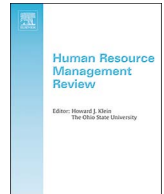




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Employee recruitment and job search: Towards a multi-level integration

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ABSTRACT

This study describes an attempt to develop an integrative model of job search and employee recruitment. Inevitably multi-level in nature, the model demonstrates the interplay between organizational-level factors and individual-level factors in influencing the outcomes of employee recruitment and job search activities. According to the model, influenced by job seeker and organizational characteristics, job search and recruitment activities jointly create job awareness, which is the first step in organizational attraction. Next, depending on the job seeker's current job situation, this attraction leads to job pursuit intention and behavior. The model also emphasizes the longitudinal nature of the process by which individuals gain employment. Finally, since each organization's applicant pool consists of job seekers with some common characteristics attracted to the same position, the model proposes that recruitment and job search can be examined by utilizing a multilevel framework.

1. Developing a multilevel and integrative model of employee recruitment and job search

Since an organization's success is confined within the limits of its human capital, employee recruitment is a critical function for organizational survival (Phillips & Gully, 2015). Potentially as a result of this importance, many researchers have sought to examine and reveal the factors associated with successfully filling job openings. This has led to mountains of research examining predictors of applicant attraction to a job (e.g., Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012). In a related vein, several other researchers have examined the process from the job-seekers' perspectives and strived to find the predictors of job search success. Thanks to this research, we now have a good amount of information about the predictors of success for organizations and individuals in reaching their employment goals. However, despite this research interest, the available literature has been criticized for lacking a bonding theory to organize the findings and guide future research (e.g., Breugh & Starke, 2000; Ployhart, 2006). Although we know several linkages within the process such as some of the factors leading to job search success or predictors of applicant attraction to a job opening, no attempts have been made to integrate this vast amount of research into one integrative model, which delineates both the process by which individuals search for jobs and the process by which organizations search for employees.

Employee recruitment can be defined as activities that influence the number and types of applicants who apply for a position, stay in the applicant pool, and accept a job offer (Breugh, 2008). A distinction can be made between types of recruitment efforts in terms of the targets of these activities. Specifically, while some recruiting practices are aimed at attracting individuals who are looking for jobs (i.e., active job-seekers), others target individuals who are currently employed by other organizations or are not interested in participating in the workforce but would potentially be open to job opportunities if offered (i.e., passive job-seekers). The main difference between these two groups is that active job-seekers can be attracted by relatively passive methods of recruiting such as posting information about a job opening on an online job board or a company website. However, these methods are not likely to work

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for the second group because these individuals are not likely to be searching for jobs. Accordingly, the way to reach those individuals is by specifically targeting them through more active approaches.

Traditional methods of recruitment (i.e., recruitment sources) include advertisements, employee/friend/relative referrals, employment agencies, internal job postings, walk-ins, campus visits, and job fairs (Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). Advertisements can also be divided into different types based on the medium (e.g., TV, internet, billboards, etc.) used to advertise about the job openings. In addition to these more traditional sources, online recruitment has also become an established practice for organizations in the last two decades as official company websites, online job boards, and more recently social networking sites are frequently used for this purpose (Acikgoz & Bergman, 2016). Social networking sites are especially useful for targeting passive job-seekers given the vast number of individual profiles they contain. In fact, LinkedIn is a social networking site specifically designed for professional networking, and thus it is largely used by recruiters to locate and approach those individuals who are potentially good candidates for the job openings they are seeking to fill (Jobvite, 2016).

As can be inferred from the definition above, the ultimate goal of the employee recruitment is to fill job openings with individuals who possess the desired attributes. There are a few models of employee recruitment process in the literature which describe factors associated with an increased likelihood of reaching this goal (e.g., Breaugh, 2008; Celani & Singh, 2011; Schreurs & Syed, 2011). One common limitation of these models is the limited discussion of job search behaviors by potential applicants. However, any model which attempts to illustrate the recruitment process must take into account those activities performed by job-seekers in search of an employment opportunity. Job search can be defined as goal-directed activities initiated by an individual in response to a real or perceived discrepancy between an employment goal and current state of affairs (Kanfer, Wanberg, & Kantrowitz, 2001). Commonly examined topics in the literature on job search include antecedents of different types of job-seeking behaviors and the extent to which these behaviors lead to the desired employment outcomes. According to one taxonomy, job search behaviors include preparatory and active job search behaviors (Blau, 1994). Preparatory job search behaviors include the actions aimed at gathering information about potential job openings, while active job search behaviors include actually acting upon the information gathered in the first phase by sending out resumes, contacting potential employers, and interviewing with those employers.

Another distinction is generally made between job-search effort and job-search intensity (Kanfer et al., 2001). Job search effort refers to the overall amount of effort spent by job-seekers when looking for jobs, while job-search intensity involves the frequency with which specific job-seeking behaviors are performed. The literature on job search has generally examined the types, antecedents, and outcomes of job search behavior. The types of job search behaviors frequently examined in the literature include job source usage, job search intensity, and job search effort (Saks, 2006). As Kanfer et al. (2001) note, the extent to which individuals perform these job search behaviors has been found to be influenced by several antecedents including applicant personality characteristics, locus of control, optimism, self-esteem, job-search self-efficacy, motives (e.g., financial need), social support, and other demographic variables (age, gender, education, etc.). Finally, while the most frequently studied outcome is employment status after the job search, other outcomes such as number of job interviews, number of job offers, duration of job search, and perceptions of person-organization (P-O) fit and person-job (P-J) fit have also been studied (Saks, 2006).

Literatures on employee recruitment and job search, although from different perspectives, are in fact both examining the factors that lead to a job opening being filled by an appropriate candidate. While the research on employee recruitment examines the issue from the organizational perspective and thus is aimed at predicting factors which influence the quality and quantity of the applicant pool, the literature on job search examines the issue from the job-seeker perspective and thus investigates factors which influence whether or not an individual successfully lands a position which meets his or her expectations. Accordingly, in both research areas, the goal is to ensure that the right candidate fills the right job opening. Despite this deep connection, anyone who conducts a review of the studies published in both fields would realize that the literatures on job search and employee recruitment have followed their own paths without making a clear reference to one another. As an example, available meta-analyses on the subject limit their scopes to either job search activities by individuals (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001) or employee recruitment activities by organizations (e.g., Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012).

This state of affairs is neither new nor unique to employment research. For example, in their update to the ASA framework, Schneider, Goldstein, and Smith (1995) emphasize this phenomenon by eloquently pointing to the “fundamental difference in paradigms between studies of people who work and studies of the attributes of organizations in which people work” leading to “a scholarly bifurcation characterized by two parallel, yet largely non-overlapping literatures (p.747)”. Schneider and colleagues further posit that because of the reasons pointed above, “...” there has been a general failure to integrate the individual and organizational foci of theory and research inhibiting a full understanding of the reciprocal relationships that exist between individuals and their employing organizations (p.747)”. In the context of employment research, job search researchers whose goal is to offer practical implications to job seekers and career consultants have to take into account the ways in which organizations recruit in order to increase the chances that their recommendations are useful. Similarly, researchers examining how organizations can generate the applicant pool they desire have to have a clear understanding of the job search processes employed by potential applicants. This warrants that, unlike the current state of affairs, a comprehensive and integrative approach to the employment process, which takes both the applicant perspective and the organizational perspective into account, is needed to improve our understanding of the mechanisms through which a job opening is being filled.

