

The Red Flags in Job Advertisements

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The job market can be a nightmare to navigate for anyone without prior experience. Having recently left an organisation after one and a half years of service, I found myself on the job market once again. As I found myself on the hunt, I learned to spot certain signs in job advertisements that made me think, "I'd rather be unemployed." Here are some of the top ones:

"WE ARE A FAMILY"

If you see this in any job posting, run in the opposite direction. Firstly, any employer that is unprofessional enough to include such a point in either a job advertisement or an interview is a problem by itself. However, in most cases, such a statement usually is an indicator that the employer exploits its employees.

See, when a job tries to imply that the work environment is one where the team feels like a family, it just means that there is a lack of professionalism and probably a lack of fixed work hours. Just like your family expects you to do things for free, these types of employers will also be doing the same.

NO REMUNERATION

I feel like there's a lot of organisations and



start-ups that try and hire people without wanting to pay for them. Whether it's an internship or a part-time gig, avoid unless there is some form of remuneration involved. Promises of payment upon completion of tasks, experience certificates and access to "professional networks" don't count either.

The reason I say this is that if an employer is unwilling to commit to paying you, then they honestly should not be trying to hire. And any employer that doesn't pay you, doesn't respect you either. You'll waste

your time doing menial tasks or will be overworked to the point that you're burned out.

INSECURE INTERVIEWS

Now this section is specifically dedicated to interview questions. The type of questions that an employer or recruiter asks you during an interview are highly indicative of how the organisation operates.

Employers who constantly stress upon whether you'll leave after gaining some quick experience are the ones to look out for. Any employer that can give a candidate

an opportunity that suits them, along with the possibility of growing within the organisation does not need to obsess over these details. Good interview questions are based around the role that you have applied for, the skills you bring to the table and your long-term career goals, and if the company can accommodate the vision you have outlined for yourself.

DISCUSSING SALARY

Sometimes certain interviewers do not want to discuss salaries during the interview. This doesn't make a lot of sense, as people work for the pay, and they have every right to not waste the time of both parties by directly discussing the compensation during the interview process. It saves both the applicant as well as the interviewer valuable time. However, such basic concepts are sometimes absent in the Bangladeshi job market, as employers stick to old-school mentalities that are no longer applicable.

Finding your first job is a big deal. And therefore, it's of the utmost importance to find the right one. Even top organisations sometimes have problematic ideals embedded into them, and that is why it's even more important that you start looking for the signs as you apply, rather than being bombarded with them after you're hired.

The Covid-19 Survivor's Guilt

JANNATUL FERDOUS

The world is in its second year of the pandemic that sent everyone running behind closed doors and surgical masks. The second wave of the wily and constantly evolving virus continues to wreak havoc, taking lives and infecting the masses.

In the short time it has been studied and scrutinised, it seems that the one most predictable thing about it is its blatant unpredictability. In certain cases, post-Covid syndromes turn out to be deadlier than the initial infection. Yet, barely even a quarter of the precautions we should be taking is being followed in proper seriousness. Along with the endless side effects of having infected by the virus, is the emotional toll it takes on individuals. Anxiety, fear, grief and guilt haunts many survivors for much longer than the period the virus stays in their systems.

Most people who have lost family members, friends or relatives to the virus but survived it themselves, often fall into the obsessive clutches of survivor's guilt. This less-talked about, yet equally harrowing facet of post-covid syndrome transpires when the person experiencing it believes they are either the cause of their loved ones' demise, or that they are unworthy of living while their loved ones have passed. Sometimes, it's both.

Some feel undeserving of the medical care they have received or their sheer luck when it came to surviving the virus, while many unfortunate people did not. Some people also feel guilty because of the resources and extra care their privileges have often afforded them. This gives way to incessant scenarios where individuals find themselves to blame for either unwittingly

transmitting the virus due to carelessness, and feelings of self-reprohension for surviving an illness that innumerable people could not.

