

# **Impact of LinkedIn as a social network on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector**

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A dissertation submitted to the University of Dublin  
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
MSc. in Management of Information Systems

**31<sup>st</sup> August, 2017**

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work described in this dissertation is, except where otherwise stated, entirely my own work, and has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university. I further declare that this research has been carried out in full compliance with the ethical research requirements of the School of Computer Science and Statistics.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Felicia Olubukola Adedapo

**31<sup>st</sup> August, 2017**

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Felicia Olubukola Adedapo

**31<sup>st</sup> August, 2017**

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Finally, I would like to thank my teachers, my faculty, and Trinity College Dublin.

## **Abstract**

This qualitative research investigates how LinkedIn has revolutionised traditional job search methods, its impact on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector, and what affects the recruiter or employer's final decision on candidates using LinkedIn for employment. This research reviews the significance of using LinkedIn for social enhancement, interpersonal connectivity, and regular engagement with connections from the participants' point of view.

The study participants responded to questions regarding the importance of using LinkedIn for social enhancement, interpersonal connectivity, and regular engagement with connections. Articles, journals, and books concerning the career influence of social network sites (SNS)s were critically reviewed. Primary data obtained through surveys as well as face to face interviews with participants were used to develop these themes.

The findings from the research show that establishing and maintaining contact with other professionals enhances job search effectiveness and the rapidity of employment. The results also show that regular engagement with connections on LinkedIn increases visibility. The findings further show that recruiters or employers gain an understanding of the candidate's personality through his or her LinkedIn profile, and that this helps to determine the decision to hire.

The research also highlights setbacks faced by participants using LinkedIn for employment, and suggests that jobseekers in the Irish IT sector should provide information related to specific topics and recruiter interests that may thus enhance employment.

The findings suggest that jobseekers should effectively utilise opportunities to network with other professionals, potential recruiters, and employers on LinkedIn to promote career success. The findings also suggest that LinkedIn as a recruiting tool should not be a complete replacement for traditional recruiting methods, but instead should be utilised as a supplement to optimise the recruitment process.

**Keywords:** Social networking sites, LinkedIn, Social media, Jobseekers, Candidates

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## List of Abbreviations

CNBC	Consumer News and Business Channel
CSO	Central Statistics Office
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DSP	Department of Social Protection
EHECS	Earnings, Hours and Employment Costs Survey
HR	Human Resource
IS	Information System
IT	Information Technology
JRQ	Jobseeker Research Question
OJP	Online Job Provider
PES	Public Employment Service
PO	Person Organisation
QNHS	Quarterly National Household Survey
RERQ	Recruiters and Employers Research Question
RQ	Research Question
SLMRU	Skills and Labour Market Research Unit
SNS	Social Network Site
SOLAS	Seirbhísí Oideachais Leanúnaigh agus Scileanna

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1. Background to the study and context**

This research is an investigative study into the impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector who were seeking employment within the last 5 years. To search for a job is one of the main reasons why people join and use social networking websites such as LinkedIn (Nikolaou, 2014).

In 2013, 46% of Irish enterprises used social networks to hire candidates; the percentage increased to 58% in 2014. According to a CSO statistical release, in 2015, the user base grew to 62%, which indicates that recruiters and employers make most of their hires through social networks, and that jobseekers increasingly recognize the new networking advantages that these social network sites offer.

Similarly, Smith (2011) explained that candidates seeking employment now frequently use social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, to make professional connections and to search for employment opportunities. The role of LinkedIn in job searches has permeated much of the job search process in recent years. Dekay (2009) demonstrated this from a study of 200 LinkedIn members. Over 94% of respondents indicated that they wished to be contacted for reasons related to job searches.

According to LinkedIn's report in 2016, technology sector is one of the professional sectors on LinkedIn with ongoing demand owing to the fact that technology skills cut across every industry in Ireland. In addition, technology dominated the list of top skills that got Irish professionals hired in 2015, which is set to grow significantly in the coming years; Wendy Murphy, (Independent.ie). LinkedIn as a social network has opened up new paths of engagement and revolutionised the exchange of information to jobseekers and potential recruiters or employers. With more people engaging with LinkedIn, it is worth investigating its relevance to jobseekers.

This research aims to add to the body of knowledge which currently exists in relation to social enhancement as the value derived from socially acceptable self-promotion on an SNS (Dholakia et al., 2004), interpersonal connectivity, which refers to the value derived from establishing and maintaining contact with other people through a SNS (Dholakia et al., 2004, DiMicco et al., 2008; McAfee, 2009; Skeels & Grudin, 2009). Regular engagement to increase connectedness and a faster propagation of information, (Dholakia & Talukdar, 2004a). Personal brand as a reflection of individual's skills, abilities and lifestyle (Gehl, 2011; Hearn, 2008; Peters, 1997, Van Dijck (2013) in the context of job search activities.

## 1.2. Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to explore how the emergence of LinkedIn as a social network has revolutionised traditional methods of job searching. The following primary research questions will be examined in this study:

“What effect does LinkedIn have on a candidate’s ability to get employed?”

“What would affect recruiter or employer’s final decision on candidate using LinkedIn for employment?”

The other research elements presented by this study focuses on these key questions:

- How LinkedIn has impacted their ability to get employed
- What features of LinkedIn has enhanced their personal connectivity?
- How often do they produce content to showcase their knowledge and expertise to help others?
- What their personal experiences are through the use of LinkedIn in comparison with traditional job search methods?
- What extent do organisations use LinkedIn for recruitment?
- What are their overall decision factors about LinkedIn practice?

## 1.3. Importance of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore how the emergence of LinkedIn as a social network has revolutionised traditional methods of job searching. This research will also outline the impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish It sector who have been seeking employment in the last 5 years. In addition, it will provide an overview of the extent to which recruiters and employers use LinkedIn to recruit the best talent and what will affect recruiter or employer’s hiring decision.

Brightwater Recruitment Agency highlights that 90 percent of IT job-seekers use LinkedIn currently (Campbell, 2010). Considerable research has shown that social networks positively affect career success (Podolny & Baron, 1997), advancement (Ibarra, 1995), and satisfaction (Burt, 1992), It serves to note that participation and acceptance within these networks are of utmost importance (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1988; Friedman and Craig, 2004). Given the importance of social networks on career success, the understanding of the network participation and acceptance is necessary.

Similarly, Ibarra & Smith-Lovin, (1997) pointed out that social networks are important for career development. Furthermore, Smith (2011) explains that candidates seeking employment are now frequently using social networking sites, such as LinkedIn to make professional connections and to search for employment opportunities.

It is hoped that this qualitative research would guide future jobseekers to make effective use of the opportunity to apply for jobs, freedom of networking with other professionals and potential employers on LinkedIn with their job search activities thereby empowering them to become more productive and successful.

#### **1.4. The scope of the research**

The scope of this research is the Irish IT sector. The evaluation survey was circulated to 100 jobseekers and 20 jobseekers were interviewed in the Irish IT sector who have been looking for employment in the last 5 years. 20 key recruiters and employers in the Irish IT sector were contacted with requests for interviews.

#### **1.5. Overview of the research methodology**

To answer the question on what effect does LinkedIn have on a Irish IT jobseekers' ability to get employed and what would affect recruiter's or employer's formal decision on candidates using LinkedIn for employment. All draft questions were pretested on potential participants and an informal expert review was carried out to identify any potential problems. The online survey was tested to monitor the display properties, predict any data collection problem and improve survey outcomes. The interview questions were revised appropriately. Secondary data will be derived from a pilot survey study and interviews involving participants from jobseekers in the Irish IT sector, recruiters and employers.

#### **1.6. Timeframe of Study**

The following is the actual vs planned schedule of this research project.

- December 2016 – Research topic chosen.
- December 2016 – Research Proposal presented.
- February 2017 – First draft of the literature review presented.
- March 2017 – Ethics approval submitted.

- May 2017 – Ethics approval granted. Semi-structured interviews carried out and surveys opened
- July 2017 – Surveys closed
- July 2017 – Transcribing interviews, primary data analysis gathered out. First draft of findings submitted.
- August 2017 – First complete draft submitted to supervisor. Finalising dissertation. Printing, binding and submission.

## **1.7. Chapter Structure**

The chapters of this dissertation are structured as follows:

### **Chapter One - Introduction**

This chapter introduces the area of the proposed research and its significance in the context of job searching in the Irish IT sector. It also states the purpose and objectives of the research. A summary of the research methodology used to achieve the aim of the study is presented.

### **Chapter Two - Literature Review**

This chapter places the research issues in context and the population under study. A review of the literature surrounding the broad area of social media, recruiters, traditional recruiting methods and jobseekers using LinkedIn will be discussed in relation to its findings. The benefits of using LinkedIn in job searching, recruiting will be explored as well as the possible drawbacks there might be in adopting the use. This section initially justifies the theoretical perspective.

### **Chapter Three - Methodology**

This chapter explains how the research strategy will justify the choice of using interviews and surveys to gather data. Steps taken to answer the research questions and ethical considerations will be discussed.

### **Chapter Four - Findings and Analysis**

This chapter discusses a summary of the results of the study, detailing the main findings and their relationship to the research objectives and questions. The impact of using LinkedIn for job search, effectiveness of using LinkedIn for recruiting candidates by recruiting professionals will be discussed. The issues of reliability and validity of the research to be conducted will be

discussed in relation to the sample, followed by a discussion on the limitations of the study. The report also concludes with a suggestion of issues deemed to be relevant for research studies.

### **Chapter Five - Conclusions and Future Works**

This chapter concludes the dissertation by discussing answers to the research questions, presenting key findings of the research, drawing conclusions, explaining limitations and providing recommendations for future studies.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to present a comprehensive review of the literature relevant to LinkedIn, jobseekers, recruiters, and employers. In addition, this chapter will highlight the key themes and trends emerging from current studies on the topic. The chapter provides theoretical content of previous successful research studies carried out in the field of jobseekers using LinkedIn to search for employment. The literature review includes journal articles, conference papers, books, and edited volumes. The research goes in depth to focus on the experiences of jobseekers who have been seeking employment within the last five years in the Irish technology sector using LinkedIn to search for employment opportunities. Relevant literature was identified by searching databases for terms such as “LinkedIn”, “social networks”, “jobseekers”, “recruiters and employers”.

The first section summarises social network trends in Ireland, and examines their contribution to the job search and hiring process. The second section examines LinkedIn as a social network, personal branding on LinkedIn, using LinkedIn for job searches, and compares the traditional job search to the job search on LinkedIn. Benefits of LinkedIn to jobseekers and the dilemmas of using LinkedIn for job searching will also be discussed. The third section examines LinkedIn as a talent acquisition tool, its benefits and challenges. The fourth section provides recommendations for future research, and in conclusion, reflects back on the results of this research study.

### **2.2. Social Network Study**

The development of social networking has opened new opportunities to apply for jobs, create endorsements, visualize candidate's network connections, interact with common friends, and bringing more arguments to help on hiring decisions. Its profound impact is seen daily in almost every domain of our lives. SNSs are venues for building social identity (Kwon & Wen, 2010) and impression management (Hall, Pennington, & Lueders, 2014). There are 158 different social network sites, all with various purposes and aims. This has made it a challenge to generalize SNS's research difficult and to formulate predictions (Hargittai, 2007). However, the SNS's that exist share a common trait in that they all have a visible network.

Social network sites as web-based services that allow users to construct an individual profile to interact with contacts also enable the visualization of friends' network within the system. These



platforms allow users to learn detailed information about contacts, share it with others and build online human-relationships (Beer, 2008; Kwon & Wen, 2010; Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009). Another definition by Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p.211), says "Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system". Two of the common features of social networking sites are social enhancement and interpersonal connectivity.

### **2.2.1. Social enhancement**

In the SNS context, an important form of self-presentation is self-disclosure (Choi and Bazarova In Press; Krasnova, Spiekermann, Koroleva, & Hildebrand, 2010), i.e. the process of making oneself known to others (Jourard & Lasakow, 1958, p. 91). People generally want to see themselves and be seen by others in a positive light, thus they employ different strategies to enhance their social image (Horvath & Morf, 2010), which makes self-promotion an important part of self-presentation.

Self-promotion approaches differ between users. While some manifest via explicit terms of self-disclosure, some can occur implicitly through the user's choice of discussions, terms, and mannerism (Shao, 2009; Goffman, (1959). If used strategically, social media provides users a platform to demonstrate their qualifications, skills, knowledge, and experience dynamically, in a way that is impossible via the traditional resume format (Zide et al., 2014). SNS use can support positive psychosocial behaviours such as self-promotion and self-disclosure (Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2014).

Seeking recognition from other people has also been found to be one of the driving forces behind joining virtual communities (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2002; Dholakia et al., 2004) and using SNSs (Cheung et al., 2011). Value can be derived from gaining acceptance and approval from other SNS users, and enhancing one's social status within his/ her community (Dholakia et al., 2004).

### **2.2.2. Interpersonal connectivity**

People use social network sites to obtain information about other people (Lampe et al., 2006). This helps in maintaining interpersonal relationships (Seidman, 2013) and ultimately contributes to fulfilling their need to belong (Baumeister & Leary, 1995).

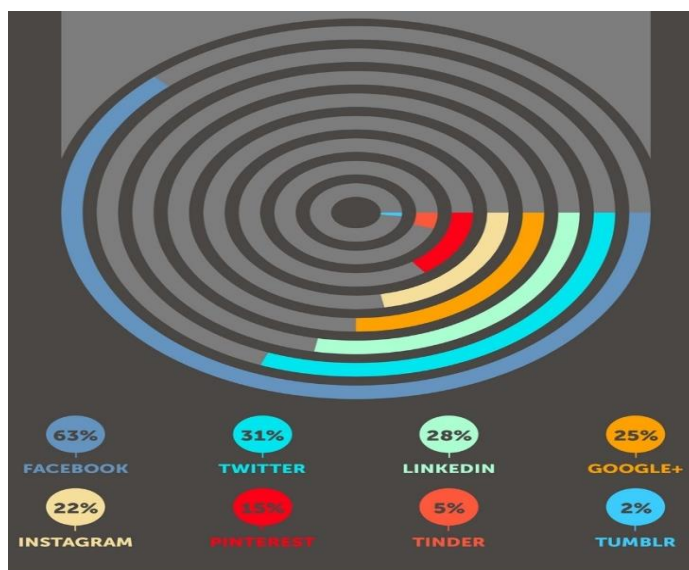
After joining a social network site, users are prompted to identify others in the system with whom they have a relationship. The label for these relationships differs depending on the site—popular

terms include "Friends," "Contacts," and "Fans." Most SNS's require bidirectional confirmation for Friendship, but some do not. These one-directional ties are sometimes labeled as "Fans" or "Followers," but many sites also call these "Friends." The term "Friends" can be misleading because the connection does not necessarily mean friendship in the everyday vernacular sense, and the reasons people connect are varied (Boyd, 2006).

Prior research has reported that people use SNSs for social interaction and communication (Ku et al., 2013; Pempek et al., 2009; Xu et al., 2012) to connect with other people (Ellison et al., 2007; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). Similarly, (Dholakia et al., 2004), refers to the value derived from establishing and maintaining contact with other people through a SNS as interpersonal connectivity. SNS may increase both the number and strength of ties among people, yield highly useful digital environments that are easy to capture and spread knowledge, and provide high-quality answers to questions (DiMicco et al., 2008; McAfee, 2009; Skeels & Grudin, 2009).

Further studies showed that the popularity of SNS's is not just limited to social or professional connections, (Belk, 2013; McAndrew & Jeong, 2012). Doucek et al. (2012) pointed out that social media sites like Facebook and LinkedIn have come recently to the labour market, and are used more and more frequently in the area of recruitment.

Figure 2.1 Social Network Trends in Ireland (1st quarter 2016).



Source: Bubble Digital, 2016

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Figure 2.1. shows the percentage of Irish network account owners in Ireland as of March 2016. From the survey conducted, 63% of Irish people are on Facebook, 31% are on Twitter, 28% are on LinkedIn, Google has 25% account owners, 22% are on Instagram, 15% are on Pinterest, 5% are on Tinder and 2% are on Tumblr.

A high level of engagement in SNS is associated with an increased connectedness and a faster propagation of information (Dholakia & Talukdar, 2004a). Social media, specifically social networking sites, can increase the possibilities of future in-person contact and exchange of information between the recruiter and jobseekers (Roberts and Roach, 2009). Both jobseekers and recruiters can maintain, mobilize, and develop their social network more efficiently because of social media. They can filter out relevant information and use SNS's to create new collaboration opportunities (DeKay, 2009; Girard & Fallery, 2011).

It is important to acknowledge the existence of Facebook and Twitter due to the high number of users in Ireland. Their popularity was also identified by Jencius and Rainey (2009), Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are examples of SNS's that are becoming increasingly popular, each having millions of users, and seen as "tremendous vehicles for connecting with others, be it socially or professionally" (Jencius and Rainey, 2009, p.22). Each of these social media sites mentioned above can be of exceedingly beneficial use for jobseekers in the digital age when it comes to building relationships and developing a strong professional reputation and presence.

### **2.2.3. Facebook**

Launched in 2004, Facebook is the most popular social networking site in the world based on the number of active users. "Facebook's purpose is to give the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (About Facebook, 2017, p.1). Decker (2006) describes Facebook as a college centric social networking website developed to allow users to interact with friends, create professional profiles, and post photos and messages. Additionally, users may join common interest groups on Facebook. Facebook experienced an increase in its user base in December, 2016 with 1.86 billion monthly active users worldwide. Facebook statistics as of December 2016 with 1.23 billion daily active users, 1.15 billion mobile daily active users, 1.86 billion monthly active users, 1.74 billion mobile monthly active users, and approximately 85.2% daily active users outside US and Canada, a statistic that includes Ireland.

In today's contemporary society, businesses use Facebook to build an online presence and to connect with candidates so as to take advantage of the number of users. Companies are creating "Facebook Groups" for university students or interns to advertise jobs and opportunities

within the organisation. Parker (2008), lists companies such as PWC, KPMG and the Royal Bank of Scotland as examples.

Recently, Facebook has been regarded as a very powerful tool for sourcing due to its huge user base. Light (2011) explains how companies are using Facebook to find new employees, though the amount of total hires is currently very low because it is still a growing trend. Not only is Facebook a powerful tool for sourcing, it can also be useful for spreading awareness of jobs that are currently available. Zeidner (2009) explains how businesses are going beyond the usual boundaries of having a basic Facebook page, and are now offering the facility to users to spread word of jobs, as well as rewards for successful hires based on this information. Zeidner (2009) highlights how the advertising agency TMP Worldwide created an app which establishes a link between a worker's Facebook page and their employer's career's site.

Light (2011) further explains that some companies now hire recruiters to source solely on Facebook. Additional efforts by Facebook to enhance job search activities reported by Pepitone (2012) are part of the social jobs partnership and personnel networking to enhance career building.

#### **2.2.4. Twitter**

Twitter is a free social network that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called Tweets. Founded in 2006, Twitter's mission is to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly without barriers (About Twitter, 2017). Wilkins (2009) defines Twitter as a combination of texting and blogging. He explains that Twitter users enjoy the immediacy and simplicity of texting, even though Twitter is fundamentally a public service.

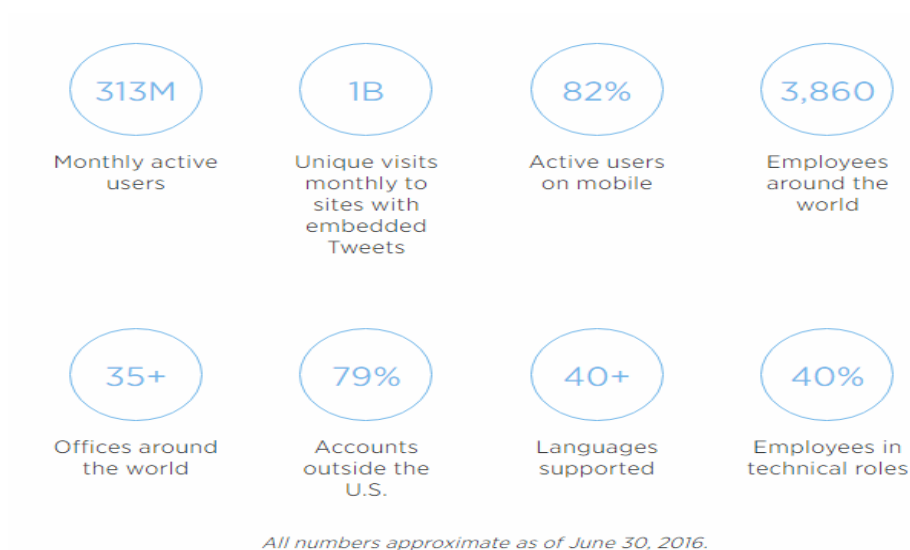
Twitter members can broadcast 'Tweets and follow other users.' Tweets can be broadcast by using multiple platforms and devices, but non-members can only read posts. Twitter, unlike Facebook and LinkedIn, allows for asymmetric relations, that is, a person can follow another individual without that person having to follow in return.

