

# Advantages and Disadvantages of the “Employee Recruits Employees” Method

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**Abstract**— This paper evaluates the advantages and disadvantages of the “Employee recruits employees” method. The use of private social networks to identify new employees for their own employer is used in many organizations. Human resources management departments use these tools to recruit candidates quickly and easily, to improve the recruiting results and to reduce the recruiting efforts. Potential candidates use their social network to identify employment opportunities. Their network gives them an advantage. The disadvantages of the use of social networks for the employee recruitment process are evaluated too. Human resources management has to know the advantages and disadvantages of the “employee recruits employees” to avoid inherent risks. Human resource management staff needs to be aware that social networks can have disadvantages for their organizations. Deeper knowledge concerning social networks is important for companies to recruit successfully and identify suitable candidates. The theoretical background is called the social capital theory. It is used to explain the mechanism of social relations and to investigate social capital in the employee recruitment process. The results indicate that participants more often accept advantages over disadvantages, regarding “employee recruits employees”. Another surprising result is that women have stronger tendencies than men. The method used was a questionnaire with 210 participants. The results have been investigated with median, mode, mean, standard deviation, frequency and correlation coefficient to explain the behavior and usage of social networks for the employee recruitment process.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Recommendations via social networks are important in many different business areas e.g. marketing or human resources management. The reputation of the company depends on the prestige in social networks. The experience from the consumer that a product gets a recommendation is important to be successful. The research in the marketing field has done many investigations about the recommendation of products to customer [1] [2]. The recommendation of employment opportunities needs research too. This research provides human resources management recommendation to use the “employees recruit employee” process for the recruiting process. This research gap in Germany, is initially, addressed with this paper. The paper presents the concerns of individuals. The disadvantages and advantages of “employee recruits employees” are under investigation. The paper evaluates the reason for individuals to use the opportunity to recommend or not to

recommend friends to an employer. “Employee recruits employees” is defined as the process that employees explore their social network e.g. their student group or sport club friends. They recommend open positions in their company or employment relevant information to member of their social network. The employee has to recommend their company to members of their network. The history of the employees with the company is important. They share their knowledge about the company [2]. The advantages are the emotional and additional information which is beneficial for the network. They know their contacts very well. They know who is available or interested in a change. They have the knowledge of who has the required skills and experience. But there are not only advantages, the use of social networks and the opportunity to present potential candidates by employees to companies can have a negative effect. The social network can be defined as a group of individuals who have a direct relationship with each other. Most of the networks have an objective or purpose. The network member shares resources or information to have an advantage. A typical network is a sport team, choir or religious group for example. Those networks do not have the purpose to exchange information about employment opportunities but the members of this networks support each other with information. The information transfer provides a favor to their network members. One reason can be that they expect some reciprocity or they have sympathy for the members of their network. The social network can be used as a communication channel for any kind of information including employment opportunities. The channel is confidential and exclusive. The purpose of the social network could have another purpose than the social network is used by some of the members. The network members bundle their resources and information to create a new situation which is beneficial for them but maybe not for the society [3] [4]. The social networks are updated with new technological opportunities and developments. That provides a new situation for social networks and changes social networks. This paper concentrates on the employment seeking process but further research can use the results to test additional situations. The research can be transferred to other issues for example, marketing research has found findings on the recommendation process for products [5]. This gives an indication of the importance and the power of recommendations. The social network can be used to

present the company to potential candidates. That supports the employer branding and provides a channel to exchange information. The advantage of the potential candidate is the transfer of the reputation from the employee to the potential candidate. The suggestion of the company is that the candidates skills are comparable with the employee [6]. "Word of mouth" or a personal recommendation is the best instrument to pass on information for good faith and confidentially, as an example. This represents one of the advantages of social networks for the members [7]. This can be used in many different situations to support organizations allowing a competitive advantage and potential benefit via their social networks for example, social networks of their clients or the social networks of their supporters. The information from a social network is more reliable and trusted than from other information channels. The communication in networks or between individuals is personalized. That means the transfer of information between friends is easier and faster [8]. The relationship reduces communication difficulties and transaction costs.

This paper concentrates on the employment recruitment process in Germany because companies need well qualified employees to attain a competitive advantage. Only a limited number of suitable employees are available in the German labor market at the moment. The number of applicants is decreasing and human resources management is under pressure to identify suitable candidates. There are many different channels to identify candidates [9]. Human resource management needs new opportunities and knowledge to identify employees. Companies use employees as ambassadors for employment relevant information for example. They transfer information about the culture and leadership to potential candidates. The company collects additional information about the potential candidate from the employee.

