ROLE OF INFORMATION- SOURCE AND APPLICANTS' DISCONFIRMATION SENSITIVITY IN JOB APPLICATION DECISIONS

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ABSTRACT

Every recruitment exercise, designed to get the right people, involves assimilations of factors that could positively influence and/or convert a job seeker's organisational attraction to a decision to apply. These factors could be varied in nature from being internal and/or external. This article takes a discursive route to state the importance of studying the role of disconfirmation sensitivity and information quality; factors, vital to the process of recruitment with tremendous impact on the perception of job expectations and intention to apply. Moderation to application decisions in the preliminary stages of recruitment are critical to the success of any recruitment exercise. Fast paced changes in the business processes, virtual job arrangements and changing nature of sources of recruitment along with dynamic employment objectives of job seekers render the subject of information quality and disconfirmation sensitivity worthy of discussion.

This article adopts a discursive analysis to present the latent importance of information quality and disconfirmation sensitivity in a recruitment process and intention to apply. High-quality information programmes contribute to employability and right career choices for a job seeker in the digital age. The relationship between job application decision, information quality and disconfirmation is one which holds a cohesive structural utility and is based on the functionality of the emerging demands and dynamics of the job market.

Keywords: Information quality, job expectations, dis confirmation sensitivity, HR

INTRODUCTION

Among the many objectives of an organisation, recruiting and selecting the right people to join and contribute towards achieving success in the ever competitive market, is one of the most important ones. Organisations create awareness about vacancies for the job seekers through various sources of recruitment, which are larger devices to help the organisations tap the employment market in constituting an applicant pool. A job seeker decides to be a part of the applicant pool, only after he or she receives favourable and convincing information about the job

attributes, work culture and work environment and creates a self-assuring preliminary recruitment image. Sources not only bear the responsibility of attracting as many applicants as possible (Rynes & Cable 2003) but also facilitate the selection process, by way of sustaining a job seeker's interest in the job vacancy. To do so and achieve an organisation's recruitment objective, the source's information needs to be as realistic as possible in nature, Breaugh (1983). Realistic information is supposed to create a close to -reality, job image for the job seeker. Realistic information has been a primal line of thought for establishing relationship between recruitment and employee turnover. It has been argued that organisations in order to improve the short-term recruitment outcome(high response rate to advertisements)convey information to glamourize job image, jeopardizing the long-term commitment of employees(case of unmet expectations) and therefore the need arises to understand how information affects a job applicant in the most initial phase of recruitment.

Recruitment research of the past states that realistic image has been one of the consistent features over the past fifty years. As per Ployhart, Tippins and Schimtt, (2017) there have been three main areas of focus in recruitment research. The first concentrated on the recruitment interview (i.e., interviews designed primarily to attract applicants to a firm) and the factors that influenced either applicant or interviewer responses to the interview (e.g.,

Alderfer & McCord, 1970; Cohen & Bunker, 1975; Schmitt & Coyle, 1976; Simas & McCarrey, 1979).The second evaluated the effectiveness of different recruiting methods and strategies (Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Rynes & Miller, 1983; Sands, 1973).The third explored realistic job previews (RJPs) and applicant-focused perceptions (Reilly, Tenopyr, & Sperling, 1979; Rynes & Lawler, 1983; Wanous, 1973). Recruitment research in the 1980s largely continued the research of the 1970s: recruitment interviews (Borman, Eaton, Bryan, & Rosse, 1983; Rynes & Miller, 1983); sourcing strategies (Swaroff, Barclay, & Bass, 1985); and RJPs (Premack & Wanous, 1985).

Job markets and its stakeholders-organisations, job seekers and educational institutions as well as mediatory bodies (staffing and recruiting agencies, job boards) are constantly affected by the macro and micro-level technical transformations, economic developments and the societal changes such as demographic shifts, migration, job values and expectations. These changes along with the over-arching dominance of Internet and globalisations to match geo political factors affect organisations and their processes and objectives. Recruitment managers perform under much uncertain conditions than ever before. Organisations and economies have no more singular dimensions of operation of earning profit and so do employees and job seekers. The present generation has a larger concept of employment, which has

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more to do with employability in the long-term. This brings the focus on the importance of factors that affect job application intentions of job seekers.