According to Heaps (2009), Twitter provides the ability for companies to communicate directly, interact, create, and maintain relationships. Twitter is also used as a job search and hiring tool. Similar to text messages, jobs tweeted by hiring managers have shown some success in getting an immediate response. Silliker (2011 - I) underlines how Twitter can help companies create a personal touch in reaching out to candidates who might be interested in working for their companies. Employers can use hash tags functionality to search for specific communities, such

as conferences, meetings, and chat forums within the Twitter framework to identify potential leads (Miller-Merrell, 2012).

Figure 2.2 shows Twitter's approximately (as of June 30, 2016) 313 million active users worldwide, 1 billion unique visits monthly to sites with embedded Tweets, 82% active users on mobile, 3,860 employees around the world, more than 35 offices, and 79% of accounts outside the U.S. Twitter supports more than 40 languages, and 40% of its employees are in technical roles.

Figure 2.2: Twitter usage worldwide / Company facts



Source: [about.twitter.com](http://about.twitter.com) (Feb, 2017)

### 2.3. LinkedIn

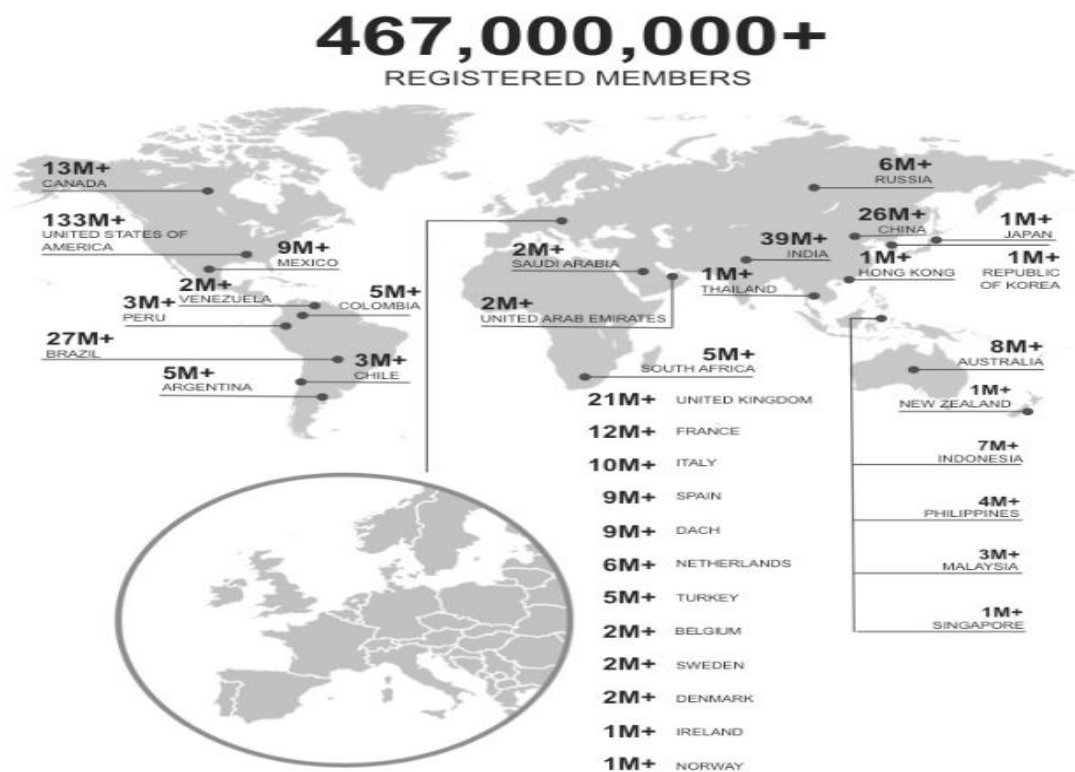
LinkedIn is a social network service based on business connections and employment. The main aim of LinkedIn is to offer professional networking on a digital platform. It operates by employers posting job offers on the platform, and job seekers posting their curriculum vitae for their respective jobs of interest (Russell and Stutz, 2014). Membership in the LinkedIn ([www.linkedin.com](http://www.linkedin.com)) online community has grown exponentially (Gerard, 2011). Founded in 2003, LinkedIn has over 467 million members. Fortune 500 companies represent close to 106 million active users, making it a very broad platform (About Us, 2017). To be a member or registered member on LinkedIn, one must be at least 18 years old. Registered employers and job seekers get the chance to create connections with other users of their interest, which may

represent real-world professional relationships. Apart from creating profiles for employment purposes, some students also create LinkedIn profiles for their college applications.

According to Internet World Stats, internet saturation in Ireland is very high. In 2012, it was estimated at 80 % with over 3.5 million internet users. This shows that the majority of the population is embracing the internet. This also includes platforms offered by the internet, such as LinkedIn. Emarkable statistics analysed Irish consumers' social media usage, which showed that 24% of the Irish population are on LinkedIn (Jencius and Rainey, 2009).

LinkedIn differs from Facebook and Twitter because it is used for more professional purposes, similar to an exchange of business cards.

Figure 2.3 *LinkedIn user statistics.*



*LinkedIn user statistics. Source: LinkedIn.com (Feb, 2017)*

In April 2017, Consumer News and Business Channel (CNBC) reported that LinkedIn now has 500 million members. This is an increase from 450 million, a milestone the company reached in August 2016. These half a billion members are spread across 200 countries. The company now has over 10 million active jobs, and around 9 million companies on the platform, with users posting 100,000 articles on the platform every week on average.

Even though all SNSs have some traits in common, Bainum (2010:1) claims that LinkedIn visualizes its network better than all the others in relation to bridging social capital accumulation. Bainum (2010:1) also highlighted that LinkedIn goes further than other SNSs by alerting users to the second-degree and third-degree connections they possess, thus giving the user the potential of forming a mutually advantageous weak tie with another user. LinkedIn not only makes sure users are aware of multi-degree, relevant relationships, the site also provides the tools for the user to convert these latent ties into weak ties, which results in the bridging of social capital (Bainum, 2010:1). This is further supported by Vermeiren (2009), who explained that LinkedIn is a platform that provides visibility and helps others.

LinkedIn is the most popular tool that enables jobseekers to reach potential recruiters or employers. Various studies have shown that of the most popular SNWs, LinkedIn is the one most used for recruiting purposes (Olington et al., 2013; Kluemper, 2013; Karl and Peluchette, 2013). It is almost exclusively used for building professional relations. Kluemper, (2013, p.9) noted that LinkedIn is more like an expanded resume used for the explicit purpose of connecting professionally, including recruitment and selection. Furthermore, LinkedIn can be used in a variety of ways, such as identifying business contracts, candidates or clients, to canvass opinions on a particular topic, to advertise jobs, to reconnect with former colleagues, and to contact or advertise services, credentials, or availability for a new job (Thew, 2008).

### **2.3.1. Personal branding**

Personal branding is the practice of marketing oneself to society (Brooks & Anumudu, 2015; Gehl, 2011; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005; Khedher, 2014 & 2015; Kleppinger & Cain, 2015; Peters, 1997; Rampersad, 2001; Shepherd, 2005). An individual personal brand is a reflection of his or her skills, abilities and lifestyle (Gehl, 2011; Hearn, 2008; Peters, 1997).

Similar to product branding, personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and unique qualities to a target audience (Kaputa, 2005; Schwabel, 2009, and Shepherd, 2005). Personal branding has significantly increased with the rise of LinkedIn usage for job searching because of its resourceful opportunities provided to jobseekers to target potential recruiters or employers. Goffman's (1959) influential sociological theory of impression management refers to the efforts made by individuals to regulate the information within a social interaction to manipulate the perceptions of their image according to their personal goals. Shepherd (2005, p.590) defined 'self-marketing' as consisting "of those varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace, usually (though not exclusively) for the purpose of obtaining gainful employment."

Kleppinger and Cain (2015) enhanced the definition of personal branding to include the all-encompassing technological element of communication by utilising the term 'personal digital brand.' It is a "strategic self-marketing effort, crafted via social media platforms, which seeks to exhibit an individual's professional persona."

Understanding the importance of one's personal brand has been the subject of much discussion (Brooks & Anumudu, 2015; Montoya and Vandehey, 2002; Hearn, 2008; Morgan, 2011; Peters, 1997; Wetsch, 2012). Recognizing that the business world is becoming increasingly dependent on the interconnectedness, accessibility, and the real-time transmission of social media, mastering the art of digital self-branding will almost certainly become the most significant skill an individual can possess to drive his or her professional success (Greer, 2010). Burdick (2010) outlined four principles for career development which also emphasize the strategic management that must be incorporated into a self-branding scheme: (1) users must manage their strategies; (2) they must create differentiation; (3) they should avoid commoditization; (4) users must focus on brand distinction.

A personal branding statement gives individuals the ability to differentiate themselves from the crowd (Harris & Rae, 2011). A personal branding statement identifies what you do, how you do it, why people should care and what makes you unique (Hughes, 2013). An example of a personal branding statement is as follows "I'm a technology entrepreneurial marketer with a passion for building teams of brand advocates by fostering relationships with customers and users" (Hughes, 2013, para. 8). This statement allows potential employers to identify the key skills and strengths of a potential candidate.

### **2.3.2. Personal branding on LinkedIn**

Van Dijck (2013) found out that a LinkedIn profile can be used to shape an idealised portrait of one's professional identity by displaying skills to peers and anonymous evaluators. Edwards et al. (2015) evaluated how LinkedIn members responded to another user's profile picture or lack of one. The researchers found that there were significant differences between social presence (picture/no picture) conditions and social attraction and evaluation by others (Edwards et al., (2015). Results demonstrated that users who uploaded a profile picture to their LinkedIn account are evaluated more favourably than users who refrain from doing so (Edwards et al., (2015). An online profile is a tool that can predict one's overall job prospects because it influences other people's perceptions.



This demonstrates a need for members to strategically manage their online professional identities and use it as a tool for impression management (Zide et al., 2014). In the workforce recruiting context, job seekers must present themselves in accordance with a script, and ensure that recruiters positively evaluate their image (Jansen et al., 2012), (Lievens and Peeters, 2008). LinkedIn profiles should include a recent, professional photo and accurate academic and personal history highlighting personal accomplishments (Morgan, 2011). Students should provide keywords on their LinkedIn Profile to assist search engines and recruiters in finding their profile (Schwabel, 2009b).

A member's professional identity might also receive a boost from contributing to the Question and Answer space provided by the SNS (Raban, 2009), which is typically called a 'post and comment.'. Tsai, Chi, Huang, and Hsu (2011) found that a job seeker can influence recruiter evaluations through impression management. Although the effect of applicant impression management has been studied primarily in the context of employment interviews, Jansen et al., (2012), and Guillory & Hancock, (2012) have noted that job seekers may employ online impression management tactics to create a desirable image.

Managing self-presentation in online communities is an integral part of private and professional life (Rui & Stefanone, 2013). Online communities are actually online manifestations of physical communities, despite their strong reliance on technology and physical distance between participants (Daneshgar & Ho, 2008). When people become members of a community, they must select the relevant and appropriate pieces of information for their self-presentation to be consistent with the script for the group (Hornsey, Grice, Jetten, Paulsen, & Callan, 2007).

Kleppinger and Cain, (2015); Khedher, (2014) noted that abstaining from social media ceases individuals' control of their digital identities and empowers others to brand them, which can result in the relinquishing of professional benefits, such as employment opportunities. Personal goals affect self-presentation in online communities, it is important for job seekers to provide information related to specific topics and recruiters' interests that may enhance the likelihood of obtaining hiring recommendations (Schwämmlein & Wodzicki, 2012). In relation to one's professional life, it is essential to maintain a consistent and professional appearance (Labreque, Markos & Milne, 2010; Shah, 2017).

### **2.3.3. Using LinkedIn for job search**

According to Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, and Phillips (1994), the process of job searching is an important aspect of jobseekers' lives because it determines the opportunity set of potential jobs

from which jobseekers may choose, and influences outcomes such as employment status and employment quality (Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987).

Job-search methods have traditionally been divided into formal and informal methods. Formal methods include using the services of employment agencies or answering advertisements published in newspapers, journals, and more recently, the internet. Using one's personal contacts is among the most studied informal job-search strategies (Drentea, 1988). Likewise, job-search behaviour has been classified as 'active' or 'passive' depending on the level of activity that the individual engages in to seek employment, with the former being associated with greater activity.

A focus on the job-search methods employed can provide useful information as to which methods are more effective and more readily conducive to finding a job. The role of LinkedIn in job searches has permeated much of the job search process in recent years. Dekay (2009) demonstrated this from a study of 200 LinkedIn members. Over 94% of respondents indicated that they wished to be contacted for reasons related to job seeking. This shows that the significance of job searching on LinkedIn cannot be underestimated. Smith (2011) explained that candidates seeking employment are now frequently using social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, to make professional connections and to search for employment opportunities.

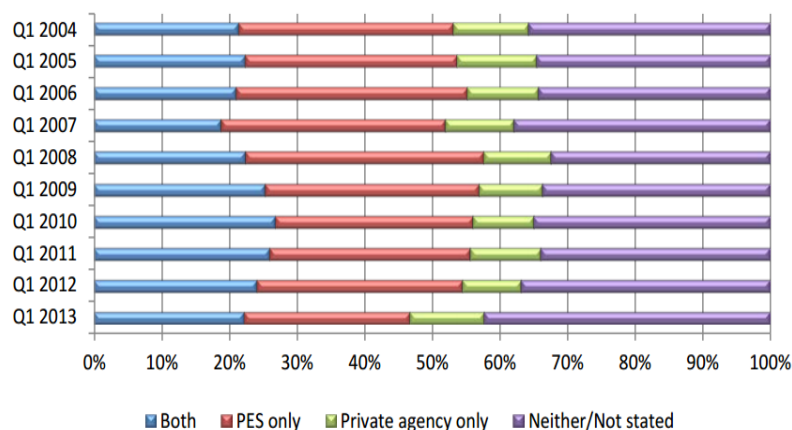
According to Putnam, (2000); Aldridge et al., (2002); Halpern (2005), the literature on job searches and related topics suggests that the use of social networks plays an important role in the job-search process and in career advancement. Dekay (2009), Winkler (2011), and Silliker (2011) highlighted the significance of the passive candidate and the access which social media sites such as LinkedIn has given them, providing the foundation for their success.

## **2.4. Irish job search analysis**

The Skills and Labour Market Research Unit (SLMRU) in SOLAS conducted a recruitment agency survey in 2014 to determine the methods utilised in searching for a job. The study showed from quarter 1 of 2004 to quarter 1 of 2013, the overall share of persons contacting public and private employment agencies has not changed dramatically. On average, approximately one quarter of unemployed persons contact both a public and private employment agency when searching for a job; a further third contact only a public employment office, and a tenth contact only a private employment agency. Therefore, typically two thirds of respondents contact either public or private employment agencies, or both.

In the most recent period between quarter 1 of 2012, and quarter 1 of 2013, the first decline in the number of unemployed since 2006 occurred. There was a decline in both the share and absolute number of persons contacting a public employment office (from a 54% share in 2012 to 46% in 2013); the share of those contacting a private employment agency remained unchanged at 33%.

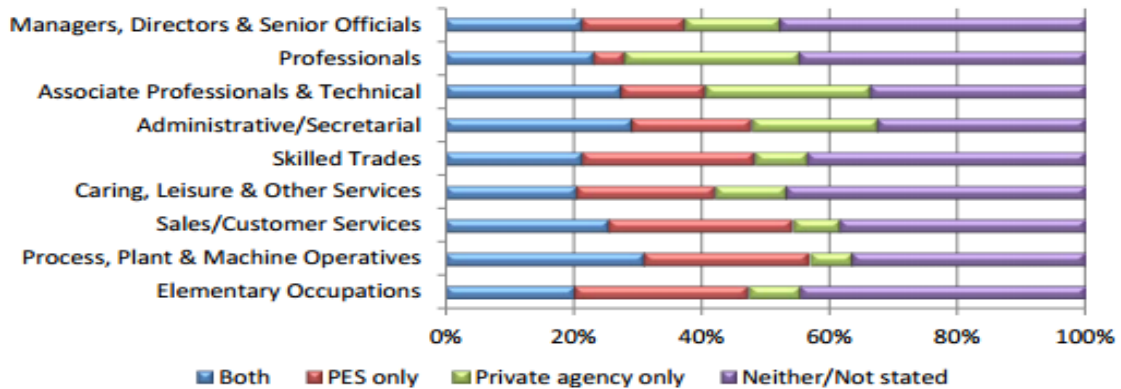
Figure 2.4 Job search for unemployed persons, 2004 - 2013



Source: SLMRU Analysis of CSO QNHS data

Figure 2.5 shows that the methods used by unemployed persons to search for a job varied across occupational groups. Those previously employed as operatives were most likely to utilise the services of both public and private employment agencies when searching for a job at 31%; those previously employed in sales related occupations had the highest share of persons who contacted only a public employment office at 29%, whereas those previously employed as professionals were least likely to contact only a public employment office, with 5% share, and most likely to contact a private employment agency only, with a 27% share. At 48%, managers had the highest share of persons who stated that they did not contact either a private or public employment office when searching for a job.

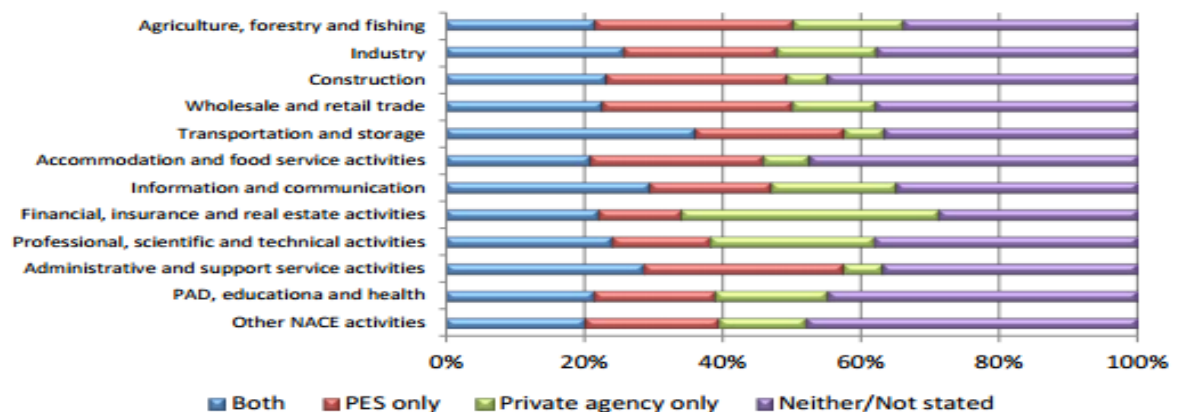
Figure 2.5. Job search by broad occupation of previous employment, q1 2013



Source: SLMRU Analysis of CSO QNHS data

The survey analysis showed that those previously employed in the traditionally lower skilled sectors of administration, construction, and agriculture had the highest rate of contacting only public employment offices while previous employees of professional and financial activities were more likely to contact a private employment agency than a public employment office (Figure 2.4). At 71%, those from financial activities backgrounds had the highest rate of using either source when searching for a job whereas those in construction, PAD, education, health, and other NACE activities had the highest share of persons utilising other methods in their job search.

Figure 2.6: Job search by broad sector of previous employment, Q1 2013



Source: SLMRU Analysis of CSO QNHS data

Interestingly, the study suggested that unemployed persons searching for a job may increasingly be using other methods not captured in the QNHS, such as social media, while searching for a job.

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## 2.5. Traditional job search methods versus job search using LinkedIn

Initially, people would look for advertisements in newspapers, or listen to broadcasted advertisements on their national radio stations. Other methods would consist of going to companies of interest and asking for available posts, or visiting job fairs. These methods are time consuming, compared to job searches on LinkedIn. Studies on job-search methods used by job seekers indicated that asking friends, relatives, and acquaintances for information regarding job opportunities is a common and useful practice. Survey Report of Incapacity Benefit Claimants in Northern Ireland, Shuttleworth et al., (2008) indicated that using 'information from friends and family' ranked second in terms of its usefulness as a job-search method (after using 'adverts in the press'). Similarly, Hogarth and Hasluck (2008) found that 'use of word of mouth and personal contacts' was among the top five job-search methods in terms of perceived usefulness and frequency of use among non-working individuals who participated in a survey examining job searches in the Greater Manchester area.

The literature on job searches and related topics suggests that the use of social networks plays an important role in both the job-search process and career advancement (Putnam, 2000; Aldridge et al., 2002; Halpern, 2005). In 2013, 46% of Irish enterprises used social networks to hire candidates; the percentage increased to 58% in 2014, and in 2015, the user base grew to 62%, according to a CSO statistical release on 16 December 2015. This shows that recruiters make the majority of their hires through social networks, and jobseekers increasingly recognise the new networking advantages that these social networking sites (SNSs) offer.