Individuals and human resource management have objectives and need opportunities, or tools, to achieve their objectives. Social networks are a social construct and can be used as a tool to access information and resources. This is a great benefit for individuals and organizations to use relationships to access information and resources. This also supports individuals and provides a benefit to the individuals. That is a reason to be member in a social network and to maintain or create a relationship [10].

The behavior of individuals and the use of social networks can be explained within the social capital theory. The social capital theory explains the exchange of resources and information. It is a prominent network theory. Individuals expect a return for their investment in social networks e.g. the opportunity to create obligations and to have an advantage with their relationships [11]. The opportunity to get additional information through the use of social networks is described and explained in many articles. Potential candidates and employees have an advantage to share information. The employees receive additional information for their decision for a position. The employee can influence the applicants. The employer

can control those applying [12] [13]. This provides them with the power to determine who gets additional information about their company and who applies. They can influence the pre-selection and support the decision for or against, a candidate. The search for employment is especially supported by social capital [14] [15]. The influence of social capital can be positive or negative for the individual. Human resources management has to be aware that the use of social networks and membership of social networks can create disadvantages e.g. corruption [3] [16]. The use of social capital can decrease the transaction cost and influence the information exchange. This paper concentrates on the variable information exchange to test the usefulness of social networks for the employment seeking process. The information exchange is a variable to explain social capital [17]. The collected data concentrate on the information exchange within social networks. The data explains the advantages and disadvantages of social networks for the employment seeking process. The theoretical disadvantage for employer is that the employee influences the selection of potential candidates. The power and influence of employees on the selection process can have a negative outcome. If they recommend a friend and the friend is selected then has the new employee obligations to the employee who recommends him/her. That can be a benefit for the employee. That means the current employee improves their network. They have a benefit with an increasing strong network in their company.

Social networks can be described as relationships between individuals. A network has a minimum of three participants and individuals maintain their relationship in their social network. Membership in different social networks depends on their environment or family origins for example. Social networks can be used to achieve objectives and to get access to resources and information [18]. The social networks provide the opportunity to share resources and information. The shared information and resources can create a benefit for the network or network member. The advantage of the individual is the reason to be a member of a network. People would not join a network or invest their resources and information in a network if they did not expect reciprocity for their investment. The density of the network influences the kind of the network and the opportunity to penalize negative or damaging behavior of social network members [19] [20]. Social networks have power. The power can be used by the members, e.g. exchange of employment relevant information. The prestige of social networks is an advantage for their members to have a benefit. The structure of social networks can be described with weak and strong ties [21] [22] and the history of the network. The distance between the network members can be used to describe social network structure and explain the mechanism of social networks.

Under consideration is the difference quantifiable between men and women. The gender difference is of particular interest. Men and women use social networks differently. Their interest in employment opportunities is different [23]. That means some kinds of professions are

more of interest for men and other positions are more preferred by women. Employers have to take under consideration, how the different use of social networks by men and women influences the recruiting strategy, to access to the desired potential candidates.

II. METHOD TO INVESTIGATE SOCIAL NETWORKS

The investigation is possible with various methods. This paper uses data from an online survey [24]. The questionnaire has different parts to investigate the behavior of employment seeking individuals and has a part about demographic data. This paper concentrates on the part about the process “employee recruits employees”. The participants answered three questions regarding “employee recruits employees”. The data has been collected in October 2015 in cooperation with a scientific project of the University of Ludwigshafen. The investigated population is young, employment seeking individuals, in Germany. The participants are 210 German speaking individuals. The gender distribution is 34.4% men and 65.6% women. Figure one illustrates the social status. The social status is an important factor if people are searching for employment opportunities. The majority with 47.9% of the participants are students. Students have to identify in the near future an employment opportunity. As the research is concentrating on “employee recruits employees” it is important that the second largest group of employees. Employees have the opportunity to forward their information about companies in a social network to their friends. They have the needed information about employer and employment opportunities. Among the school adolescents 8.2% are looking, in the near future, for a practical training/apprenticeships or a University in which to study. That means they can use information of employed peers to investigate an employer or employment opportunity. The smallest group is the unemployed group, at 1.5%. This group is involved in the employment seeking process and has experience with the employment seeking process. They need an employment. The unemployed rate of the sample is very similar to the unemployment rate in Germany. The data about the employment rate is provided by the German employment agency<sup>1</sup>.