Literature Review:

Sources, which are the primary carriers of job information and their effect on applicants carry high valence for achieving recruitment objectives for organisations. Recruitment managers choose sources for broadcasting a vacancy considering the outcome of utilising a particular source. Factors for a choice of source could be time, audience, cost, level of filter and sorting; they could help a manager decide the utility of a source for a vacancy (Chapter 4, Employee Recruitment Handbook 2001). Each source differs from others in terms of its access to suitable candidates and ability for an applicant pool creation for the organisation. Rynes (1991) put forth a hypothesis of individual difference stating that sources reach different segments of population and therefore shall impact the recruitment outcome differently. Another hypothesis proposed by Taylor and Schmidt (1983) stated that sources presented information differently to target population and thus asymmetric information creates irregular recruitment image and unrealistic job expectations for the job seeker. Ryan, Kriska and Horvath (2005)stated that organisation increase the flow of information towards those sources, which yield better response whereas for a long-term benefit, sources should provide

applicants with better understanding of the job and organisation. Standardised high-quality information by way of quantity, presentation and informativeness could change the perception of a job for a job seeker. Perception of information from a source is subject to moderation by traits of individuals receiving it and the dimensions of the source as well as the information itself leading to asymmetry.

Information Quality

Information here is considered in general management sense and unless specified should not be restricted to system design only. Any process of knowledge creation and transfer should carry a high degree of information quality. Knowledge creation, management and transfer in high information quality environment help in right decision-making by an individual and an organisation, Eppler (2006). Meaning of information quality lies in how information is presented, perceived and used. Dimensions of information are important but a user's perception of these dimensions matter foremost, (Miller& Holmes 1996). Some of these dimensions are accuracy, timeliness or currency, format, validity, security and so on. Studies so far in the area of recruitment have not mentioned the dimensions of information as such but they have concentrated on the nature of information specificity, (Barber & Roehling1993; Collins & Stevens, 2002). The amount of information available to applicants from different sources in terms of high and low

information (Gatewood, Gowan & Lautanschlager, 1993), source informativeness and familiarity of the source, (Ryan, Kriska & Howarth, 2005). Information credibility, Walker et al (2009) and information credibility and media richness, (Cable & Yu 2006).

In effect all these works have corroborated that information in varying sense matters to recruitment. Recruitment as a process should not be too predictable so that it continues to respect the difference between individuals' reaction to the changing nature of jobs, economy, education and level of critical thinking, availability of resource and its effective utilisation. These variables interact with the information that a job seeker seeks or receives through information projection mechanisms of recruitment sources used by organisations.

This article focuses on the way information is presented, which leads to asymmetry in perceiving expectations. Multitudinal factors causing perceptual disturbance need to be sorted so as to appropriate required action.

Information quality also deserves to be a subject of observation and study owing to the fact that the present economy, which is moving towards digitalization relies on complex extraction and utilisation of information for an organisation. Today's organisations hold information as key resource in the environment and virtually engaged individual teams contribute towards a common goal of a particular assignment or product or service. Older full- time jobs have now given way to short-term, result oriented contracts and environmental set ups, which may not even have a physical presence. The changing nature of job has also bought about changes in the sources of recruitment as well. Newspapers and regional employment weeklys gave way to private job agencies. These were overshadowed by online job boards Naukri, Monster and the likes. By the 90s most of the organisations had their own website, which handled recruitment queries as well. In the middle of 2000 some of the organisations handled all recruitment- related activities through their official website only.

On the other hand technical and business schools have their own placement cells, which caters exclusively to the nature of the courses taught and skills development of the students. The past two decades have been of the indispensable Internet. Organisations, market and individuals helplessly depend upon it for varied kind of decision making. It is also the backbone of all the recruitment activities and a single platform for all the sources of recruitment to conduct their businesses. What could differentiate these players in terms of effectively enabling the organisations to complete their recruitment activities is the information they carry for the job seeker, so as to discern their position in the market.

The question is how do organisations create recruitment processes and map it to gain access to desired skills and individuals Breaugh stated in (1983) in a

highly complex environment. Recruitment processes essentially need recruitment objectives to guide usage of sources of recruitment. It may also be affected by the type of source available, the education level of the job seeker and the culture of his community and country. Greater usage of different sources of recruitment shall lead to larger set of information available but the culture of the community or country may offset the usage of a particular source, (Linnehan & Blau 2003).It is accepted that quality of information has major effects on the decision taken there upon (O'Reilly 1982).There are many studies on the importance of information quality for the information systems management and the direct access of information by various users increases the importance of quality of information (Lee et all, 2002) and to areas it serves.