With the lack of a comprehensive and integrative approach to job search and employee recruitment, it seems that the danger eloquently stated by Ployhart (2006) has actually become a reality for both streams of research. Specifically, the literatures on employee recruitment and job search are both fragmented into very complex micro theories, which are aimed at explaining the relationships between pairs of a large number of variables. This becomes evident after a review of the literature, as it appears that comprehensive models of job search and employee recruitment are scarce and were developed independently of each other (e.g.,

Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Chapman et al., 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001; Saks, 2006). However, to better understand the process and to be able to give actionable recommendations to both organizations and job seekers, an integrative model of the employment process based on the findings of both employee recruitment and job search literatures is necessary. In addition, given the subject matter spans across levels of analysis, such a model would need to be multilevel. There have been multiple calls in the recent literature for research and theory building that integrates organizational levels in a way that encompasses multilevel effects (e.g., Hitt, Beamish, Jackson, & Mathieu, 2007; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Mathieu & Chen, 2011). Pointing to there being few efforts in this direction (Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011), and most organizational entities residing in nested arrangements (Mathieu & Chen, 2011), these authors suggested that more research was needed in the field of management in order to achieve a better understanding of organizational systems, as adopting either a micro or a macro approach would lead to an incomplete understanding of phenomena occurring at single levels (Porter, 1996).

In fact, the view that employee recruitment and job search are two sides of staffing is not a novelty in the literature (e.g., Heneman, Heneman, & Judge, 1997). In addition, the multilevel view to staffing has been introduced in at least two recent theoretical examinations of the topic (Phillips & Gully, 2015; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). However, aside from broadly describing the reciprocal and multilevel nature of staffing and answering the “what” question, these authors have not provided a detailed account of “how” individuals and organizations interact at different stages of employee recruitment and job search processes. Ployhart and Moliterno (2011) provide a good description of many processes at multiple levels leading to the emergence of human capital, but their model starts with a group of employees and therefore does not explain how these employees are acquired in the first place. Phillips and Gully (2015) describe the recruitment process at multiple levels, but their model does not incorporate actions by job seekers and therefore describes the emergence of an applicant pool from only the organizational perspective. What is missing in the literature is a description of the process through which an applicant pool emerges in an employee recruitment effort by combining the actions and perspectives of both organizations and job-seekers. This study is an attempt to take on this challenging task.

The purpose of the remaining sections of this paper is twofold. First, a review of the variables which have been discussed in employee recruitment and job search literatures will be presented with the goal of identifying key constructs that influence employee recruitment and job search success. Given the vast literature examining employee recruitment and job search processes, this review will be selective with only the most relevant concepts being included. Second, utilizing these key variables and concepts, an integration of both literatures with the goal of generating a model of the employment process will be attempted. Hence, the purpose of this review is not breaking new grounds in the recruitment and job search literature. Rather, the major goal is to provide a basic framework to the study of employee recruitment and job search activities in a way that describes the reciprocal and multilevel nature of the process.

2. Theoretical background

One theoretical approach which integrates individual and organizational approaches and explains the reciprocal influences between individuals and organizations is the attraction-selection-attrition (ASA) framework by Schneider (1987). According to the ASA framework (Schneider, 1987), people are differentially *attracted* to organizations based on an evaluation of the congruence between their own characteristics and the characteristics of an organization. Next, in the *selection* stage only people with certain competencies are admitted into the organization through formal and informal selection procedures. Finally, individuals who were initially attracted to and selected by an organization may leave the organization in the *attrition* phase if they discover later on that they do not fit. Accordingly, the outcome of ASA processes determines the characteristics of people in an organization and thus “makes” the organization. In fact, Schneider emphasizes the importance of employee recruitment as one of the key implications of his model by suggesting that it is through recruitment activities and the resulting applicant pool that the organization can manage the types of people they select. However, despite being a long-held assumption, “how” this happens has not yet been subjected to theoretical and empirical examination, with the exception of studying person-organization fit as an important predictor of applicant attraction (e.g., Chapman et al., 2005).

Evident in this brief description is that the model covers the full cycle of employment with attraction generally referring to employee recruitment and job search, selection to organizational selection processes, and attrition to employee turnover. Accordingly, the ASA framework has frequently been applied to how organizational characteristics emerge in the first place by examining the processes through which individuals with similar characteristics survive in an organization (e.g., Judge & Cable, 1997). However, what is often neglected is that attrition not only occurs after the employment relationship begins, but also in the recruitment and job search stage. That is, the full cycle of ASA occurs even before an individual begins working in an organization. For example, individuals incompatible with the job/organization may not even be aware of the job opening in the first place, or withdraw during the recruitment process, leading to a distinct applicant pool for each job consisting of individuals that are more compatible to the position than the general population. Accordingly, in the current model, it is proposed that these three processes simultaneously operate in the employee recruitment and job search phase, as attrition does not only occur after an individual joins an organization but also at the early stages when an applicant drops out of the process or even when an individual decides not to apply for a job after initially being attracted. Thus, through this ASA process, a distinct candidate pool emerges for each job opening being filled.

Both employee recruitment and job search processes can be viewed as consisting of a few key processes including search and communication, evaluation and decision-making, and persuasion. That is, recruitment activities include attempts by organizations to communicate their open positions to potential applicants, search for eligible candidates, persuade them to submit applications, evaluate whether they possess the desired qualities and make selection decisions, and persuade them to accept a job offer. Similarly,

job applicants search for job openings, evaluate whether they meet their criteria and make decisions to submit applications, communicate with organizations, attempt to persuade the organizations to offer a job, and decide whether to accept a job offer. Those activities that are aimed at being seen as a desirable employer (i.e., image recruitment; Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993) or candidate (e.g., maintaining a LinkedIn profile; Han, 2016) without searching for applicants or jobs can also be seen as persuasion attempts aimed at the other side. These key processes also roughly correspond to the attraction-selection-attrition stages of the ASA framework and constitute the mechanism through which a distinct applicant pool emerges for each job opening.

In most cases, the first step in the process to a new employment relationship is searching and communicating, which is the *attraction* phase in the ASA framework in the context of employee recruitment and job search. Both organizations and individuals search for and communicate with one another, and it is through this process that the initial attraction occurs. The search for desirable organizations or candidates in the context of employee recruitment and job search can also be seen as a communication process since both parties communicate with one another through recruitment sources. One area of inquiry in the communication literature examines the predictors of media use (e.g., face-to-face vs. electronic), and there is evidence that individual characteristics of those who communicate influence the preference regarding communication channels (Minsky & Marin, 1999). Given there must be a congruence between the preferred channels for communication to occur, and the evidence that channel choice is partly influenced by characteristics of those who communicate, this presents an early mechanism through which individuals with similar attributes are attracted to the same job opening. In other words, what is implied in this argument is that individuals and organizations with compatible characteristics will be aware of each other, which is one mechanism through which the attraction stage of the ASA model works in this context. This process is dubbed as “job awareness” in the proposed model.

