014). Also, some states are now requiring school corporations to implement social media policies in an effort to define and curtail "inappropriate" teacher online activity (DiMarzo, 2012). Though some other types of employers have developed crucial social media policies to deal with issues involving employee's social networking practices, studies show that 57% have not (Mulvey, 2013). Many personal social media usage issues therefore remain undefined for employees as they relates to their workplaces (Protivity, 2013). The laws and policies regarding social media-based terminations of employment are still evolving and are being shaped by societal notions of justice and fairness.

1.2. Existing research on social media, psychological characteristics, and employment decisions

In the empirical literature on the topic, there are currently no known studies that have measured societal opinions of the use of social media for employment decisions. However, a few researchers have attempted to connect social media use, personality characteristics, and employment-related outcomes. In one of the first

studies in this area, Karl, Peluchette, and Schlaegel (2010), surveyed American and German undergraduates to determine the frequency with which young adults posted problematic material (e.g., drug and alcohol use or sexual behavior) online and how this related to individual personality characteristics. Karl et al. (2010) found that a fair number of young adults, more Americans than Germans, indicated that they had posted different types of problematic material online. Undergraduates who were more conscientious, agreeable, and emotionally stable were less likely to post problematic material online, whereas those who had greater internet compulsivity were more likely to post such material online (Karl et al., 2010). In the discussion of their results, Karl et al. (2010) connected their findings to employment decisions, suggesting that these internet profiles may be used by employers to make hiring decisions during the recruitment and selection processes.

Stoughton, Thompson, and Meade (2013) took this work a step further by examining the relationships between personality characteristics and potentially damaging online behaviors in a pool of actual job applicants. In their study, college students who were more extraverted were more likely to reference alcohol and drugs in posts. Additionally, those who were less agreeable were more likely to badmouth others (e.g., coworkers, classmates, professors, or superiors) in posts; whereas those who were more conscientious were less likely to badmouth others (Stoughton et al., 2013). Stoughton et al.'s (2013) study provided further evidence that there is a link between a person's psychological characteristics and their potentially damaging online behavior. Again, these authors connected their findings to employment decisions, suggesting that some employers may already use social media sites to screen potential applicants, and that Facebook profiles may have the potential to provide valuable information to employers about the psychological characteristics of job applicants.

Notably, although both Karl et al. (2010) and Stoughton et al. (2013) suggested that social media profiles might be useful to employers to help make decisions about job applicants, neither examined applicants' opinions about this process. Buy-in from job applicants and employees on these issues may lessen the likelihood of litigation; therefore, it is important from both a practical and legal perspective to understand what these opinions are and which types of individuals hold these opinions.

1.3. Opinions of use of social media for employment decisions: the current study

As social media is being used in employment decisions (e.g., Jobvite, 2013), but social media policies are still mostly non-existent or in flux (Mulvey, 2013), public opinions about these practices may help to shape future policy. Opinions about the appropriateness of using social media profiles in employment decisions are likely shaped by both individual characteristics, like the Big-5 characteristics examined in Karl et al.'s (2010) and Stoughton et al.'s (2013) studies, as well as societal factors, such as the proliferation of social media use in the culture.

With regard to Big-5 traits, we expected that psychological openness would affect opinions on the use of social media for employment decisions. Psychological openness is one of the five key personality dimensions according to the five factor model (e.g., Costa & McCrae, 1992; Digman, 1990). McCrae (1996) defines openness as a broad but complex personality dimension which encompasses both intrapsychic and interpersonal dimensions. Those who are high in openness to experience are creative and flexible thinkers, who are open to new experiences and are intellectually curious (McCrae, 1996). With regard to the present inquiry, we hypothesized [H1] that those high in openness would be more likely to oppose the use of social media for hiring and firing decisions, as they would be more likely to accept a wider variety of

behaviors (both online and offline) as acceptable within the spectrum of normal human behavior.