Recruitment is one such area where applicants' access information about job & organisation freely from various sources and since information variable can be inferred to impact their application decisions. It is all the more relevant today with multitude of information sources emerging from the Internet services (company website, online job boards, social platforms such as Facebook and LinkedIn etc.) and the quality of the information available or accessible could be the source differentiator. Since it is not possible to consider all aspects of information quality, here a few of them have been discussed in a seeming proximity to recruitment and applicant

relationship - completeness, accuracy, format and currency. Completeness refers to the information being complete in terms of the need of the information seeker, here the applicant. Accuracy refers to the correctness of the information provided by the source about the job attribute, organisation, work environment and the process itself. Format is the way of information presentation across the media so as to convey a standard and set information without diluting the uniqueness of each source. Currency is the value of information in terms of whether it is current and valid (Sethia, and Venkatesh& Joglekar 2013; Wixom and Todd 2005). There are studies, which show information quality being used by organisations to improve their customer response system, digital media and to gain better access to customer choice issues and understanding its customer better. (Sethia, Venkatesh & Joglekar 2013, Lee, Strong, Kahn & Wang 2001). Use of information quality can lend much to recruitment process. If organisations & their sources exercise high information quality, it is expected to lead to individuals having reliable information, which shall in turn increase their trust on the organisation and create an attraction or fuel a latent one for the organisation. Information plays a crucial role in terms of the effect it has on the mind of the applicant, which is supposed to be all accepting, (YPC, Popovich & Wanous 1982). Source may be differentiated by the applicants based on source information quality rendering them asymmetric and

relatively more or less persuasive than others and creating diverse value in terms of expectations and perceptions of the job and organisation. Information quality is expected to work upon the expectation of the applicant and his/ her behavioural trait as well.

Proposition 1: Information quality of a source of recruitment helps create job expectations.

Proposition 2: Sources with high information quality help create realistic job expectations.

Proposition 3: Sources with low information quality create unrealistic job expectations.

Disconfirmation sensitivity:

An applicant is no less a consumer, who seeks information from varied sources to gain knowledge about the job and organisation in which he/she plans to invest a certain part of his life and career (YPC, Wanous, Popovich 1982). If information quality is an attribute of the source and is an external factor moderating the intention to apply of a jobseeker, disconfirmation sensitivity is an internal factor, which can interact with the information impacting the job expectations in the job application decision process.

Like marketing, recruitment is also an information driven process. If marketing is about attracting consumers towards a product, through a recruitment drive a firm competes to attract a typically skilled set of individuals to a job vacancy, (Cable & Turban, 2001). Bringing together the marketing and recruitment literature could enable individuals and organisations to explore the possibilities of discovering factors active in marketing drives and which have not been explored in recruitment context so far. There are though few studies, which have brought to light the similarities of informational value in marketing as well as recruitment, (Collins& Bell 2010; Collins 2007; Kanar, Collins &Steven 2003). Besides informational value, based on individual's difference and attitudinal factor is disconfirmation sensitivity, a concept frequently used in customer satisfaction study; in fact it is similar to expectation lowering process(ELP), which has been used to explain how ELP facilitates an applicant in effective post hire management of expectations (Buckley et al.1998). Application of disconfirmation sensitivity concept to job application intentions may unfold a new perspective for the process of recruitment and effective utilisation of sources since it evaluates the effectiveness of the source information quality at a pre hire stage. Attraction, by way of realistic expectations is created and strengthened by the information, which is complete, accurate, has the right format across different platforms and has currency. Realistic expectation is assumed to act as a stimulus, which may result in the intention to apply (Fishben & Ajzen, 1972) and therefore the need to explore. This study opines that disconfirmation sensitivity of an individual job seeker could

be a moderator between quality of information and a job seeker's expectations from a job. This moderation of expectation affects his intentions to apply for a job.

Dis confirmation sensitivity is a concept of how much an individual confirms to the available information/product/concept or idea. It is a widely studied subject in marketing specially customer satisfaction. Oliver (1977) stated that individuals either confirm or dis confirm expectations. It has found its way from psychology and marketing to consumer research and information technology and it should make sense to include it in studies of acquisition, management and development of human resources for organisations.