Given the search behavior itself has a cost, after each search event the job-seekers and organizations are required to evaluate their options and make a decision regarding whether to continue the search or end by selecting from among the available options (Sonnemans, 1998). This is the *selection* phase in the ASA framework in the context of employee recruitment and job search. Several choice goals may influence the way these decisions are made, including high accuracy, low effort, low negative emotion, and high justifiability (Sauer mann, 2005). Although these goals largely apply to job-seekers and has been proposed in the context of job-seeker decision-making, it is conceivable that the same goals drive the decisions made by the organizations, with the exception of low negative emotion. For example, an organization may apply a highly valid selection system to ensure high accuracy, hire without doing so with cost concerns (i.e., low effort), and/or consider employment legislation in hiring to maximize justifiability. Evaluation of options by individuals and organizations given one or more of these goals culminate in the construct of perceptions of fit, which is an immediate precursor to attraction to the job/organization by candidates. However, fit is loosely defined in this context simply as a congruence between needs and abilities of a candidate and supplies and demands by an organization (Kristof, 1996), and does not consider whether individuals and organizations share similar fundamental characteristics (i.e., the supplementary vs. complementary fit perspective), although this second type of fit is also certainly important in some contexts.

Once a decision has been made, the next step is persuading the candidate or the organization to accept a job offer or hire a job-seeker. If this persuasion does not occur, then the outcome is attrition by the individual from the applicant pool (or the organization from among the available options for the job seeker). Persuasion takes place through multiple stages, beginning with an initial attitude formation and attraction by both parties, progressing through forming of intentions to act, and culminating in actual behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). An important attribute of this process is its longitudinal nature such that these initial attitudes are updated over multiple instances of interaction between the parties (Swider, Zimmerman, & Barrick, 2015). As individuals and organizations sift through multiple options during this stage, perceptions of the discrepancy between current situation and the desired situation and contextual factors influence whether or not attraction occurs or is maintained.

Since the processes described in the preceding paragraphs occur across levels, it is important to take a multilevel perspective when studying recruitment and job search. That is, individuals and organizations search for and communicate with one another, and subsequently evaluate and attempt to persuade the other party. Whereas the way job-seekers approach these tasks are largely determined by individual-level psychological factors such as personality and self-efficacy (e.g., Kanfer et al., 2001; Sauer mann, 2005), how organizations manage their recruitment activities is largely determined by higher-level organizational and contextual factors such as organizational strategy, culture and external environment (Phillips & Gully, 2015). In addition, the emergence of an applicant pool for a job opening is in itself a multilevel process such that multiple candidates with certain qualifications are attracted to a recruitment message by an organization, the content and style of which is presumably determined by organizational-level phenomena. Since this represents higher-level constructs shaping lower-level properties (i.e., characteristics of job applicants) that in turn emerge into a collective construct (i.e., applicant pool; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000), the whole process should be examined through a multilevel lens.

The remaining section of the manuscript is organized in four parts. First, the way individuals and organizations search and communicate and how this leads to an initial attraction will be discussed. Second, some of the factors influencing how individuals and organizations evaluate their options and make early selection decisions will be explored. Third, the process will be examined longitudinally as individuals and organizations attempt to persuade each other and attrition occurs from among the options for both individuals and organizations. Finally, the process will be reviewed by taking a multilevel perspective. Although the model is laid out following these three phases, the distinction between the stages described is not clear cut as this structure implies. For example, as will be discussed below, attrition occurs all throughout the process, and the final process also includes extensive evaluation and decision-making by both parties. Accordingly, although each phase is named after the major process that is thought to occur within, the distinction is somewhat arbitrary. The proposed model attempts to accomplish two major goals. First, unlike prior models of employee recruitment (e.g., Celani & Singh, 2011; Schreurs & Syed, 2011) and job search (e.g., Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987; Soelberg, 1967), the proposed model attempts to combine research on employee recruitment and job search in one model delineating

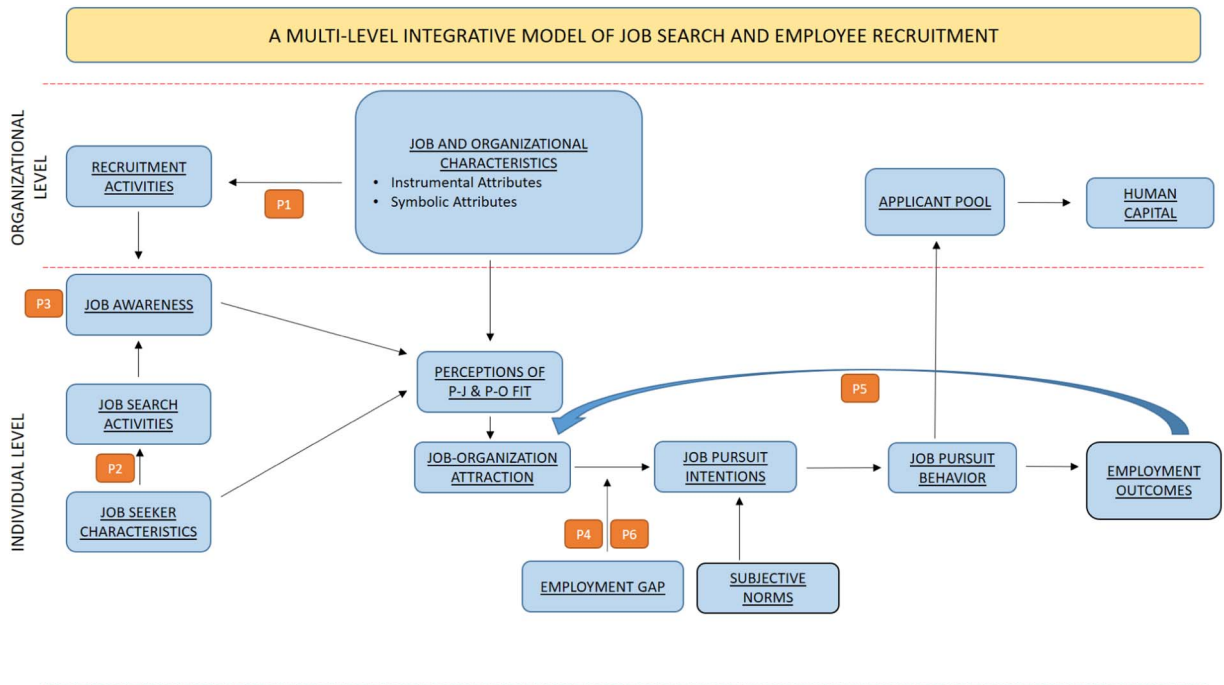


Fig. 1. The proposed model of job search and employee recruitment.

the major factors influencing both individual and organizational outcomes. Second, it emphasizes the longitudinal and multilevel nature of the process and describes some of the ways in which this influences recruitment and job search outcomes (Fig. 1).