Various studies have shown that of the most popular SNWs, the one most used for recruiting purposes is LinkedIn (Olington et al., 2013; Kluemper, 2013; Karl and Peluchette, 2013). It is the social media site used almost exclusively for building professional relations. Kluemper (2013) noted that LinkedIn is more like an expanded resume, and is used for the explicit purpose of connecting professionally, including recruitment and selection. Job searches conducted on LinkedIn can be conducted through a filtered search of the field of interest.

Bainum (2010: 1) claimed LinkedIn goes further than other SNSs by alerting users to the second and third-degree connections that they possess, thus providing the user with the potential of forming a mutually advantageous weak tie with another user. LinkedIn not only makes sure users are aware of these multi-degree, relevant relationships, the site also then provides the tools for the user to convert these latent ties into weak ties which results in the bridging of social capital (Bainum, 2010, p.1).

## **2.6. Benefits of using LinkedIn for job search**

McDonald and Crew (2006) investigated 'the extent to which internet job search results in the receipt of better jobs than traditional search methods' (p. 240). They concluded that: '(1) the internet searchers have greater job-related skills than people who do not search on the internet', and that '(2) highly skilled jobs are more likely to be advertised on the internet.' (p. 246). Considerable research has shown that social networks positively affect career success (Podolny & Baron, 1997), advancement (Ibarra, 1995), and satisfaction (Burt, 1992). This shows that participation and acceptance within these networks are of the utmost importance (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998; Friedman and Craig, 2004).

The role of LinkedIn in job searching has permeated much of the job search process in recent years. Taylor et al., (2010), advised users to manage an online profile professionally. Using LinkedIn, one can find potential clients, search for jobs, discover inside connections to help find jobs, close deals, post and distribute jobs listings, head-hunt for talent, and be introduced to professionals through connections (LinkedIn.com, cited in Gilewicz, 2009, p.54). Therefore, the purposes and uses of LinkedIn align closely with bridging social capital and maintaining weak tie relationships (Gilewicz, 2009, p. 54).

Granovetter's (1973) theory on the strength of weak ties is seminal to the work on social networks, their relationship to job searching, and access to employment. Granovetter asserts that a person's acquaintances (weak ties) are less likely to be linked socially to one another, whereas their family and close friends (strong ties) are more likely to know each other and form a close-knit group. Since acquaintances are likely to have their own separate friends and social circles, they can act as bridges to other groups and provide a greater volume and range of information that would not be available through close friends. The disadvantages that having few or no weak ties has on the job-search process were succinctly outlined by Granovetter, who says of social networks and job searches: 'It follows, then, that individuals with few weak ties will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and will be confined to the provincial news and views of their close friends. This deprivation will not only insulate them from the latest ideas and fashions but may put them in a disadvantaged position in the labour market, where advancement can depend... on knowing about appropriate job openings at just the right time.' (Granovetter, 1983, p. 202).

Using LinkedIn, jobseekers are given the opportunity to have professional online connections in their network, something that is absent from CVs. Jobseekers can insert as many skills as they desire. Some recruiters consider this to be of primary importance in certain careers (i.e. sales,

marketing, public relations, recruiting, etc.), which cannot be determined from the traditional resume format (Gilham, 2011).

Researchers also reported that a job seeker can influence recruiter evaluations through impression management (Tsai, Chi, Huang, and Hsu, 2011). Although the effect of applicant impression management has been studied primarily in the context of employment interviews (Jansen et al., 2012), researchers have noted that job seekers may employ online impression management tactics to create a desirable image (Guillory & Hancock, 2012).

The benefits of using LinkedIn as a social network for employment opportunities in most cases depends on a good education, skills, and well-connected friends, family, and acquaintances (Lin 1999, Mouw 2003, 2006).

## **2.7. Challenges of using LinkedIn for job search**

Jobseekers may not always benefit in the same way from using LinkedIn to search for employment. Zide et al. (2014) argued that LinkedIn has restructured the relationship between candidate and prospective employer by transferring the marketing responsibility onto the candidate. Those that invest in providing a thorough background of their skills and expertise receive more recognition than those who do not, which significantly advances their employment opportunities. Candidates need to spend more time connecting with new professionals and participating in relevant groups to highlight their skills and expertise. Kelley (2011) highlighted that increased activity allows one to become more prominent.

Studies have shown that the introduction of LinkedIn has given people a chance to think about how they want to present themselves before meeting in person (Wong, 2012). Users are forced to create a self-image online, hypothesising what the audience may want to see or read, but not knowing for sure if what they create is dissonance in the reader rather than acceptance (Fornaciari, 2012). Further in line with the inferred information model, which stipulates that people make inferences of others depending on how much information they provide, incomplete profiles are viewed negatively (Johnson, 1989). Roth et al., (2013) purported that LinkedIn users who do not have certain information could lose some points as compared to those who do present such information. Failures may also become clear if a job seeker's online self-presentation does not match a recruiter's expectations (Bohnert & Ross, 2010).

Personal branding has some unique challenges, which emanate from complexities in the online environment. One of the consequences of not managing an online profile in a professional

manner is that jobseekers may post inaccurate information that could inadvertently damage them as individuals (Henson et al., 2011). It is thus logical to predict that LinkedIn members who do not create a comprehensive list of skills and expertise will be found less often than those members who do list them, putting the former at a disadvantage. Then, it becomes essential to suppress stories that dilute the branding message so as to avoid branding failures (Shepherd 2005). Failures may also become clear during a first face-to-face meeting if a person does not match the other's expectations (Frost et al., 2008).

Gunnigle et al., (2011, p.123) argued that “the selection process is far more about how people perceive each other and the impressions that are made when they meet each other and it is this human interaction that often determines the selection decision that is made.” It can be argued that using LinkedIn to choose candidates does not give the candidates the opportunity to portray themselves properly. They are judged on the information that they have provided on their profile, which may hinder them from making lasting impressions, which they may have been able to make if they had met in person.

Candidates' profiles are available to the public, though this should be less of a concern than it is for other social media sites, since applicants are aware that LinkedIn is used for work related purposes. Nevertheless, data insecurity through malicious attacks may be inevitable because hackers have used information gathered from LinkedIn to plan targeted attacks. LinkedIn pages can provide a considerable level of detail to potential cyber attackers, such as names, job titles, email addresses, partnering organisations, upcoming projects, and even hobbies and interests. In June 2012, LinkedIn confirmed that some of its user passwords have been compromised; millions of LinkedIn passwords were subject to a security breach, (Chris Velazco, Techcrunch.com, June 2012).

According to Whitman (2004) combating this problem begins with understanding the threats. Solutions for privacy and security are not mathematical, but are instead tied up in human behaviour (Landau, 2008). In this sense, Perez et al. (2013, p. 956) states that “Anyone who chooses to create a LinkedIn profile must be aware that this information can and will be looked at by HR professionals, recruiters and any other users.” It is therefore advisable that jobseekers should consider the impact their online postings may have on their career success.

## **2.8. Using LinkedIn for talent acquisition**

As implied in extant research, the likelihood of realising good job-worker matches depends on the choices of search methods from the side of job applicants and on the choices of recruitment



channels from the perspectives of prospective employers (Granovetter 1995, p.155). Online community life has increasingly become a significant part of our social lives (Burkell, Fortier, Wong, & Simpson, 2014), and has become a new channel through which organisations can connect with stakeholders, including job candidates (Madera, 2012). Increasing numbers of employers utilise these platforms to screen job candidates (Bohnert & Ross, 2010).

Dekay (2009) explained that most people who use LinkedIn are concerned with improving their professional potential or progressing on their career paths, and that they use the site as a middle man as opposed to using people within their company or outside agencies. Thus, the use of the site as an intermediary can impact business operations within companies that are recruiting as well as within outside agencies.

LinkedIn has a participant base of more than 175 million experienced professionals from around the world with membership from over 200 countries (Claubaugh and Haseman, 2013, p. 94). Therefore, it can provide companies with a larger talent pool of diverse candidates from which to choose. Searches on LinkedIn allow employers to see detailed professional information about a candidate, which may be used to check information reported on a resume.

Recently, there has been an increase in the use of social networks for recruitment purposes; hence, many companies are starting to embrace social recruitment strategies in Ireland. In 2013, 46% of Irish enterprises used social networks to hire candidates. The percentage increased to 58% in 2014, and in 2015 the user base grew to 62% according to a CSO statistical release on 16 December 2015. This shows that, recruiters make most of their hires through social networks, and that jobseekers increasingly recognize the new networking advantages that these SNSs offer. This is because the technology sector in the country is growing significantly. The recruitment process involves inviting as many candidates as possible to apply for a certain post in the company. The hiring company performs the task of recruitment, and expects to find the most talented and qualified people to hire and work for them. On the other hand, the candidates try as hard as they can to be part of the recruitment, as they are aiming to be hired by these companies.

The University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth released a study finding that 81% of Inc. 500 companies use LinkedIn for talent acquisition (Barnes & Lescault, 2012). LinkedIn is perhaps the most successful and widely used SNS for recruiters and job seekers, and is the world's largest professional network on the internet (Adams, 2013).

Bondarouk, Ruel, Axinia, & Arama (2013) and Breaugh (2009) believe that social networking tools can help HR professionals make more informed and strategic staffing decisions. When searching for better quality candidates, employers are now relying on social media to target more qualified candidates. For recruiters and employers, LinkedIn provides a cost-effective solution for their recruitment needs by facilitating the opportunity to connect and engage directly with candidates. Significantly, it provides a credible platform for them to screen a candidate's information (Bonson and Bednarova, 2013; Caers and Castelyns, 2011). Furthermore, Davison et al. (2011a, b) found that another significant contribution for recruiters was that the information extracted from the site allowed them to evaluate a candidate's (person organisation) P-O fit because a profile is perceived to be reflective of the candidate's values and personality.

Recruiters and employers are motivated to use LinkedIn for sourcing best talents. LinkedIn's Global Recruiting Trends 2017 survey showed that 56% of Talent Acquisition teams said their hiring volume will increase, but their team size and resources will stay the same. According to the data of Intelligence Group and Similarweb.com, 87% recruiters chose LinkedIn over Indeed as the preferred recruitment channel and Global Talent Acquisition Monitor (GTAM), a large scale international research executed by Intelligence Group in 45 countries in which Ireland has 13%.

To efficiently succeed in the acquisition of these talents, the users need to feel a sense of safety within the companies interested in them. LinkedIn has made this possible by including features where companies can create profiles containing their activities, endorsements, achievements, and goals. This makes the individuals feel like they can relate to these recruiters, and that they know something about them. With these features, recruiters can effectively use LinkedIn for talent acquisition.

### **2.8.1. Benefits of using LinkedIn for talent acquisition**

Using a site such as LinkedIn in lieu of traditional recruiting efforts can undoubtedly prove to be beneficial to a recruiter or an employer. LinkedIn has a participant base of more than 175 million experienced professionals from around the world, with membership from over 200 countries (Claubaugh and Haseman, 2013, p. 94), and therefore can provide companies with a larger talent pool of diverse candidates from which to choose. Likewise, advertising jobs on LinkedIn can allow for the post to be seen by many people, and may/ thus attract a greater interest in the job itself, compared to advertising the vacancy through traditional recruitment methods.

Gunnigle et al., (2011, p.121) stated that “web-based recruitment and early stage pre-screening of applicants are now common across the world, due to the fact online recruitment allows access to a wider range of candidates and is more convenient and considerably cheaper than traditional methods.”

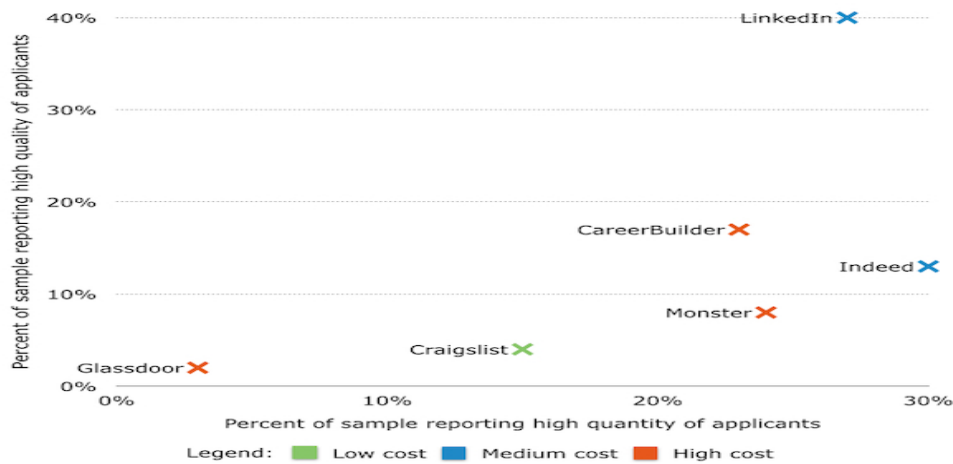
Currently, with the emergence of professionally targeted SNS such as LinkedIn, HR professionals can search for qualified candidates or even announce new job positions on the website. In the United States, the number of recruiters using SNS to access and recruit talent is high: about 92 percent already use or are planning to use SNS in their hiring pursuits (Westemeier, 2012).

Unlike traditional methods of recruitment which offer no certainty that candidates will apply for the job, LinkedIn “guarantees ten applicants” (LinkedIn.com, 2014, p.1). Another benefit is the search tool, which makes searching for potential candidates incredibly easy and fast. This makes the recruiting process less cumbersome. LinkedIn also allows companies to view aspects of a candidate’s personality, which can be gleaned from one’s digital footprint - their social media profile- which may not be observed from a printed paper CV (Chamorro-Premuzic & Steinmetz, 2013, p.1). This is important, as the recruiters see the whole history of employment or achievements and connections that the candidates have attained. Being able to view one’s life from the information available on his or her social media profile, companies can see first-hand what type of person the candidate is and how they spend their time. “Applicant screening through social media can have an obvious benefit—to discover information about a candidate that would otherwise be impossible to discover” (Lieber, 2011, p. 98). They can gain much personal information about applicants “as a source of applicant data to improve hiring decisions” (Kluemper & Rosen 2009, p.567).

LinkedIn has initiated a new era of workforce recruitment (Guillory & Hancock, 2012) in which recruiters are increasingly using these SNSs to source and screen job candidates (Davison et al., 2011).

Grensing-Pophal (2012) agreed that LinkedIn and similar networks are effective recruiting tools. Silhker (2011) highlights how if an organisation uses products such as LinkedIn, they would be given access to 70 million passive candidates. Passive candidates are said to be safe employees who are stable in their jobs (Dekay, 2009). In addition, LinkedIn can deliver quality jobseekers. A survey of 150 recruiters in the U.S. and Canada in early June 2014 showed that LinkedIn delivers a high quality and quantity of applicants (Figure 2.7).

Figure 2.7 LinkedIn Delivers High Quality and Quantity of Applicants



Source: Global Recruiting Roundtable

### 2.8.2. Challenges of using LinkedIn for talent acquisition

As a global platform, LinkedIn has a plethora of registered talent, as many people have put their interests and skills on the site. To get the best out of the LinkedIn recruiting feature, the recruiters or employers have to commit a certain amount of money. LinkedIn states “the price of the job posting varying by geographical location” with the user able to choose from different pricing plans for 30 days or more (Help.Linkedin.com, 2014, p.1-2). The corporate recruiter plan may be as high as \$8,600 per year, which may be necessary for many global organisations to find the perfect candidates to fill the available posts.

The process can be time consuming in certain scenarios if the recruiter or employer is not computer savvy. As a digitised process, some of the recruiters may experience challenges when learning how to use it as a recruitment tool. Learning how to set up an account and manoeuvring around the software may be an easy task, but using LinkedIn as a recruitment tool could pose a great challenge to some people.

Despite the fact that there are many filtered search results to suit the job post available, there are occurrences where most of the candidates are passive candidates. Some of these candidates already have jobs, and are working on establishing broader connections. These candidates who suit the description required, but already have jobs are thus passive candidates (Hayes, 2012, pp. 6-8). This may affect the recruitment process, as the passive candidates could be numerous, and thus reduce the number of positive responses.

## **2.9. Recruiters and employers' best practices to observe**

It is important for recruiters and employers to make sure the rights and privacy of the candidate are not violated in any way. Here are some suggestions on practices to observe: Recruiters and employers must consider the enforcement of various legislation acts, specifically the Protection of Employment Acts 1977 and 2015, Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004, and The Trade Union Act, 1941. It is essential for recruiters and employers to consider these acts before proceeding with recruitment process through social media.

Grensing-Pophal (2012) agreed that LinkedIn and similar networks are effective recruiting tools and 'middle men', but stated that they should not be considered complete replacements for conventional methods and traditional recruiter tasks. Herboud and Douma (2012) noted that a general search of the networks as middle men should be used as a supplement to conventional recruiting methods, likely to optimise the recruiting and hiring outcomes.

To ensure a fair and positive environment, Davison, Maraist, Hamilton, and Bing (2012) recommended the following (p. 15-17):

1. Develop policies regarding appropriate and inappropriate uses of internet searching.
2. Base the use of internet screening media for selection purposes on recommendations from a job analysis.
3. Conduct a risk-benefit analysis to determine if the legal risks of using internet screening media to assess applicants outweigh the potential benefits.
4. Standardize assessments of internet screening media and use multiple raters.
5. Verify the accuracy of information obtained from internet screening media.
6. Disclose the potential use of internet screening media for selection decisions to applicants.

## **2.10. Conclusion**

Networking is a strategy used by job seekers to establish and maintain relationships with connections who can promote their career success. LinkedIn has become a beneficial avenue for jobseekers in the digital age for job searching, building professional relationships, and creating a strong professional reputation and presence. It also speeds up recruiting tasks and is a convenient tool in many cases.

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter details the decisions in terms of research methodology and methods used to gather and analyse data from Irish IT jobseekers using LinkedIn for employment, recruiters and employers using LinkedIn for talent acquisition. Firstly, the selection of a qualitative approach is justified and the research approach is discussed in the context of the philosophy of the researcher and the strategy and research choice. Secondly, the identification and selection of a sample is discussed and the methods employed to analyse the resulting data are described. Finally, the reliability and validity of the research decisions are outlined and ethical issues are considered.

### **3.2. Research Objectives**

The research objective is to develop knowledge of how the emergence of LinkedIn has revolutionised traditional job search methods. The research will also provide an overview of Irish IT sector jobseekers' perceptions of the abilities provided by LinkedIn, both positive and negative. The research aims to answer the following questions. What features of LinkedIn have enhanced the jobseekers' personal connectivity? How often do the jobseekers produce content to showcase their knowledge and expertise to help others? What are the jobseekers' personal experiences using LinkedIn for job searches? Why do organisations decided to use LinkedIn for recruitment, and to what extent is it utilised? How useful do recruiters and employers find LinkedIn as a screening tool in comparison to traditional methods (such as screening CV's)? What would affect the recruiter or employer's final decision on a candidate who uses LinkedIn to search for employment?

### **3.3. Research Process**

In outlining the research methodology, the researcher decides on the course of action that will lead to the collection of data that can be analysed and which gives validity to the research. The researcher will select the appropriate research approach by referring to a 'Research Onion' model (Saunders *et al.*, 2009) (Figure 3.1). In the 'Research Onion', there are six layers, namely - Philosophies, Approaches, Strategies, Choices, Time Horizon, Techniques and Procedures.

The onion's layers depict the issues underlying the choices of the researcher, and assists in answering the research questions through the selection of the appropriate research design.

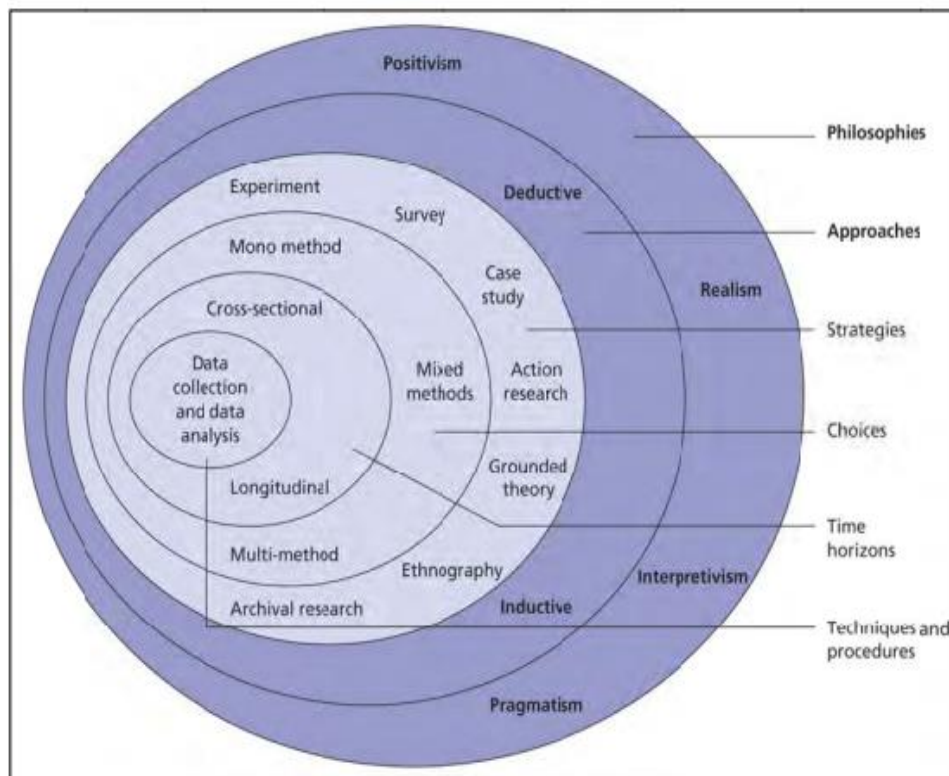


Figure 3.1 The Research Onion (Saunders, et al., 2009)

### 3.4. Research Philosophies

A research philosophy can be defined as a researcher's personal view of what constitutes acceptable knowledge and the process by which this is developed (Saunders et al., 2007). There are a number of different research philosophies that can be selected within this outer layer of the 'Research Onion' - Saunders identifies these as Positivism, Realism, Interpretivism, and Pragmatism.

