Interpersonal perception of LinkedIn profiles and employability

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Summary. *This paper presents two pilot studies related to the self-presentation of users of the professional social network LinkedIn. The first one looks at the most relevant categories users and observers employ when they assess LinkedIn profiles. The results show that professional and non-professional observers rely on similar aspects of the observable characteristics of these profiles to draw conclusions and form their assessment of a given candidate's employability. However, job selection professionals (recruiters) are more suspicious of profiles than non-professionals. The study concludes that candidates are highly aware of how they have to present themselves in a LinkedIn profile in order to attract the attention of selection professionals. The second pilot study asked whether certain gender roles, namely instrumentality (traditional masculinity) and expressiveness (traditional femininity), were predictors of the perceived employability of candidates, in addition to their competencies, personality and gender. The variable competencies turned out to be the strongest predictor of perceived employability, followed by expressiveness. These results are discussed in relation to changes in gender roles in society overall and in the labour world specifically.*

Keywords: *employability; interpersonal perception; LinkedIn; gender roles; competences*

Percepció interpersonal de perfils a LinkedIn i ocupabilitat

Resum. *Aquest treball presenta dos estudis pilot en relació a la autopresentació d'usuaris de la xarxa social professional LinkedIn. En el primer s'estudia quines són les categories mes rellevants a l'hora de valorar un perfil de LinkedIn, tant per als usuaris com per a observadors. Els resultats mostren que els observadors professionals i no professionals es basen en aspectes similars pel que fa a característiques observables dels perfils per treure conclusions per a la seva valoració sobre l'ocupabilitat del candidat, però els professionals de la selecció desconfien més dels perfils que els no professionals. Es conclou que els candidats són força conscients sobre com s'han de presentar en un perfil de LinkedIn per atreure l'atenció de professionals de la selecció. El segon estudi pilot es va fer per comprovar si els rols de gènere, en tant instrumentalitat (la tradicional masculinitat) i expressivitat (la tradicional feminitat) eren predictors de l'ocupabilitat percebuda dels candidats, juntament amb les competències, personalitat i sexe. La variable competències es va perfilar com el predictor més fort de l'ocupabilitat percebuda, seguit per l'expressivitat. Es discuteixen aquests resultats en relació als canvis en els rols de gènere en la societat i en el món laboral específicament.*

Paraules clau: *ocupabilitat; percepció interpersonal; LinkedIn; rols de gènere; competències*

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Introduction

The job search and job recruiting in the digital era

The world we live in is hyperconnected, digital and globalised, and it is characterised by constantly accelerating social and technological changes, by the continuous appearance of new social agents and by omnipresent mobility and connectivity. The sweeping changes in models of consumption and the trend toward digitalisation (the cloud, big data, etc.) are transforming society and leaving in their wake new challenges and business opportunities. This in turn has given rise to new ways of organising companies and new methods of internal communication and information and talent management (both in terms of recruitment and retention). In light of all of this, individuals and companies have no choice but to take an approach that allows them to evolve and progress by engaging in a constant process of learning and adaptation. Meanwhile, there is also a need for scientific studies to identify the variables that may be associated with these transformations, and how human behaviour is changing as a result (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009; Kluemper, Rosen & Mossholder, 2012).

More specifically, the appearance of social networks in contemporary society has sparked a revolution in the way organisations seek out talent. The past 20 years have seen a move from the traditional paper CV to the digital CV, now an indispensable element of the job market. Thus, it is worth stressing the importance of good use of the Internet, as determined by careful analysis of the concept of job recruitment 2.0. Also referred to as Social Recruiting, this new collection of practices and procedures have in common the use of new technologies (web 2.0 tools and online collaboration) in an effort to attract the ideal candidate to fill a given position. It has been shown that both job recruiters and candidates view social networks like LinkedIn as valuable resources that help determine how good a fit an individual may be for a certain job, or how well a certain jobseeker might fit into a given organization. (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013).