3. Search and communication: Attraction

Although more specific and strategically crafted objectives can be defined (Breugh & Starke, 2000), one common goal of recruiting activities for many organizations is to bring the job opening to the awareness of as many qualified applicants as possible and convincing them to apply. Accordingly, applicant attraction to the job and the organization has been studied as the nexus variable of most recruitment studies (e.g., Chapman et al., 2005). The literature provides several variables that potentially influence the effectiveness of employee recruitment practices and result in applicant attraction (Chapman et al., 2005; Kanfer et al., 2001; Uggerslev et al., 2012), including job seeker characteristics, job and organizational characteristics, and perceptions of fit. Job seeker characteristics include the values, needs, interests, and personality characteristics of the potential applicant, while job and organizational characteristics include the specific attributes about the job the applicants seek to obtain such as pay, benefits, working hours as well as organizational factors such as company image, size, work environment, and location. In searching for desirable candidates, organizations use several recruitment sources such as online job boards or formal referral systems to communicate with potential applicants and inform them about these characteristics of the job and the organization.

The characteristics of applicants and jobs/organizations influence attraction to a job opportunity in two ways. First, these characteristics directly influence perceptions of fit, which in turn influence applicant attraction. For example, in terms of how characteristics of job seekers influence organizational attraction, Baslevent and Kirmanoglu (2013) examined if personal needs and values influenced the extent to which individuals found certain job attributes important when choosing a job. The results revealed that need and values influenced preferences towards several job attributes such that jobs that involved using initiative were appealing to those with a strong inclination for power and achievement while the same jobs were not desirable for those who valued security and conformity. In an examination of whether applicant personality influenced recruitment outcomes, Cable and Judge (1994) found that personality traits predicted attraction to different pay policies. Specifically, the authors found that (a) more materialistic job-seekers ascribed greater importance to pay level, (b) job seekers with internal locus of control were attracted to organizations offering flexible benefit systems, (c) individualists were more likely to prefer individual-based pay systems than collectivists, and (d) risk-averse job seekers were more attracted to organizations which applied non-contingent pay systems than risk-takers.

Job and organizational characteristics that influence perceptions of fit include instrumental attributes of the job and the organization such as working conditions, hours, pay/benefits, and the location of the work, as well as symbolic attributes such as organizational image, reputation, and job prestige. This distinction between symbolic and instrumental attributes is important as they correspond to two major forms of persuasion as defined by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM; Kitchen, Kerr, Schultz, McColl, & Pals, 2014). That is, instrumental attributes are likely to follow a central route to persuasion given they are likely to include non-judgmental information about the job and the organization; whereas symbolic attributes are likely to persuade individuals through a

peripheral route to persuasion given their subjective nature. Evidence to the importance of job and organizational characteristics comes from two recent meta-analyses examining predictors of applicant attraction (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012). Specifically, in predicting applicant attraction, Chapman et al. (2005) found a corrected correlation coefficient of 0.30 for job characteristics. The job characteristics examined in that study was compensation and advancement (0.27), pay (0.27), and type of work (0.37). Similarly, Uggerslev et al. (2012) found a corrected correlation coefficient of 0.36 for job characteristics including pay (0.23), benefits (0.31), and the characteristics of the job (0.42). As evidence to the importance of organizational attributes, Turban and Cable (2003) found that firm reputation was positively related to the number and quality of applicants who sought employment with a firm. Specifically, using ratings by prominent media outlets as indicators of firm reputation, Turban and Cable found that companies with higher reputations had more applications through career services offices of two universities, and these applications were more likely to come from students with higher grades, leading to an applicant pool with higher average applicant quality. These findings provide evidence that applicant and organizational characteristics directly influence perceptions of fit, which is a major predictor of applicant attraction (Chapman et al., 2005).

Arguably more important in terms of the ASA framework, the second way in which individual and organizational characteristics influence perceptions of fit is through their influence on the way in which individuals and organizations search and communicate. In other words, these factors influence the manner in which individuals seek for jobs or organizations search for candidates, which leads to an early attrition from the process and contributes to the emergence of a distinct applicant pool for each job opening. In order for perceptions of fit to occur, the first condition to be met, even before a congruence between applicant characteristics and job/organizational characteristics, is that the applicant should learn about a job opportunity. That is, before being able to evaluate the extent to which there is a congruence, potential applicants must first acquire the knowledge that there is a job opportunity. As part of their recruitment efforts, organizations use recruitment sources such as media advertising, official company websites, or online job boards to convey information about positions they are looking to fill. In addition, organizations also use subtler signaling mechanisms to transmit information about the job and the organization (Celani & Singh, 2011). Specifically, using the signaling theory's doctrine of market signaling (Spence, 1973), organizations strategically plan the style and content of their outreach efforts such as recruiting interactions or image advertising to create an image consistent with the way they desire to be perceived as an employer (Barber, 1998).

It is likely that the forms and content of recruitment activities are influenced by the characteristics of the job and the organization. In terms of the characteristics of the job, organizations are likely to perform different types of activities when filling a high-level management position versus an entry level blue collar position. The differences may include such things as the recruitment source being preferred (e.g., executive search firms for high-level management vs. point-of-purchase for entry level part-time jobs) or content of the recruitment message (e.g., an emphasis on pay for high level positions vs. an emphasis on experience for entry level jobs). In terms of characteristics of the organization, different types of organizations that differ by size, sector, etc. are likely to prefer different types of recruitment activities. For example, small local firms may prefer to use different recruitment channels (e.g., word-of-mouth, newspaper ads) than larger firms with a better reputation (e.g., using official website, LinkedIn). There may also be differences between firms in different sectors. For example, a tech company may be expected to prefer a different approach in reaching their candidates (e.g., internships, "hackathons") than a fast-food company (e.g., point-of-purchase methods, local job fairs). Accordingly, the following is proposed:

Proposition 1. The characteristics of the job and the organization influence the content and form of recruitment activities performed by organizations.

In a similar manner, the characteristics of job seekers may influence the types of activities they will perform when searching for jobs. There is meta-analytic empirical evidence supporting this proposition. Specifically, in a meta-analysis, Kanfer et al. (2001) found that several individual-level variables, including personality, self-efficacy, needs, and social support were significant predictors of job search behavior. It is also likely that applicant characteristics such as needs, personality, education, or experience may influence the recruitment sources preferred by job seekers. In fact, this is the basic idea behind one of the most supported explanations of recruitment source effects, the individual differences hypothesis (Breugh & Starke, 2000). According to this hypothesis, recruiting sources vary in effectiveness because they reach individuals from different demographic groups, who may be more or less qualified from each other for the job. For example, a highly extroverted individual or an individual with a high need for affiliation may prefer to use personal connections such as friends or family to search for jobs whereas job seekers with higher levels of education may be more likely to use internet or professional connections. Demographic characteristics of job seekers, such as their age, gender, or location may also influence the sources of information they use when searching for jobs. In fact, this is the reasoning on which targeted recruitment is based (e.g., Newman & Lyon, 2009). Accordingly, the following is proposed:

Proposition 2. Applicant characteristics influence the type of job search activities performed by job seekers.