The participants are mainly under 30 years of age, which explains the share of students and school children. The age distribution is illustrated in detail in figure two. The age is in a range which is typical for individuals to identify employment. That means the majority of the individuals is between 21 and 35 years old. The share of 46.2% of the participants, are between 21 and 25 years old.

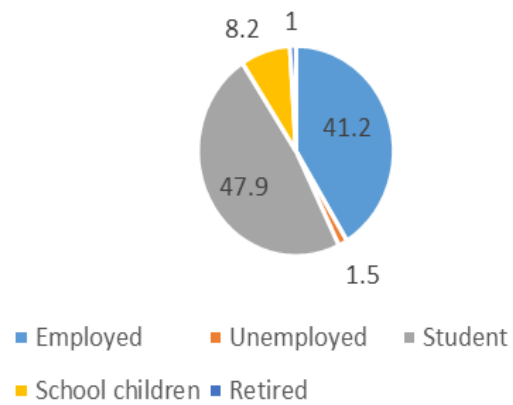


Figure 1. Distribution of social status of the participants in %, (n = 194), Diagram constructed by author

This is a typical age to search for employment opportunities because the students finish their studies in this age range. Less than 20 years of age, are 13.8% of the participants. This age group needs a practical training place, apprenticeship or higher education to develop their skills to be ready for an employment opportunity with a company, to be prepared for the labor market. This group exchanges information about companies too. They use their network to share information about employment relevant information because they are doing internships and practical training in cooperation with a company in Germany.

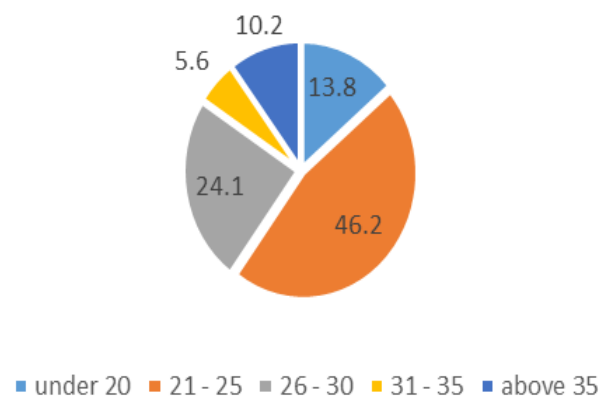


Figure 2. Age Distribution in %, (n = 195), Diagram constructed by author

In the near future they will be looking for employment or practical trainings. They investigate companies to identify suitable employment opportunities. A small group of participants, having 10.2% are above 35 years of age. This group of participants collects experience with companies. They have an employment history. They can share their knowledge. They know the importance of sharing employment relevant information with employment seeking friends.

The educational level is important because knowledge influences the use of social networks and social network

<sup>1</sup> Bundesagentur für Arbeit  
<http://statistik.arbeitsagentur.de/Navigation/Statistik/Statistik-nach-Themen/Arbeitsmarkt-im-Ueberblick/Arbeitsmarkt-im-Ueberblick-Nav.html> (viewed 29.04.2016)

sites. It is important that the participants of the survey can use social network sites and use social networks in their daily life. The age distribution is a typical age for social network members and social network sites members. The federal statistical office provides data that shows there are differences between educational levels, social status and age [25]. The gender is biased but all other demographic data is on a good representative level for the investigated population.

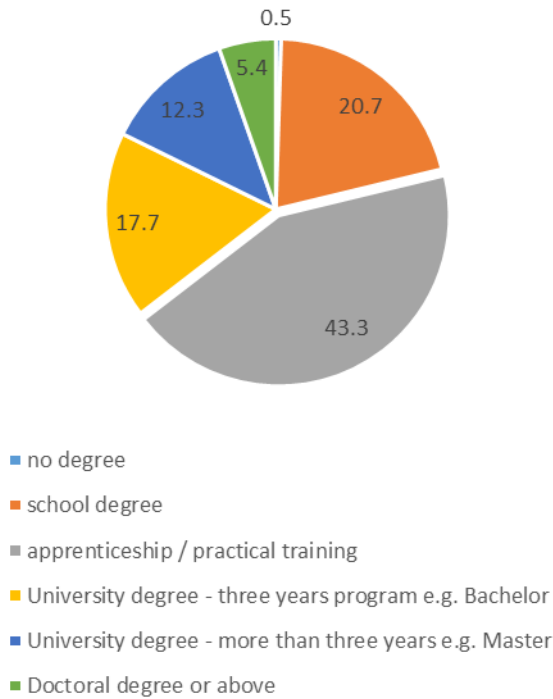


Figure 3. Distribution of educational degree in % (n = 203)

The data has been analyzed with SPSS and evaluated with mean, median, mode, standard deviation, frequency and correlation methods.