Thus, the use of social networks in human resources has mushroomed, and at the same time it has shaped the ways in which HR recruiters assess candidates, especially for the growing number of profiles connected to the digital world, positions that require different kinds of skills. Thus, HR professionals need to use a range of specific programmes to process information on candidates. According to Casilda (2016) these new techniques make for improved selection processes and streamlined recruitment, especially when there are large numbers of candidates or positions to fill and it is desirable to interview only those jobseekers who are most likely to fit with the company. In fact, current companies tend to analyse their candidates' digital footprints online, examining their contacts, how often they are active on social networks, their use of language, their posts and the kinds of articles they share. This reality is proof of the need to occasionally engage in so-called egosurfing, egosearching or vanity searching in order to keep tabs on our own online identities. This way, it is more possible to avoid unpleasant surprises and occurrences, such as missing out on a job opportunity as a result of online personal information or having private details of our lives posted in public view. Candidates are expected to be active users of LinkedIn, to update their profiles at least once a week and to share articles connected to their professional fields. This means that in order to boost our own value as professionals we must consider how we create and maintain our social media profiles, and it has been observed that the best strategy to employ when updating our presence on these networks is to engage in a kind of content marketing aimed at the professional community in which we would like to take part (Reig, 2013).

According to a recent study on Social Recruiting by the online platform Jobvite (2013), the best social networks for recruiting candidates to fill job vacancies are LinkedIn (94%), Facebook (65%), Twitter (55%), Google Plus (18%) and YouTube (15%). Of those surveyed, 78% of employers had found at least one employee via a social network, and 93% of HR professionals were found to use social networks to verify information on the CVs of job applicants. Meanwhile, 58% of employees reported having at some point rejected a candidate based on the content of his or her social network profiles. Of employers who rejected applicants because of material on social networks, 65% did so because the candidates had posted insults or explicit mentions of violence online, 61% had ruled out candidates because of serious grammatical errors on their profiles and 47% reported ruling out candidates who were pictured drinking alcohol.

The network LinkedIn was founded in 2002, and since then it has become a leading social network of professionals, aimed at helping them forge and maintain contacts. In fact, the network now has over 430 million registered users in over 200 different countries, with 8 million users in Spain alone. Just like on other social networks, each user has a personal profile, but LinkedIn stands apart from other networks in that it focuses on professional activities. As such, it allows users to form connections both with people with whom they may have had professional contact and with other users of similar professional backgrounds. Additionally, companies can use the network to get information about users, who are able to adjust their privacy settings to allow whatever information they choose to be publicly visible. Pavan, Velasco, Jiménez, Gonzalo and Acevedo (2012) observed that this profile acts as a sort of interactive CV, on which users can highlight their areas of expertise, their work experience and the kind of opportunities they are seeking, all in different languages. Recruitment professionals use this network to seek out candidates with a certain level or period of professional experience or with specific skills. All of this means that good online self-presentation has become one of the keys to a successful job search.

Competencies and employability

Competencies are defined as abilities that draw on various areas of knowledge, skills, thoughts and talents and become apparent through all the interactions individuals engage in as they go about their personal, social and working lives. This concept initially referred to the professional sphere only, but now it embraces a broader area of know-how that consists of situations when knowledge, skills and attitudes must be applied creatively, dynamically and responsibly.

The concept of competency is closely linked to that of employability. According to Evans (2010), in general terms employability can be defined as the set of variables that account for an individual's status or situation of employment or unemployment. For a given individual, it is defined as the set of competencies that allow him or her to obtain and maintain a given job while meeting his or her professional and economic goals while becoming realised in terms of promotion and development. Knowledge of these factors makes it possible to predict a person's professional trajectory, as the more competent an individual is, the more likely he or she is to get and maintain a job.

Thus, it is clear that while the traditional definition of employability consisted of the command of a specific area of knowledge and the theoretical or practical demonstration of this command, this view has fallen out of favour in the contemporary world (Alonso, Fernández, & Nyssen, 2009). Additionally, it is worth noting that when it comes to employability, competencies are not synonymous with skills. According to Climent (2010) there are significant differences between these two categories. Skills are a part of competencies. They make up the building blocks of competencies and are connected with the lifelong learning and educational processes that individuals go through. Competencies, meanwhile, are not mere components of skills, and their role is found in the training of adults.