The interaction between signals from organizations regarding job and organizational characteristics and personal characteristics of potential applicants leads to perceptions of person-job and person-organization fit, which in turn determines the extent to which an individual is attracted to a specific job opening (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). However, in order for this interaction to occur, job seekers must first learn about the availability of a job opportunity. It is the formation of this knowledge in the job seekers' minds concerning the availability of a job that makes it possible for an interaction between job seeker characteristics and organizational characteristics to occur. However, whether this happens is in part determined by a congruence between the characteristics of the job/organizations and the applicant. As previously explained, there is evidence that individual characteristics influence communication channel preference (Minsky & Marin, 1999), and this presents an early mechanism through which individuals with similar attributes are attracted

to the same job opening. When an organization or an individual uses a specific recruitment channel to seek candidates or job openings, what is found will most likely be individuals or organizations with certain characteristics leading them to use those channels in the first place. For example, a novel method of recruitment may only be used by innovative organizations and individuals using the same recruitment method to search for jobs may have a certain personality (e.g., high openness). Since using the same channel to communicate is a prerequisite for being aware of a job opening (or a desirable candidate), it follows that individuals and organizations with compatible characteristics will be aware of each other, which is one mechanism through which the ASA process operates in the recruitment and job search stage.

Referred to here as “job awareness”, whether this happens to a large extent depends on a congruence between the recruitment activities engaged in by organizations and job search activities performed by job seekers. The likelihood that job awareness occurs depends on a match between recruitment activities and job search activities, which implies that applicants to a job are not a random collection of individuals but share certain characteristics, leading to the emergence of a distinct applicant pool for each job opening. As will be discussed in the section describing the multilevel perspective, this non-independence of candidates in the applicant pool is the main reason for taking a multilevel perspective to research on employee recruitment and job search. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

Proposition 3. A congruence between job search and organizational recruitment activities is required to create “job awareness”; which is a prerequisite of perceptions of fit.

In the current model, perceptions of fit is conceptualized as a mediator between job/organizational and job seeker characteristics and applicant attraction. Evidence for importance of perceptions of fit in job and organizational attraction comes from two meta-analyses on the topic in which perceptions of fit were found to be the most proximal predictors of applicant attraction whereas job/organization and job seeker characteristics were relatively more distant predictors (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev et al., 2012). In fact, this is consistent with recent theorizing about how job and organizational characteristics influence applicant attraction (e.g., Carless, 2005; Gully, Phillips, Castellano, Han, & Kim, 2013; Judge & Cable, 1997). When job seekers are evaluating the merits of a job opportunity, it is unlikely that job and organizational characteristics alone lead to attraction to the job and the organization in the same way for all applicants. Instead, what is more plausible is that job seekers form perceptions of fit based on the characteristics of the job and the organization and their own characteristics, which then leads to applicant attraction. For example, a job which pays very well but involves activities which constitute threat of injuries or death is not likely to be seen as attractive by a job seeker if he or she has high risk avoidance. Similarly, a job which pays well but consists of only a small number of repetitive tasks may not be seen as attractive if the job-seeker is looking to gain experience in a specific field.

There are several alternative conceptualizations of perceptions of fit, including supplementary vs. complementary fit, needs-supplies fit, and demand-abilities fit (Kristof, 1996). The supplementary fit perspective describes the similarity between the fundamental characteristics of individuals and organizations, while demands-abilities and needs-supplies perspectives describe what individuals and organizations demand from and supply to each other. Depending on the characteristics of the job and the individual, either one of these perspectives may be adequate to create an attraction or both may be necessary. For example, a day laborer may not care much about supplementary/complementary fit as all he or she is concerned about would likely be the extent to which the job can supply his or her basic needs. Similarly, organizations would not be expected to care much about supplementary/complementary fit for such positions, as the most important concern would be the extent to which an applicant would meet the demands of the position. However, for higher-level jobs, both kinds of fit may be important for both candidates and the organizations.

4. Evaluation and decision-making: Selection

Once an organization and a job seeker become aware of one another, they evaluate the merits of one another and make early decisions regarding whether to include each other in a shortlist of potential jobs/candidates. This stage typically does not last very long, since it only involves the decision to apply by the job seekers and an initial elimination based on basic job requirements by the organization. This can also be seen as an early selection process in which individuals and organization select those that will be included in their initial pools of options. This is largely influenced by perceptions of fit between the individual and the organization, which then creates an initial attraction. According to the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA, Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) attitudes (i.e., organizational attraction) and subjective norms (i.e., social influence from others) both have direct effects on intentions, which then predict behavior. The attitudes in terms of recruitment and job search domains are comprised of the positive or negative feelings potential applicants have towards the job opening. Perceptions of fit lead to either a positive or a negative attitude towards the job. In addition, in the TRA subjective norms are also thought to influence intentions to behave in a certain way because individuals are also likely to consider what significant others will think about the focal behavior (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). In terms of employment decisions, subjective norms represent the thoughts of significant others about pursuing employment with the prospective job. According to TRA, these attitudes and subjective norms are likely to influence the extent to which an individual intends to apply for the job.

While the process described proposes a mechanism from attraction to intentions, it is likely that for some individuals, being attracted to a job opportunity or favorable reactions by significant others may not necessarily lead to intentions to apply. Here the concept of *employment gap* is introduced to account for the combined effect of multiple factors that influence whether an initial attraction will lead to intentions to apply. Employment gap is defined as the difference between an individual's current employment situation and the employment situation which is thought to be offered by the job opening being considered. Perceptions of employment gap may be influenced by several factors including embeddedness in and satisfaction with the current job (for employed

individuals) or other employment options available to an unemployed job seeker. For those who currently have a job but looking for a better job opportunity, or those targeted by active recruitment efforts of organizations, job embeddedness and satisfaction with the current job are likely to influence whether attraction to a job opening will translate into intentions to apply. Job embeddedness represents individuals' links to, fit with, and sacrifice required to leave from their organizations and communities (Mitchell, Holtom, Lee, Sablinski, & Erez, 2001), while job satisfaction is generally defined as a positive or negative emotional state towards one's job (Harrison, Newman, & Roth, 2006). Accordingly, for employed individuals, employment gap is similar to the perceived ease and desirability of movement framework (March & Simon, 1958).

However, employment gap also applies to unemployed job seekers, and for these individuals perceived alternatives is the main determinant of employment gap. That is, as individuals search through job opportunities, submit applications to multiple organizations, and track the responses they receive, it is likely that they will have an idea about their chances of getting a desirable job. Despite being unemployed, having multiple attainable job opportunities represents an improvement in the employment situation of a job seeker. This, in turn, is likely to influence their perceptions of employment gap. For example, a candidate invited to face-to-face interview by six companies would feel a smaller employment gap and thus be less likely to apply for a job (or stay in the applicant pool) with any specific organization, whereas a candidate who received no interview offers would perceive a larger employment gap. Thus, although similar to established constructs such as job embeddedness and perceived alternatives, employment gap is conceived of as a construct that encompasses the combined effect of these factors. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

Proposition 4. Employment gap moderates the relationship between applicant attraction and job pursuit intentions. For individuals for whom the job opportunity offers an improvement over their current employment situation, attraction to the job leads to intentions to apply.