Especially, given that the acute rise in the number of infected people in the past several months was followed by a blatant disregard for any and all precautions as the majority of the youth of our country showed monumental indifference to the severity of the virus earlier this year, and chose to mingle freely, embarked on trips out of town, and neglected most of the safeguards that had painstakingly taken place just the year before. This lapse in judgement has likely contributed to the deaths of countless elderly family members, which can undoubtedly lead to profound survivor's guilt.

This guilt may lead to manifesting physical symptoms such as sleep disorders, heightened anxiety which affects appetite, depressive thoughts that may induce a severe lack of motivation, therefore causing inactivity and stagnation. All this in turn makes the body more susceptible to illnesses, which could cause further serious health complications for those who are still in recovery. And recovery from Covid-19 lasts months, if not years. For those who have personally witnessed the quick and unsuspecting spiral of death via Covid may even be scarred with PTSD in some extreme cases due to the rapid way in which the virus temperamentally takes lives. The mental toll, the emotional lacerations, and exhaustion it triggers may prove to be much more detrimental than the physical symptoms it leaves behind. The deteriorating mental health implications of Covid-19 is already proving to be the next battle we face.



PHOTO: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

ONLINE ACTIVISM IS HERE FOR GOOD

ALIZA RAHMAN & SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

For a generation blamed for staying on their devices for too long, internet or online activism seems like the perfect way to have people's voices heard. Sadly, it is often seen with derision, and readers of this article likely know why. The adverse feelings appear to stem from many factors, some valid and some not so. One of which is that online activism is pointless, but that is far from the truth.

A September 2020 article on *BBC Future* discusses the issue, stating "Evidence collected over the last decade suggests that clicktivism, in the aggregate, can be very effective in spreading little-known ideas and publicising non-mainstream notions."

This can be clearly seen if we look at Instagram accounts such as @soyouwanttotalkabout, @girl-sagainstoppression, and @nowhitesaviors which have all tackled heavy local, international, and historic incidents and issues of great significance – from the Tulsa race massacre to the trademarking of phrases, names and festivals that have had cultural meaning for people of colour for decades if not centuries by corporations.

Social media has given both access and opportunity to people as young as thirteen-year-olds to voice their concerns regarding matters that impact society and learn what they weren't (and might never be) taught in school. However, the very ease which provides benefits also brings along dangers that may not be immediately noticeable.

Another serious issue is the spread of misinformation. This isn't just limited to middle-aged or elderly people new to the Internet but even those who have been using computers since childhood. While remarkable feats can be achieved without a considerable amount of hassle because of social media, information not thoroughly checked and researched, fuelled by the intention to jump on the bandwagon of whatever topic is trending, can lead to spread of false information.

"In the era of fake news, it is always important to vet and cite sources before sharing any factual claims online, where misinformation can spread like wildfire. While it can be tempting to press the 'share' button on a post that resonates with us, the need to ascertain its validity is more important. When we have highly customisable and accurate search engines, there is no excuse for not doing our due diligence," says Taqbir Huda, Coordinator, Justice for All Now (JANO, Bangladesh).

He adds, "For instance, when sharing stories of injustice from JANO, Bangladesh, which seeks to utilise the power of modern communications technology to increase social awareness and legal literacy in the country, we are always careful to link our sources so readers can immediately cross check for themselves. We should also be mindful about not conducting online activism in a manner that actually compromises the safety of the very people who are the subject of our activism."

"Wokeness" is frequently ridiculed, with the term evoked to frequently mock individuals who share posts regarding social issues on their personal social media

accounts. Many perceive that this is a form of virtue signalling – an act of expressing support for a certain issue with the sole intention of portraying good character. This is not to say however, that it can never take on a more malign form. With individuals, this can look like bullies preaching kindness. On a more serious note, this provides the means to problematic and dangerous individuals to easily craft an image which paints them not only as harmless but can work to invalidate the claims of their victims.