### III. RESULTS

The first question evaluates the reasons to use social networks for the employment seeking process, to explain the advantages of social networks. The paper asked “What kind of information is of interests to motivate the individual to apply for an open position”. The needs of individuals to collect information about employment opportunities are an essential factor for potential candidates. They can use further information to consider their application. The additional information provides employment seeking individuals the base to decide about the application. The question “I can collect more detailed information about the job specification and further information about the position” has the mode one and median two. The statement “I can receive more detailed information about the employer e.g. working atmosphere or about colleagues or company culture” has the mode one and the median is one. The results are similar. This means these two statements are the most important points for individuals. The clear tendency is very important. That explain the importance to collect informal information which is not accessible on regular information channels e.g. newspapers or career pages for example. They are keen to get this information about the employer and additional information about the position. That is an advantage of the social network for them. The two pieces of information concerning “realistic information about the economic situation” or about “company procedures” have the mode and median three. Both kinds of information are accessible easily on formal information channels e.g. newspapers or career webpages.

That means this kind of information is not expected to

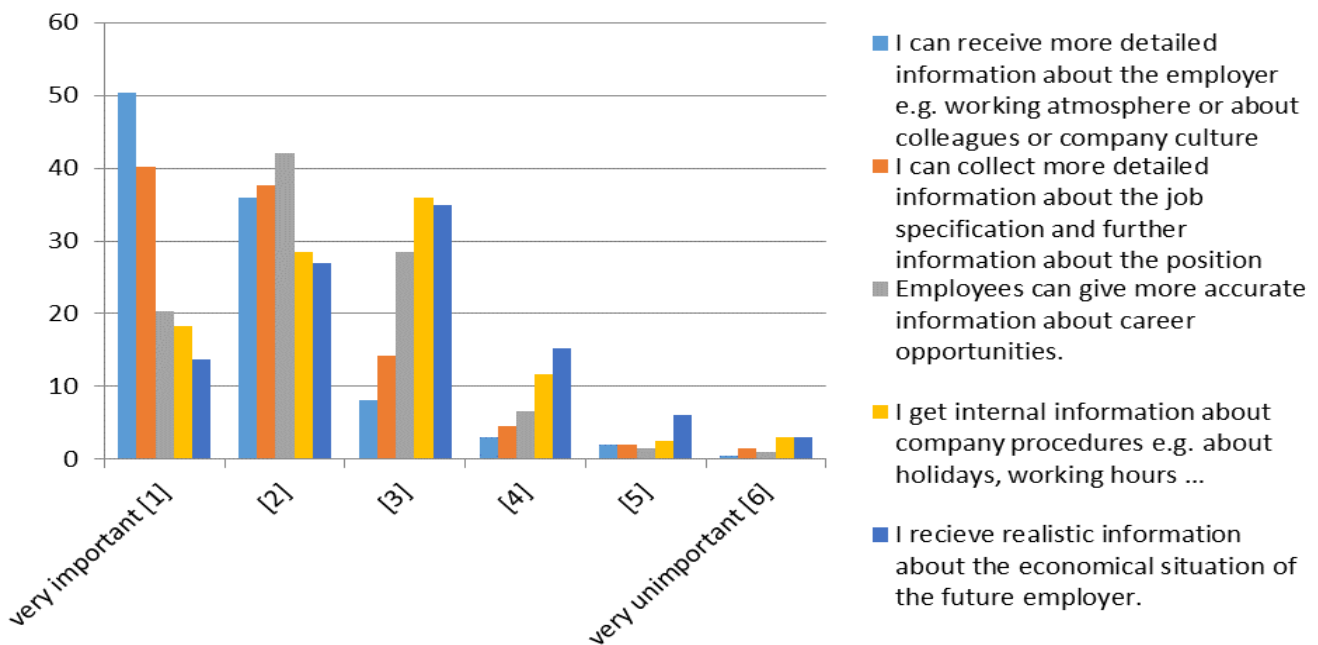


Figure 4 Distribution of evaluations for the statements regarding “What kind of information from employees is interesting to motivate the individual to apply for an open position?”, evaluation scale 1 – 6, where 1 – very important, 6 – very unimportant, n = 197, results in %, data collected by Tom Sander

be collected from friends or relationships of social networks. The information is official and easily accessible. Social networks are not needed to collect this information. The information is sensitive. Individuals would not produce the feeling of oppression to their friends in the social network or to ask discourteous questions their contacts.