5. Persuasion: Attrition

Once an attraction to a job occurs and this leads to intentions to submit an application, the next step is acting upon those intentions, which includes attempts by individuals and organizations to persuade each other about their positive attributes. This occurs through multiple interactions between a candidate and an organization during which either party may decide to end the process. Thus, one important aspect of the proposed model is its emphasis on the longitudinal nature of this process since this is the stage attrition is most likely through candidates dropping out of or being eliminated from the applicant pool or eliminating some of the job opportunities for the sake of more desirable ones. According to TRA, intentions have a direct effect on the subsequent behavior. Several meta-analyses examined this relationship between intentions and behavior and provided empirical evidence for this relationship (e.g., Armitage & Conner, 2001; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). In terms of employee recruitment, it is a natural extension to the above findings to argue that job pursuit intentions predict job pursuit behavior. However, despite the credibility of this straightforward argument, it is likely that there is more to staying in the applicant pool than an initial intention to apply for a job opening. Webb and Sheeran (2006) criticize the intention-behavior interventions in the literature as assuming that intentions cause behavior without actually testing it. The same can be said for the current state of affairs in the recruitment literature. Although it has been acknowledged that the relationship between job pursuit intentions and job choice is not perfect (e.g., Chapman et al., 2005), no empirical or theoretical examinations exist which seek to discover the factors leading to this attenuation in the relationship between initial intentions and job pursuit behavior.

It is arguably more appropriate to treat the process between applicant attraction, job pursuit intentions, and job pursuit behavior as recurring cycles of attitude-intention-behavior rather than a single linear process from attitudes to behavior. That is, every action in the process through which individuals seek employment may be seen as a precursor of intentions for the behavior in the following cycle. For example, initial attraction to the job stemming from positive perceptions of fit may lead to intentions to apply and subsequent application behavior. This in fact marks the end of the "generating applicants" phase (Barber, 1998), and can be seen as indicating an intention to go through the remaining phases of recruitment such as attending a site visit or going through selection procedures, given the organization determines that the individual is an appealing candidate. However, intention in these subsequent "maintaining applicant status phase" cycles is still influenced by the same factors described above; namely job and organizational attraction, employment gap, and subjective norms; and it is possible that organizational attraction may change because of updated perceptions of fit. Subjective norms are still likely to be influential; and it can be argued that the influence of subjective norms in the subsequent iterations is even more salient as the prospects of getting the job are higher. Finally, perceptions of employment gap may change based on the number of job opportunities that remain after an initial screening by the organizations to which the individual has applied.

One type of job pursuit behavior that may result from job pursuit intentions is making an initial application for a job. However, this behavior rarely results in a job offer, as most organizations screen applicants through several stages to make sure they hire the best candidates. A more likely outcome of an initial application behavior is invitation to a second screening hurdle such as a selection test or a job interview. There is evidence suggesting that an initial attraction by job seekers may not guarantee continued persistence in the job application process. For example, Swider et al. (2015) found that perceptions of P-J and P-O fit were not stable but were likely to change during the first (i.e., generating applicants) and second (i.e., maintaining applicant status) stages of the recruitment process, and this change was related to maintaining interest in the job. Similarly, Walker et al. (2013) found that during the maintenance stage of recruitment (i.e., after submitting their applications), individuals were likely to update their perceptions of organizational justice through successive interactions with organizational agents, and these updated perceptions were likely to influence an initial attraction in a positive or a negative way. Within this view, the factors that influence an individual to apply for a job

or the perceptions of those factors may change after the initial application, and this change has the potential to influence whether or not the individual stays in the applicant pool and eventually becomes an employee of the organization.

In line with the earlier propositions, it is likely that perceptions of fit is the most proximal predictor of applicant attraction, and applicant attraction is the most proximal predictor of job pursuit intentions. However, since perceptions of fit are likely to change during the recruitment process (Swider et al., 2015), job pursuit intentions may also change, attenuating the relationship between intentions measured at one time and job pursuit behavior. As applicants keep collecting information about the job and the organization through outside sources and an increased amount of contact with company representatives through selection procedures, the initial positive perceptions of fit may attenuate, lowering applicant attraction and intentions to stay in the applicant pool. Recruiters' behaviors may also contribute to this attenuation of perceptions of fit (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991). This view of employee recruitment as a dynamic process of successive interactions between an organization and a job-seeker, during which both the job-seeker and the organization perform activities to get to know each other better, is a divergence from previous mainstream research on employee recruitment and consistent with recent theoretical advancements (e.g., Swider et al., 2015; Walker et al., 2013). Swider et al. (2015) argue that perceptions of fit are inherently unstable and constantly change as new information about the potential future job and the organization is collected. Moreover, this process does not end when an individual applies for the job. To the contrary, these authors suggest that individuals are likely to engage in more elaborate information processing in the second stage, echoing a proposition made by Rynes et al. (1991) almost three decades ago. Accordingly, as more information comes in through more elaborate processing, perceptions of fit may change even more in the subsequent stages:

Proposition 5. Intentions to pursue a job may change after initial application because of updated perceptions of fit.

In addition to perceptions of fit, perceptions of employment gap may also change in the subsequent cycles as applicants generate an initial pool of possible job opportunities. Despite the theorizing by Soelberg (1967) who proposed that individuals were likely to evaluate more than one job opportunity simultaneously, most research on job search has ignored this possibility and assumed that evaluation of a job opportunity occurs independently of other options. However, it is likely that job-seekers generate more than one job option and evaluate multiple job opportunities simultaneously (Barber, 1998). Despite the logical appeal of the argument that attraction to other jobs is likely to influence attraction to a job, early empirical evidence has not been supportive as the meta-analysis by Chapman et al. (2005) found that perceived alternatives was not a significant predictor of acceptance intentions. However, the meta-analysis by Uggerslev et al. (2012) found that even though perceived alternatives did not predict applicant attraction at the “generating applicants” stage of the recruitment process, it became a significant predictor at the “maintaining applicant status” stage. This evidence suggests that regardless of how many alternatives they have, applicants may still apply to jobs. This may be because the level of investment and effort required for an initial application is not very significant. However, as the recruitment and job search process advances, applicants may be less likely to stay in the applicant pool of a company over which another alternative is preferred.