#### 3.4.1. Positivism

The positivist approach aims to generate objective research questions that can be replicated by other researchers so as to verify the results. Positivism is a position that applies natural science methods to the study of social reality (Bryman, 2015). Positivism was not chosen as the underlying philosophy in this research because it usually involves large samples of quantitative

data and statistical hypothesis testing which was not achievable with this study due to time constraints.

#### **3.4.2. Realism**

The realism approach is founded on the possibility of observing and describing reality from an objective viewpoint. According to Saunders et al. (2007) the philosophy of realism is that there is a reality independent of the mind. Realism philosophy was not chosen for this study because this method takes a scientific approach to the collection, analysis and development of data but view their findings as evidence-based probabilities (Guest et al., 2012).

#### **3.4.3. Pragmatism**

The pragmatism approach posits that no single viewpoint can provide a full picture. Many data collection techniques may be required with this approach. The pragmatic approach situates the research question centrally and applies all approaches to understanding the question (Creswell, 2008). This method was rejected because pragmatists often use a mixed method approach and work with both quantitative and qualitative data collection, using different analysis techniques Saunders et al. (2007).

#### **3.4.4. Interpretivism**

Interpretivism takes into account social aspects during the research process and uses qualitative methods. It focuses on devising research questions by observing the subject's social interactions in its natural environment. Where positivism tests hypotheses, interpretivism investigates research questions focused on understanding phenomena in their natural settings through the use of verbal data.

#### **3.4.5. Rationale for philosophy chosen**

Interpretive approaches and methods have become accepted in IS (Klein and Myers, 1999; Roode, 2003; Walsham, 1995a; 1995b; Vannoy and Salam, 2010). Klein and Myers believe that interpretive studies provide deep insight into IS phenomena, helping the IS research community to understand human thought and action in both social and organisational contexts.

The interpretivism approach is appropriate for this research study because there are many behavioural and technological advantages of LinkedIn which cannot be precisely measured with numbers. Another reason for the selection of interpretivism approach in this study is because the researcher is more concerned with gathering rich insights into subjective meanings than providing law-like generalisations.



### **3.5. Research Approaches**

The research approach is the second layer of Saunders' 'Research Onion'. There are two main types of research approaches used in information systems research, the inductive and deductive approaches (Blaikie, 2009). Bryman (2015), also confirms that in research, the two major conventional methodological approaches are deductive and inductive. The two approaches differ on the basis of the steps employed when applied to the research process. A qualitative, or inductive approach was utilised in this research paper in order to analyse the individual perspectives of the impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector. The following section outlines the differences between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

#### **3.5.1 Quantitative (Deductive) vs Qualitative (Inductive)**

Quantitative research is a deductive approach that consists of collecting measurable, quantifiable data through structured questionnaires or surveys to support or develop an existing theory (Wilson, 2014). The deductive approach begins with the formulating of hypotheses that then lead to a theory (Matthews and Ross, 2014). In a 'deductive approach', a theory is tested through a series of propositions with the final goal of deducing conclusions. It involves the development of a theory that is subjected to a rigorous test. According to Saunders (2011) it is characterized by "searching to explain causal relationships between variables as well as by enabling facts to be measured in a quantitative way". A high level of expertise is required when using deductive approach (Bryman, 2015).

In contrast, qualitative research is an inductive approach based on understanding and interpreting reasons, opinions and underlying motives, to create new ideas and develop new theories (Hair, Celsi et al. 2011). Mertens (1998) describes qualitative research as a naturalistic, interpretive, multi-method science. Qualitative data is developed from interviews, focus groups, observations and case studies, and is analysed as narrative text rather than numerical values (Wilson, 2014). Qualitative research aims to get to the reality of the situation in order to understand the nature of the problem better. "The approach concentrates on using literature to identify theories and ideas that the researcher will test using data" (Al Zefeiti and Mohamad 2015). As described by Gray (2013) this approach first makes a plan for data collection, then this information is analysed to determine if any patterns emerge that suggest relationships between variables. The aim of qualitative researchers is to obtain the participant's view of the subject under study (Beuving and de Vries, 2015)

### **3.5.2 Rationale for research approach chosen**

This research follows an interpretivist belief that reality and the individual who observes it cannot be separated (Weber 2004). The interpretivist philosophic approach is a useful means of measuring the responses to the interviews. "Simply observing and interviewing do not ensure that the research is qualitative, the researcher must also interpret the beliefs and behaviour of participants" (Janesick, 2000). Jobseekers' views on LinkedIn profiles and other features could be completely different from recruiters and employers' views on the factors that determine employment.

As explained by Kaplan (2005), qualitative studies aim to understand how people feel about something and why, what their perspectives are, and what a specific technology means to people. LinkedIn has impacted the job search and talent acquisition, so jobseekers, recruiters, and employers' judgements and feelings towards it need to be recorded and analysed, tasks that this study aims to complete.

There is no straight forward quantifiable way to address Irish IT sector jobseekers' perceptions of the abilities provided by LinkedIn, instead these perceptions need to be investigated in a qualitative way. Korez-Vide et al. (2014, p. 75) noted that when researching the decision-making process, a qualitative approach allowed their study to take a more holistic approach in addressing the research question. It can be further argued that a quantitative research approach may have missed valuable insights into the interaction of social, economic, and geographic variables.

As the research questions are focussed on users' perceptions, a qualitative interpretivist research approach was deemed to be the appropriate method, since it is difficult, if not impossible, to measure a feeling or perception in a statistical manner.

### **3.6. Research strategies**

The research strategy can be defined as how the researcher intends to carry out the work (Saunders et al., 2007). This research focuses on gathering primary data in order to develop knowledge of how the emergence of LinkedIn has revolutionised traditional job search methods. For this purpose, a variety of primary research strategies were considered. These strategies will be briefly explained below.

There are a number of varying and different research strategies within the context of Saunders' model. These include experiment, case study, action research, archival research, and survey.

- 
- Experimental research refers to the strategy of creating a research process that examines the actual results of an experiment against the expected results (Saunders et al., 2007). Therefore, using an experimental approach was not appropriate for this study.
  - Case study research is the assessment of a single unit in order to establish its key features and draw generalisations (Bryman, 2012). A case study strategy was also disregarded because this research is not aimed at investigating a particular organisation.
  - Action research is generally medium to long term in duration, and was also rejected due to time constraints.
  - An archival research strategy is where the research is conducted from existing materials (Flick, 2011). The strategy of archival research was not considered, as administrative data was not available on the impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector.

The survey based approach was chosen in order to gather a large amount of responses in a relatively short period of time.

### **3.6.1. Rationale for research strategy chosen**

For the purpose of this research, a survey based approach was chosen in order to gather a large amount of responses in a relatively short period of time. The prospective participants had very limited time available to respond to the study. As suggested by Wright (2005), one of the main advantages of using a survey is the ability to gather a large amount of responses in a relatively short period of time, and at a lower cost to the researcher in terms of both finances and time.

According to Neuman (2005), the most popular variations of surveys include questionnaires, interviews and documentation review. Denscombe (2004), explained that questionnaire is conducted in order to gather a large amount of information in a short period of time. Interviews are carried out in order to explore participants experiences with a greater focus. Therefore, the researcher felt that questionnaires and interviews were the most suitable to help provide insights into how LinkedIn's emergence has impacted IT jobseekers' ability to gain employment and to identify factors that affect the recruiter and employer's final decision on a candidate using LinkedIn for employment.

### 3.7. Research Choices

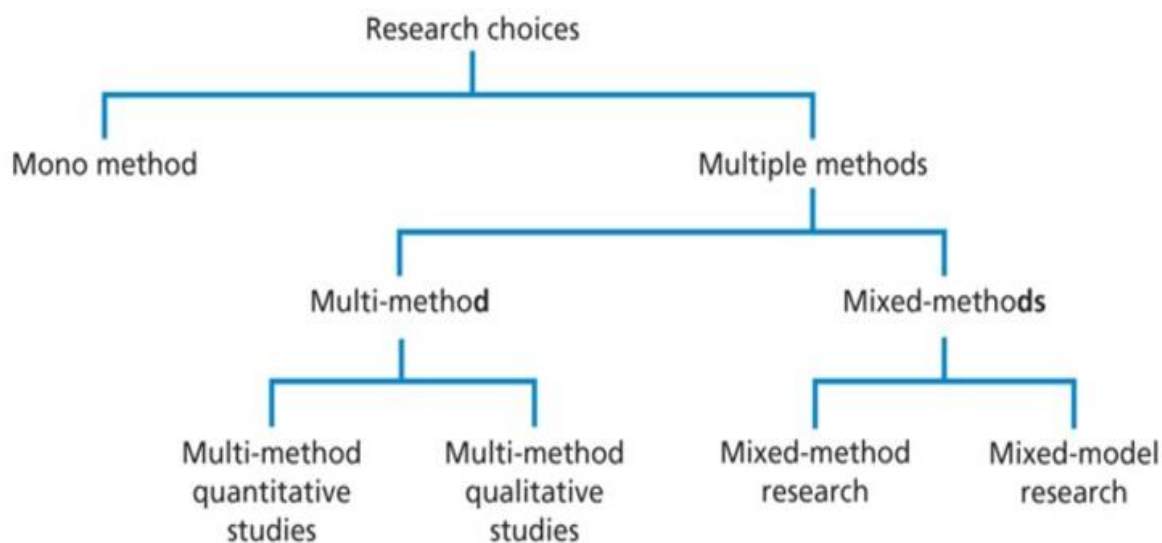


Figure 3.2. Research Choices (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill 2006)

The 'Research Onion' proposes different choices when it comes to choosing a research design. When conducting research one or both of these techniques may be used. The mono method uses a single data collection technique, with a corresponding form of analysis. A multi-method approach involves the use of more than one data gathering method, and more than one analysis technique to answer the research question. Mixed methods studies are a challenge because they are perceived as requiring more work, financial resources, and requiring more time. Increased time demands arise from the time it takes to implement both aspects of the study (Niglas, 2004). For the purpose of this research a monomethod research choice was determined to be appropriate.

### 3.8. Time Horizon

Time horizon is an inner layer of the 'Research Onion'. There are two types of time horizons, - longitudinal and cross-sectional. For a longitudinal study, the researcher observes the phenomenon for a period of time, whereas in cross-sectional studies the time is limited (Saunders 2011).

A cross-sectional time horizon was selected due to the time constraints necessary to conduct this research. Each interview was approximately 40 minutes in length and each informant was interviewed once and then contacted later if any further questions arose. The survey was kept open for five weeks, commencing on the 23rd of May, 2017 and closing on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, 2017. The expectant duration of the participant involvement for the survey was 30 minutes.

### **3.9. Pilot study**

To detect weaknesses in design and instrumentation (Cooper & Schindler, 2003, p. 86), a pilot study was conducted. Online questionnaires were created on the 30th of March 2017. As recommended by Dillman et al. (2009), all draft questions were pretested on the group of people representing the target audience to avoid awkward wordings and phrasings which could be unintelligible to the interviewees. In addition, an informal expert review was carried out to identify any potential problems. Finally, the interview questions were revised appropriately.

The online survey was tested to monitor the display properties, predict any data collection problem and improve survey outcomes. The group retested the online survey to make sure all aspects of the survey functioned before the final survey was carried out. They also responded to general questions about the survey itself, as suggested by Dillman et al. (2009):

- Are the questions ambiguous or difficult?
- Does the questionnaire feel repetitive?
- Does it feel too long?
- Does it feel too superficial?
- Are there any annoying features in terms of the wording or formatting?

### **3.10. Data collection**

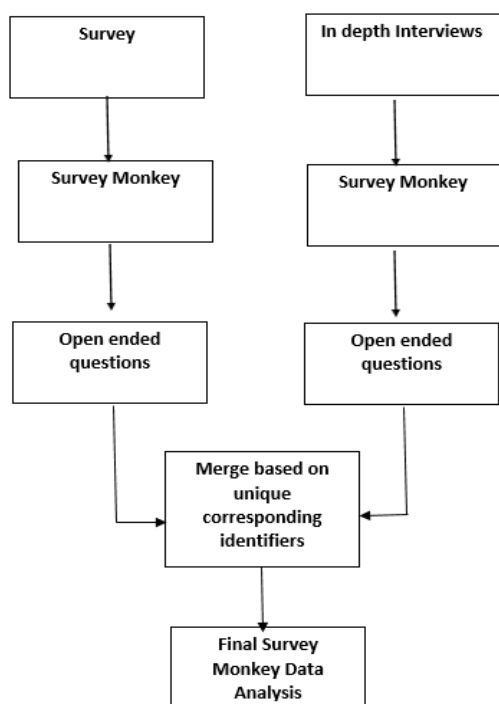
The final layer of the onion involves deciding upon the techniques and procedures to be used to gather research data. Saunders et al., (2007) describes two different types of data collection, namely primary and secondary data. Primary data is described as the collection of new information by the researcher through a variety of techniques. Secondary data collection involves the reanalysis of existing data collected for some other purpose.

The researcher chose to employ a flexible and iterative data collection strategy consisting of in-depth semi structured interviews and online surveys. To avoid generating unequal evidence, the researcher employed the same open-ended questions for both data collection methods. The first part of the semi-structured interviews and surveys was carried out with jobseekers from the Irish IT sector to address how the emergence of LinkedIn has impacted their ability to find employment.

The interviews and surveys also addressed LinkedIn's benefits as well as the setbacks jobseekers find in using LinkedIn for job search. The second part of the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires was carried out with recruiters and employers to determine what

would affect the recruiter or employer's final decision on candidates who are using LinkedIn for their job search.

Figure 3.3 Sequential design



The two-phased approach (Figure 3.3) allowed study participants to respond to the surveys in their own time. It provided the researcher the opportunity to review and analyse the survey results and tailor the subsequent in-depth interview instrument to follow-up on confusing or significant responses. This iterative analytic approach also simplified subsequent attempts to integrate the coded qualitative data collected during in-depth interviews with survey data. A primary disadvantage of this strategy is the time required to design and conduct separate tailored instruments for the same open-ended questions.

### 3.10.1 Survey

This research utilised an online survey administered through SurveyMonkey as one of the data collection methods. SurveyMonkey is an online survey development company. This method of data collection met the primary goal of organisational research which is to, “obtain high-quality data that are reliable and valid and that accurately reflect the beliefs and attitudes of the target population” (Buchanan & Bryman, 2011, p. 451). By definition, a strictly anonymous study design makes it impossible to trace data or information back to the research subject from whom it was obtained. Generally, online survey software makes it easier to administer anonymous surveys. Survey Monkey features this option. In the case of this study, the data cannot be tied to any particular research participant, not even by the researcher. Participants indicated consent simply by agreeing to complete the survey and clicking on the link, so there was no need for backup paper files that could compromise the anonymity of respondents.

### **3.10.2. Survey implementation**

A web based survey enables the quick rollout of the survey and was considered appropriate for the sample audience to complete the survey in a fast and efficient manner. The online survey participation took place between 23<sup>rd</sup> May and 15<sup>th</sup> July 2017. A total of 65 surveys were conducted. Participation in the survey was voluntary. Respondents were assured that information given would not be passed on to any other organisation or individual. The online survey allowed the faster collection of data than if traditional hard-copy surveys had been used.

A web based survey was considered to be an appropriate data collection instrument. Survey Monkey, a web-based tool was employed for the design, and analysis of the survey instrument. Emails were sent directly to jobseekers inviting them to participate and directing them to the web- based survey instrument. Each survey consisted of twenty-one questions generated by reviewing the literature, and adopting and adapting questions from previous successful research studies.

To ensure reliability, the survey was distributed with a research information sheet and consent form (Appendix B), providing clear instructions on how to complete the survey. The survey was administered through the aforementioned web-based survey tool, Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey helped to ensure the layout and format was clear and instructions were provided with each question so that respondents knew exactly what was being asked and how to answer the question. In addition, Survey Monkey enables automatic data compilation, helping to reduce human error in data input, contributing to the reliability of this study. As suggested by Dillman et. al., (2009), confidentiality and security of personal information were ensured.

### **3.10.3. Semi-structured Interviews**

A semi-structured interview is defined by a pre-set question guide that aims to provide in-depth findings through informal discussions with participants (Collis and Hussey, 2003). According to Seidman (2013), interviews are preferred for collecting data on participants' history, opinions and experiences, especially when exploring insightful topics.

Rowley (2012), stated that this method allows flexibility in information sharing because the order of questions is not fixed and allows research participants to describe situations in their preferred manner, with the aid of prompts from researchers. Gray (2013) points out that the main objective of semi-structured interviews is to obtain detailed information that can enhance qualitative

analysis. The order of questions may vary depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders, 2011, p.230).

The questions are open-ended to allow the researcher to collect detailed information. Respondents can provide additional details that could not be captured by asking closed-ended questions, Galletta, (2013). Unlike structured interviews, in which researchers cannot collect additional information beyond what the questions require, researchers using semi-structured interviews can omit questions that they regard as redundant or can ask for clarification to understand the participant's individual experiences and perspectives (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2015).

#### **3.10.4 Interview Implementation**

Interviews were conducted between 23<sup>rd</sup> May and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2017 following receipt of approval from the Ethics Committee in Trinity College Dublin. Potential participants were sent an initial email or letter requesting them to take part in an interview. As per ethical guidelines, participants were provided with the information sheet in advance and an informed consent form was signed by each interviewee on the day of the interview. Saunders et al. (2007) indicates that credibility can be promoted by supplying the relevant information to interviewees prior to the interview. Participants were informed that upon agreement interviews would be recorded. Interviews were manually transcribed from the recording, and names were removed to preserve anonymity.

#### **3.11. Population and Sampling**

The research population can be defined as the total number of individuals or objects that are the main focus of the study (Arcury and Quandt 1998). The population for this particular study is jobseekers in the Irish IT sector seeking employment within the last 5 years, recruiters and employers using LinkedIn to assist with the hiring process.

For this research, the sample audience was identified beforehand following the qualitative methodology. The target subjects for this study were jobseekers using LinkedIn for employment, including recruiters and employers using LinkedIn for talent acquisition. Subjects were identified by the researcher beforehand and some additional interviewees were identified through the use of snowballing techniques.



### **3.12. Data validity**

To reduce the risk of data errors the interviews were audio recorded with permission, and notes were taken during each interview. The audio recordings were later transcribed in order to reduce the risk of inaccuracies. To ensure face validity for this study, the literature on the impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers was extensively examined, enabling the emergence of the key themes.

### **3.13. Ethical Considerations**

The application for ethical approval was submitted to TCD School of Computer Science and Statistics on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017. The ethical considerations are considered at each stage of this research. No ethical issues were identified by either the researcher or the ethics committee. The informed consent process ensured that the participants were aware of the purpose of the study and that their participation was entirely voluntary. It also informed them that they could terminate their participation at any point during the study. Participants were assured that any information provided to the researcher for the purposes of the study was fully anonymous and confidential. The Ethics Approval documentation is attached in Appendix B: Ethics Approval.

Every participant was given a brief outline of the purpose of the study and what it involved. Once the researcher received confirmation that the participant would like to take part in the study, the participants were each presented with the participant information sheet and the informed consent form, which was signed before the interview commenced.

### **3.14. Methodology Limitations**

In general, qualitative research approaches suffer from the following weaknesses. Firstly, the context, events, conditions and interactions cannot be replicated. Secondly, the time required for data collection, analysis and interpretation is lengthy. Thirdly, the researcher's presence may have an effect on the subjects of the study. Finally, confidentiality and anonymity present issues when selecting the findings (Hughes 2014). The limitations of the chosen methodology for this study are as follows:

**Sample size** - The research was limited to a specific sector of the Irish economy and to a small number of jobseekers, employers and recruiters, this research is limited in its scope.

**Interviewer Bias**- Interviews are potentially subject to bias, and this was kept in mind when creating an outline of the interview questions and topics to be discussed.

**Sample population** - The majority of interviewees were not known to the interviewer prior to conducting this research so as to yield a better generalisability of the research findings. However, random sampling was not possible in this case given the financial and time constraints.