Aside from psychological openness, we also expected a few other characteristics to be related to the opposition of the use of social media for employment decisions, including the use of and addiction to social media, low self-control, and endorsement of the hookup culture. With regard to social media use, we expected those who use social media to a greater extent to be more likely to have posted things online that could be potentially damaging to their career or job search. This might be even more apparent among those who are addicted to Facebook, who, according to Andreassen, Torsheim, Brunborg, and Pallesen (2012) may have “used Facebook so much that it has had a negative impact on [their] job/studies” (p. 516). Indeed, Karl et al. (2010) found that those who had higher internet compulsivity were more likely to have posted potentially problematic material online. Thus, we expected [H2] that because they had more opportunities to post potentially damaging information online, those with high social media use and Facebook addiction would be more opposed to the use of social media for hiring and firing decisions.

We also expected that those with low self-control would oppose the use of social media for employment decisions. Researchers have shown that those with low levels of self-control are more likely to engage in inappropriate or socially non-normative behaviors (DeBono, Shmueli, & Muraven, 2011), including inappropriate or impulsive sexual acts (Gailliot & Baumeister, 2007). Moreover, according to Vohs, Ciarocco, and Baumeister (2005), when self-control is lower, individuals are less effective at impression management. Therefore, we expected those with low self-control would have both engaged in more impulsive behaviors and been less effective at impression management (e.g., through their online posts). Consequently, akin to those who use social networking frequently, we expected [H3] those with low self-control to have more potentially damaging information online and therefore oppose the use of social media for employment decisions.

Finally, we explored a variable that reflects acceptance of one of the normative values of modern young adult culture—endorsement of the hookup culture (Aubrey & Smith, 2013). According to Aubrey & Smith (2013), those who endorse the hookup culture do not believe that young adulthood is a time for commitment; instead, they embrace the fun, sexually-free nature of the life stage, and they engage in sexual hookups to attain status and/or maintain control. Therefore, like those low in self-control, they may have engaged in more potentially damaging behaviors that could have been posted online. Alternatively, like those high in openness to experience, they may be more flexible thinkers, who would be more open to different lifestyles, with the understanding that these lifestyles may have been documented (inappropriately) online. It might also be that those who endorse the hookup culture are part of a larger movement that embraces the norms (e.g., social networking, hashtagging, tweets) of the young adult generation and rejects the policies and laws imposed upon them by their elders.

Regardless of the reason, we expected [H4] a positive relationship between endorsement of the hookup culture and opposition to the use of social media for employment decisions.

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Participants were 442 young-adult students (144 men, 298 women) from a mid-sized Midwestern university. From a larger sample ($N = 477$), only the young adult participants (aged 18–27) were retained. The participants' average age was 19.45 years ($SD = 1.67$) and most were freshmen (65% freshmen, 25% sophomores, 6% juniors, and 3% seniors). Participants came from more than 40 major fields of study. With regard to ethnicity, most of the sample was Caucasian (84% White, Non-Hispanic; 5% Hispanic; 3% African American; 3% Asian; and 5% Biracial or other ethnicity).

2.2. Procedure

Participants were recruited from introductory psychology classes in Fall, 2013 and received a research credit for participation. All participants completed online consent forms and were then given access to an online anonymous survey on social media use among young adults. The survey included demographic questions as well as questions about their opinions on the use of social media for hiring and firing decisions, their use of and addiction to social media, and various psychological measures. As this was part of a larger study, only the relevant measures are reported below.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Opinions of use of social media for employment decisions

To measure participants' opinions about the use of social media for employment decisions, we asked them to respond on a 5-point agreement scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) to the following statement: “A person's Facebook or Twitter account should not be used to make hiring or firing decisions.” As this study was exploratory in nature, we also asked them a number of other questions related to this practice (see Table 1 for questions), including their agreement with the legal outcomes of recent social media cases (questions 2 & 3) and questions related specifically to illegal lewd behavior, which was defined as “sexual gratification with another with knowledge that they are in the presence of others OR publicly and indecently exposing genitals or pubic area” (questions 3 & 4). We also asked them whether they feared whether something they posted might hurt them in their job search (question 5). For each of these questions (displayed in Table 1), participants responded on a 5-point agreement scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Additionally, to measure whether they or their friends had ever felt the threat of job loss from social media, we asked two separate questions on the extent to which:

Table 1
Participants' opinions and feelings about social media and hiring and firing decisions.