Employment gap was defined as the difference between an individual's current employment situation and the employment situation that is thought to be offered by the job opening being considered. Perceptions of alternative desirable job opportunities may provide applicants with an increased sense of satisfaction with their current employment situations, although they may currently be unemployed or unsatisfied with their current jobs, as they may believe that there is a likelihood for them to achieve a good employment outcome. This decreased sense of employment gap, in turn, may influence the relationship between attraction and intentions towards some of the less desirable job opportunities in the initial pool of job options generated. Dorenzo and Greenhaus (2011) proposed a model of voluntary turnover based on control theory, in which they proposed that job search activities affect actual and perceived ease of movement by enabling individuals gauge their employability in the labor market. That is, their model suggests that as they search and apply for jobs, job seekers receive feedback from the environment regarding their employability and react to this feedback in a way to reduce the discrepancy between their desired level of employability and the feedback they receive. Similarly, as organizations screen candidates and individuals evaluate their chances of getting job offers from multiple organizations, their employment gap is updated and thought to substantially influence the decision regarding whether to stay in the applicant pool of a certain organization. Accordingly, the following is proposed:

Proposition 6. Intentions to pursue a job may change after initial application because of updated perceptions of employment gap through alternative employment opportunities.

6. Multilevel implications

In the preceding sections of this review, several factors were examined which influence the extent to which individuals are likely to be attracted to a job opening. It was proposed that this attraction, in turn, predicts job pursuit intentions and behavior. Implied in this argument is that whether or not job-seekers apply for a job opening and stay in the applicant pool eventually influences the extent to which individuals are likely to reach their job search goals and organizations reach their recruiting objectives. That is, job applicants who go through all the cycles in the maintenance stage of the recruiting process and eventually are offered the job can be considered as reaching their goal of finding employment. Similarly, to the extent that many job-seekers with the desired qualifications are attracted to the job, apply for the job, and stay in the applicant pool until the position is filled; employing organizations can be seen as having reached their recruiting goals.

The above mechanisms also indicate that recruiting and job search activities are in fact two levels of the same multilevel process. As Phillips and Gully (2015) stated, recruitment is influenced by inputs and processes at different levels and this is generally neglected in the recruitment literature. The model described in this review combines several inputs from both individual and

organizational levels. In addition, several within-level (e.g., how organizational characteristics influence recruitment strategies) and between-level (e.g., how some organizational characteristics or recruitment activities appeal to a certain applicant demographic profile) processes are described. Acknowledging and describing the multilevel nature of employee recruitment is important for at least two reasons. First, it is this multilevel structure which makes recruitment “strategic”. Phillips and Gully (2015) describe one model in which recruitment inputs, procedures, and outcomes at individual, team, and organizational levels are aligned with organizational goals and strategies. By doing so, they fill an important gap in the literature and provide a theoretical framework of how employee recruitment relates to the fulfillment of organizational goals such as firm-level performance and execution of organizations' strategies. However, their model is based more on the strategic management literature and less on job search and recruitment literature, thus lacking a clear description of how activities performed by individuals and organizations relate to the emergence of an initial applicant pool and eventually human capital. More clarity regarding how individual-level and organizational-level variables relate to recruitment outcomes is needed.

This brings us to the second reason why recruitment should be studied in a multilevel fashion. Recruitment and job search activities complement each other in that they influence and are influenced by what is done at both individual and organizational levels. That is, the outcome of an action in one level is generally an action in the other level. Individuals searching for jobs respond to organizations' calls for applicants through recruitment activities; and the way organizations seek applicants is influenced by specific types of individual differences. In another theoretical framework attempting to describe multilevel effects in staffing, Ployhart (2006) describes the mechanism in which an organization's staffing practice influences specific KSAOs generated at the individual level, and the KSAOs in turn create organizational-level human capital through human capital emergence. However, Ployhart's (2006) examination of multilevel effects is more tied to selection practices and less so on employee recruitment and job search. Ployhart and Moliterno (2011) later describe in great detail how selection and team processes lead to the emergence of human capital. However, the literature lacks an examination of the process by which the applicant and labor pools initially emerge through recruitment activities and job search activities.

In this model, it is proposed that job search and employee recruitment activities are influenced by job-seeker and organizational characteristics. One likely outcome of this argument is that the applicant pool of each job opening consists of individuals who share certain attributes leading them to use the same recruitment source when searching for jobs in the first place. Given individuals in an applicant pool would also share specific characteristics such as interests, needs, knowledge, skills, and abilities, it can be argued that job-seekers in each applicant pool are more similar to each other than they are to other individuals applying for other jobs at the same organization or in different organizations. This is in fact the first stage of the ASA model (Schneider et al., 1995) in which individuals with similar attributes are attracted to the same job opening. What this suggests is that job-seekers are nested in applicant pools, which are then nested in organizations (Hitt et al., 2007). In such nesting arrangements, one important concern for multilevel theory-building and research is determining the focal unit, also known as level of theory, which refers to entities about which generalizations are to be made (Hitt et al., 2007). Another area of concern is determining levels of measurement and analysis, referring to the unit at which data are attached and hypotheses are tested, respectively (Rousseau, 1985).

However, unlike most multilevel examinations of organizational phenomena, the nesting arrangement described in this model is highly complex as both influences from the specific job (i.e., job characteristics) and the organization (i.e., organizational characteristics) need to be considered simultaneously (Mathieu & Chen, 2011). This makes it challenging to determine the focal unit and levels of measurement and analysis in testing the proposed model. For some job openings, the characteristics of the job may be more salient than that of the organization, leading to the focal unit to reside at the job level. For example, sales jobs in many retail organizations would attract individuals with similar characteristics regardless of the specific organization. For other job openings, there may be a very salient organizational image leading to individuals sharing certain attributes being attracted to jobs in that organization and hence the focal unit residing at the organizational level. For example, tech start-ups usually attract those with an entrepreneurial mindset given the potentially risky compensation scheme generally offered by these organizations. Accordingly, when applying a multilevel perspective to employee recruitment and job search as proposed in this model, the characteristics of the job and the organization should be considered on a case-by-case basis and decisions regarding levels of theory, measurement, and analysis must be made accordingly.

Another key idea in multilevel theory and research is emergence, which refers to the process through which phenomena at lower levels combine and create a higher-level construct which is distinct from its lower-level origins (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000; Ployhart & Moliterno, 2011). Emergence occurs through either a composition or a compilation process. In composition, the resulting construct is the sum of its lower-level antecedents whereas in compilation, the lower-level entities combine in a complex and non-additive fashion (Mathieu & Chen, 2011). The higher-level construct that emerges in employee recruitment and job search process is applicant pool, which is a distinct entity resulting from many individuals being attracted to and applying for the same job opening. Through this process of selective attraction to and attrition from job openings and organizations, a distinct applicant pool emerges for each job opening. It is this applicant pool which largely determines the outcome of a recruiting effort for organizations. Given the limited amount of interaction between members of an applicant pool, it is likely that this emergence occurs through a composition process in which qualifications of each candidate can be aggregated to determine the overall quality of the applicant pool. In other words, the quality of the applicant pool can be seen as the sum of qualities of individuals it is comprised of. Another key idea in multilevel research is the type of aggregate construct that emerges through composition or compilation processes. Chen, Mathieu, and Bliese (2004) proposed six aggregation approaches in creating higher-level constructs in multi-level theory, including selected score (i.e., using the most representative scores in a group of observations) and summary index (e.g., using the mean of observations), among others. The aggregation of qualities of each individual in generating an overall applicant pool quality should utilize the selected score approach such that the most capable members determine the overall quality of the applicant pool, as these individuals are likely to be

those who are eventually selected and offered a job.