**Confidentiality and trust issues** - The participant may feel uneasy about disclosing certain private information. This could impair the interview process and the determined outcomes. The risk of this possibility was mitigated by keeping participants' responses anonymous and allowing participants to skip any questions that they did not feel comfortable answering.

### **3.15. Lessons learnt**

Pretesting of all draft questions received feedback that helped to improve clarity. Pretesting the online survey to monitor the display properties, and predict any data collection problem also helped the researcher to improve survey outcomes.

The combination of semi-structured interviews together with internet based surveys led to a greater rate of participation. In particular, appears that the inclusion of a survey link in a follow up email only to those who did not agree to participate in the semi-structured interview process helped to increase the overall participation levels. The use of an internet-based survey required less of their time, and hence they may be more willing to participate.

### **3.16. Summary**

This chapter outlined the various academic research methodologies available for this research. This research employs an interpretivist method. In addition, the qualitative, as opposed to quantitative, research method was chosen for many reasons. Online surveys and semi-structured interview questions were formulated based on existing literature. The surveys and interviews questions were created, in order to explore the impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector. And to explore what factors affect the hiring decision of a recruiter or employer using LinkedIn for recruitment.

## Chapter 4 - Findings and Analysis

### 4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the analysis and findings of the data collected using the combination of semi-structured interviews and online surveys. The chapter is structured as follows:

Table 4.1 – Chapter 4 road map

Section	Section Summary
4.2	Overview of the research participants
4.3	Description of the research analysis process
4.4	Description of the developed themes
4.5	Qualitative findings (charts and comment)
4.6	Data analysis against the selected IS theory
4.7.	Summary of chapter findings and analysis

### 4.2. Overview of research participants

The following is the breakdown of participants in the research;

As outlined in chapter three, the target participants of the research were IT sector jobseekers, recruiters and employers.

Table 4.2: Overview of Research Participants

No. of Jobseekers interviewed	No. of Jobseekers that participated in online survey	No. of recruiters and employers interviewed	No. of recruiters and employers that participated in online survey	Total no. of participants
15	50	3	15	83

### 4.3. Data processing and analysis

To answer the research questions, the analysis of research data began with the reading of the interview transcripts and online responses. Next, a themed analysis was made in which the major patterns were extracted. Finally, the emergent themes were compared to selected IS theories.

### 4.3.1. Themes development

The main themes that emerged can be categorised into ten areas.

Table 4.3. - Research themes

Theme	Description
1	Perceptions that participants have been using LinkedIn for over a year
2	Perceptions that participants use LinkedIn for rapid employment
3	Factors that enhance participants' regular visits to LinkedIn
4	Perceptions that interpersonal connectivity can enhance employability
5	Perceptions that regular engagement will promote employability
6	Perceptions that self-branding on LinkedIn would affect hiring decision
7	Perceptions that participants experience setbacks when using LinkedIn
8	Perceptions that traditional methods of recruitment are still in use
9	Perceptions that only LinkedIn is utilised to determine hiring process
10	Perceptions that LinkedIn may replace job sites in future

As shown above in Table 4.3, the literature review uncovered a number of common themes that need to be considered by a jobseeker using LinkedIn for employment. The themes in regard to jobseekers' questions focus on using LinkedIn for rapid employment, interpersonal connectivity, social enhancement, perceptions about LinkedIn profiles, LinkedIn features that are important to recruiters, and jobseekers' concerns regarding the use of LinkedIn for employment. In addition, the themes in regard to recruiters and employers' questions focus on using LinkedIn for rapid employment, LinkedIn features that are important to recruiters during candidates' screening, and their concerns about using LinkedIn for recruitment. After all the interviews were concluded, answers were reviewed again, and larger themes were modified accordingly to accommodate any new insights.

### 4.3.2. Themes Presentation

Table 4.4 – Summary of identified themes from research questions and results

Themes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Jobseekers' Questions (JRQ)</b>	JRQ1	JRQ3 JRQ17	JRQ2 JRQ 4 JRQ5 JRQ10 JRQ11 JRQ19	JRQ6 JRQ13 JRQ14	JRQ7 JRQ8 JRQ9	JRQ12 JRQ16	JRQ15			
<b>Results</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>			
<b>Recruiters and employers Questions (RERQ)</b>	RERQ1	RERQ4	RERQ5 RERQ8 RERQ9 RERQ11 RERQ12	RERQ10		RERQ16	RERQ13	RERQ2 RERQ3	RERQ6 RERQ7	RERQ19
<b>Results</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Positive</b>	<b>Negative</b>	<b>Uncertain</b>

(*JRQ* – Jobseeker Research Question, *RERQ* – Recruiter and Employer Research Question)

### 4.3.3. Theme 1- Perceptions that participants have been using LinkedIn for over a year.

#### **JRQ1 - How long have you been using LinkedIn?**

62 responses were received and 5 participants skipped the question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.1 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. None of the respondents have been using LinkedIn for less than 3 months, none of the respondents have been using it for 6 months, 1 of the 62 responses indicated 1 year's usage, 3 of the 62 responses indicated they have been using it for 2 years, 4 of the 62 responses indicated they have been using it for 3 years, 10 of the 62 responses indicated they have been using it for 4 years, 25 of the 62 responses indicated they have been using it for 5 years, 19 of the 62 responses indicated they have been using it for more than 5 years. The responses indicated positive because greater number of the participants have been utilising LinkedIn for over a year.

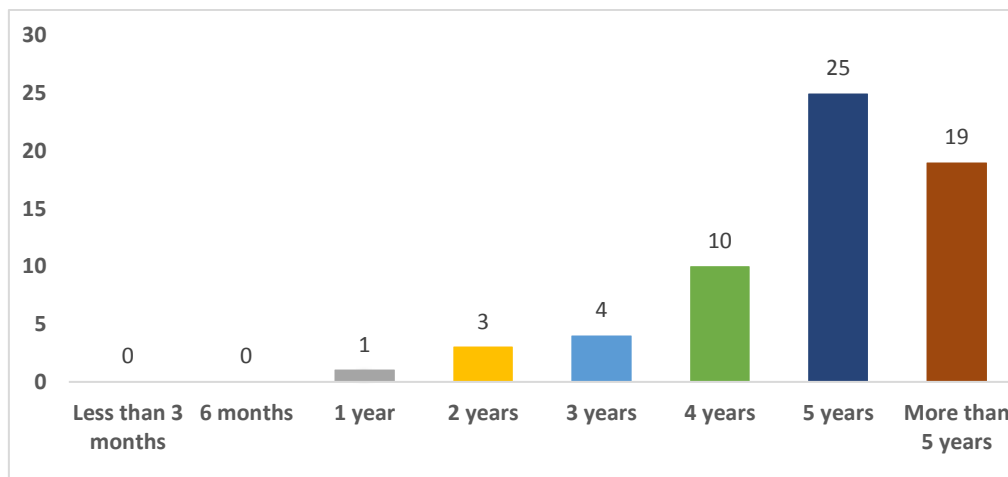


Figure 4.1: *How long participants have been using LinkedIn for employment*

***RERQ1 - When did you decide to use LinkedIn for recruitment?***

14 responses from recruiters and employers were received. The overall response was positive, all the participants indicated that they decided to use LinkedIn for recruitment over a year ago.

**4.3.4. Theme 2 - Perceptions that participants use LinkedIn for rapid employment.**

***JRQ3 - How often do you typically visit your LinkedIn account to engage with potential employers?***

60 responses were received, and 7 participants skipped the question. 17 of the 60 responses indicated that they visit LinkedIn daily, 30 of the 60 responses indicated they visit weekly, while 13 of the 60 responses indicated they visit monthly.

***JRQ17 - Do you prefer searching for jobs via LinkedIn compared to traditional methods such as recruitment agencies, job websites, job exhibitions/fairs?***

61 responses were received, and 6 participants skipped the question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.2 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 47 of the 61 responses indicated they prefer to search for jobs on LinkedIn compared to using traditional job search methods. 14 of the 61 responses indicated they do not prefer using LinkedIn because they believe not all jobs are posted on LinkedIn, and that some employers who may not know how to use LinkedIn because of its technicality. Some participants indicated that they use both LinkedIn and traditional job search methods. The overall response was positive, since greater number of the

respondents indicated that they prefer to use LinkedIn for job searching. Below are feedbacks from the question:

*“It is much easier, it is professional and effective, it is the first place employers turn to”.*

*“It is much easier for me because most recruiters use LinkedIn for employment. And if I need to relocate someday, it gives me the opportunity to have connections worldwide which other methods do not have”.*

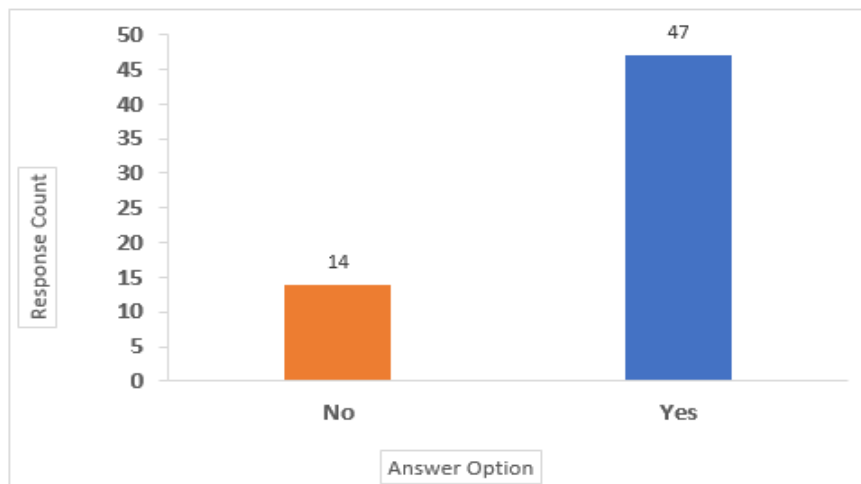


Figure 4.2: *Number of participants who prefer to use LinkedIn for job search*

**RERQ4 - How often does your organisation use LinkedIn when recruiting job candidates?**

14 participants answered this question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.3 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 8 of the 14 responses indicated they use LinkedIn for recruitment very often while 6 of the 14 responses indicated they use LinkedIn quite often for recruitment. None of the respondents use it seldomly, and none of them indicated that they have never used it. The overall response was positive because all the respondents indicated that they use LinkedIn often for recruitment.



Figure 4.3: *How often organisations use LinkedIn when recruiting job candidates*

#### 4.3.5. Theme 3 - Factors that enhance participants' regular visits to LinkedIn

##### **JRQ2 - Which LinkedIn features are the most helpful to you?**

62 responses were received and 2 participants skipped the question. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. Participants were allowed to choose more than one option. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.4 below. 14 of the 62 responses indicated headlines are helpful, 24 of the 62 responses indicated groups, 22 of the 62 responses indicated that endorsements are the most helpful, 35 of the 62 responses indicated connection suggestions, 41 of the 62 responses indicated that the newsfeed showing available jobs are helpful to them. The overall response showed that newsfeed listing available jobs is the most helpful feature to participants.

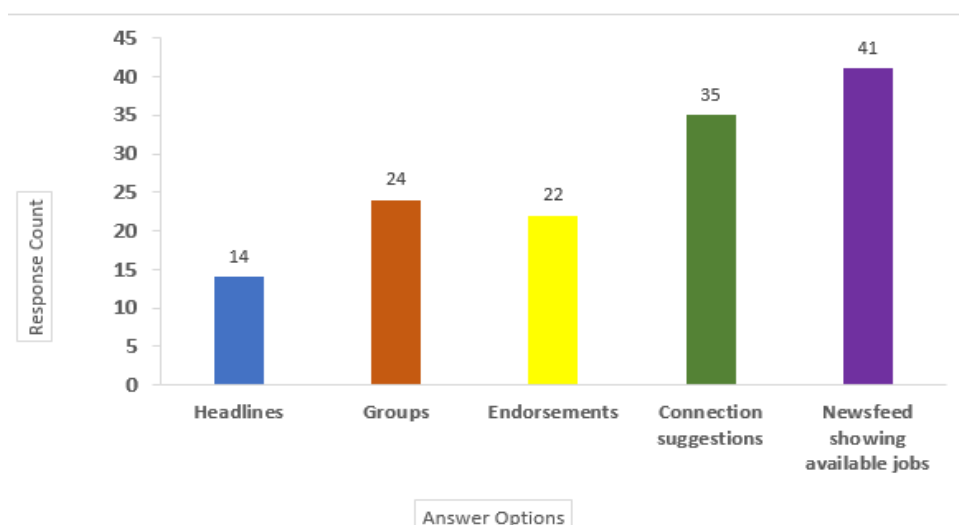


Figure 4.4: *LinkedIn features that are helpful to participants*



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***JRQ4 - What devices do you use when you visit your LinkedIn account?***

62 responses were received and 5 participants skipped the question. 35 of the 62 responses indicated the use of a computer, 45 of the 62 responses indicated the use of a mobile phone, and 9 of the 62 responses indicated the use of a tablet. The overall response indicates that using a mobile phone to visit one's LinkedIn account makes for easier access, increases level of visits to LinkedIn, and helps participants to regularly engage with connections and professionals.

***JRQ5 - How often do you update your LinkedIn profile to promote your personal brand?***

62 responses were received, and 5 participants skipped the question. The vertical axis displays percentage and the horizontal axis displays selections. 10 of the 62 responses indicated that they update their profile every 1-2 months, 9 of the 62 responses indicated they update their profile every 3-4 months, 21 of the 62 responses indicated they update their profile every 5-6 months, while 22 of the 62 responses indicated they update annually. The responses showed that participants do not update their LinkedIn profiles regularly.

***JRQ10 - How important do you think it is good for an IT candidate to have a LinkedIn presence?***

62 participants answered this question and 5 skipped it. 18 of the 62 responses indicated that a LinkedIn presence is somewhat important, 27 of the 62 responses indicated it is very important and 17 of the 62 responses indicated it is extremely important. Jobseekers visit LinkedIn because they believe that majority of recruiters and employers use it as a recruiting tool. Respondents showed that they believe it is beneficial for an IT candidate to have a LinkedIn presence.

***JRQ11 - Did you get your present job through LinkedIn?***

61 responses were received and 6 participants skipped the question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.5 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 20 of the 61 responses indicated they did not get their present job through LinkedIn, 41 of the 61 responses indicated they did get their present job through LinkedIn. The overall response was positive since greater number of the respondents did get their present job through LinkedIn.

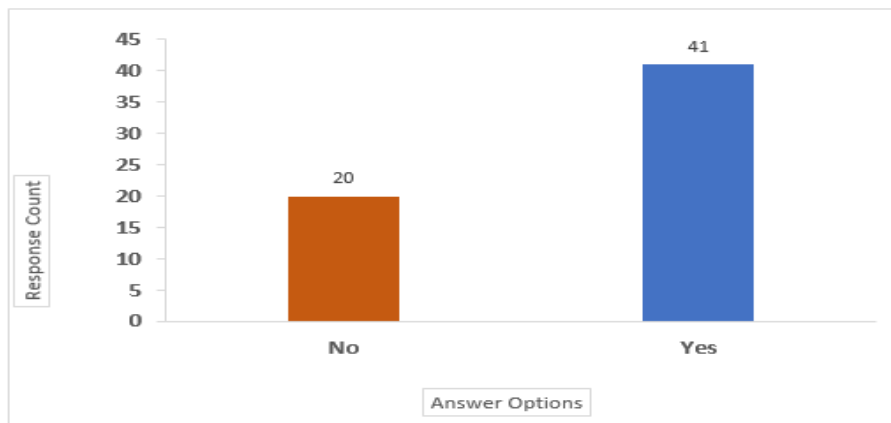


Figure 4.5: Number of participants who got their present job through LinkedIn

**JRQ19 - Overall, do you think LinkedIn is the best tool for recruitment?**

59 responses were received and 8 participants skipped the question. 46 of the 59 responses indicated that they do view LinkedIn as the best tool for recruitment hence their frequent visits. Meanwhile, 13 of the 59 responses indicated that they do not regard LinkedIn as the best tool. Feedback from the question is listed below;

*“Avenue for recruiters to get the best. it creates more networking. Helps you get connected to other professionals”.*

*“LinkedIn used vis a vis other form of recruitment will be a much better tool for recruitment. But, I will advise that employers should use other methods to recruit as well to be able to get the best candidate for the job because some jobseekers do not have professional profiles but they are very good on the job...their skills should be considered by using multiple methods to screen candidates”.*

**RERQ5 - In comparison with traditional methods (such as screening CVs), how would you rate LinkedIn as a screening tool?**

14 participants answered this question. 9 of the 14 responses indicated it is better than most of traditional methods, 5 of the 14 responses indicated it is better than some traditional methods, while none of the respondents indicated that it is not as good as most traditional methods.

**RERQ8 - What LinkedIn features do you access the most often?**

14 responses were received. Participants' responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.6 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. Participants were allowed to select more than one option. 9 of the 14 responses indicated that they use Talent pipeline, 4 of the 14 responses indicated they use Boolean searches, 9 of the 14 responses indicated they use InMail messages, 10 of the 14 responses indicated they use Talent reporting and analytics tools, 2 of the 14 responses indicate they use Team collaboration, and 10 of the 14 responses indicated they use source on the go. The overall response showed that participants mostly access talent reporting and analytics tools and source on the go.

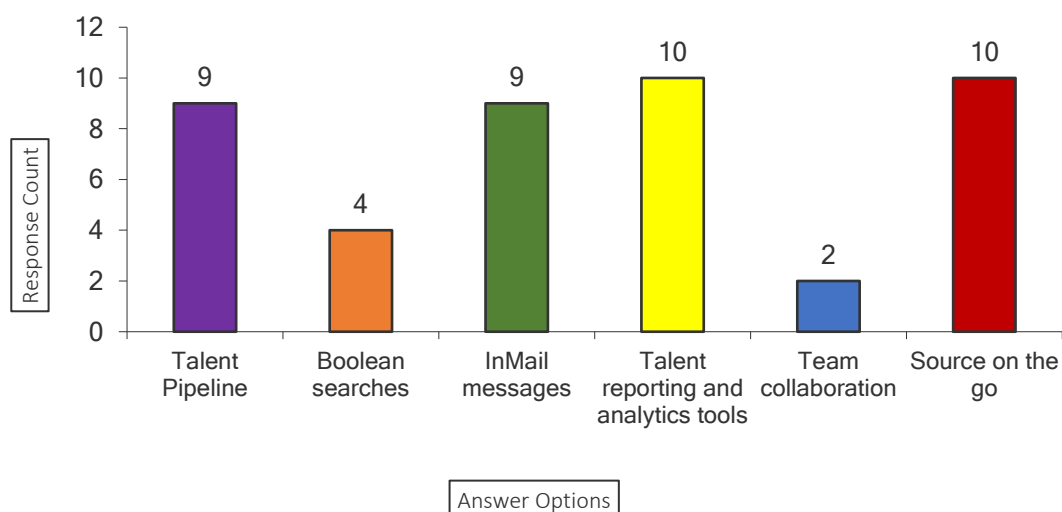


Figure 4.6: LinkedIn features that recruiters and employers access most often

**RERQ9 - To what extent has LinkedIn helped the effectiveness of recruitment within your organisation?**

14 responses were received. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.7 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. None of the respondents indicated that it has increased their effectiveness to a small extent, 3 of the 14 responses indicated that it has increased their effectiveness to a moderate extent, 5 of the 14 responses indicated it has increased their effectiveness to a large extent, and 6 of the 14 responses indicated that it has increased their effectiveness to a very large extent. Overall, respondents indicated that LinkedIn has increased the effectiveness of recruitment within their organisation to a substantial degree.



Figure 4.7: *Extent to which LinkedIn has increased the effectiveness of participants*

**RERQ11 - How important do you think it is good for an IT candidate to have a LinkedIn presence?**

14 responses were received. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.8 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. None of the respondents indicated that it is not at all or somewhat important, 8 of the 14 responses indicated that it is very important, while 6 of the 14 responses indicated that it is extremely important. The overall responses were positive because all the respondents believe it is important for an IT candidate to have a LinkedIn presence.

