Do Recruiter Characteristics Lead to Employee Burnout?

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Abstract

Previous researchers have given due consideration to 'recruiter characteristics' and the impact of these characteristics on the 'post-hire behaviour' of the respective applicants. The performance and attitude of an employee towards his employing organization has been said to be linked to the mode and process of recruitment. Also, recruiters play a significant role in building applicant perceptions about future fellow employees and about the organization itself. Some of the recruiter characteristics tested by previous researchers are: recruiter age, gender, effectiveness, and personality. While the outcomes of recruiter behaviour studied previously include, intention to accept the job, regard for the company, employee performance and organizational citizenship behaviour. The present study examines the long term effects of recruiter characteristics on employee burnout. The recruiter characteristics investigated in this paper have been termed as personable, informative, competent, and applicant treatment. A multiple regression analysis was performed to identify the relationship between recruiter characteristics and employee burnout. This research is one of the very few that test the relationship between recruiter characteristics and its long term employee burnout outcomes within the Indian banking and insurance industry. The insights of this study would aid practicing business managers to design programs that help reduce employee burnout.

Keywords: Recruiter characteristics, burnout, banking, insurance, India

Introduction

A study steered by Kronos Incorporated and Future Workplace (2017) specified that nearly 95% of HR leaders consider employee burnout to be the biggest threat to an engaged and productive workforce. 46% of the HR leaders admitted that employee burnout was responsible for 20-50% of their annual workforce turnover. While 97% of the HR leaders planned to increase investment in recruitment technology by 2020. Another report by ICIMS (2017) indicate that 78 percent of the candidates agree that their recruitment experience is an indicator of how the organization values their employees. In the same study 58 percent of the candidates who had negative impression of the hiring organization would not apply again to the same organization in future. The type of employees hired, the way they perform and if they stay with the organization is highly influenced by the way they are recruited in the organization (Breaugh, 2013). The surveys mentioned before clearly depict the importance of study of burnout and the same in the context of recruitment.

Amongst various recruitment studies the study of effect of recruiter characteristics on applicant reaction is a growing body of literature. The literature on personnel selection has given lot of attention to the fairness in selection process which further creates an impact on the applicant decisions (Schmitt, 1989; Gilliland 1993; Elkins & Phillips, 2000; Colquitt, & Rodell, 2015). Gilliland (1993) emphasised procedural justice in selection i.e. the behaviour of recruitment personnel influence the applicants' perception of justice. Such recruitment experience creates an impact on attitude and behaviour of newly hired employees and it may further shape an organization's climate too. He further contends that the fairness perception is related to the individual and organizational outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, organizational citizenship behaviour etc.

Recruiter play very important role in applicant perceptions signifying what other members of the organization are like, as well as, what the organization is like (Rynes, 1989). Numerous studies have been conducted to test the recruiter effectiveness in terms of its post-hire outcomes (Carless & Wintle, 2007; Connerley, 1997). Rynes & Connerly (1997) studied the effects of recruiter effectiveness and behaviour on applicant perceptions. Applicants form initial impressions about the organizations very early in the recruitment information acquisition process (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). This information gained during recruitment process leads to greater impact on later impressions employees forms towards the organization and job too. These post-hire outcomes are studies in the form of applicants' attitude, behavior and effects on

insiders by few researchers (Schmitt and Coyle 1976; Rynes, 1989). However, the study on the effects of recruiter characteristics on their long term post-hire behaviour in the form of burnout is extremely sparse.

The current study takes into consideration relationship between applicant perception of recruiter characteristics and its long term post-hire outcome in the form of employee burnout. The results are discussed and implications given for recruitment practitioners and academicians for further research.

Review of Literature

Numerous studies are available on recruiter, recruiter characteristics, recruiter behaviour and the impressions it makes on job applicants. The first section of review of literature discusses about the recruiter and related studies that has an influence on applicants. While second section elaborates burnout as the outcome of recruitment practices of the organization.