**TABLE I.**  
MAIN STATISTIC INDICATORS OF EVALUATIONS FOR THE QUESTION “WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION FROM EMPLOYEES IS INTERESTING TO MOTIVATE THE INDIVIDUAL TO APPLY FOR AN OPEN POSITION?”, DATA COLLECTED BY TOM SANDER, EVALUATION SCALE 1-6, WHERE 1-VERY IMPORTANT, 6-NOT IMPORTANT

	I can collect more detailed information about the job specification and further information about the position	I can receive more detailed information about the employer e.g. working atmosphere or about colleagues or company culture
N	197	197
Mean	1.95	1.72
Median	2	1
Standard Deviation	1.075	0.947
Mode	1	1

The information is transparent and easily accessible, that is the benefit for the membership in social networks and social network sites. The effort to get the information correlates with the value to be member in a social network. That means employment relevant information is easily accessible at many places. The individuals do not need to be members in a social network to receive this information. The information access is possible without membership in a social network. The career development opportunities have the median and mode too. This means there is not a clear tendency as for the other four

questions. The results are illustrated in Figure 4. More detailed is the data presented in table one and two. The tables present clear differences between the reasons for individuals to exchange information about employment relevant information.

**TABLE II.**  
MAIN STATISTIC INDICATORS OF EVALUATIONS FOR THE QUESTION “WHAT KIND OF INFORMATION FROM EMPLOYEES IS INTERESTING TO MOTIVATE THE INDIVIDUAL TO APPLY FOR AN OPEN POSITION?”, DATA COLLECTED BY TOM SANDER, EVALUATION SCALE 1-6, WHERE 1-VERY IMPORTANT, 6-NOT IMPORTANT

	I receive realistic information about the economic situation of the future employer.	I get internal information about company procedures e.g. about holidays, working hours ...	Employees can give more accurate information about career opportunities.
N	197	197	197
Mean	2.82	2.61	2.3
Median	3	3	2
Standard Deviation	1.21	1.167	0.983
Mode	3	3	2

The mean and mode support the results. The indication is that people are interested to receive information about companies. The interest increases if they are looking for an employment opportunity. They use their social network and social network sites to exchange and receive employment relevant information. The results in detail are described in the figure four and confirm the results. The answers in the distributions are mainly skewed to “very important”. The tendency is clearly towards the first three points on the scale.