According to Martínez (2011), the competency of employability has to be proven in a specific context related to the job in question. In other words, a person is competent in terms of employability only when he or she has put into practice the optimal undertaking of a planned out professional career. According to this framework, there can be different degrees of competency when it comes to employability:

1) Cognitive aspects: related to individuals' knowledge and the processes linked to the design and carrying out of a professional career, in a given context and considering the particularities of each person (such as the state of the job market, the understanding of the systems and processes involved in seeking and getting a job, individual, theories, perceptions and beliefs, etc.); 2. Conative aspects connected with know-how: habits and processes that are useful in the design and development of a professional career (decision making, career and organisational planning, etc.); 3. Aspects that are useful for the design and putting into practice of a career plan, linked to know-how and social aptitudes (attitudes, characteristics, values, relationships, emotional intelligence, etc.).

Additionally, employability includes an individual's competencies when it comes to getting and keeping a job, improving job performance, adapting to change, choosing another job when desired and joining and re-joining the job market as necessary throughout life. In this way, the concept of employability is linked to that of personal development. In other words, this individual competency is linked with the personal commitment to the planning of one's own professional life, to the adopting of a proactive attitude when seeking out opportunities for increased employability, whether within one's organisation or outside it (Campos, 2003).

According to Fernández (2016), in order to stand out in today's competitive job market, a candidate must have the ability to be creative and innovative, and must be able to adapt to working in changing circumstances, skilled at making decisions, capable of autonomous learning and continuous training, adept at various disciplines, and flexible and multi-talented enough to be able to occupy a range of positions. Candidates must also have interpersonal and communicative abilities, a strong international perspective, experience and command of the use of social networks. Beyond all of this, candidates must be able to forge their own individual brands. In fact, the *Informe Epyce* (2016) came to the conclusion that the competencies that were most necessary in the present and those most likely to be demanded in the future are:

Commitment (10.16%), initiative and proactiveness (7.62%), a command of different languages (7.39%), a result-oriented perspective (6.95%) and leadership (6.35%). Among the last factors included on this list are analytical thinking (1.87%) and conflict management (1.42%). In light of these results, the study suggests that the labour market places a priority on sales positions (as a result of the economic context of the past few years), and that there seems to be a need for candidates skilled in technology and engineering, as a result of recent technological changes and the move toward greater optimisation and efficiency in organisations. This explains why in an era of high unemployment there may yet be positions that companies cannot fill, and it shows that a lack of necessary capacities can stand in the way of an organisation's competitiveness (as evidenced by studies like the Manpower Group's *Talent Shortage Survey*).

Founded upon this research, these two pilot studies aimed to lay a foundation for research into competencies and employability on LinkedIn. The first of these two studies focuses on the processes of interpersonal perception on LinkedIn, via an analysis of the aspects that users believe to be most relevant to achieving effective self-presentation on the network, as well as of profiles that outside observers are most likely to examine in their assessments. The aim of the second study is to analyse the role played by competencies and personality characteristics and they extent to which they can predict employability, while at the same time

examining variables associated with gender roles: instrumentality and expressiveness.

Study 1

Introduction

Interpersonal perception on social networks

Self-presentation or self-revelation can be defined as any intentional or unintentional message an individual communicates about him- or herself to others (Wheeless & Grotz, 1976). The term "impression management" is often used to describe practices of this sort which involve deliberate decisions as to what to reveal and how (and what not to reveal). Impression management is the process by which individuals attempt to control the impression they make on others (Goffman, 1959). In this conceptual framework for the processes of interpersonal perception, the way in which an observer perceives this presentation is called impression formation. Although these processes take place in face-to-face communication, there has been a considerable emphasis in recent studies on looking at how they operate in digital environments. Online communication allows for more careful processes of self-presentation than face-to-face contexts, because when posting online people can spend longer thinking about the impression a certain piece of information is likely to cause, and because the public nature of online social networks serves to motivate people to take more care when presenting themselves there.

This leads to two important questions: a) Do users actively distort their self-presentation in their profiles to create a certain sought-after impression in the viewer, and if so, to what extent do they do this? Do they achieve the sought-after effect on the viewer? (impression management); b) What aspects of online profiles do observers pay the most attention to when forming their impressions (impression formation), and how accurate are they when they attempt to identify the relevant characteristics to reach conclusions upon which to base their decisions on recruitment and other matters?