Recruiter

Researchers have contended that candidates are highly influenced by recruiters in the organization (Rynes, 1991; Rynes, Heneman, & Schwab, 1980). And their intention to accept job offer or attitude towards organization is related to the impressions made by organization members they come across during recruitment process. (Schmitt & Coyle, 1976). Variety of research on recruiter is performed to find out the recruiter characteristics which might explain applicant's overall impression of recruiter. Such impressions many times influence applicants approach towards successive stages of the recruitment process, and also their decision of job choices (Harris & Fink, 1987; Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991).

Harris & Fink (1987) confirmed four categories of recruiter characteristics. They are personable, competent, informative, and aggressive. Personable and informative came out as the most significant characteristics of recruiters in their study. The study further showed that recruiter characteristics were considerably linked to the regard for the organization. Chapman et al. (2005) contended that applicants find job opening more attractive when the recruiter is personable, competent, informative and trustworthy and also there is high probability of their accepting the job offer. Amongst these characteristics recruiter personableness is more important because it gives a hint to the applicant as to how he/she may be treated if hired Connerley & Rynes (1997).

The information about job an applicant receives can come from variety of sources including social media, friends, and company publications etc. But the information that is shared by concern authorities especially recruiter has more credibility. Such information is highly valued by applicants regardless of their selection or promotion decision (Dodd, 1977). Few recruiters are more informative as in they share more information and also more specific information than other recruiters (Powell, 1991). If the information shared by such recruiters is of personal relevance, then applicant find is beneficial to interact with more informative recruiter. This helps applicant in making decision on whether to accept the job offer or not. Further, if the recruiter is prospective supervisor or co-worker then he/she is more informative than other recruiter who may be any other individual from human resource department Breaugh (1992). Thus, informativeness of recruiter is an important characteristic that needs to be assessed in relation to post-hire behaviour of employees.

The competence of recruiter plays vital role in applicants' decisions regarding a recruiting organization (Landay & DeArmond, 2018; Rogers & Sincoff, 1978). A study by Harris & Fink (1987) revealed that recruiter competence was significantly related to regard for company by employees. Chapman et al. (2005) found that recruiter competence was related to applicant's attraction towards organization. Fisher et al. (1979) theorized that, organizational recruiters would be short of reliability in comparison to the other employees of the organization. The base of their (Fisher et al., 1979) contention is on the assumption that candidates see organizational recruiters as deficient in proficiency required for a job and candidates perceive them as someone who has vested interest in filling job vacancies.

During the recruitment process applicant value and expect transparency, objectivity, feedback, participation and a humane treatment (Derous *et al.,* 2004). The applicants may withdraw themselves from the recruitment process if they get inconsiderate treatment during the process (Taylor & Bergmann, 1987). According to the study by Schreurs *et al.* (2008) applicant treatment factors like warmth / respect, chance to demonstrate potential, difficulty of faking, unbiased assessment, and feedback were related to organizational outcome measures. The applicants' perception of fairness of treatment during recruitment influence various outcomes like willingness to accept job offer, perception of organization, willingness to recommend the employeer and self-efficacy (Hausknecht *et al.*, 2004).

Applicant reactions refer to the attitudes, affects, or cognitions a candidate might have about the hiring process (Ryan & Ployhart, 2000). During recruitment process job applicant's reactions lead to outcome, such as test performance (Chan, Schmitt, Sacco, & DeShon, 1998), Sometimes no direct consequence of recruiter attributes is seen on perceived employment opportunities but the same may have an indirect influence through their impact on job attributes (Harris & Fink, 1987). Therefore, post-hire behaviour of employees with reference to recruiter characteristics like competent, personable, informative and treatment to applicant needs attention in recruitment studies.

