

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

Discussion

In the organization attraction literature, it is widely supported that objective P-O fit influences the subjective P-O fit, which, in turn, influences the organization attraction. However, the present study focused on another possible causal relation stating that organization attraction may influence subjective P-O fit, which, in turn, influence application intention. In addition, the present study investigated the moderating effects of objective P-O fit and PFC on the causal relation mentioned above by using an experimental design.

As predicted, the results indicated that organization attraction would influence the subjective P-O fit. On average, participants who read the high attraction information show high level of subjective P-O fit, and those who read the low attraction information show low level of subjective P-O fit. Although past research demonstrates that subjective P-O fit influences organization attraction, the present study shows that organization attraction may influence subjective P-O fit, too. According to the social identity theory, people want to be recognized positively by joining the organization or group with desirable image (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Therefore, when the organization is viewed positively, people will tend to perceive that they fit with the organization to maintain the positive self-concept.

However, contrary to expectations, there is no moderating effects of objective P-O fit on the relationship between OA and subjective P-O fit. According to past research (Cable & Judge, 1996), large sample size is often required to detect the moderating effects, which may provide an explanation about this null result. However, after further investigating, interesting findings are shown in the present study. First, for its high correlation with the outcome variables, subjective P-O fit acts as a more

proximal predictor, while objective P-O fit acts as a more distal predictor for its low correlation with outcome variables. This is consistent with the past research findings (e.g. Kristof, 1996). Second, the correlation between OA and objective P-O fit was low ($r=-.06$, n.s.). After controlling OA, objective P-O fit was significantly related to subjective P-O fit ($\beta=.42$, $p<.001$). Also, after controlling objective P-O fit, OA was significantly related to subjective P-O fit ($\beta=.42$, $p<.001$). Therefore, both OA and objective P-O fit significantly influence subjective P-O fit and the influences from each of them is independent and almost equal.

Contrary to expectations, PFC did not moderate the relationship between OA and subjective P-O fit. First, this might be caused by the low internal consistency reliability of PFC scale ($\alpha=.77$), which limited the power to detect the interactions. Also, the number of sample is a concern. Secondly, this might be caused by the confounding definition of PFC. Although past research indicated the high correlation between variables, such as objective P-O fit, subjective P-O fit, and organization attraction, might be caused from the tendency to be consistent, no research did further investigation about so-called consistency effects in the attraction literature. Therefore, the specific definition of this construct is not clear and operationalized. Besides, according to the literature, interests in consistency effects have declined since 1970s (Nail et al., 2001). Although Cialdini et al. (1995) refined the construct of consistency and developed the PFC scale whose validity was supported by a series of experiments (e.g. Cialdini et al., 1995); it still could not tell whether the definition of the consistency was the same in these two different research streams. Therefore, further research will be needed to investigate this construct and its effects.

According to the results, subjective P-O fit partially mediates the relationship between OA and application intention. It reveals that the OA influences the application intention either directly or through subjective P-O fit. The fail to support

the hypothesis may be caused by the strong influences of OA.

Besides, according to the analysis of longitudinal effects, the partial mediation effects could last for a period of time. It was demonstrated that subjective P-O fit partially mediated the relationship between OA and dependent variables two weeks later, including organization attraction, subjective P-O fit, and application intention. In addition, based on the results of longitudinal analysis, there might be a reciprocal relationship existing between these variables.

Strength

Although some hypotheses are not supported, there are two strengths of the present study. First of all, in the attraction literature, one common limitation has been noted is that the correlation between subjective P-O fit and organization attraction should be interpreted with caution for common method bias or correlational design. However, the present study was conducted in experimental design manipulating organization attraction. Therefore, the association between organization attraction and subjective P-O fit could be explained as the cause-and-effect relationship with more confidence.

Secondly, most of the past research investigates the attraction at a single time point. However, recruiting is a series of activities over time, to investigate attraction as a dynamic construct that can be changed over time is encouraged (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). As suggested in the past research, the present study is conducted in a longitudinal design to track applicants' perception or attitude change over time and contribute to attribution of causality. Besides, the common method bias is reduced in such a study design.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. One limitation is the potential of common method bias. Although the experimental method is adopted, the dependent variables, including subjective P-O fit and application intention at Time1, were measured with a common method at the same time. However, this concern was mitigated by measuring some of the dependent variables at Time2, including subjective P-O fit, application intention and organization attraction. And the results still showed the same partial mediating effects of subjective P-O fit on the dependent variables.

The second limitation stems from the subjects. First, the subjects was composed of soon-to-graduate students, thus, the generalizability of the results to people in the workforce would be limited. However, to understand the job search behavior of the new labor market entrants is worthy of researching for its large proportion of job applicants. Second, because of samples attrition, the distribution of applicants' gender was significantly different at two time points. However, gender has no significant relationship with research variables. Therefore, the difference may not have great influences on the results.