Different people may have different reasons for intentionally distorting their profiles, but among them might be a desire to improve their job prospects. A study by Guillory and Hancock (2012) showed that information on LinkedIn is less distorted than data on traditional CVs when it comes to work experience and responsibilities but more distorted when it refers to interests and hobbies. One clear factor that may contribute to possible distortions or embellishments of LinkedIn profiles is the need to present a high degree of competency of employability.

The aim of Study 1 is to carry out pilot research into the aspects of profiles that professional and non-professional observers pay most attention to when assessing the profiles' quality and the employability of the candidate in the position he or she is seeking. The study also attempts to obtain an initial assessment as to whether the candidates' assessments coincide with those of observers with regard to distortion and employability, based on the profile observed. The following research questions are posed:

1. What categories are relevant to the assessment of a LinkedIn profile? Do personnel selection professionals use the same categories as candidates (the individuals who maintains the profiles) and non-professional observers? How do they describe profiles, and on what aspects do they base these descriptions?

2. Do candidates "embellish" their profiles? Are observers able to detect when candidates have included distortions in their profiles?

3. Is self-assessment of one's own employability (perceived employability, PE) a realistic measure? Does it coincide with the employability scores given to candidates by professional and non-professional observers?

Method

Participants

A total of 22 people participated in the study, of whom five men and five women of between 23 and 33 years of age were "candidates" or jobseekers with active LinkedIn profiles. The other 12 were "observers", who examined and assessed the profiles. Of these observers, six were peers (three women and three men in the same age range as the candidates) and six were recruiters (three women and three men who are selection professionals).

Instruments

A brief questionnaire consisting of four items was created for the purposes of the study. Two open-ended items were drafted in order to address the first research question and obtain a system of categories. First, participants were asked to freely describe and assess the profile (item 1), and then they were asked to identify the aspects of the profile upon which this assessment was based (item 2). In order to answer the second research question and obtain a score for distortion, participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they thought a profile was embellished (on a scale from 1 [not at all] to 5 [considerably]) (item 3). Finally, in order to address the third research question, participants were asked to rate the employability of the candidate (item 4) for a job for which the candidate was qualified (on a scale from 1 [very low] to 5 [very high]).

Procedure

An individual, in-person interview was conducted with each participant. Participation in the study was voluntary. In the initial phase, the candidates signed an informed consent form that granted permission for the interviewer to take screen shots of their profiles and for these profiles to be presented to the participating observers and assessed. In other words, although the answers

were confidential, the candidates' public LinkedIn profiles were saved in such a way that their names were visible. No other data on candidates was recorded, aside from this publicly available information. As a reward for participating, candidates were offered anonymous feedback on their profiles from the professional observers, and 10 of the candidates accessed this information. Later, the candidates themselves were interviewed in person and asked to answer the survey questions with respect to their own LinkedIn profiles.

Immediately after this part of the interview, the screenshot of the interviewed candidate's LinkedIn profile was taken, in order to guarantee that the observers were able to view the profile in the same state as the candidate.

The second phase of the study consisted of the interviews with observers (peers and recruiters). Each peer and each recruiter examined and rated all the profiles, meaning that a total of 120 observations were collected (10 candidates times 12 observers). The observers answered the same questions as the candidates, but the questions were phrased in the third person and asked in regard to each profile. This means that they were asked to freely describe each of the profiles, indicate the aspects upon which they had based these assessments, indicate whether and to what extent they thought candidates had embellished their profiles, and, lastly, assess the employability of each of the candidates in a given job.

Results

Mention analysis

The first step consisted of reading all the responses to the open-ended questions in order to arrive at a system of descriptive categories encompassing those that were cited without prompting in the assessments. This was followed by a second reading to count the number of times each category was mentioned by candidates, peers and recruiters. Only categories that were mentioned more than once in at least one of the three groups of participants were maintained. Table 1 shows the number of unprompted mentions of the categories by the candidates, peers and recruiters.

The most frequently mentioned categories, and those with greatest degree of agreement between peers and recruiters, were those of professional experience and overall education (over 30 mentions in each group), followed by the picture, languages, extract, certifications and recommendations. While peers tend to consider the candidates' interests and social networks, the professionals are not as likely to take these categories into account. In fact, this represents the only statistically significant difference between the groups ($\chi^2 = 24.05$, $p < .001$).