	Disagree (%)	Neutral (%)	Agree (%)
1. A person's Facebook or Twitter account should not be used to make hiring or firing decisions	30	28	42
2. It is acceptable for a teacher (K-12) to post a picture on her Facebook site of her holding a beer during a vacation to Ireland	24	24	52
3. If a teacher (K-12) engages in lewd behavior [legal definition provided] at a bachelor or bachelorette party and someone posts and tags pictures of that teacher online, the teacher should lose his or her job	39	28	33
4. People should be able to post pictures of private events (e.g., parties) without threat of losing their job, even if those pictures contain lewd behavior [legal definition provided]	44	27	29
5. I fear that some pictures/videos posted of me will hurt me in my job search	78	12	10

Note. Disagree = strongly disagree or disagree. Agree = strongly agree or agree.

(1) the person had ever “Lost job/thought I might lose job because of something posted online,” (2) a friend had ever “Lost job/thought they might lose job because of something posted online.” For these questions, participants responded on a 5-point frequency scale (1 = *never*, 5 = *very frequently*).

2.3.2. Openness to experience

Openness to experience was measured with the openness to experience subscale of the 44-item Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999). Participants indicated their level of agreement of whether they saw themselves as someone who, for example, “Is curious about many different things” on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *disagree strongly*, 5 = *agree strongly*). Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was .74.

2.3.3. Frequency of social media use

Participants were asked how frequently they posted messages or sent media via five of the most popular social communication methods: Text message, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Participants responded on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = *never*, 6 = *very frequently*). These five measures were combined into one composite measure reflecting the frequency of social media use (Cronbach’s alpha = .71).

2.3.4. Facebook addiction

Facebook addiction was measured with the 6-item Bergen Facebook Addiction Scale (Andreassen et al., 2012), which asked participants to respond on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *very rarely*, 5 = *very often*) on the frequency with which they had engaged in addictive Facebook behaviors (e.g., “Felt an urge to use Facebook more and more.”) during the last year. Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was .88.

2.3.5. Self-control

To measure self-control we used the 13-item short form of the Self-Control Scale (SCS; Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004). Participants were asked to respond about how well statements (e.g., “I am good at resisting temptation.”) reflected how they typically are on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). Cronbach’s alpha for this measure was .84.

2.3.6. Endorsement of the hookup culture

Attitudes towards the modern-day hookup culture were measured with the 20-item Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index (EHCI; Aubrey & Smith, 2013). Participants indicated their agreement with statements such as “Hooking up is not a big deal” on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Cronbach’s alpha for this subscale was .97.

3. Results

As this study was exploratory in nature, our first step was to examine the frequencies with which people engaged in behaviors and supported beliefs that social media should be used for employment decisions. Next, we conducted a correlational analysis to examine whether our social communication and psychological measures were related to the belief that social media should be used for employment decisions. Finally, we conducted a hierarchical regression analysis, controlling for age and gender, to determine whether our psychological characteristics of interest contributed unique variance to this belief.

With regard to actual and perceived threat of job loss related to social media, only 6% of participants lost a job or thought they might lose their job based on their social media posts, but 25% indicated that they had a friend who had lost their job or thought they might lose their job based on their social media posts. In terms of their opinions regarding social media and employment decisions, 42% believed that social media should *not* be used for hiring and firing decisions (see Table 1). With regard to their attitudes toward actual court cases, the majority of participants (53%) agreed that it was acceptable for a teacher to post a picture of herself holding a beer on a social networking site. In terms of illegal, lewd behavior, 39% of participants (and 27% were neutral) *disagreed* that a teacher who had pictures posted of her engaging in lewd behavior during a bachelorette party should be fired. Meanwhile, in terms of general lewd behavior, 29% agreed (and 27% were neutral) that lewd behavior posted from private events should *not* cost a person their job. Thus, overall, approximately two-thirds of participants were either neutral or positive (in terms of keeping a job) towards people who were featured in lewd acts online. Finally, only a small portion of the sample (10%) feared that something they had posted might hurt them in their job search.