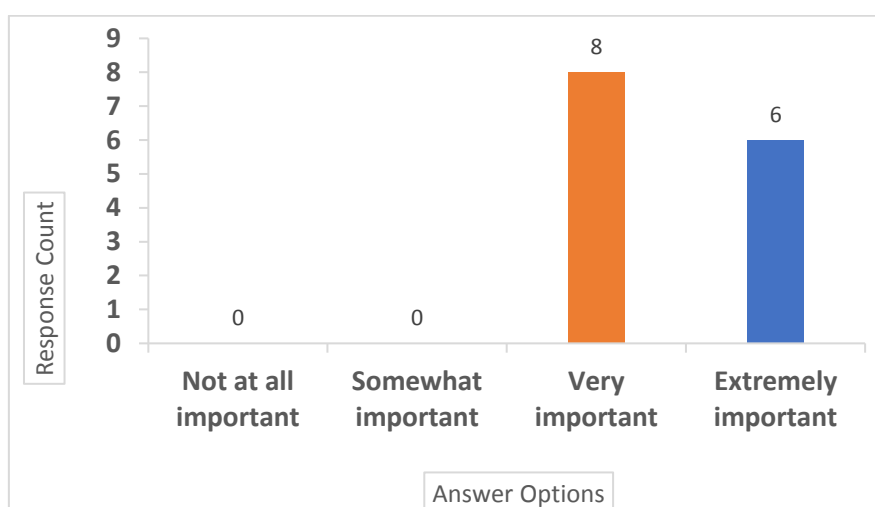


Figure 4.8: *Participants' views about importance of having a LinkedIn presence*

**RERQ12 - To what extent do you think LinkedIn has influenced jobseekers in the technology sector?**

14 responses were received. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.9 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. The findings indicated that none of the respondents believed that LinkedIn has influenced jobseekers in the technology sector to a small extent, 11 of the 14 responses indicated the belief that it has influenced jobseekers to a large extent, 3 of the 14 responses indicated the belief that it has influenced IT jobseekers to a very large extent. Overall, the responses were positive, respondents indicated that LinkedIn has influenced IT jobseekers to a significant extent.

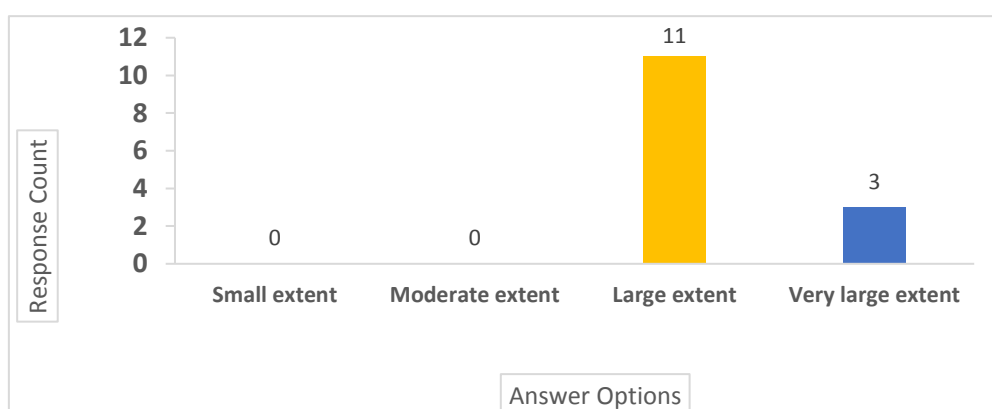


Figure 4.9: *Extent to which LinkedIn has influenced participants*

**4.3.6. Theme 4 - Perceptions that interpersonal connectivity can enhance employability.**

**JRQ6 - On average, how many views do you get on a monthly basis to tell you who has engaged with your updates?**

61 responses were received for this question and 6 participants skipped the question. 24 of the 61 responses indicated they receive less than 10 views on a monthly basis, 29 of the 61 responses indicated they receive between 10-20 views on a monthly basis and 8 of the 61 responses indicated they receive between 20-30 views on a monthly basis. The responses showed that participants need to engage regularly with their connections. Feedback from two interviewees is shown below:

“I think I need to stay more active to get more views.”

“My regular engagement with connections has really helped my career success.”

**JRQ13 - To what extent do you think LinkedIn has widened your network?**

62 responses were received, and 5 participants skipped the question. The participants' responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.10 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer option. 5 of the 62 responses indicated that LinkedIn has widened their network to a small extent, 21 of the 62 responses indicated it has widened their network to a moderate extent, 23 of the 62 responses indicated it has widened their network to a large extent, and 13 of the 62 responses indicated it has widened their network to a very large extent.

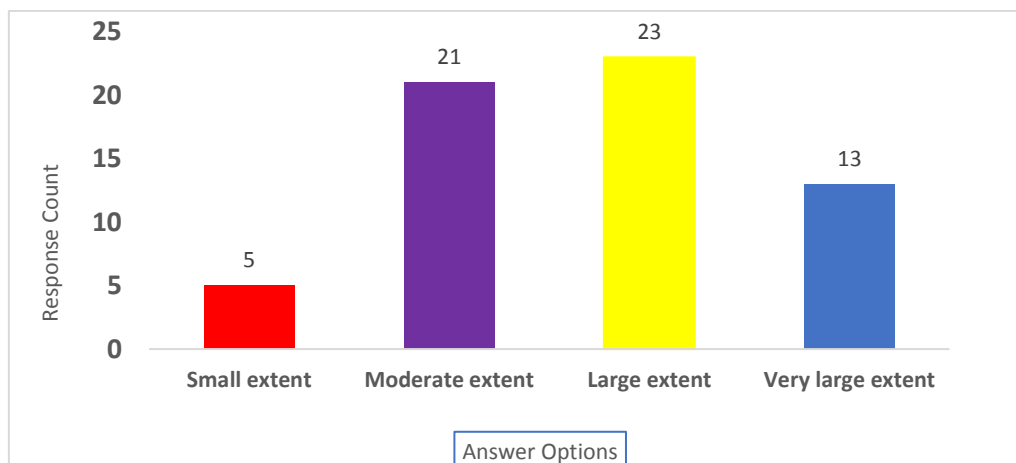


Figure 4.10: *Extent to which LinkedIn has widened participants' network*

**JRQ14 - Describe LinkedIn's impact on your ability to get employed**

62 responses were received and 5 participants skipped the question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.11 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 36 of the 62 responses indicated it has helped them to further build their professional network, and 28 of the 62 responses indicated it has helped them find out more about potential employers and recruiters who use it as part of the process to shortlist candidates. 32 of the 62 responses indicated it has given their profile increased visibility to recruiters and employers, 20 of the 62 responses indicated it has helped them focus on their career goal while 1 of the 62 responses indicated that it has no impact. The overall response was positive. Feedback from the question is as follows:

*“My connections and groups that I belong to on LinkedIn have all added up to help my career goal.”*

*“It has helped me to link with and discover other professionals like me.”*

*“I have over 500 connections, this has really helped me in my field of IT knowledge.”*

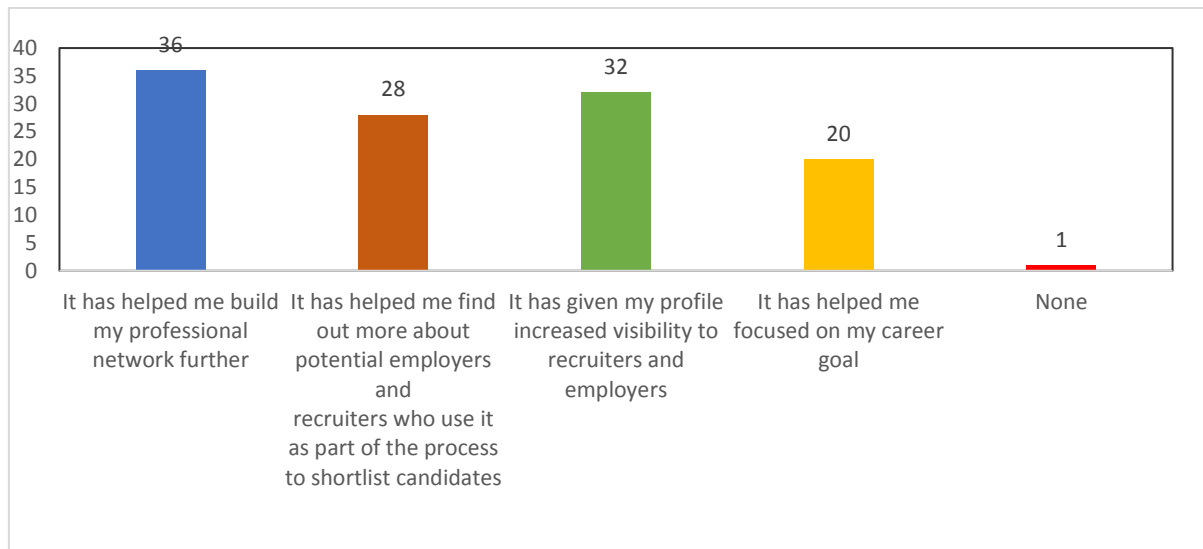


Figure 4.11: *Participants' views about LinkedIn's impact on their job search*

***RERQ10 - What percentage of candidates that you contacted or that contacted you via LinkedIn have you been able to place in the last year?***

14 responses were received for this question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.12 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 1 of the 14 responses indicated that they placed less than 20% of candidates discovered via LinkedIn, 3 of the 14 responses indicated the placement of 30%, 2 of the 14 responses indicated the placement of 40%, 3 of the 14 responses indicated the placement of 50%. Meanwhile, 5 of the 14 responses indicated that they placed more than 50% of those who engaged with their updates. The responses showed positive since greater number of respondents indicated that a considerable number of candidates got employed through interpersonal connectivity.

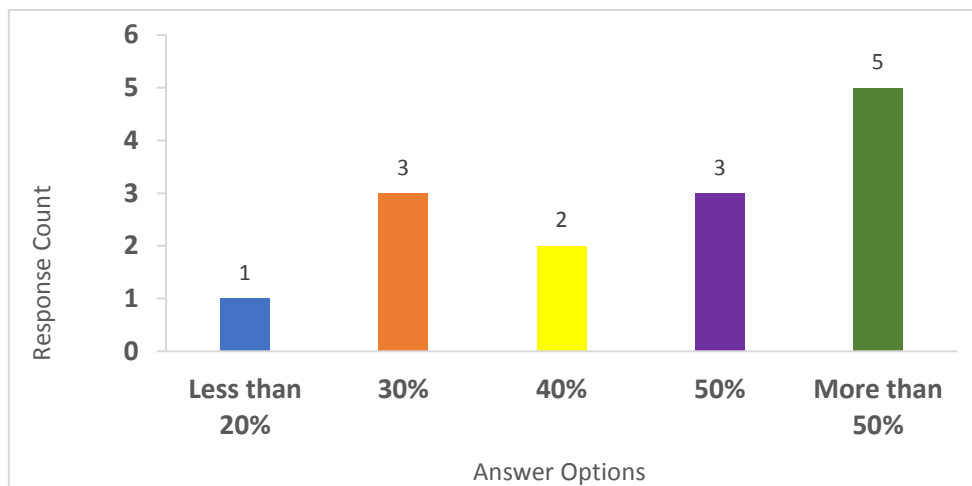


Figure 4.12: *Percentage of candidates placed in the last year by participants*

#### **4.3.7. Theme 5 - Perceptions that regular engagement will promote employability**

##### ***JRQ7 - How often do you "like" posts on LinkedIn to give a positive feedback on what you care about?***

51 responses were received and 16 participants skipped the question. 8 of the 51 responses indicated they never like posts on LinkedIn, 33 of the 51 responses like posts on LinkedIn weekly while 10 of the 51 responses like posts daily on LinkedIn. The responses indicated that most participants "like" posts weekly.

##### ***JRQ8 - How often do you comment on LinkedIn to showcase your knowledge to help other connections?***

49 responses were received and 18 participants skipped the question. 21 of the 49 responses indicated that participants never comment on LinkedIn, 21 of the 49 responses suggest that participants comment on LinkedIn weekly so as to showcase their knowledge to help other connections. Meanwhile, 7 of the 49 responses showed that participants comment daily. The responses showed that most participants comment weekly rather than daily.

##### ***JRQ9 - How often do you share content on LinkedIn to showcase your knowledge as well as provide your expertise to help other connections?***

50 responses were received and 17 participants skipped the question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.13 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 30 of the 50 participants never shared



content on LinkedIn, 18 of the 50 participants share content weekly, while 2 of the 50 participants share content daily. The responses showed that the majority of participants do not share content, and that those who share content do so weekly. Feedback received from the question is shown below:

*“I enjoy sharing job openings from different companies, upcoming trainings, and conferences with my connections.”*

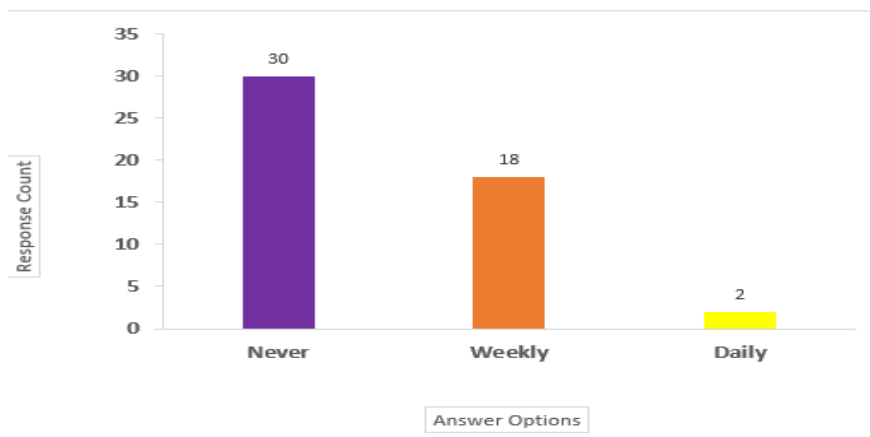


Figure 4.13: *How often participants share content on LinkedIn*

#### **4.3.8. Theme 6 - Perceptions that self-branding on LinkedIn would affect hiring decision.**

##### ***JRQ12 - Do you think LinkedIn profiles are much stronger than regular CVs?***

62 responses were received and 5 participants skipped the question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.14 below and indicate an overall positive response from the reviewers. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. None of the respondents believed that it is unlikely that LinkedIn profiles are much stronger than regular CVs. 14 of the 62 responses indicated that LinkedIn profiles are not stronger than regular CVs, 41 of the 62 responses indicated probably yes, and 7 of the 62 responses indicated very much so. The responses showed that participants are in general not sure whether LinkedIn profiles are stronger than traditional CVs.

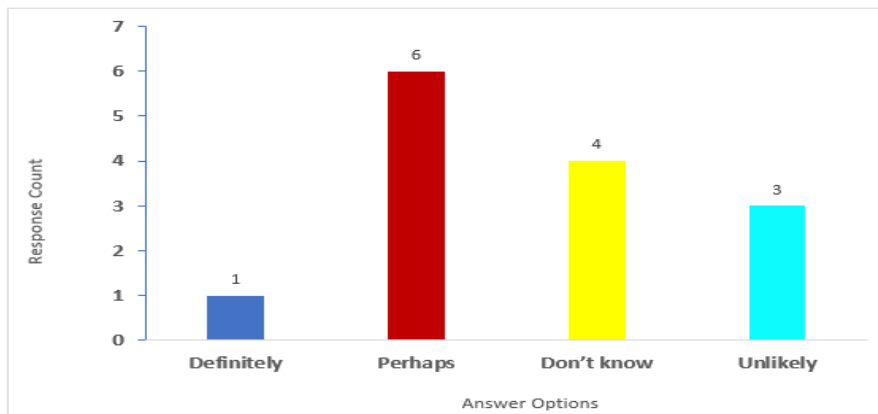


Figure 4.14 *Participants' views about LinkedIn profiles versus regular CVs*

**JRQ16 - Which do you think is more important on your LinkedIn profile?**

62 responses were received and 5 participants skipped the question. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.15 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 48 of the 62 responses indicated that background (experience and education) is the most important, 52 of the 62 responses indicated that skills are most important while 25 of the 62 responses indicated that their accomplishments are the most important. One of the participants stated that all the three are equally important. Another interviewee pointed out that accomplishment is important, but that not having won an award in your field does not illustrate a lack of competence rather that your skills set should speak for you. The overall responses showed that background, skills, and accomplishments are all important factors on LinkedIn profiles.

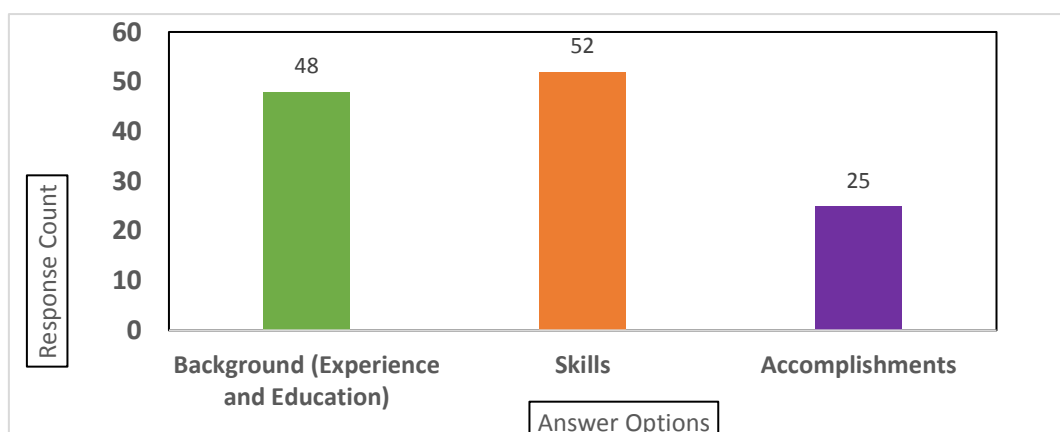


Figure 4.15: *Participants' views about important factors on LinkedIn profiles*

**RERQ16 - Based on your experience, what do you think would affect your hiring decision on candidates using LinkedIn for job search?**

The goal of this question was to investigate what would affect recruiters' and employers' hiring decisions on candidates using LinkedIn for employment. 13 responses were received and 1 participant skipped the question. The participants' responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.16 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. Participants were given the opportunity to pick more than one option. The vertical axis displays percentage and the horizontal axis displays the number of selections. 10 of the 13 responses indicated background, consisting of a profile photo, education and experience. 12 of the 13 responses indicated skills would affect their hiring decision while 8 of the 13 responses indicated accomplishments would affect their hiring decision on candidates using LinkedIn for employment. A respondent stated that the presentation of the trio of factors matters, while another respondent stated that all of the above are very important. The overall responses indicate that background, skills and accomplishments are all important.



Figure 4.16: *Factors that would affect the recruiter or employer's hiring decision*

**4.3.9. Theme 7 - Perceptions that participants experience setbacks when using LinkedIn**

**JRQ15 - What concerns do you have, if any, using LinkedIn?**

45 responses were received for this question, while 22 participants skipped it. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.17 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 11 of the 45 responses indicated that their concern centred around profile plagiarism, 20 of the 45 responses indicated privacy

concerns, while 14 of the 45 responses indicated concern about data security. The overall responses showed that most participants are most concerned about their privacy online.

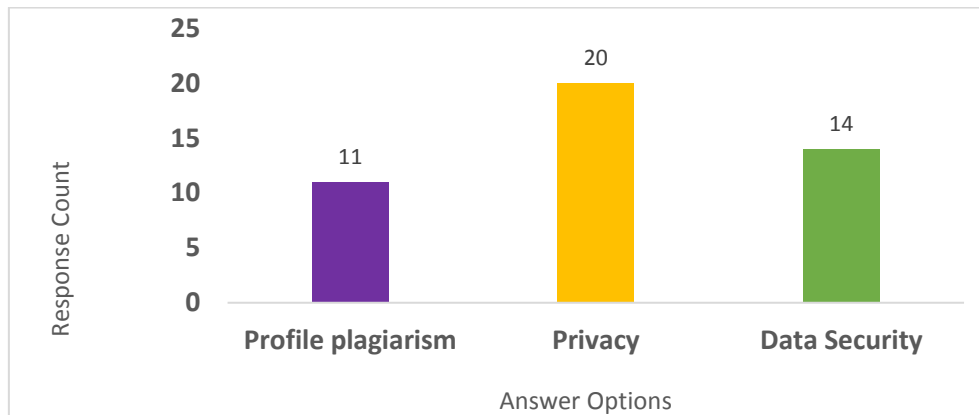


Figure 4.17: *Jobseekers concerns when using LinkedIn for employment*

**RERQ13 - Do you think there are any shortcomings in using LinkedIn as a recruitment tool?**

14 responses were received. The participants' responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.18 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. The overall response was negative from the reviewers. 12 of the 14 respondents indicated that they have not experienced any shortcomings since they began using it as a recruitment tool. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 2 of the 14 respondents indicated that they experience shortcomings when using LinkedIn for recruitment. One of the respondents summarised his setback and how to overcome it in the following way:

*“Navigating all of LinkedIn’s functionality is time consuming for me, but the way out is to familiarise myself with it.”*



Figure 4.18: *Participants views about shortcomings when using LinkedIn?*

#### 4.3.10. Theme 8 - Perceptions that traditional methods of recruitment are still in use

##### ***RERQ2 - Do you use traditional recruiting methods such as third-party websites or online job boards, telephone, referrals etc.?***

14 responses were received. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.19 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 13 of the 14 respondents indicated that they still use traditional methods of recruitment in their organisation. 1 of 14 respondents indicated that they don't use it anymore. The overall response from the reviewers was positive since greater number of respondents still use traditional recruitment methods.