Employability and distortion analyses

Weighted averages of scores for profile distortion and employability were calculated for peers, recruiters and the candidates themselves for the purposes of comparison. Table 2 displays descriptive statistics.

Sign tests were conducted on related samples to compare the assessments of the candidates with the peers, the candidates with the recruiters and the peers with the recruiters. No significant differences with regard to scores for employability were found among the three groups. In other words, the three groups largely coincided in their assessments of employability. With regard to distortion, there was a significant dif-

Table 1. Frequencies of categories mentioned (by groups)

Category	Candidates (N = 10 observations)	Peers (N = 60 observations)	Recruiters (N = 60 observations)
Professional experience	6	41 (6.83)	47 (7.83)
Time at same workplace	0	9 (1.5)	1 (0.17)
Professional trajectory	0	7 (1.16)	5 (0.83)
Reputation of company/ies	0	3 (0.5)	6 (1.0)
Experience in different companies of same branch	0	7 (1.16)	3 (0.5)
Work experience in foreign country	0	2 (0.33)	4 (0.67)
Focus in details of present company	0	11 (1.83)	0
General education	3	31 (5.17)	35 (5.83)
Languages	0	27 (4.5)	28 (4.67)
Main picture	5	36 (6.0)	29 (4.83)
Social network	0	26 (4.44)	3 (0.5)
Extract	1	17 (2.83)	26 (4.33)
Competences	2	30 (5.0)	23 (3.83)
Endorsements	0	18 (3.0)	10 (3.33)
Interests	1	10 (3.33)	1 (0.17)
Recommendations	0	10 (3.33)	11 (1.83)
Vitae attached	1	8 (1.33)	7 (1.16)
Volunteer work	0	5 (0.17)	2 (0.33)
Achievements/projects	0	7 (1.16)	4 (0.67)

Table 2. Means and standard deviations (in brackets) of group scores

	Peers (n = 10)	Recruiters (n = 10)	Candidatos (n = 10)
Employability	3.55 (1.01)	3.98 (1.91)	3.50 (1.18)
Distorsion	1.53 (0.49)	2.05 (0.75)	1.20 (0.42)

ference between peers and recruiters (*p*= .025) and between candidates and recruiters (*p*=.008). In each case, the expert evaluators (recruiters) were more likely to perceive distortion. In other words, HR selection professionals tend to think that candidates embellish their profiles more than the candidates themselves are willing to admit.

Discussion

The results of this pilot study show that when professional and non-professional observers reach their conclusions about candidate profiles and assess candidates' employability, they base these conclusions on similar aspects of the observable data in the profiles, with the exception of candidates' social networks. Recruiters are more likely than peers to question the information in the profiles, but the three groups nonetheless come to similar conclusions as to the employability of candidates. These findings allow us to conclude that candidates are quite aware of how to present themselves on their LinkedIn profiles in order to attract the attention of selection professionals. This leads to the affirmation that personal branding has not only become common among LinkedIn users, but has also become a fundamental part of the development of an individual's employability. The second conclusion is that candidates tend to have a realistic view of their own employability, given that candidate scores for this variable largely coincide with observer scores. However, these are very preliminary results, given the reduced sample size and the fact that this is a pilot study.

Along the same lines as previous research, this study provides evidence that job recruitment 2.0 techniques improve selection processes, especially by offering greater efficiency in mass selection processes, when it is highly desirable to interview only candidates with a high probability of success within the framework of a given company (Casilda, 2016). As such, LinkedIn serves as a source to provide both greater quality and a larger quantity of information to be applied in selection processes.

Study 2

Introduction

Masculinity and femininity as competency

Unlike the biological category of "sex", the term "gender" is understood and explained through the theory of social roles (Eagly, 1987) and defined as a social construction that takes shape in the course of a con-

stant learning processes on the behaviours, perceptions and expectations as to what it means to be a man or a woman. So-called gender stereotypes are made up of a series of characteristics associated with men or with women (López-Zafra, García-Retamero, Diekman, & Eagly, 2008). This means that gender roles are not merely descriptive or explanatory categories, but rather also have prescriptive elements. These roles shape how individuals perceive others' expectations of them and of their behaviour, and as a result, individuals tend to enact these roles (Oberst, Renau, Chamarro, & Carbonell, 2016). Men are expected to exercise greater agency than women (to be more task-oriented, assertive, controlling and independent, and less emotional), while women are expected to be more "communal", or in other words more communicative and more focussed on interpersonal relationships (Guadagno, Muscanell, Okdie, Burk, & Ward, 2011).