Burnout

The associated relationships between organization members and applicants at work often takes the form of a 'psychological contract' that includes both written and unwritten agreements (Rousseeau, 1995) as well as incompletely articulated beliefs and assumptions about the conditions of work (Golembiewski, 2000). One noteworthy cost of the new psychological contract is burnout (Pines, 2002). Burnout significantly affects the health of an individual as well as consequences in the organization (Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). It can directly hamper the organization's retention struggles and further might create trouble in hiring good people (Harvard business essentials, 2002). Increase in turnover, absenteeism and reduction in productivity is caused by the burnout (Leiter & Maslach, 1988; Shirom, 1989). All the studies mentioned in this paragraph point out the need to understand many factors leading to burnout in different services, industries and corporate settings.

Burnout is a form of work-related strain which is the result of a major addition of work related stress. Therefore, researchers have considered work context or environmental factors as the proximal cause of burnout (Khamisa et al., 2015). Sharma and Cooper (2016) have listed out the personal, social and job related factors related to burnout. Cordes & Dougherty (1993) identified three factors that are linked with burnout to a varying degrees. First is role related factors (role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload), second, organizational characteristics (contingency of organizational outcomes and job context) and third is personal characteristics (demographic variables, social support, personal expectations and career progress). Maslach and Jackson (1981) define burnout as a three dimensional psychological syndrome characterised by emotional exhaustion, depersonalization (callous or negative behaviour towards others) and diminished personal accomplishment (tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regard to one's work with clients) that occurs among individuals (Maslach et. al., 1986). In their view burnout syndrome is restricted to individuals who are in human services professions. *Emotional exhaustion* refers to a mental and physical tension and strain resulting from job-related stressors (Maslach et. al., 1986). *Depersonalization* refers to a distancing of oneself from others and viewing others impersonally (Maslach et. al., 1986). It is a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or are having problems. While *Diminished personal accomplishment* is a feeling of negative self-evaluation.

Few researchers (Ross & Altmaier, 1994; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2002) have suggested mainly two interventions for reducing burnout among employees. First is to change individual employees and second changing the organization practices. This study is conducted on the assumption that certain organizational practices lead to burnout among the employees and one of those organizational element is recruiter characteristics. Therefore, this paper attempts to find the relationship of post-hire burnout of employees with perceived recruiter characteristics that influenced them during recruitment process.

Purpose of research

As suggested by Carless & Wintle (2007) and Chapman (2005) it is important to study post hire behaviour and attitudes of applicants. Human resource professionals use realistic job preview and expectations lowering procedures (Buckley et al., 1998) to effectively work on recruitment process and reduce turnover (Wanous, 1992).

Burnout in the organizations can be tracked by effectively implementing individual, managerial and organizational practices (Sharma & Cooper, 2016). Lot of researchers have presented studies on positive effects of recruiters who are informative, credible, personable, and demographically diverse. The current research aims to study recruiter characteristics to manage post-hire outcome in terms of burnout.

Considering numerous studies mentioned in the literature review section it becomes essential to further study and validate post-hire outcomes of recruiter characteristics. Most of the post hire studies are been conducted amongst the students appearing for the campus placements, or testing the immediate reaction during recruitment process. This study tests the applicants' reactions to recruiter characteristics after completing

certain tenure in the organization. To date, very few field research studies have systematically examined this possibility. Vispute (2013) has studied relationship between recruiter characteristics and, commitment and turnover intention of employees. Hence, on the similar line this papers finds the relationship between recruiter characteristics and burnout as a post-hire outcome among employees.

Research Methodology

Sample

Burnout many a times is observed among the employees whose profession demand frequent interaction with the customers. In banking and insurance sector employees need to serve their customers promptly, help their colleagues, comply with instruction from authorities, etc. Therefore, the current study is done amongst banking and insurance professionals. Out of 591 participants 67% of them are males. 50% of the respondents are junior level managers, 47% are middle level managers and rest 3% are top managerial employees. 47% of the participants have tenure of 1 year to 3 years in current organization. 17% have experience of 3 years to 5 years in current organization, while 15% of them have more than 5 years of tenure in current organization.