Our next step was to examine whether there were any significant relationships between our outcome measure of interest (Item #1 from the table—young adults’ opinions of whether social media should be used for hiring and firing decisions), social media usage and addiction, and our selected personality measures. We also included age and gender in the analyses as potential covariates. Our correlational analyses showed that there were significant but weak relationships between agreement that social media should *not* be used for hiring or firing decisions and self-control, openness to experience, and endorsement of the hookup culture (Table 2). In contrast, agreement that social media should not be used for hiring or firing was not significantly related to overall frequency of social media use or Facebook addiction. Therefore, our H1, H2, and H4 were supported, but H3 was not supported. Meanwhile, with regard to our potential covariates, age and gender were both positively and significantly related to the opposition of the use of

Table 2

Relationships between agreement that social media should not be used for hiring/firing, social media use, and personality characteristics.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. No SM for hiring/firing	–							
2. Age	.13**	–						
3. Gender	.12**	.18**	–					
4. BFI-Openness	.16**	.25**	.10*	–				
5. Frequency SM use	.03	–.18**	–.25**	–.09*	–			
6. FB addiction	.02	.02	–.16**	–.04	.22**	–		
7. Self-control	–.16**	–.03	–.15**	.08	–.15**	–.18**	–	
8. EHCI	.21**	.20**	.47**	.01	.06	.02	–.42**	–
M	3.20	19.45	0.33	3.51	1.80	3.36	3.84	2.20
SD	1.25	1.67	0.47	0.59	0.81	0.65	1.18	1.00

Note. SM = social media. BFI = Big Five Inventory. EHCI = Endorsement of the Hookup Culture Index. For gender, men = 1, women = 0.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .001$.

Table 3

Hierarchical regression of agreement that social media should not be used for hiring or firing on self-control, openness to experience, and endorsement of hookup culture.

Variable	B	SE(B)	β	ΔR^2
Step 1				.03**
Age	.09	.04	.12*	
Gender	-.27	.12	.09	
Step 2				.05***
BFI-Openness	.33	.10	.15**	
Self-control	-.20	.10	-.10*	
EHCI	.19	.07	.15*	

Note. Total $F(5, 425) = 7.70$, $R^2 = .08$. For gender, men = 1, women = 0.

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .001$.

*** $p < .001$.

social media for hiring and firing; therefore they were included as control variables in the first step of our regression analyses that followed.

Next, we performed a hierarchical regression analysis, controlling for age and gender in the first step, to determine whether self-control, openness to experience, and endorsement of the hookup culture were unique predictors of agreement that social media should not be used for hiring or firing (see Table 3). In the first step, age was a significant predictor: Those who were older were more likely to agree that social media should not be used in hiring or firing decisions. In the next step, after controlling for age and gender, openness to experience, self-control and endorsement of the hookup culture were all significant predictors of agreement that social media should not be for these purposes. Those who were more open to experience, had less self-control, and endorsed the hook-up culture more were more likely to agree that social media should not be used for hiring or firing decisions. Overall, our predictors accounted for 8% of the variance in this belief.

4. Discussion

Social media use has skyrocketed over the last decade, and companies and legislative bodies are scrambling to develop policies to address the myriad of issues that have arisen as a result of the inevitable mixing of work and private life through this medium. The aim of our exploratory study was to examine whether young adults agreed with the use of social media for employment decisions (e.g., hiring and firing), whether they agreed with the outcomes of recent legal cases on the topic, and what views they held on the posting of illegal material with regard to job termination. Additionally, we examined the psychological characteristics of those who opposed the use of social media for hiring and firing decisions.

Almost half of the participants (44%) stated that social media should *not* be used for hiring and firing decisions, and a further 28% were neutral. Therefore, less than one third of our young adult sample expressed agreement with this practice. Meanwhile, with regard to their opinions about behaviors featured in recent legal cases, only one fourth of our participants deemed a k-12 teacher holding a beer in a social media picture to be unacceptable, and only one third agreed that a k-12 teacher featured on social media engaging in lewd behavior should lose her job. When questioned more generally about the practice of posting illegal sexual behavior online, almost one third (29%) of the young adults in our sample felt that people should be able to post *illegal* material without the threat of losing their jobs. Moreover, only 10% feared that something that they had posted could hurt them in their job search. Overall, these results suggest a very liberal view of the types of material that people should be able to post online without the threat of job termination. More importantly, they show that

this generation (young adults) generally do not support employers' use of social media for making employment decisions about their employees.