To summarize, employee recruitment and job search activities can be seen as two different perspectives of the same process, and unlike the current state of the extant literature, must be studied simultaneously in a multilevel fashion. The methodological implications of this assertion are of paramount importance. Taking organizational-level effects into account when studying the effectiveness of a job search activity may help explain why certain job search activities may be more or less effective under different circumstances. Similarly, variables at the individual-level influencing job search strategies may be important in explaining why certain recruitment practices seem to be more important than others. Most importantly, multi-organization studies examining job seekers applying to different organizations hold great promise as they can overcome the problems stemming from non-independence of observations when the effectiveness of recruitment practices are studied on samples applying to a single organization (Bliese, 2000). Even though such studies have their place as they allow for controlling organizational-level effects; their weakness stems from this very fact as by controlling, they fall short of explaining how organizational-level variables influence the outcome of actions performed at the individual level, either as part of a job search effort or in response to employee recruitment activities.

7. Limitations and future research

Given the vast literature examining employee recruitment and job search, there are some issues that have not been addressed in the current model in order to keep the discussion manageable and at a reasonable length. First, the model is intended to cover the timeframe that ends with job offer acceptance and does not include a discussion of what happens after an individual joins an organization. However, as proposed by Schneider et al. (1995) in the ASA framework, fit perceptions are updated after an individual joins and organization and this sometimes leads to attrition through turnover. Given the focus of the current model was on pre-acceptance phase and the emergence of the applicant pool, this form of attrition was not discussed despite its influence on the emergence of human capital. Second, the very likely influence on the whole process by environmental factors such as overall health of the economy, unemployment rate, and government regulations was not included in the model. However, these factors are also likely to influence the processes described in the model and potentially require different recruitment and job search strategies (Phillips & Gully, 2015). For example, while relatively low involvement methods may be enough to recruit qualified employees in a high unemployment environment, organizations may need to do much more when unemployment rate is low. Finally, despite proposing a framework for examining the process from a multilevel perspective, the discussion was restricted to including only individual and organizational levels. However, organizations also recruit employees to teams and the same multilevel considerations may be applicable in investigations addressing this type of employee recruitment.

Despite the limitations, the proposed model offers several exciting new opportunities for research. First, the within-level relationships between job-seeker characteristics and job search activities and organizational characteristics and recruitment activities must be examined in detail. Are there distinct job search strategies? Are job seekers with certain personal characteristics more or less likely to apply a specific job search strategy? Are there distinct recruitment strategies? Do organizational characteristics influence the recruitment strategy to be used? In addition to these within-level effects, between-level relationships must also be studied. Is it possible that job search strategies and recruitment strategies align such that some recruitment strategies are more appealing to certain types of job seekers and vice versa? What are the outcomes stemming from this alignment or misalignment? These are some of the questions which may be asked in this regard.

Second, the longitudinal nature of the recruitment and job search processes must be better examined as more important than an initial attraction to a job is whether or not this attraction is maintained. Especially with advanced mobile technologies, the investment required for making an initial job application is almost null. This reduces the importance of job application as a criterion for studying predictors of attraction to a job. Accordingly, more studies are needed which examine subsequent behaviors by job seekers and organizations in the advanced stages of the recruitment process; and the outcomes of these behaviors. Using the TRA terminology, it is important to examine the moderators of intention-behavior relationship in the subsequent stages of the recruitment process.

Third, the concept of employment gap merits some attention. In the current model, it is defined as the difference between one's current employment situation and his or her desired employment situation. What are the factors influencing perceptions of employment gap? How does the real or perceived availability of other job opportunities in the job search process influence perceptions of employment gap? Is employment gap more likely to predict job pursuit behavior in the advanced stages of job search when the investment required for staying in the applicant pool is significantly higher compared to the initial stages? A related domain of inquiry is the predictors and outcomes of having multiple alternatives when searching for jobs. What drives the decision regarding how many jobs to apply for? How does having multiple opportunities influence the way in which applicants behave in the job search and recruitment process? Flipping the coin, how does having more or less applicants influence organizations' recruitment strategies?

Finally, research is needed examining the multilevel effects in the recruitment and job search processes. How does job awareness occur and what is the role of job seeker and job/organizational characteristics in this process? How are job seekers nested in different job openings or organizations and what is the role of job awareness in this process? What is the process through which applicant pools emerge (i.e., composition vs. compilation) and are there any variations across types of jobs/organizations or sectors in this process? What is the typical amount and nature of interaction between potential applicants to the same job/organization and how does this influence the process of applicant pool emergence? How do specific recruitment activities influence recruiting outcomes such as the quality or quantity of the applicant pool; and how do job search behaviors mediate/moderate this process? From the job seekers' perspective, how do job search activities influence employment outcomes such as the quality and quantity of job offers; and how do recruitment activities mediate this process? These are some of the important questions related to the multilevel effects in job search

and recruitment processes.

8. Conclusion

This review was an attempt to merge the literatures on employee recruitment and job search into a multilevel and longitudinal model. While preserving the basic ASA framework and the attitude-intention-behavior pathway of the theory of reasoned action as the backbone of the model, some of the findings in the employee recruitment and job search literatures describing the factors which have been found to predict applicant attraction and job search success were incorporated. The end result is a multilevel model describing the process by which individuals are attracted to and intend to apply for jobs at the individual level and the ways in which organizations influence this process at the organizational level. According to the model, during the process by which individuals search for and obtain employment in an organization, job and organizational characteristics combine with individual-level characteristics of potential applicants to influence applicant attraction, which triggers job pursuit intentions and behavior. This behavior, if maintained, leads to the desired individual-level (i.e., employment status) and organizational-level (i.e., applicant pool quality and quantity) outcomes.

The model contributes to job search and recruitment literatures in two important ways. First, unlike most previous models, the proposed model depicts the interplay between individual-level and organizational-level factors in the fulfillment of employment goals by combining the findings from the recruitment literature and the job search literature in a multilevel fashion. Second, the model recognizes that recruitment process is not linear and does not end when job application occurs, but instead proceeds dynamically until the job-seekers and organizations reach their goals. The model also recognizes that during the job search process, attitudes and intentions towards a specific job opening may change substantially through new information about several job openings being considered simultaneously. The proposed model, if further examined, has the potential to greatly improve our understanding of the several factors and their interplays which influence the extent to which both individuals seeking employment and organizations seeking employees achieve their goals. In line with this aim, and based on available theory and evidence, several testable mechanisms were proposed throughout the paper which are likely to influence recruiting and job search outcomes. Accordingly, future research should examine and test the proposed mechanisms individually, as well as test the model fully or in sections, to further advance our understanding of the process by which individuals and organizations begin their employee-employer relationships.

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