Measures

Recruiter characteristic: Measures for recruiter characteristic were adapted from the study by Vispute (2013). These are 5 point Likert scales. Chronbach's alpha for the scale of personable (6 items) has value of 0.75, informative (2 items) 0.63, competence (4 items) 0.61, and applicant treatment (3 items) 0.50.

Burnout: Maslach Burnout Index (Maslach and Jackson, 1981) of 22 items is applied to measure burnout. Cronbach's Alpha is 0.90 of Emotional exhaustion, 0.82 of Personal Accomplishment, and of Depersonalization it is 0.74.

Procedure

The survey questionnaire was administered among respondents working at all managerial levels. Multiple regression analysis is performed to determine the contributions of each of the specified independent variables to the variations in dependent variables.

Analysis
Major Results

In descriptive statistics the mean values showed that respondents found the recruiter to be highly personable ($M = 21.82$, $SD = 3.74$), informative ($M = 7.28$, $SD = 1.67$), and competent ($M = 14.86$, $SD = 2.46$). The recruiter treatment ($M = 8.28$, $SD = 1.48$) was satisfying.

Table 1 – Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personable	591	6.00	30.00	21.8166	3.73853
Informative	591	2.00	10.00	7.2791	1.66698
Competent	591	5.00	20.00	14.8566	2.45816
Applicant Treatment	586	2.00	11.00	8.2816	1.47720
Emotional Exhaustion	591	0.00	54.00	14.1466	11.88231
D Personal Accomplishment	591	0.00	48.00	14.9656	9.75560
Depersonalisation	591	0.00	30.00	7.5265	6.53774
Valid N (listwise)	579				

The level of emotional exhaustion ($M = 14.15$, $SD = 11.88$), diminished personal accomplishment ($M = 14.97$, $SD = 9.76$), and depersonalization ($M = 7.53$, $SD = 6.54$) among respondents is seen to be low.

The scale correlations are calculated between the recruiter characteristics variables and burnout variables. The results show all three variable of burnout i.e. Emotional Exhaustion, Diminished Personal Accomplishment and Depersonalization are negatively and significantly correlated with recruiter characteristics like Personable, Informative, Competent, and Applicant treatment.

Table 2 - Correlations

	Emotional Exhaustion	Diminished Personal Accomplishment	Depersonalization
Personable	-.325[**]	-.250[**]	-.121[**]
Informative	-.296[**]	-.217[**]	-.129[**]
Competent	-.268[**]	-.193[**]	-.139[**]
Applicant Treatment	-.194[**]	-.149[**]	-.138[**]

[**]. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

After one-to-one correlation it is essential to conduct multivariate analysis. This will help explore the factors which will help explain maximum variation in executive burnout.

Burnout comprises three variables, namely emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalization. Regression analysis presents results of predictors of burnout variables. The regression coefficient of independent variables on Emotional Exhaustion was estimated. The recruiter characteristics factors explain 13% variation in the variable Emotional Exhaustion.

Table 3: Multiple Regression: Dependent Variable – Emotional Exhaustion

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	.357[a]	.127	.121	11.11362

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	10463.715	4	2615.929	21.179	.000[b]
	Residual	71760.773	581	123.513		
	Total	82224.488	585			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	40.096	3.229			.000
	Personable	-.679	.180	-.211	.000	.000
	Informative	-1.006	.369	-.141	.000	.007
	Competent	-.261	.263	-.054	.007	.322
	Applicant Treatment	.004	.385	.000	.322	.992

The recruiter experience factors Personable (β = -.211, p = .000), Informative (β = -.141 p = .007) significantly negatively influence Emotional Exhaustion at 5% level of significance. While rest of the two factors of recruiter experience, i.e. competence and applicant treatment show no significant influence on emotional exhaustion at 5% level of significance.

The regression coefficient of independent variables on Diminished Personal Accomplishment was estimated. The recruiter characteristics factors explain 7% variation in the variable Diminished Personal Accomplishment.