Those who most opposed the practice of using social media for employment decisions had less self-control, were more likely to endorse the hookup culture, and were more psychologically open. These results were expected. We hypothesized that those with these psychological characteristics (i.e., less self-control, more openness to experience, and more acceptance of the hookup culture) may have more opportunities to engage in inappropriate behavior and may have more to hide on their social media profiles. Thus, their opposition of the use of social media for job decisions could be a form of self-preservation. Alternatively, we suggested that those with these characteristics may have a more liberal view and flexibility with regard to what is considered normal within the context of human behavior. The fact that all of these psychological characteristics emerged as unique predictors of the opinion of use social media use for hiring and firing decisions suggests that both explanations are tenable.

Meanwhile, we were somewhat surprised that social media use and addiction were not predictive of opinions on the fairness of using social media for job decisions. We expected that those who used social media more, and especially those who were addicted, would also be more likely to have inappropriate material on their social media profiles (e.g., Karl et al., 2010). Thus, we expected that these individuals would oppose the use of social media for job decisions. The fact that this was not supported suggests one of two things: (1) that those who use social media heavily vary in their opinion of whether the information they present online should be subject to public scrutiny, or (2) that among people who use social media heavily, there is a good amount of variance in their engagement in inappropriate behaviors, their ability to filter out their inappropriate behaviors, or both. This is a direction for future research.

Finally, one unexpected finding that merits mention is that the older participants in our sample were more likely to oppose the practice of using social media for job decisions. As all of the participants in our study were young adults, we examined age only as a potential covariate and did not make a priori predictions about with regard to its direction of influence. However, our correlational analyses give some explanation for this finding. More specifically, those who were older were more likely to endorse the hookup culture and were also more likely to be open to experience. Therefore, they may have had more experiences that, if posted online, could be potentially damaging to their job search. They also could have, because of their openness past experiences, more flexibility with regard what is acceptable to post online within the prevailing culture and a greater understanding that what is posted might be potentially damaging in the eyes of future employers. As these older adults are likely to be closer to entering the job market (or active in the job market), these social media/work issues might also be more salient and/or objectionable to them.

4.1. Limitations

Our study does have limitations that need mention. First, this study was conducted in a university setting; therefore, it is not known whether these results are applicable to the more general population of young adults. However, even if we captured only the sentiments of those who are in college preparing for their future careers, this is a large population of future employees that will, in the future, be weighing in on this issue. Additionally, we used a single-item measure to assess participants' opinions regarding the use of social media for job decisions. We acknowledge that a lengthier, multi-faceted measure might be more desirable, and a multi-item measure is another direction for future research. That

said, we did find significant predictive relationships even with this single-item measure. Finally, we examined only a limited number of psychological characteristics that could be related to people's opinions of whether social media should be used for hiring and firing decisions, and these variables accounted for only a small amount of variance in this opinion. We acknowledge that there are other variables not explored in this study that could influence opinions on this issue, and we look to future research to explore this topic further.

4.2. Conclusion

As legal cases are hitting the courts, both private and public companies are beginning to recognize the importance of developing policies regarding the use of social media for hiring and firing decisions. Until now, the public perception of this practice has gone unexplored; however, as laws are supposed to be influenced by the voices of the constituents, it is important to examine what the voices of the upcoming generation of employees are saying about this practice. In our study, most young adults were opposed to using social media in hiring and firing decisions, and this was more common among those who were more open to experience, had little self-control, and were more accepting of the hookup culture. Perhaps these individuals have more to hide in their social media profiles; however, it could also be that these individuals are more accepting and embracing of the current culture, in which the sharing of all types of information (both appropriate and inappropriate) via social media is commonplace. As this generation of employees enters the job market, it will be interesting to see how social media laws and policies adapt to prevailing cultural attitudes. However, and most importantly, this generation of upcoming workers must be informed that regardless of their opinions of the fairness of these policies, as it currently stands, their short-term social media use could have a long-term effect on their future careers.

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