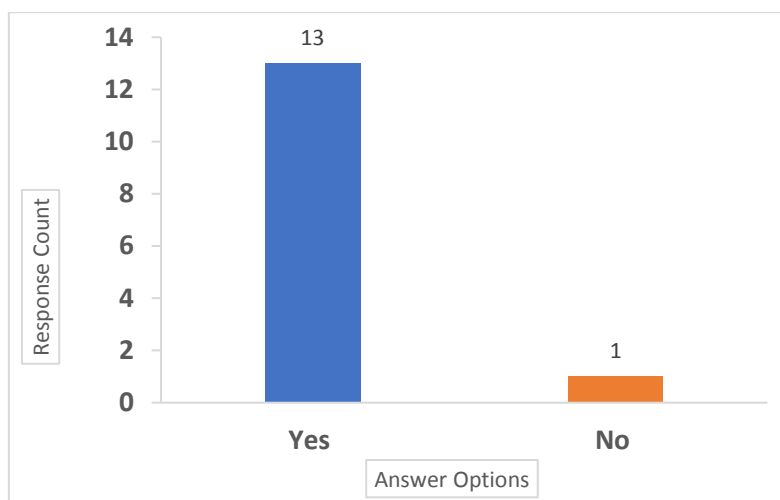


Figure 4.19: *Participants' views about using traditional recruiting methods*

##### ***RERQ3 - How often do you use traditional recruiting methods such as third-party websites or online job boards, telephone, referrals etc.?***

14 responses were received. The participants' responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.20 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 2 of the 14 respondents indicated that they use it very often, 6 of the 14 respondents indicated that they use it quite often, 5 of the 14 respondents indicated that they use it seldomly, while 1 of the 14 respondents indicated that they have never used it.

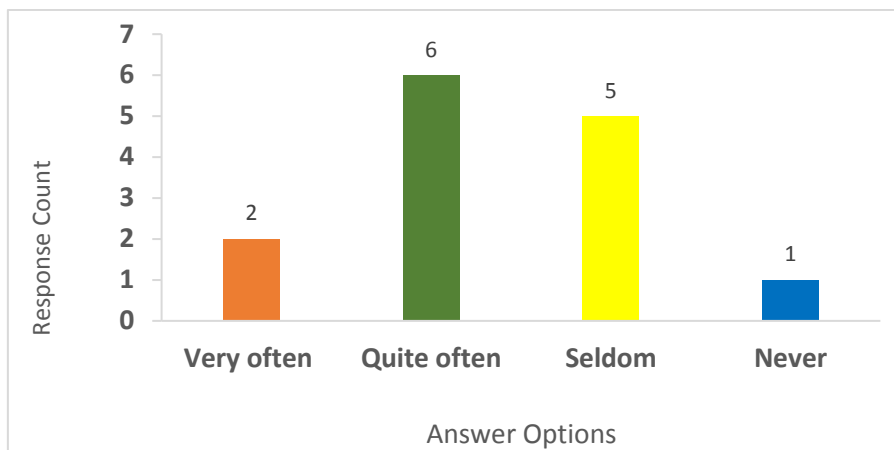


Figure 4.20: *How often participants use traditional recruiting methods*

#### 4.3.11. Theme 9 - Perceptions that only LinkedIn is utilised to determine hiring process

##### ***RERQ6 - Do you have a policy in place regarding screening potential employees through LinkedIn?***

14 responses were received. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.21 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 12 of the 14 respondents indicated that they have a policy in place regarding screening potential employees through LinkedIn. 2 of the 14 respondents indicated that they have no screening policy in regards to LinkedIn. Responses were negative from the reviewers, since a considerable number of respondents indicated that they have a policy in place regarding screening of potential employees through LinkedIn.

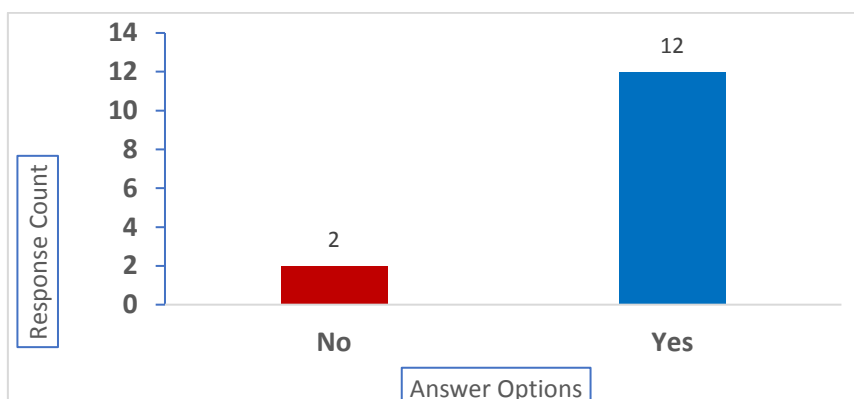


Figure 4.21: *Number of participant that utilise policy to determine hiring process*

**RERQ7 - How do you measure applicants' important characteristics via LinkedIn to standardise your screening process?**

14 responses were gathered for this question. 5 of the 14 respondents indicated that they use multiple raters to measure applicants' important characteristics via LinkedIn so as to standardise their screening process. The question allowed participants to give feedback, one respondent indicated using virtual screening protocol in their organisation, and another respondent stated that they use selection assessment methods to screen out unlikely candidates. 9 of the 14 respondents indicated that they use scoring protocols or rubrics to standardise their screening process. The responses showed that participants use different methods in order to standardise their screening processes.

**4.3.12. Theme 10 - Perceptions that LinkedIn may replace job sites in future**

**RERQ19 - Do you think that in the future, LinkedIn will replace job sites?**

14 responses were received. The participants responses are shown on the bar chart in Figure 4.22 below. The vertical axis displays response count and the horizontal axis displays answer options. 1 of the 14 respondents indicated definite LinkedIn will replace job sites in future, 6 of the 14 respondents indicated that LinkedIn may replace job sites in future, 4 of the 14 respondents indicated that they do not know if LinkedIn will replace job sites in future, and 3 of the 14 respondents indicated that it is unlikely that LinkedIn will replace job sites in future. The overall responses from the reviewers showed that participants were not sure whether LinkedIn will replace job sites in future.

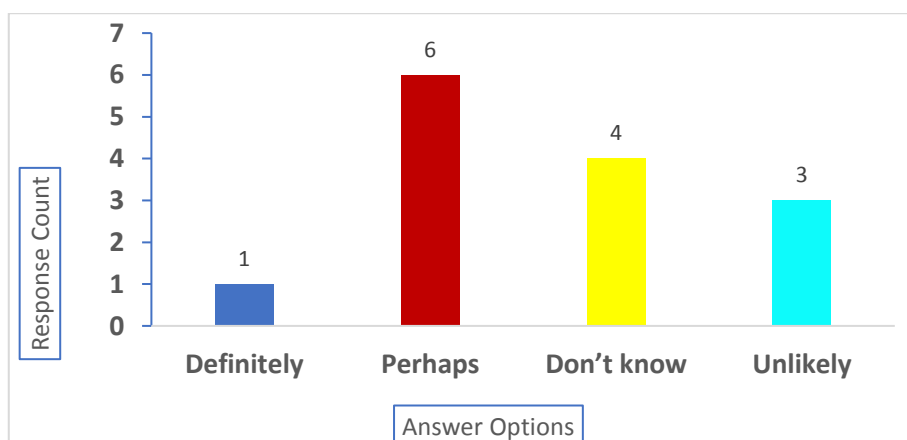


Figure 4.22: Participants' views that LinkedIn might replace job sites in future

The final questions of the interviews and surveys asked respondents for feedback and suggestions regarding IT jobseekers, LinkedIn, recruiters and employers. The majority of the feedback was positive in terms of using LinkedIn for employment. Respondents provided valuable feedback on the necessity of having a LinkedIn presence. List of responses are shown in Appendix F.

#### 4.4. Data analysis against the selected IS Theory

Table 4.5 - Data Analysis Against the Selected IS Theory

Theory	Result Indication
<p><b>Social enhancement</b> is the value which can be derived from gaining acceptance and approval from other SNS users, and which enhance one's social status within his/ her community (Dholakia et al., 2004). The research findings indicated that LinkedIn has a high positive impact on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector for rapid employment because organisations often use LinkedIn when recruiting candidates. 5 out of 14 participants indicated that more than 50% of candidates that had contacted them via LinkedIn were placed within the last year (<i>Theme 4 – PERQ10</i>). In addition, 66.9% of the participants achieved their present job through LinkedIn (<i>Theme 3 – JRQ11</i>).</p>	<p><b>Social enhancement will positively enhance rapidity in employability.</b></p>
<p><b>Interpersonal connectivity</b> refers to the value derived from establishing and maintaining contact with other people through a SNS (Dholakia et al., 2004). SNS may increase both the number and strength of ties among people, yield highly useful digital environments that are easy to capture and spread knowledge, and provide high-quality answers to questions (DiMicco et al., 2008; McAfee, 2009; Skeels &amp; Grudin, 2009). The research findings indicated that interpersonal connectivity on LinkedIn is beneficial to jobseekers because it can enhance their ability to gain employment because organisations often use LinkedIn when recruiting candidates. 58.1% participants indicated that it has helped them build their professional network further, (<i>Theme 4 - JRQ14</i>). And, 51.6% indicated that LinkedIn has provided their profile with increased visibility to recruiters and employers. (<i>Theme 4 – JRQ14</i>).</p>	<p><b>Interpersonal connectivity will positively affect jobseekers' employability.</b></p>
<p><b>A high level of engagement</b> in SNS is associated with an increased connectedness and a faster propagation of information, (Dholakia &amp; Talukdar, 2004a). A member's professional identity may also receive</p>	<p><b>A high level of engagement with professionals will promote visibility and</b></p>



<p>a boost from contributing to the Question and Answer space provided by the SNS (Raban, 2009).</p> <p>The study showed that it is important for jobseekers in the Irish IT sector to regularly engage with connections on LinkedIn to increase connections and their visibility. 39.3% indicated that they get less than 10 views on a monthly basis because they are not active (<i>Theme 5 – JRQ 6</i>). One respondent commented that he gets between 50-60 views on a monthly basis because of his regular engagement. 42.9% of participants indicated that they comment weekly to showcase their knowledge and to help other connections (<i>Theme 9 – JRQ8</i>). However, they also mentioned that their visibility would have been higher than that if they had increased their engagement with other connections.</p>	<p><b>thereby enhance employability.</b></p>
<p><b>An individual's personal brand</b> is a reflection of his or her skills, abilities, and lifestyle (Gehl, 2011; Hearn, 2008; Peters, 1997). Roth et al. (2013) purported that LinkedIn users who do not have certain information could lose favour, as compared to those who do present such information. Van Dijck (2013) found that a LinkedIn profile can be used to shape an idealised portrait of one's professional identity by displaying skills to peers and anonymous evaluators.</p> <p>The research findings indicated that background information (experience and education), skills and accomplishments are very important to IT jobseekers' profiles. 77.4% indicated background, 83.9% indicated skills and 40.3% indicated accomplishments (<i>Theme 6 – JRQ16</i>). In addition, 10 of 14 participants indicated background, 12 out of 14 participants indicated skills and 8 of 12 participants indicated accomplishments as one of the factors that would affect their hiring decision on candidates using LinkedIn for job searching. (<i>Theme 6 – PERQ16</i>).</p> <p>In addition, feedback and suggestions from participants indicated that there is a need for jobseekers in the Irish IT sector to have a professional LinkedIn profile to enhance their employability.</p>	<p><b>Personal brand contributes to immediate impression formation. And will affect recruiters and employers' decision on candidates' employment.</b></p>

#### **4.5. Chapter Summary**

This section presents a detailed analysis of the surveys and interviews data gathered for the research from the sample size comprising Irish IT jobseekers, employers and recruiters.

The survey questions allowed the researcher to:

- Reveal the experience of Irish IT jobseekers' using LinkedIn for employment and their level of participation on LinkedIn.
- Describe job search methods undertaken by IT jobseekers alongside the use of LinkedIn for employment.
- Reveal what recruiters and employers expect to see on a jobseeker's LinkedIn profile.
- Reveal what contributes to the creation of first impressions of LinkedIn profiles.

From the data presented above, numerous aspects important to realising the objectives of this study are made apparent. The major issues raised can be analysed in six broad categories:

- LinkedIn has a great impact on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector for rapid employment
- Interconnectivity on LinkedIn is beneficial to jobseekers to enhance the ability to get employed.
- Regular engagement with professionals can also enhance the employability of jobseekers in the Irish IT sector.
- How IT jobseekers brand themselves on LinkedIn affects recruiters and employers' decisions on their employment.
- While recruiters and employers have no concerns about using LinkedIn for recruitment, IT jobseekers are concerned about data security, privacy and profile plagiarism.
- Regular CVs are yet very important because recruiters still use traditional recruitment methods to source talents.
- LinkedIn as an effective social network recruiting tool should not be a complete replacement for traditional recruiting methods, but instead should be utilised as a supplement to optimise the recruitment process and to make better more holistic decisions.

## **CHAPTER 5: Conclusions and future work**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This research study out to examine the impact of LinkedIn as a social network on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector. The study further examines what would affect recruiters and employers' decisions on candidates using LinkedIn for employment.

### **5.2. Findings Summary**

Data collected from the research showed that the emergence of LinkedIn has revolutionised the present-day job search. This research also shows that many organisations are finding their own success leveraging LinkedIn to source and then vet candidates for job searches. Hence, there is a need for IT jobseekers to have a professional LinkedIn presence to enhance their employability.

LinkedIn offers one of the most strategic methods of job searching to jobseekers in the Irish IT sector. Therefore, IT jobseekers should work to connect with appropriate contacts to optimise networking.

The researcher's findings suggest that interpersonal connectivity on LinkedIn can enhance IT jobseekers' employability. These findings advise that jobseekers can optimise their success by having a carefully developed, natural and professional online presence to gain visibility and results. Jobseekers should focus on improving their background, skills, accomplishments and endorsements on LinkedIn. Equally important is the group they belong to and their interests. The researcher found that posting comments, likes, and sharing ideas to showcase knowledge helps to sell candidates to potential recruiters or employers.

Findings from this study support prior similar research on how information management systems' context (e.g. Social enhancement (Dholakia et al., 2004, Horvath & Morf, 2010) will positively enhance rapidity in employability. Interpersonal connectivity (Dholakia et al., 2004, DiMicco et al., 2008; McAfee, 2009; Skeels & Grudin, 2009) will positively affect jobseekers' employability. Regular engagement with connections and professionals (Raban, 2009, Dholakia & Talukdar, 2004a) will promote visibility and thereby enhance employability. Self-branding (Gehl, 2011; Hearn, 2008; Peters, 1997) will contribute to the formation of immediate impressions, and will affect recruiters and employers' decisions on candidates' employment.

As an enabling factor, the result suggests mobile phones as the best means for regular visits to LinkedIn to quickly access information. In order to probe deeper into the perceptions of whether LinkedIn profile is stronger than regular CVs, this study indicated that LinkedIn profiles have a mediating effect on jobseekers' ability to be gainfully employed.

The researcher's findings further suggest that jobseekers in the Irish IT sector should be less concerned about profile plagiarism, privacy and data security, but should provide accurate and reliable information on their profiles.

Equally important, IT jobseekers can combine the use of traditional job search methods with their job search on LinkedIn so as to explore the opportunities therein. Responses from recruiters and employers indicated that organisations still use traditional methods to source talents. By combining the best of both, IT jobseekers can ideally position themselves for maximum visibility and results.

### **5.3. Answering the research questions**

This research aimed to answer the following questions:

- What impact does LinkedIn have on a candidate's ability to get employed?
- What would affect recruiters and employers' final decision on candidates using LinkedIn for job search?

In order to gather data on these questions, 65 IT jobseekers, and 18 recruiters and employers participated in the study to gain an understanding of impact of LinkedIn as a social network on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector.

The research highlighted six aspects to show how the research questions were answered:

1. Social enhancements, interpersonal connectivity and a high level of engagements with connections and professionals will have a positive impact on a candidate's ability to get employed.
2. Having a professional profile (personal brand) on LinkedIn will affect recruiters or employers' final decisions on candidates' employment.
3. The LinkedIn features most helpful to participants (headlines, groups, endorsements, connection suggestions, and the newsfeed showing available jobs).
4. Participants' experiences using LinkedIn in comparison with traditional job search methods.

5. Extent to which organisations use LinkedIn for recruitment.
6. Participants overall decision factors about LinkedIn practice (Appendix F)

#### **5.4. Recommendations for jobseekers in the Irish IT sector**

One of the recommendations in regard to the research impact of LinkedIn as a social network on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector is that all jobseekers should have a professional LinkedIn presence. Research participants were thus asked to evaluate the importance of having a LinkedIn presence. This study has shown that profile management is important because it showcases IT jobseekers' successes, honours, awards, and accomplishments, and leads people to view them as credible impressive professionals.

IT jobseekers should include skill sets as keywords in their profile, strengths, core competencies, specialities and abilities that differentiate them from other jobseekers. They should use other job searching methods because some recruiters and employers still use traditional methods to source talents. They should stay aware of changes on LinkedIn and take security pre-cautions when creating a LinkedIn account. They should focus on skills, accomplishments and background information when creating their profiles.

Personal goals affect self-presentation in online communities, it is important for job seekers to provide information related to specific topics and recruiters' interests that may enhance the likelihood of obtaining hiring recommendations (Schwämmlein & Wodzicki, 2012).

#### **5.5. Generalisability of findings**

As detailed in Chapter 3, the research method chosen was an exploratory study approach using semi-structured interviews and online surveys to gather data. According to Patton (2005), the research sampling focuses on relatively small groups to permit inquiry into and to understand the phenomenon in detail. The population chosen for the study was jobseekers, recruiters, and employers in the Irish IT job sector using LinkedIn for employment. Overall, the results confirmed that LinkedIn has a significant impact on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector beyond that of social interpersonal communication.

#### **5.6. Relevance of research questions**

The research provides a valuable perspective on the impact of LinkedIn as a social network on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector. Furthermore, jobseekers can use these insights to examine the

importance of having a LinkedIn presence, creating a professional LinkedIn profile, regular engagement with other professionals and LinkedIn features that may affect recruiters' or employers' final decisions on candidates using LinkedIn for employment. Mastering the art of digital self-branding will almost certainly become the most significant skill an individual can possess to drive his or her professional success (Greer, 2010). Lastly, recruiters and employers should not use LinkedIn solely for candidates' screening but also in combination with other screening tools. LinkedIn profiles should include a recent, professional photo and accurate academic and personal history highlighting personal accomplishments (Morgan, 2011). Candidates should provide keywords on their LinkedIn Profile to assist search engines and recruiters in finding their profile (Schwabel, 2009b).

### 5.7. Limitations of research and opportunities for further research

A mixed-method approach which also has a quantitative component would increase the validity of the findings by examining the phenomenon using a longer-time frame. Creswell (2009) indicated that when the results of qualitative study are combined with quantitative techniques it helps to interpret and better understand the complex reality of any given situation.

Future research can employ a T'ai-chi T'u diagram (Figure 5.1) to symbolize this relationship, as this depicts a dynamic balance of apparently opposing forces (cf. Capra 1983:119–120), in this case qualitative and quantitative. The diagram reflects the mutual dependence of both types of data. It indicates that meanings cannot be ignored when dealing with numbers, and numbers cannot be ignored when dealing with meanings. Each complements the other, though at lower levels of measurement questions of meaning are uppermost, while at higher levels of measurement, questions of number loom largest.

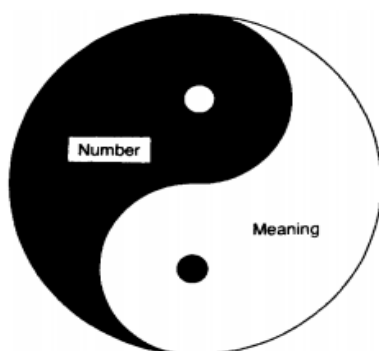


Figure 5.1. - Quantitative and qualitative data in dynamic balance (T'ai-chi T'u diagram)

## **5.8. Future directions for research**

The dissertation seeks to examine the impact of LinkedIn as a social network on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector using qualitative analysis. However, the topic can be examined additionally by using a mixed method approach. There is no existing study on the impact of LinkedIn as a social network on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector. More information should also be gathered regarding which types of positive content have the greatest impact on employers (for example, professional photos, endorsements via LinkedIn, command of grammar and language).

## **5.9. Summary**

Further, this study shows that there is the need for IT jobseekers to have professional LinkedIn presence and regularly engage with other professionals to enhance their employability. An online profile is a tool that can predict one's overall job prospects because it influences other people's perceptions. This demonstrates a need for members to strategically manage their online professional identities and use it as a tool for impression management (Zide et al., 2014).

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## 7.0. Appendices

### 7.1. Appendix A – SCSS Research Ethics Committee Application Form

**School of Computer Science & Statistics  
Research Ethics Application**

**Part A**

Project Title: Impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector

Name of Lead Researcher (student in case of project work): Felicia Olubukola Adedapo

Name of Supervisor: Mr. Anthony Niland

TCDE-mail: [adedapof@tcd.ie](mailto:adedapof@tcd.ie) Contact Tel No.: +353-876370649

Course Name and Code (if applicable): Management of Information Systems (M.Sc.)