Table 4: Multiple Regression: Dependent Variable– Diminished Personal Accomplishment

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.256[a]	.065	.059	9.42505

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3607.217	4	901.804	10.152	.000[b]
	Residual	51611.164	581	88.832		
	Total	55218.381	585			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	30.679	2.738		11.203	.000
	Personable	-.395	.153	-.150	-2.584	.010
	Informative	-.503	.313	-.086	-1.607	.109
	Competent	-.190	.223	-.048	-.851	.395
	Applicant Treatment	-.075	.327	-.011	-.229	.819

The regression results show that recruiter characteristic variable - Personable significantly negatively influence Diminished Personal accomplishment at 5% level of significance. However, rest of the three characteristics of recruiter i.e. informative, competent and applicant treatment show no significant influence on diminished personal accomplishment.

The regression coefficient of independent variables on Depersonalisation was estimated. The recruiter characteristics factors explain 3% variation in the variable Depersonalisation.

Table 5: Multiple Regression: Dependent Variable – Depersonalisation

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.164[a]	.027	.020	6.43033

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	661.614	4	165.404	4.000	.003[b]
	Residual	24023.889	581	41.349		
	Total	24685.503	585			

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	14.527	1.868		7.776	.000

Personable	-.021	.104	-.012	-.205	.837
Informative	-.236	.214	-.060	-1.104	.270
Competent	-.132	.152	-.050	-.869	.385
Applicant Treatment	-.347	.223	-.079	-1.558	.120

It seen that none of the recruiter characteristics variables influence depersonalization at 5% level of significance.

Discussion and Implication

Similar to the studies of Connerley & Rynes (1997) it is seen in the present study that two of the recruiter characteristics i.e. personable and informativeness are significantly negatively related to emotional exhaustion. Personable (e.g. caring and empathetic) recruiters help in reducing emotional exhaustion among these employees. It may be because personableness of the recruiter signals how the applicant will be treated, if hired. If enough information is shared by recruiter at a right time, then it helps candidates to take right decisions which will reduced emotional exhaustion amongst employees during their tenure with that organization.

The study revealed that recruiter characteristic personable is significantly negatively related to diminished personal accomplishment amongst employees. As per definition by Maslach and Jackson (1981) Diminished personal accomplishment is a tendency to evaluate oneself negatively, particularly with regard to one's work with clients (Zalaquett, & Wood,1998). If the recruiter is personable during recruitment process, the tendency of relating oneself positively with other people in the organization increases and vice a versa.

Competence of handling recruitment process effectively, ability to answer candidates' questions is expected by the candidates during recruitment process. The current study shows no significant relationship of competence with any burnout dimension. Similarly, applicant treatment variable of recruiter characteristic showed no significant relationship with any of the burnout dimensions.

Depersonalisation dimension of burnout showed no significant relationship with any of the variables of recruiter characteristics. As mentioned before according to the study by Chiu & Tsai (2006) emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishment were related negatively to organizational citizenship behaviour, whereas depersonalization had no independent effect on the same. Similarly, current study depicts emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishment as important dimension for influencing applicant behaviour. There is no support for the hypothesis that recruiter characteristics has an influence on depersonalization of employees. However, there are few reasons for caution before concluding recruiter does not affect depersonalization. Only direct effects of recruiter characteristics are examined in this study. Researchers (Gilliland, 1993; Ryan & Ployhart, 2000) have speculated that there are factors that moderate the recruiter characteristics. The organizational justice especially procedural justice needs to be examined as a moderator to the recruiter characteristics.

Burnout is a highly prevalent issue in many organizations, still there is little research which presents and evaluates the interventions designed to reduce burnout. The two preventive approaches to intervention are; trying to change individual employees and trying to change the organization (Ross & Altmaier, 1994; Schaufeli & Buunk, 2002). There is belief that burnout is due to personal issues or it is easier to change individual than an organization. Therefore, interventions are designed to change individuals rather than changing organizational practices (Maslach & Goldberg, 1998). The current study is an attempt to seek solution to burnout by changing organization recruitment process with special reference to recruiter behaviour.