However, the past few decades have witnessed changes in the way typical masculine and feminine traits are defined, and traditional masculine and feminine roles are diminishing in importance (Holt & Ellis, 1998; López-Zafra et al., 2008; Martínez-Sánchez, Navarro-Olivas, & Yubero-Jiménez, 2009). Thus, a consensus has developed among contemporary scholars that it is now more appropriate to talk about "instrumentality" rather than masculinity and "expressiveness" rather than femininity. Along with this loss of importance of traditional gender categories has come a degree of blurring of roles, with women having become more likely to adopt an androgynous self-perception and attribute traditionally masculine traits to themselves. However, men do not tend to assume traditionally feminine roles (López-Sáez et al., 2008). It would seem that typically feminine traits are less socially desirable than traditionally masculine characteristics (Oberst, Chamarro, & Renau, 2016).

Gender and gender roles have significant psychological implications, as they seem to be associated with mental health (Hermann & Betz, 2004). In a study by Barra (2010), self-acceptance, the command of one's surroundings and autonomy were viewed by both men and women as masculine rather than feminine traits. In broad terms, a high degree of instrumentality and pronounced femininity, especially when these two traits are combined in a single individual (androgyny), are associated with greater psychological wellbeing, although this is less the case for instrumentality alone.

Additionally, both instrumentality and expressiveness are associated with self-efficacy (Hermann & Betz, 2004). Thus, both (high) instrumentality and (high) expressiveness are coming to be viewed as important workplace competencies, especially in companies where feminine and androgynous traits are viewed more positively than some traditionally masculine characteristics (Kark, Waismel-Manor, & Shamir, 2012). These authors argue that while until the recent past leadership in organisations was associated with masculinity and with being a man (see the revised version of Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011), in the past

few years management has become more "feminine", in the sense that qualities more traditionally associated with women are now thought of as forming part of effective management and leadership.

In light of the near absence of studies examining contemporary gender roles and workplace competencies and/or employability, the aim of Study 2 is to investigate whether gender roles, in the form of instrumentality (traditional masculinity) and expressiveness (traditional femininity) can predict perceived employability (PE), along with competencies. The study also analyses personality and sex as predictors of employability.

Method

Participants

The sample used in the study was self-selected. The criteria for inclusion were that participants had to be of adult age, active in the workforce and have an up-to-date profile on LinkedIn, in order to ensure that they were interested in promoting themselves on the labour market. The final sample consisted of 90 LinkedIn users, of whom 51 were women (57.7%) and 39 were men (43.3%). The women averaged 29.76 years of age (dt=8.11), and the average age of the men was 28.87 (dt=6.34).

Materials

Perceived employability, EP: Three items from the employability questionnaire by Stevens & Kristof (1995) were used to measure employability. The following items were used, after being changed from the first person to the third person: 1. How do I rate the level of qualification for the job that I am seeking? 2. How do I rate my appeal as a potential employee of an organisation?; 3. How likely am I to be offered a job? Participants answered the questions on a Likert scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Cronbach's alpha was .731.

Competencies: Data were gathered on overall intrapersonal, interpersonal and task completion competencies (without regard to setting), using the CompeTEA self-report questionnaire (Arribas & Pereña, 2015). Participants were asked to rate themselves on a Likert scale from 1 (low) to 7 (high) for each of the following 12 overall competencies: Trust in oneself, Resistance to adversity, Communication, Forming of relationships, Negotiation, Influence, Teamwork, Leadership, Initiative, Result-orientation, Analytical ability and Decision making. Cronbach's alpha was .875.

Instrumentality and expressiveness: The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI, Bem, 1974) was used to measure the constructs associated with gender roles, in an abridged version translated into Spanish (Zimmermann, Sieverding & Müller, 2011). The instrument consists of two sub-scales made up of eight items each. Respondents answer on a Likert Scale from 1 (never true) to 7 (always or almost always true). A sample item on the instru-

mentality would be "I stand up for my opinions," while one from the expressiveness scales would be "I am sensitive to the needs of others." The alpha coefficient for instrumentality was .834, and the figure for expressiveness was .864.