With corporations, the use (better read: misuse) of online activism to promote an image that not only skews with their actual activities but hides and distracts from practices that could in reality be criminal masks a much darker reality.

An article by *Wired* titled "Google, Microsoft and the strange world of corporate greenwashing" highlights this phenomenon with examples of firms like Microsoft and Chevron running commercials and publicising initiatives to disguise their complicity and direct action in damaging the wildlife and the environment – problems they claim to be committed to solving.

The issue primarily seems to stem from the extreme visibility of online activism and the insincere efforts it subsequently attracts. Hence, one of the focuses of discussions on anti-discrimination has been the idea of non-optical allyship, with optical allyship being defined by author and online activist Latham Thomas as "allyship that only serves at the surface level to platform the 'ally', it makes a statement but does not go beneath the surface and is not aimed at breaking away from the systems of power that oppress".

Taqbir resonates, "We should realise that speaking out against injustice is not an act of charity towards the oppressed which they should be 'grateful' for, but a basic civic duty that we owe to any group facing injustice, and to ourselves. Therefore, when conducting activism online it's important to be mindful about not furthering the saviour complex that defines the international aid industry, which funds much of the activist spaces in the Global South. While we should always demand justice for a particular individual or group facing injustice, we should not be the one dictating or pre-empting what 'they need', as that is for them to decide. If for any reason they choose not to or are unable to speak for themselves, only then can we speak on their behalf, but every effort must be made to consult them first so we truthfully capture their experiences and demands. We should not aim to 'save them' but to stand beside them in solidarity."

Therefore, the way to increase the impact of online activism involves not just partnering social media with physical protests and community organising, but investing in deeper learning and decentring of the person making the posts.

While social media has created space for opinions and open dialogue of the general population, it comes with its own set of limitations for people who use it to

make their voices heard.

Mayabee Arannya, Team Leader at Kotha and an ally of the alliance Feminists Across Generations, shares, "Sometimes, messages online can be misinterpreted or diluted to something that it does not represent. Due to the rapid spread of information that can happen online, it's just as easy for the wrong information to spread as it is for the right. This is why the framing and wording of any online content published within a social movement have to be carefully chosen.

"As with activism on the ground, there are safety and security issues regarding online activism. Since anyone can hide behind an online profile and access your content, you become vulnerable to hate messages and threats. While visibility is essential to social movements, it can be dangerous speaking out online about sensitive issues and having people with unkind intentions know your identity."

Furthermore, according to vice chairperson of Orodho Foundation Ikram Hossain Akif, one of the major limitations of spreading messages through social media is the way social media algorithms work only to allow people to follow content they interact with, resulting in posts with particular messages not being shared outside a particular circle of people.

Still, it is important to understand that online activism has made a huge difference when it comes to making a real change and has a great deal of advantages too.

"One of the most apparent advantages of online activism is that the internet allows us to instantly connect with large groups of people to get our message across. Whether it be for rallying people to join a protest or sharing information on a critical social issue, social media networks have the power to simplify the process of reaching out to larger communities," mentions Mayabee.

She adds, "Another vital aspect is accessibility. Since people all over the world have access to the internet, it can sometimes be the only tool available to seek out international solidarity and aid. The internet is free and ours (most of the time), so even when traditional media is suppressed, we can use our own online platforms to keep fighting for ourselves and our communities. Online platforms are especially important for people who are part of communities whose voices are not usually included or amplified in traditional media."

"Documentation is important. Having a smartphone and access to social media can enable us to document instances of injustice and share them instantly. If our lived experiences aren't proof enough of our oppression, we can also have pictures and videos as evidence. Oppressors can't keep the world in the dark about the crimes they commit as long as we can document, share, and demand justice." We think of online activism as activism from the comforts of our home. The reality is that it is the only way for many, and even when it isn't, its impact is undeniable.



ILLUSTRATION: LENA YANG