Present study postulates few implications for practitioners as well as future researchers. Employee burnout can have its implications on their productivity in the organization. In a service sector like banking and insurance employee burnout might influence customer satisfaction negatively. Thus, it is important to control the same right from the recruitment stage. Recruiters who are personable and informative create positive impressions on candidates and it gives positive cues to the employees during their tenure in the organization. Candidates view recruiters as primary source of information regarding recruitment process and results. Thus, it is necessary that recruiters are well informed about the recruitment process, results, and also possess enough information about the candidates before interacting with them. Sharing pre-visit information to the

candidates shows professionalism of the organization that they experience in their profession. Thus, organizations should train their recruiters for being personable and informative. The care must be taken by the recruiters to share enough pre-visit information at right time to the candidates.

This study is first of its kind to test the relationship between recruiter characteristics and post hire outcome with reference to burnout of employees. Further study can be conducted to test the same in different context and different set of respondents to generalize the results.

The study has a theoretical importance. Although several attempts have been made to empirically assess applicant reactions to selection procedures, less attention has been given to assessment of applicant reactions towards recruiter characteristics. The current study adds to the theory of recruiter characteristics study and its post-hire implications.

The results of this study provide managers with an understanding of the long term negative effects of recruiter behaviour on employee burnout. To prevent employees from emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishment, the recruiter need to show personableness towards them and share information at right time and in a right manner.

The study is not without its limitations. It is conducted only among banking and insurance professionals. The results might differ in other professions. As most of the recruitment processes in various organizations are automatized, the role of recruiter has a limited scope. As none of the recruiter behaviour show no significant effect on depersonalization, there is a need to consider alternate measure of burnout to further validate the same.

Conclusion

The respondents in this study experienced high level of personableness, informativeness, competence and fair treatment from recruiter during recruitment process. At the same time mean values showed employees to be low on emotional exhaustion, diminished personal accomplishment and depersonalisation. The regression results showed personableness and informativeness of recruiter to be significantly influencing emotional exhaustion amongst respondents. After experiencing effective recruiter in terms of personable and informative employees may raise demands in terms of higher expectations from the organization they join. If these expectations are not fulfilled, then that leads to emotional exhaustion amongst them. The results further showed that personableness of recruiter is significantly negatively related to diminished personal accomplishment of respondents. If recruiter is low on personableness then the similar feelings of low self or negative self-evaluation emerges in the minds of employee.

The lack of significant relationships between recruiter characteristic variables and depersonalization may have been due to methodological problems, the theoretical arguments appear to justify further investigation of this variable as a potential contributor to burnout. The MBI construct was developed in the West. Therefore, the use of burnout measure (MBI) in the Indian context might be irrelevant (Sharma, 2002).

The competence and applicant treatment of recruiter showed no significant relationship with any of the burnout dimensions. It can be concluded from the results that these two variables (competence and applicant treatment) are insignificant in predicting burnout amongst banking and insurance professionals. Our results are similar to Powell (1984) who concluded that positive recruiter behaviours as determinants of applicant behaviours may be overstated in the literature.

It is being postulated by Leiter and Maslach (1988) that the dimension of burnout is developing. At first emotional exhaustion is observed which is result of excessive demands at workplace. To cope with energy drainage, employees distance themselves from work and colleagues. This defensive strategy manifests as depersonalization. As a consequence of such depersonalization the work effectiveness of the employees' decreases. When an employee realizes that his accomplishments are not matching with his/ her original expectations, the same causes reduced personal accomplishment or inefficacy. Similarly, current study postulates that the recruiter characteristics has given rise to two dimensions of burnout emotional exhaustion and diminished personal accomplishment. The respondents might experience depersonalization after a few more years.

Considering the progressions in technologies, organizations are undergoing radical changes. Due to such virtual offices large number of executives lack social contact or face to face people contact. Thus, it is essential to empirically better understand the phenomenon of 'executive burnout'.

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