The third limitation stems from the use of written scenarios to describe the fictional company. First, the fictional company used may limit the generalizability of the results. However, to exclude the confounding effects stemmed from the real company, fictional company is used frequently in the attraction literature (e.g. Dineen et al., 2002 ; Turban & Keon, 1993). Secondly, the organizational information is limited to few categories much less than that of the real companies. However, these scenarios were not dissimilar from the real ones. Besides, the contents were designed to attain the research purposes. For example, to manipulate the attraction, the organization was described in terms of the compensation and training information. To

increase external validity, the company background and openings were included. To influence the subjective P-O fit perception, consistent with the previous research (Dineen et al., 2002), organizational value profile was included. Finally, the organization attraction is manipulated by given different human resources practice information (e.g. compensation and benefits, opportunity of training and development), it is possible that we did not really manipulate organizational attraction but human resources practice. However, the procedure of manipulation check may diminish this confounding.

The fourth limitation is the concern about generalizability of laboratory results. However, in order to test the casual effect, the laboratory research may be one of the proper methods. It was supported that laboratory-based research is adequate to be used to explore the early stages of organization attraction (Chapman et al., 2005). For the purpose of testing the casual relation in the present study, the laboratory design is suitable to be used. However, other relations between these two variables may be ignored. Therefore, some other methods used to examine the overall causality ,such as cross-lagged panel analysis (CLPA) (Schneider, White, & Paul, 1998), are suggested.

The last limitation stems from the instruments and definitions of the constructs. First, the instruments adopted from previous research are not mutually exclusive. For example, a representative measurement item, saying “I would accept a job offer from this company”, is almost the same in two different instruments, application intention at Time1 and organization attraction at Time2. Besides, some measurement items are worded similarly in different instruments. Although this situation may overestimate the correlations between variables, the concern is mitigated by the research design. That is, the similar instruments are not measured at the same time point or analyzed in the same equation. Second, past research describe and measured organization attraction in a number of ways. Some research view organization attraction and

application intention as distinct concepts (e.g. Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001). However, some research measure organization attraction with both attitude and action items (e.g. Turban & Keon, 1993). According to this inconsistency, the interpretation of past research findings has to be more careful. In addition, in the present study, the definition and measurement of organization attraction and application intention which is viewed distinct is not completely follow all of the past research thinking. Caution must be used when interpreting the results of the present study. In the future, a lot of work will be needed to develop specific definitions and valid measuring items for the outcome variables in the attraction literature to avoid the overlap (Chapman et al., 2005).

Implications and Future Research

Based on the results, organization attraction has main effects on dependent variables, including subjective P-O fit and application intention, at both time points. Therefore, it is recommended that organizations should preserve its attraction. Because, in the present study, company attraction is designed to stem from compensation and training information, organizations are suggested to focus on these two dimensions to increase attraction. However, it is stated in the literature that attraction may come from other factors, such as familiarity (Turban & Keon, 1993). Therefore, further study is needed to check whether these factors have the effects the same as that of compensation and training in the present study. Moreover, further study is needed to check the source of organization attraction in the present study.

Although participants in the present study read the information of organizational value which is the source of fit perception, not only level of objective P-O fit but also organization attraction influence their subjective P-O fit level. Moreover, the influences from these two factors are independent and almost equal. Therefore, it is possible that the organization will attract applicants who are not really fit, but perceive themselves fit and have intention to apply because of high organization attraction. This raises issues here. Some applicants having the false perception about the fit may have great application intention, thus, the organization has to make extra effort to screen out the applicants. However, if the applicants can correctly perceive the fit level, organization could have a pool of applicants with proper quantity and quality, and save efforts and resources in selecting employee. Therefore, it may be important for organization to have proper attraction rather than high attraction in avoiding attract too many applicants. In addition, more research is needed to investigate the impact of attracting non-fit applicants, or even hiring them.

Based on the previous result, it is inferred that if organization is attractive, applicants will perceive high subjective P-O fit, and then intend to apply to the company. Thus, the more attractive the organization is, the more the applicants will apply to it. Contrary to past literature, organization attraction acts as predictor in this case. Future study is needed to investigate the influences of organization attraction, further, the possible reciprocal relationship among variables in the entire recruiting process.

Because subjective P-O fit partially mediates effects of organization attraction on the dependent variables, in order to increase the application intention, it is important to help the applicants perceive the appropriate fit perception. Accordingly, it is recommended that organizations should provide rich information of organization culture and value to help the applicants form the perceived P-O fit with the organization (Carless, 2005). Many methods of providing information are suggested in the literature. For instance, real job preview may provide the authentic information of organizations to result in more accuracy perception of the organizations (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Future study is needed to investigate the effective way provided by organizations to form the fit perception.

Finally, additional research is needed to confirm the present findings. Recruiting is a series of activities over time, and further research is needed to investigate the longitudinal relationship among these factors. Also, experimental research is needed to rule out the confounding effects.