Its interaction with individual's expectation is of our interest since disconfirmation-sensitive individuals are said to moderate their expectations in order to increase their long term satisfaction based on of the information available to them (Kopalle & Lehmann 2001). There is an overall implication here for the source effectiveness their importance furthered by the opinion that recruitment is a practice that alters the characteristics of the applicant to whom the selection procedures are ultimately applied (Bourdreau & Rynes 1995). Of particular importance to this study of recruitment process is effectiveness assessment of the sources in terms of their effect on applicant's expectation and the effect of individual's disconfirmation sensitivity on his intention in consideration of his need

for employment. An individual with high disconfirmation sensitivity may reduce his job expectation in order to derive more satisfaction and take decisions relatively.

This line of thought should help organisations and other job market stakeholders to understand how the expectations of applicant may get altered by quality of information accessible to him/her and individual's behavioural and attitudinally guided response. The idea is to bring forth the importance of realistic and quality information from sources of recruitment in the process of recruitment and behavioural traits that may moderate the ultimate actions of the applicant. Under high disconfirmation sensitivity an individual lowers his expectation from the information available and hence if the experience or outcome is more than expected it results in higher satisfaction and vice versa (Kopalle & Lehermann 2001). Studies by (Wanous & Premack 1985), Breaugh (1983) stressed on how information from different sources, which are more realistic and acceptable by the applicants lead to greater degree of satisfaction and corroborate the met expectation theory. The organisations use various media to create an attractive image and pursue the members of the applicant pool and on the other hand the applicants curate information from sources either to support the initial job and organisation image or acquire new knowledge. In both cases the objective is to maximise knowledge and benefit from the available information (Popovich & Wanous, 1982).

It can thus be assumed that disconfirmation sensitivity of applicants shall moderate their job expectations based on of information quality available to him or her. A high disconfirmation sensitive applicant is expected to lower expectations on the basis of source information quality, but if the source information quality is high, (available information in terms of frequency, accuracy and currency of information) the expectations are realistic and the intention to apply will improve. In case of individuals with lower disconfirmation sensitivity it is assumed that the expectation shall not get altered as the information quality shall be accepted as it is though in case the source information quality is low as well, the expectation may dip but shall not take a negative value in turn the expectation holds on. Applicants with low disconfirmation sensitivity will minimally lower their expectation with little or no effect on the intention to application. Their job expectation is expected to increase with high information quality. The information quality, when high would tend to render the information realistic and hence increasing the related job expectation for the applicant.

One of the most studied areas of recruitment has been of realistic expectations and relating information quality to realistic expectation should lead to a better understanding of the role information plays in effectiveness of a source of recruitment and shall enable organisations to analyse their strategies regarding usage of sources so as to leverage them best.

Proposition 4: Disconfirmation sensitivity of a job seeker will moderate relationship between information quality and expectations.

Proposition 5: High job expectations will encourage the intention to apply for a job vacancy.

Discussion:

Initial phase of recruitment, Breaugh et al (2003) refers to as the most critical phase because if the organisations fail to make the first contact and persuade the job seeker to be a part of the applicant pool then the organisations have lost the job seeker. It is a lost opportunity. If such is the role of recruitment then it is imperative to look at the existing factors affecting recruitment and the ones that could and have not been discussed so far. This article takes a step in that direction by choosing to encourage an observation of information quality of a source and disconfirmation sensitivity as factors that could have a moderating effect on a job seeker's intention to apply for a job based on information available to him or her. Implications of such observations may not make drastic change in recruitment approaches but it would carry substantial learning and knowledge creation for recruiting managers and scholars alike.

Conclusion: This study intends to add to the existing literature on recruitment

sources. It carries value for the organisations in selective utilisation of recruitment sources for achieving recruitment targets and the importance of information and its dimensions. In technology-driven economies the environment of business processes are contingent to even the smallest of change. Certain processes, which could be highly dependent on the environment are individual behavioral responses. Recruitment is one such process, being the most critical in organisation's success and competitive advantage, it needs continued introspection to so as to be most responsive to change. In light of these aspects and conclusions of the past hundred years of study on recruitment, sources of recruitment are epicenters, which can lead to discussions on newer ways of looking at recruitment processes methods, objectives and the means to achieve them.

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