

Factors Related to Job Acceptance Decisions of College Recruits

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We investigated factors related to job acceptance decisions of college recruits who visited a large petrochemical company. We extended earlier recruitment research by surveying subjects following site visits instead of campus interviews, by measuring actual job offer decisions instead of only intentions, and by collecting data across 2 years. In general, overall evaluations of the site visit, perceptions of the location, and host likableness were related positively to job acceptance decisions. Additional analyses suggested that similar variables influenced both job acceptance intentions and decisions and that intentions mediated the relationship between the predictors and job offer decisions. © 1995 Academic Press, Inc.

Researchers interested in organizational entry processes have begun investigating how organizational recruitment practices influence applicants' attraction to organizations (Harn & Thornton, 1985; Harris & Fink, 1987; Powell, 1984, 1991; Turban & Dougherty, 1992). Because of shortages of workers in certain occupations (Hanigan, 1987; Rynes, 1989) and the utility of having the most qualified applicants accept job offers (Murphy, 1986), such research seems warranted. In general, however, much of the recruitment research has collected data under the auspices of a college placement center, focused on campus interviews and recruiters, and measured applicant at-

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traction to firms. Although applicant attraction is an important objective of recruitment, research is needed that investigates factors influencing *job acceptance decisions* of applicants (Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990; Wanous & Colella, 1989). In the one study that examined job acceptance decisions (Taylor & Bergmann, 1987), only 38 applicants completed surveys at the job offer decision stage, resulting in limited power to investigate factors influencing job acceptance decisions. Furthermore, because most researchers have collected data following campus interviews, we know little about how later stages of the recruitment process (e.g., the site visit and employees other than the recruiter) influence actual job decisions (Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Barber, 1990).

Although few studies have investigated factors influencing job acceptance decisions, several theories suggest that applicants' perceptions of job and organizational attributes and of the organization's recruitment practices influence job acceptance. For example, propositions from social identity theory suggest that individuals' self-concept is influenced by characteristics of the job they hold and of the organization to which they belong (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Dutton, Dukerich & Harquail, 1994). Therefore, we expect that applicant perceptions of job and organizational attributes will be related positively to job acceptance decisions because applicants will be more likely to accept jobs when they view the job and organization positively and therefore can enhance or maintain a positive self-concept in that job. Another theory relevant to the influence of recruitment practices on job offer decisions is signaling theory, which suggests that recruitment practices influence job acceptance decisions because applicants perceive experiences occurring during the recruitment process as signals of working conditions at the organization (Breaugh, 1992; Rynes, 1991). Therefore, we expect applicant perceptions of the site visit and of the formal host who helps coordinate the site visit to be related positively to job acceptance decisions. In summary, we extend previous research by investigating relationships of applicant perceptions of job and organizational attributes, of the site visit and of the formal host with both job acceptance intentions and job acceptance decisions.

THE SITE VISIT

In general, recruitment of college graduates involves some variation of a campus interview, a site visit, and a job offer. A typical site visit includes interviews with potential co-workers, the supervisor, and upper level managers, as well as tours of the work area and possibly of the community. We investigate whether perceptions of the site visit are related to applicants' job acceptance decisions.

In general, no matter how much information an organization communicates to applicants, there are many aspects of working for the organization that are unknown to applicants (Breaugh, 1992). Therefore, recruitment scholars have suggested that applicants interpret information they receive as "signals"

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