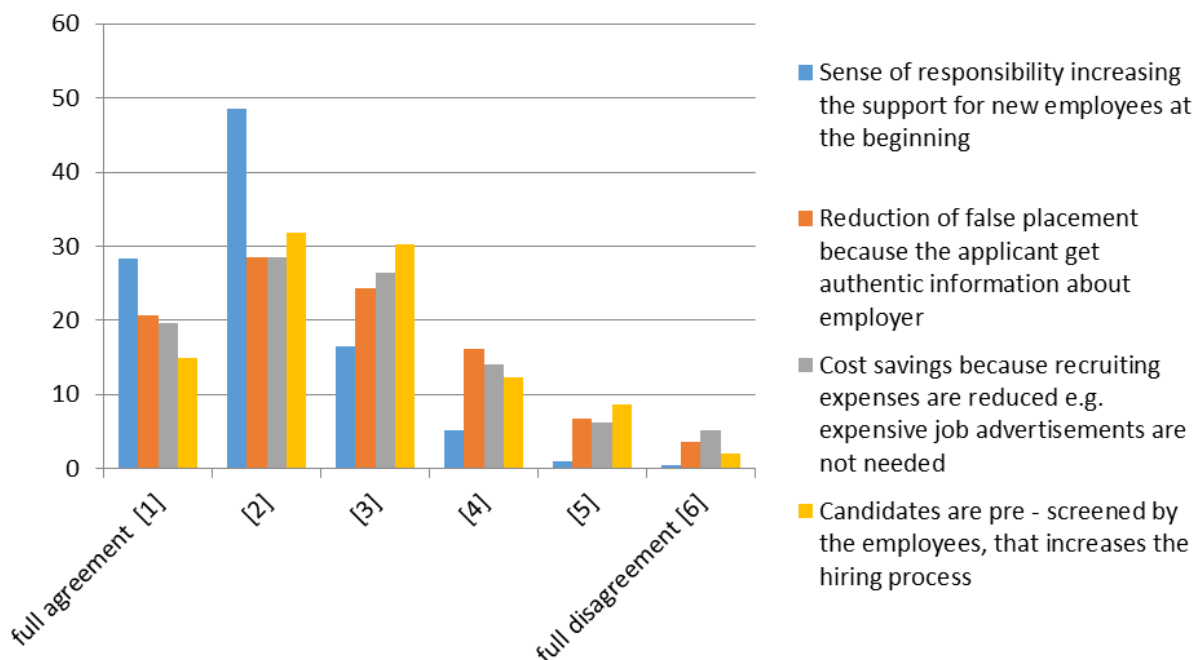


Figure 5. Distribution of evaluations for the statements regarding “Please evaluate the advantages of „the employee recruits the employee“”, n = 193 – 195, results in %, data collected by Tom Sander

This explains the importance of social networks and the information to decide on an application. The level of importance is clearly explained with the answers of the respondents. The potential candidates use the employees to get information. The access to background information is beneficial for potential candidates. The potential candidates can ask questions and receive more customized information via social networks. Their friends know their interest and needed information. Easily accessible information from official information channels is less beneficial. This important information provides an overview about the potential employer. That increases the transparency of the company for the employment seeking individual.

The gender difference is visible in the distribution the answer “I can receive more detailed information about the employer e.g. working atmosphere or about colleagues or company culture” have 37.31% men and 55.9% women. This represents a clear difference between the genders concerning their use of social networks in the employment seeking process. The question “I can collect more detailed information about the job specification and further information about the position” has 32.83% men and 44.09% women on scale one. That means 11.26% more women select stage one compared with the men. The extreme tendency to full agreement is mainly used by women’s.

The next section presents the advantages and disadvantages of “the employee recruits employees”. All answers have the mode two. The only statement with the median two is the “Sense of responsibility increasing the support for new employees at the beginning”.

The results in detail are presented in figure five. The tendency for all answers is on the scale to full agreement. The mean and mode in table three and four support the location parameter and provide the assumption that “employees recruit employees” is an important issue for applicants. They are aware regarding the advantages for themselves and the company.

The cost savings and advantages of social networks are important for companies. Social networks can reduce costs, reduce the time to hire, reduce efforts and miscast of employees for example. This influences the decision to use “employee recruits employees” as a recruiting tool. This tool provides positive results for organizations. That helps companies to be competitive. The social network is important for the recruiting process and supports human resources management e.g. pre-screening candidates and providing additional information about candidates. The results support candidates too; their social network pre-screens the potential employer. That support the decision making process for or against an employment opportunity. This helps to avoid wrong decisions of potential candidates and protects them against negative decisions. The advantage of getting more accurate information is an important advantage of the social network for the member.

TABLE III.  
MAIN STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF EVALUATIONS FOR THE QUESTION

MAIN STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF EVALUATIONS FOR THE QUESTION  
“PLEASE EVALUATE THE ADVANTAGES OF „THE EMPLOYEE RECRUITS  
THE EMPLOYEE“ PROGRAMS”, DATA COLLECTED BY TOM SANDER,  
EVALUATION SCALE 1-6, WHERE 1-VERY IMPORTANT, 6-NOT  
IMPORTANT

	Candidates are pre - screened by the employees that increase the hiring process	Reduction of false placement because the applicant get authentic information about employer
N	195	193
Mean	2.74	2.7
Median	3	3
Standard Deviation	1.229	1.339
Mode	2	2

The gender difference is of interest. The knowledge about differences provides the opportunity to create tailor made solutions. That support companies to get in touch fast and easily with potential candidates. Women are more extreme than men. This means the statement “Candidates are pre-screened by the employees and that increases the hiring speed” is answered on scale one with 7.56% men and 18.11% women. The difference between women and men is 10.55%. This is a clear result on the first stage. The difference between men and women is clearly visible.