Personality: In order to obtain an approximate measurement for personality using the Big Five model, the Spanish-language version of the Ten-item Personality Inventory, TIPI (Renau, Oberst, Gosling, Rusiñol, & Chamarro, 2013) was used. Two of the 10 items on this test make up each of the subscales that form the Big Five model (emotional stability, extroversion, openness to experience, affability, responsibility). Given that only two items were used for each subscale, it did not make much sense to calculate the reliability coefficients, and as such this was not done.

Procedure

Using Google Drive, an online questionnaire was created. It included the four instruments mentioned above, a section on the conditions of the study and an informed consent form with all the requisite information, including with regard to the confidentiality of personal data. In order to attract participants, a link to the study was published via e-mail and on the professional social network LinkedIn. Participants were asked to share information about the study with as many others as possible, but they were not compensated in any way for their participation. Data were collected over a period of about three weeks and then exported to an Excel document prior to being entered into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS v 23) software programme.

Data analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS version 23. Means and standard deviations were calculated, as were Student's t for differences between sexes and Pearson correlations. For the linear regression, the only data entered as predictors for regression (enter method) were those variables that showed significant correlations with the dependent variable (perceived employability).

Results

Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics. Gender differences were found for the variables of expressiveness ($t = -2.60$, $p = .011$, gl=88) and responsibility ($t = -2.09$, $p = .039$, $gl = 88$) with women scoring higher for each of these variables.

Significant correlations were found between employability and competencies ($r = .600$, $p < .001$), instrumentality ($r = .456$, $p < .001$), expressiveness ($r = .343$, $p = .001$), extroversion ($r = .338$, $p = .001$) and openness to experience ($r = .311$, $p = .003$). Thus, only these variables were entered into the regression: first competencies, then instrumentality and expressiveness, and finally extroversion and openness. A significant

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Tabla 3. Descriptive statistics: Means and standard deviations

	Males (N = 39)	Females (N = 51)	Total (N = 90)
Perceived employability	16.51 (2.26)	16.33 (2.44)	16.41 (2.35)
Competencies	66.05 (8.85)	63.78 (8.46)	64.77 (8.66)
Instrumentality	43.26 (6.42)	42.26 (6.17)	42.69 (6.26)
Expressivity	40.46 (6.64)	44.16 (6.72)	42.55 (6.90)
Emotional stability	4.65 (1.08)	4.82 (1.19)	4.75 (1.14)
Extraversion	5.17 (1.24)	5.13 (1.33)	5.14 (1.28)
Openes	5.24 (1.04)	5.42 (1.04)	5.34 (1.03)
Agreeableness	4.87 (0.41)	5.11 (1.00)	5.01 (0.94)
Responsability	4.91 (1.06)	5.40 (1.14)	5.19 (1.12)

regression model was found ($F(2, 87) = 27,858$, $p<.001$), explaining 39% of variance ($R^2=.390$; adjusted: $R^2=.376$). Only competencies ($\beta= .547$, $t=6.236$, $p<.001$) and expressiveness ($\beta=.181$, $t=2.069$, $p=.042$) appeared as significant predictors of PE. The model was controlled for gender and moderation effects.

Discussion

In this study, the variable "competencies" was clearly the best predictor of an individual's perceived employability, followed by expressiveness. Personality factors were not useful in predicting PE. As for competencies, it seems evident that more competent users are, the more certain they are about their future job prospects. However, it is somewhat surprising that the other predictive variable is the "feminine" quality, rather than masculinity or androgyny. Other recent studies, however, had already pointed to this conclusion. For example, in a study on transformational leadership, both men and women were perceived by others as effective leaders when they presented both masculine and feminine characteristics. However, when asked to choose observers expressed a preference for the feminine style over the masculine one.

This study only looked at self-perception of characteristics like employability and perceived competencies, and it relied on self-reporting on personality traits and gender roles. However, from the study above it is clear that candidates tend to have a fairly accurate idea of their own employability. In any case, a future study should attempt to confirm these self-assessments with the opinions of outside observers (as was done in the first study).