Estimated start date of survey/research: 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017

I confirm that I will (where relevant):

- Familiarize myself with the Data Protection Act and the College Good Research Practice guidelines [http://www.tcd.ie/info\\_compliance/dp/legislation.php](http://www.tcd.ie/info_compliance/dp/legislation.php);
- Tell participants that any recordings, e.g. audio/video/photographs, will not be identifiable unless prior written permission has been given. I will obtain permission for specific reuse (in papers, talks, etc.)
- Provide participants with an information sheet (or web-page for web-based experiments) that describes the main procedures (a copy of the information sheet must be included with this application)
- Obtain informed consent for participation (a copy of the informed consent form must be included with this application)
- Should the research be observational, ask participants for their consent to be observed
- Tell participants that their participation is voluntary
- Tell participants that they may withdraw at any time and for any reason without penalty
- Give participants the option of omitting questions they do not wish to answer if a questionnaire is used
- Tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identified as theirs
- On request, debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e. give them a brief explanation of the study)
- Verify that participants are 18 years or older and competent to supply consent.
- If the study involves participants viewing video displays then I will verify that they understand that if they or anyone in their family has a history of epilepsy then the participant is proceeding at their own risk
- Declare any potential conflict of interest to participants.
- Inform participants that in the extremely unlikely event that illicit activity is reported to me during the study I will be obliged to report it to appropriate authorities.
- Act in accordance with the information provided (i.e. if I tell participants I will not do something, then I will not do it).

Signed: .....  
Lead Researcher/student in case of project work

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

**Part B**

<i>Please answer the following questions.</i>		<i>Yes/No</i>
Has this research application or any application of a similar nature connected to this research project been refused ethical approval by another review committee of the College (or at the institutions of any collaborators)?		No
Will your project involve photographing participants or electronic audio or video recordings?		Yes
Will your project deliberately involve misleading participants in any way?		No
Does this study contain commercially sensitive material?		No
Is there a risk of participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort? If yes, give details on a separate sheet and state what you will tell them to do if they should experience any such problems (e.g. who they can contact for help).		No
Does your study involve any of the following?	Children (under 18 years of age)	No
	People with intellectual or communication difficulties	No
	Patients	No

**School of Computer Science and Statistics  
Research Ethical Application Form**

Details of the Research Project Proposal must be submitted as a separate document to include the following information:

1. Title of project
2. Purpose of project including academic rationale
3. Brief description of methods and measurements to be used
4. Participants - recruitment methods, number, age, gender, exclusion/inclusion criteria, including statistical justification for numbers of participants
5. Debriefing arrangements
6. A clear concise statement of the ethical considerations raised by the project and how you intend to deal with them
7. Cite any relevant legislation relevant to the project with the method of compliance e.g. Data Protection Act etc.

**Part C**

I confirm that the materials I have submitted provided a complete and accurate account of the research I propose to conduct in this context, including my assessment of the ethical ramifications.

Signed: ..... *Gunn* ..... Date: ..... *21/03/17* .....  
Lead Researcher/student in case of project work

*There is an obligation on the lead researcher to bring to the attention of the SCSS Research Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered above.*

**Part D**

If external or other TCD Ethics Committee approval has been received, please complete below.

External/TCD ethical approval has been received and no further ethical approval is required from the School's Research Ethical Committee. I have attached a copy of the external ethical approval for the School's Research Unit.

Signed: .....  
Lead Researcher/student in case of project work

Date: .....

**Part E**

If the research is proposed by an undergraduate or postgraduate student, please have the below section completed.

I confirm, as an academic supervisor of this proposed research that the documents at hand are complete (i.e. each item on the submission checklist is accounted for) and are in a form that is suitable for review by the SCSS Research Ethics Committee.

Signed: ..... *Anthony Michael* ..... Date: ..... *24.3.2017.* .....  
Supervisor

Completed application forms together with supporting documentation should be submitted electronically to the online ethics system - [https://webhost.tchpc.tcd.ie/research\\_ethics/](https://webhost.tchpc.tcd.ie/research_ethics/) When your application has been reviewed and approved by the Ethics committee, hardcopies with original signatures should be submitted to the School of Computer Science & Statistics, Room 104, Lloyd Building, Trinity College, Dublin 2.



## 7.2. Appendix B – Informed Consent Forms

### TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

#### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING IT JOBSEEKERS

**Project Title:** Impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector

**Lead Researcher:** Felicia Olubukola Adedapo

**Supervisor:** Mr. Anthony Niland - School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College, Dublin

**Expected Duration:**

The expected duration of this research is from May to August 2017. This study is conducted in partial fulfilment of Felicia Olubukola Adedapo's MSc, to be awarded by the School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

**Background of Research:**

The interview is part of a research project designed to investigate how the emergence of LinkedIn as a social network has revolutionised traditional job search methods. The research also aims to provide an overview of Irish IT sector jobseekers' perceptions of LinkedIn usage on their ability to get employed and what shortcomings they find using it. The research will seek to determine what would affect recruiter's final decision on candidates using LinkedIn for employment opportunities.

**Procedures of this study:**

Each and every question in the interview is entirely optional. The interview is anticipated to take approximately 40 minutes. The information collected during the process will be analysed subsequently. To aid this analysis and the associated transcription, the interview audio will be recorded and stored on an encrypted laptop. If this is likely to cause issues for you, the interview will be manually transcribed, though this is likely to extend the duration of the interview process. No risks to you have been identified as a result of participating in the interview process.

**Publication:**

Results of the interviews and questionnaires supporting the study will be aggregated anonymously and research reported on an aggregate basis. The results will form part of a report for dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Sc. in Management of Information Systems (MIS) being undertaken at Trinity College Dublin and can be accessed through normal publication procedures. A completed copy of the dissertation can be made available to you upon request. Only anonymous data will be used, no individual will be identifiable in any report (or journal article).

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**Declaration:**

- I am 18 years or older and am competent to provide consent.
- I have read, or had read to me, a document providing information about this research and this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction and understand the description of the research that is being provided to me.
- I agree that my data be used in the findings of the research as part of the dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Sc. in Management of Information Systems (MIS) being undertaken at Trinity College Dublin in a way that does not reveal my identity.
- I agree that my data is used for scientific purposes and I have no objection that my data is published in scientific publications in a way that does not reveal my identity.
- I understand that if I make illicit activities known, these will be reported to appropriate authorities.
- I understand that I may stop electronic recordings at any time without penalty.
- I understand that, subject to the constraints above, no recordings will be replayed in any public forum or made available to any audience other than the current researchers/research team.
- I freely and voluntarily agree to be part of this research study, though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights.
- I understand that I may refuse to answer any question and that I may withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I understand that my participation is fully anonymous and that no personal details about me will be recorded.
- I have received a copy of this agreement.

**Consent Statement:**

I have read the description of the procedure. I am 18 years or older and am competent to supply consent. I wish to proceed and I consent to participate in the study that has been described above.

- Yes, I would like to proceed with the interview
- No, I would not like to proceed [EXIT Interview]

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Participant's Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Lead Researcher's Responsibility:**

I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study, the procedures to be undertaken and any risks that may be involved. I have offered to answer any questions and fully answered such questions. I believe that the participant understands my explanation and has freely given informed consent.

**Researcher's Contact Details:**

Felicia Olubukola Adedapo  
Phone: +353 (0) 8763706490  
Email: [adedapof@tcd.ie](mailto:adedapof@tcd.ie)

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## TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPATING RECRUITERS AND EMPLOYERS

**Project Title:** Impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector

**Lead Researcher:** Felicia Olubukola Adedapo - School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College, Dublin

**Supervisor:** Mr. Anthony Niland - School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College, Dublin

#### **Expected Duration:**

The expected duration of this research is from May to August 2017. This study is conducted in partial fulfilment of Felicia Olubukola Adedapo's MSc, to be awarded by the School of Computer Science and Statistics, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

#### **Background to the Research:**

The interview is part of a research project designed to investigate how the emergence of LinkedIn as a social network has revolutionised traditional job search methods. The research also aims to provide an overview of Irish IT sector jobseekers' perceptions of LinkedIn usage on their ability to get employed and what shortcomings they find using it. The research will seek to determine what would affect recruiter's final decision on candidates using LinkedIn for employment opportunities.

#### **Permission to conduct this Research:**

Interviews will be electronically recorded on an encrypted laptop and destroyed on the 31st of October 2017. Participants will be informed of this prior to the commencement of the interview and will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the interview process if they would prefer not to be recorded. Participants will also have an opportunity to review all recordings after the completion of the interview process and make any changes and/or corrections they deem necessary. All interview recordings will be encrypted and only the lead researcher and the research supervisor will have access to these recordings. Any recording made will not be replayed in any public forum or presentation of the research.

#### **Publication:**

Results of the interviews and questionnaires supporting the study will be aggregated anonymously and research reported on an aggregate basis. The results will form part of a report for dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Sc. in Management of Information Systems (MIS) being undertaken at Trinity College Dublin and can be accessed through normal publication procedures. A completed copy of the dissertation can be made available to you upon request. Only anonymous data will be used, no individual will be identifiable in any report (or journal article).

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**Declaration:**

- I am 18 years or older and am competent to provide consent.
- I have read, or had read to me, a document providing information about this research and this consent form. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction and understand the description of the research that is being provided to me.
- I agree that my data be used in the findings of the research as part of the dissertation in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.Sc. in Management of Information Systems (MIS) being undertaken at Trinity College Dublin in a way that does not reveal my identity.
- I agree that my data is used for scientific purposes and I have no objection that my data is published in scientific publications in a way that does not reveal my identity.
- I understand that if illicit activities are made known, these will be reported to appropriate authorities.
- I understand that the participant may stop electronic recordings at any time without penalty.
- I understand that, subject to the constraints above, no recordings will be replayed in any public forum or made available to any audience other than the current researchers/research team.
- I freely and voluntarily allow data provided in this interview to be part of this research study, though without prejudice to my legal and ethical rights.
- I understand that the participant may refuse to answer any question and may withdraw at any time without penalty.
- I understand that the organisation's participation is fully anonymous.
- I have received a copy of this agreement.

**Participant's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Lead Researcher's Responsibility:**

I have explained the nature and purpose of this research study, the procedures to be undertaken and any risks that may be involved. I have offered to answer any questions and fully answered such questions. I believe that the participant understands my explanation and has freely given informed consent.

**Lead Researcher's Contact Details:**

Name: Felicia Olubukola Adedapo

Email: [adedapof@tcd.ie](mailto:adedapof@tcd.ie)

### 7.3. Appendix C - Letter of permission to employers

Felicia Olubukola Adedapo  
Dublin

13<sup>th</sup> May 2017

The Manager  
Company Name  
Dublin

Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Research Study: Impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector

I am an MSc student of the Management of Information Systems course at Trinity College, Dublin. I am working under the supervision of Mr. Anthony Niland. The primary aim of my research is to investigate how the emergence of LinkedIn as a social network has revolutionised traditional job search methods. The research also aims to provide an overview of Irish IT sector jobseekers' perceptions of LinkedIn usage on their ability to get employed and what shortcomings they find using it. The research will seek to determine what would affect recruiter and employer's final decision on candidates using LinkedIn for employment opportunities.

I am hoping to conduct this study within your organisation. I am writing to seek your permission to gain access to participants from the IT department in your organisation and also permission to carry out the interviews in a quiet room within the organisation. The semi-structured interview should last approximately 40 minutes. All ethical issues will be considered, confidentiality and anonymity will apply to participation in the interview process and to all subsequent publication and presentation material.

A letter of invitation will be issued to all potential participants along with a consent form. If your IT staff members wish to participate, they must sign the written consent and post it in the pre-stamped envelope included. All participants maintain the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. I would be grateful for your permission to carry out this study within your organisation and access to participants from the IT department. Should you have any queries please feel free to contact me on my mobile number +353876370649 or email [adedapof@tcd.ie](mailto:adedapof@tcd.ie) at any stage.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Felicia Olubukola Adedapo

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## **7.4. Appendix D - Invitation to take part in the online survey (jobseekers, recruiters and employers)**

You are invited to participate in this research project "Impact of LinkedIn on jobseekers in the Irish IT sector".

Your participation is voluntary. Before you decide to take part in this survey, please read the information sheet below to find out the reasons behind the research, and your role in the process.

I am an MSc student of the Management of Information Systems course at Trinity College, Dublin. I am working under the supervision of Mr. Anthony Niland. The primary aim of my research is to investigate how the emergence of LinkedIn as a social network has revolutionised traditional job search methods. The research also aims to provide an overview of Irish IT sector jobseekers' perceptions of LinkedIn usage on their ability to get employed and what shortcomings they find using it. The research will seek to determine what would affect recruiter and employer's final decision on candidates using LinkedIn for employment opportunities.

I have no conflict of interest with regard to the research topic and participants, either individually or any other level (employment or university).

All survey data collected will be strong password protected and will be permanently deleted on conclusion of the study by October 2017.

The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to fully complete.

- Your participation is voluntary.
- Each participant may take the survey once.
- All data will be treated with full confidentiality and all contributors will remain anonymous if published.
- You must be 18 years old or older and competent to supply consent.
- You can opt-out at any time by simply clicking the exit link on the right hand corner at any time without penalty.

Participation is confidential, and any information which I may obtain from you during the survey responses will be stored or published on a strictly anonymous basis. Third party anonymity in analysis, publication and presentation of resulting data and findings will also be in place. If you have any questions about this survey or the research study in general, please do not hesitate to contact me on [adedapof@tcd.ie](mailto:adedapof@tcd.ie).

## 7.5. Appendix E: Research Questions

### Jobseekers' semi-structured questions

#### 1. How long have you been using LinkedIn?

- Less than 3 months
- 6 months
- 1 year
- 2 years
- 3 years
- 4 years
- 5 years
- More than 5 years

#### 2. Which LinkedIn features are the most helpful to you? (You may tick more than one)

- Headlines
- Groups
- Endorsements
- Connection suggestions
- Newsfeed showing available jobs

Other (please specify)

#### 3. How often do you typically visit your LinkedIn account to engage with potential employers?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly

Other (please specify)

#### 4. What devices do you use when you visit your LinkedIn account? (You may tick more than one)

- Computer
- Phone
- Tablet

Other (please specify)

#### 5. How often do you update your LinkedIn profile to promote your personal brand?

- 1 - 2 Months
- 3 - 4 Months
- 5 - 6 Months
- Yearly

#### 6. On average, how many views do you get on monthly basis to tell you who has engaged with your update?

- Less than 10
- 10 - 20
- 20 - 30

Other (please specify)

#### 7. How often do you "like" posts on LinkedIn to give a positive feedback on what you care about?

- Never
- Weekly
- Daily

Other (please specify)

8. How often do you comment on LinkedIn to showcase your knowledge to help other connections?

- Never
- Weekly
- Daily

Other (please specify)

9. How often do you share content on LinkedIn to showcase your knowledge as well as provide your expertise to help other connections?

- Never
- Weekly
- Daily

Other (please specify)

10. How important do you think it is good for an IT candidate to have a LinkedIn presence?

- Not at all important
- Not so important
- Somewhat important
- Very important
- Extremely important

11. Did you get your present job through LinkedIn?

- No
- Yes

12. Do you think LinkedIn profiles are much stronger than regular CVs?

- Unlikely
- Probably No
- Probably Yes
- Very much so

13. To what extent do you think LinkedIn has widened your network?

- Small extent
- Moderate extent
- Large extent
- Very large extent

14. Describe LinkedIn's impact on your ability to get employed (You may tick more than one).

- It has helped me build my professional network further
- It has helped me find out more about potential employers and recruiters who use it as part of the process to shortlist candidates
- It has given my profile increased visibility to recruiters and employers
- It has helped me focused on my career goal
- None

Other (please specify)

15. What concerns do you have, if any, using LinkedIn?

- Profile plagiarism
- Privacy
- Data Security

Other (please specify)



16. Which do you think is more important on your LinkedIn profile? (You may tick more than one).

- Background (Experience and Education)
- Skills
- Accomplishments

Other (please specify)

17. Do you prefer searching for jobs via LinkedIn compared to traditional methods such as recruitment agencies, job websites, job exhibitions/fairs?

- No
- Yes

Give reasons for your answer

18. What other features would you like to see on LinkedIn that might be helpful to jobseekers?

19. Overall, do you think LinkedIn is the best tool for recruitment?

- No
- Yes

Give reasons for your answer

20. What future trends do you envisage for IT jobseekers, LinkedIn and recruitment?

21. Do you have any other comments or insights?

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## Recruiters and employers semi-structured questions

### 1. When did you decide to use LinkedIn for recruitment?

- Less than a year ago
- More than a year ago

### 2. Do you use traditional recruiting methods such as third party websites or online job boards, telephone, referrals etc.?

- Yes
- No

### 3. How often do you use traditional recruiting methods such as third party websites or online job boards, telephone, referrals etc.?

- Very often
- Quite often
- Seldom
- Never

### 4. How often does your organisation use LinkedIn when recruiting job candidates?

- Very often
- Quite often
- Seldom
- Never

### 5. In comparison with traditional methods (such as screening CVs), how would you rate LinkedIn as a screening tool?

- Better than most
- Better than some
- Not as good as most

### 6. Do you have a policy in place regarding screening potential employees through LinkedIn?

- Yes
- No

### 7. How do you measure applicants' important characteristics via LinkedIn to standardise your screening process?

- Using multiple raters
- Scoring protocols or rubrics

Other (please specify)

### 8. What LinkedIn features do you access the most often? (You may tick more than one)

- Talent Pipeline
- Boolean searches
- InMail messages
- Talent reporting and analytics tools
- Team collaboration
- Source on the go

Other (please specify)

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9. To what extent has LinkedIn helped the effectiveness of recruitment within your organisation?

- Small extent
- Moderate extent
- Large extent
- Very large extent

10. What percentage of candidates that you contacted or that contacted you via LinkedIn have you been able to place in the last year?

- Less than 20%
- 30%
- 40%
- 50%
- More than 50%

Other (please specify)

11. How important do you think it is good for an IT candidate to have a LinkedIn presence?

- Not at all important
- Somewhat important
- Very important
- Extremely important

12. To what extent do you think LinkedIn has influenced jobseekers in the technology sector?

- Small extent
- Moderate extent
- Large extent
- Very large extent

13. Do you think there are any shortcomings in using LinkedIn as a recruitment tool?

- No  
 Yes

14. If you answer Yes to question 13, what are the shortcomings?

15. How can the shortcomings be safe guarded against?

16. Based on your experience, what do you think would affect your hiring decision on candidates using LinkedIn for job search?

- Background  
 Skills  
 Accomplishments

Other (please specify)

17. What other features would you like to have on LinkedIn that might be helpful to the recruitment process?

18. Do you have any recommendations for IT jobseekers who use LinkedIn for job search?

19. Do you think that in the future, LinkedIn will replace job sites?

- Definitely  
 Perhaps  
 Don't know  
 Unlikely

20. What future trends do you see for recruitment, LinkedIn and IT jobseekers?

21. Any other comments or insights?

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## 7.6. Appendix F: Participants feedback and suggestions

<b>Future trends envisage for IT jobseekers, LinkedIn and recruitment</b>
<u>IT jobseekers:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Jobseekers should improve their skills to enhance employability</li><li>• IT jobseekers would use LinkedIn the more</li><li>• Jobseekers would dictate what features they want on LinkedIn</li><li>• They should pay very much attention to skills, background and accomplishments</li><li>• Jobseekers would not want to use other methods</li></ul>
<u>LinkedIn:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• LinkedIn would have a free premium for jobseekers.</li><li>• All jobs will soon be advertised on LinkedIn.</li><li>• LinkedIn will be able to guarantee jobseekers employment.</li><li>• Increased analytics on profile to promote suitability for a role</li><li>• Skills gap analysis and suggestions on how to fill the gap</li></ul>
<u>Recruitment:</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Recruiters should contact jobseekers to test their skills</li><li>• Recruiters will soon depend solely on LinkedIn for sourcing talents</li><li>• LinkedIn being a broker between the jobseekers and recruiters may likely have a module that will create avenue for confirmation of information provided by the players</li></ul>

<b>Other features that might be helpful to jobseekers on LinkedIn</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Suggestions on needed skills based on the jobseekers' background information</li><li>• Links to external jobsites apart from company's website</li><li>• Video CV</li></ul>

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<b>Recruiters recommendations</b>
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Jobseekers should
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- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• opt for the premium to gain access to more recruiters and employers</li><li>• use enjoy LinkedIn's opportunity of free online trainings</li><li>• ensure a professional representation on LinkedIn</li><li>• use appropriate keywords</li><li>• focus more on career growth and networking</li><li>• use proper tone in profile creation be detailed</li><li>• optimise their LinkedIn search results</li><li>• have a professional photo and a downloadable CV</li><li>• engage more with professional and other connections to increase their visibility through stronger and weaker ties</li></ul> |
|---|