TABLE IV.  
MAIN STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF EVALUATIONS FOR THE QUESTION  
“PLEASE EVALUATE THE ADVANTAGES OF „THE EMPLOYEE RECRUITS  
THE EMPLOYEE“ PROGRAMS”, DATA COLLECTED BY TOM SANDER,  
EVALUATION SCALE 1-6, WHERE 1-VERY IMPORTANT, 6-NOT  
IMPORTANT

	Cost savings because recruiting expenses are reduced e.g. expensive job advertisements are not needed	Sense of responsibility increasing the support for new employees at the beginning
N	193	194
Mean	2.74	2.04
Median	3	2
Standard Deviation	1.367	0.913
Mode	2	2

The results regarding disadvantages of “the employee recruit employees” is different compared to the advantages. The mode and median are three. The only statement with the median and mode two is “Candidates are only recommended because the employee receives a benefit”. This means the results of disadvantages compared with the advantages have a few strong tendencies to “full agreement”.

TABLE V.  
MAIN STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF EVALUATIONS FOR THE QUESTION  
“PLEASE EVALUATE THE DISADVANTAGES OF „THE EMPLOYEE  
RECRUITS THE EMPLOYEE“ PROGRAMS”, DATA COLLECTED BY TOM  
SANDER, EVALUATION SCALE 1-6, WHERE 1-VERY IMPORTANT, 6-NOT  
IMPORTANT

	Creation of undesired cliques and cronyism	Possible conflicts if a recommended candidate is rejected
n	192	192
Mean	2.84	2.83
Median	3	3
Std. Deviation	1.361	1.352
Mode	3	3

The results in detail for the statements are presented in the Figure 6. The distribution is more equal compared to the frequency of the statements of advantages. That means the answers of “full disagreement” is more often selected for disadvantages compared with the advantages. The main disadvantage of “the employee recruits employees” is the misuse of this tool to have a personal advantage e.g. the recommendation of unsuitable candidates because employees receive a benefit. Then the individual has an advantage but the organization has a disadvantage. The potential conflicts and reduction of the possibility of innovations are another danger for organizations considering using social networks to employ new individuals.

The differences between men and women are visible. More women answer with full agreement than men. The women select mainly the first stage for their answers. Both statements “Creation of undesired cliques and cronyism” and “Possible conflicts if a recommended candidate is rejected” are answered by 22.22% women. Compared with men with 12.31% for “creation of

undesired cliques and cronyism” and 6.15% for the statement “Possible conflicts if a recommended candidate is rejected” These differences are clear signals that there is a difference between men and women. The gap between men and women is greater than 10%.

TABLE VI.  
MAIN STATISTICAL INDICATORS OF EVALUATIONS FOR THE QUESTION  
“PLEASE EVALUATE THE DISADVANTAGES OF „THE EMPLOYEE  
RECRUITS THE EMPLOYEE“ PROGRAMS”, DATA COLLECTED BY TOM  
SANDER, EVALUATION SCALE 1-6, WHERE 1-VERY IMPORTANT, 6-NOT  
IMPORTANT

	Innovation and creativity losses for the company because all employees have a similar background	Candidates are only recommended because the employee receives a benefit.
N	191	191
Mean	2.96	2.6
Median	3	2
Std. Deviation	1.339	1.387
Mode	3	2

Correlations are not statistically significant or not at an acceptable level. This means the use of social network sites or demographic data is not explainable with the use of the “employee recruits employees” method. The results of the correlation are valid, showing the advantages, disadvantages and reasoning for use of social networks to identify employees.

## VI DISCUSSION

Companies need new employees and the “employee recruits employees” is an important tool to identify new employees. The time to hire and costs can be reduced with this method. The advantage is the additional information for the candidate and the opportunity for