General discussion

These two pilot studies have yielded a few notable results. Firstly, they show that LinkedIn users have a fairly realistic view of their own job prospects and are aware of how they need to present themselves in order to attract the attention of HR professionals. This conclusion, however, is preliminary, and it needs to be confirmed by studies with different, larger samples. As for the results of Study 2, they make apparent that personality characteristics traditionally associated with

femininity are now seen as predictors of greater employability, at least in the eyes of jobseekers themselves. This finding contradicts the results of some prior studies on the correlates of gender roles. Past research had, for example, found a high degree of correlation between instrumentality and social self-efficacy (Hermann & Betz, 2004). However, our results are consistent with findings from the literature on gender and leadership. In the past, the ideal executive was viewed as possessing stereotypically masculine qualities (such as self-confidence, independence, assertiveness, dominance, rationality, etc.) (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell & Ristikari, 2011; Schein, 2007; Schein, Mueller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996) and stereotypically feminine characteristics were seen as irrelevant or even undesirable in those wishing to act as leaders (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Powell & Graves, 2003). Now, however, the evidence is mounting that leadership while roles, especially when it comes to transformation al leadership, still do require some pronounced masculine (agency) characteristics, they also call for communal or feminine traits (Kark et al., 2012), and this is so whether the leader in question is a man or a woman. Despite these changes, women may still be perceived differently from men if they act in certain ways. Some studies (Koening et al., 2011) have shown that when leaders engage in certain kinds of behaviour (masculine or feminine), women leaders are more likely to suffer negative consequences for being overly "masculine" and less "feminine", or in other words they are penalised to a greater extent when they are seen to be less communal and communicative and less caring in their relations with their employees. Men are not subject to a comparable phenomenon (Kark et al., 2012).

How does all of this manifest itself in social networks and online recruitment? Although selection professionals tend to claim to pay attention to directly observable characteristics such as educational level and professional experience (see Study 1), this study has shown that less verifiable elements such as a candidate's profile picture can provide observes with a lot of implicit information and as such can cause significant biases for or against certain candidates. For example, observers are able to ascertain important information about candidates' personalities (such as extroversion and maturity) from their profile pictures (Caers &

Castelyns, 2011), and this can play a role, albeit perhaps an unconscious one, in hiring decisions.

Based on Tellado's recommendations (2015) on the dimensions or subcategories of employability that are presented on a LinkedIn profile, the following aspects were confirmed as relevant by this study: professional experience, overall education, language skills, the image or profile picture, the extract and the breadth of the individual's social network. The results coincide with those of Jobvite's Social Recruiting study (2013), which indicated that 58% of employers are willing to reject a job candidate on the basis of the content of the jobseeker's social network profiles. The results of this study also allow us to reflect upon and analyse the processes involved with recruiting and selecting personnel using LinkedIn as a tool.

Future studies should examine the different sorts of discrimination (on the basis of sex, race, gender, age, etc.) and determine which are the most prevalent in today's labour market. Discriminatory attitudes can influence selection and hiring decisions, and they can emerge due to factors intrinsic to the recruitment professional, such as personal experiences, beliefs, myths and perceptions.

In short, we can conclude that LinkedIn is a very useful tool that provides added value by speeding the initial phase of the personnel selection process: the filtering of CVs. However, the benefits offered by this method serve only to streamline this process, not to eliminate the need for it. Given that recruitment professionals believe that jobseekers embellish the information in their profiles (or lie), there is a question as to the extent to which LinkedIn can be used as a valid quantitative tool. In fact, the degree of scepticism on the part of recruitment professionals as to the veracity of the information in candidate profiles has been noted on several occasions throughout the study.

Limitations and future research

This paper has some limitations, chief among them the fact that the two studies it details were both pilot studies. This was especially the case of the first study. The second study is limited in that it is based exclusively on the self-perception of the users, making it impossible to draw conclusions as to their real level of competencies and employability, as determined by job selection professionals. Another significant limitation is that this paper failed to examine the risk of making selection decisions that exclude certain candidates as a result of bias and/or prejudice. Future studies should compare self-perception with professional assessments. In conclusion, although this paper did not have a significant sample size, it does represent a contribution of useful information for Human Resources professionals, especially those who seek to use the latest tools in the field.

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