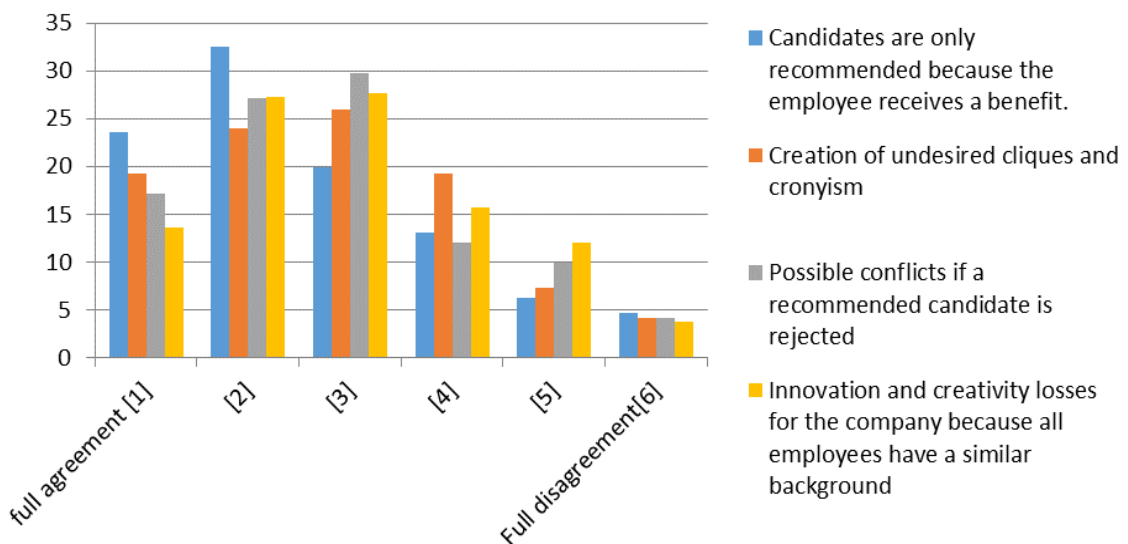


Figure 6 Distribution of evaluations for the statements regarding “Please evaluate the disadvantages of „the employee recruits the employee“”, n = 191 – 192, results in %, data collected by Tom Sander

companies to get further information about candidates. The companies can superior evaluate the potential candidate from the employee social network with this information. This means social networks are accepted as a place to recruit new employees. The use of social networks is explained within the work of this paper. The value of the information is that the information is more tailored for the candidate and the access to the employee provides a realistic insight and access to accurate information. This means information is an important part of social networks. The exchange of beneficial information between individuals is a reason to be a member of a social network. The merge of the employee network with members who are potential candidates and the organization of employee seeking companies provide an advantage for all involved individuals.

There are advantages for companies, potential candidates and both groups. The pre-screened candidates by the employees improve the hiring speed and the selection process is more accurate as more information is available for potential candidates and the organization. This reduces the cost for organizations to employ new employees. New employees are superior supported if they are recommended by employees. The colleagues take more care of the new employee because they feel responsible for their recommended new colleagues. The statements mode tendency is to two. This means the people agree that the advantages are more positive and more accepted than the disadvantages.

All disadvantages have a mode 3, except one statement which has a mode 2. The disadvantages do not have the same acceptance compared with the advantages. The median has the same structure as the mode. There are possible conflicts if recommended candidates are rejected. That influences the selection process which can lead to negative results e.g. the reduction of innovative skills in the company because all employees are from the same social networks with similar cultures and ethical standards. This can be dangerous for companies, but participants rate the disadvantages with mode and median 3. This means the tendency on the scale is more neutral than the advantages. The only disadvantage with median and mode 2 is that individuals only recommend new candidates because they get a benefit from the company. This means the personal value is of higher interest than the value of the social network or value for the company. This behavior can be negative for all but positive for the individual, that result is not desired as the damage for the social network is more than the value of the social network.

The negative consequences of using social networks to identify potential candidates have to be under consideration by human resources management. Human resources management has to be aware of the advantages and disadvantages that social networks can be used successfully for the company. This provides the opportunity to improve the recruiting process e.g. time to hire and to avoid poor appointments. This is the advantage for human resources management and provide a strategic benefit to the organization. They have a

competitive advantage because their potential candidates are informed by their employers and the employer can motivate the candidate to apply with positive information. Then the candidates have to the desire to apply for the job. This means the social network is used to transfer information and can be used for employer branding to present the company in a positive light or to an audience and create the motivation for an individual to apply. The advantage can be explained with the social capital theory. The access to information and resources is a benefit for members. Organizations have an advantage with "employee recruits employees" because they can use the networks of their employees, to identify fast and easily, potential employee candidates.

The observed gender utilization difference is of interest since women have much higher frequency of utilization on this scale than men. This needs further research to fully explain the result and to investigate the different uses of social networks of men and women in the employment recruitment process. The results can support better understanding of how people use social networks and to reach women and/or men with social networks. This information is of interest for other scientific fields and also would also require further research.

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