



Perception on Organisational Attractiveness: An African Sample

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration with all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

A major concern of entrepreneurs worldwide is how to identify and engage the services of workers that would stay for a reasonable period of time with minimal personnel turnover consequences on the organization. Understanding the worker's initial attraction to the organization provides a mitigating approach. Based on the Attraction-Selection-Attention (ASA) model, this study chose organizational characteristics as a platform for an examination. Data was collected from a convenient sample size of 62 graduating accounting students from a public university in Nigeria using an adapted questionnaire which was earlier developed and used in a developed economic environment. Descriptive and inferential statistics provided the basis for the analysis. The result agrees with earlier studies reinforcing the opinion that workers attraction to organizations goes beyond the traditionally acknowledged job description approach.

Keywords: Job attraction; organizational characteristics; employment; job description.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human capital is one of the most valuable organizational assets and recruitment serves the

important function of bringing this necessary talent into the organization [1,2]. Recruitment remains a crucial human resource function for at least three reasons. First, there will always be

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certain hard-to-fill vacancies for which organizations must compete fiercely to attract potential applicants, even in an otherwise loose labour market. Second, the most talented job seekers continue to have enough options to critically investigate and compare potential employers. Therefore, organizations that wish to attract these highly desired applicants have no choice but to participate in the “war for talent.” Third, demographic trends (e.g., smaller supply of younger workers, emergence of the Generation Y workforce and retirement of baby boomers) indicate that recruitment will be even more important in the future [3,4].

Attracting and the attraction of applicants remain central to the human capital management process of firms [5] considering the need to retain them [6]. Due to the current quantitative and qualitative shortages on some labour markets the attractiveness of organizations has become increasingly important. Earlier studies used Vroom's expectancy theory [7,8] or decision theories: [9,10] to examine organizational attractiveness. For instance, [8] reported on a strong relationship between the attractiveness of an organization and the perceived instrumentality of that organization for accomplishing specific goals (e.g. higher salary, more opportunity for advancement, among others).

Recent studies framed organizational attractiveness for prospective applicants in the context of the fit between the person and the organization (p-o fit) [9]. [5] reported that individuals were attracted to an organization whose culture reflected their own personality characteristics. [11] found that individuals' high on need for achievement were more attracted to organizations which encouraged and rewarded individual performances. [12] showed that final-year students preferred jobs in organizations with organizational values similar to their own values. [9] concluded that the fit between characteristics of human resource systems in organizations and individual characteristics was an important determinant of job acceptance.

Finnegan [13] found that personality attributes such as materialism and self-efficacy significantly predicted individuals' preferences for organizations with pay systems characterised by high pay levels and individual-based pay. [14] demonstrated that specific personality aspects (i.e. self-esteem and need for achievement) moderated the effects of organizational characteristics on organizational attractiveness.

Specifically, upper-level students high on self-esteem were more attracted to decentralised and larger organizations. Students high on need for achievement chose to work in organizations with a merit-based pay system instead of a tenure-based pay system. [15] were of the opinion that objective as well as subjective measures of person-organization fit (p-o fit) significantly correlated with organizational attractiveness.

While these studies indicate the growing link between organizational attractiveness and organizational characteristics, they have largely focused on Western and developed economies [4,9,13]. There is, therefore, a deficiency of empirical understanding on the subject matter in developing countries and in particular, Nigeria. This study seeks to fill the gap by assessing the disparities in organizational attractiveness status of college-based youths in a developing economy like Nigeria.

To achieve this purpose, this study intends to identify the demographic characteristics of the youths; assess the organizational attractiveness status of the youths; estimate the organizational job attractiveness index of the youths; and examine the variations in the organizational attractiveness status of the youths.

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Theoretical Perspective

This study is founded on the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model of [16]. This theory describes how individuals seek organizations that they perceive to have characteristics that are similar to their own. It posits that people in any organization are unique in that they are the ones attracted to, chosen by, and who choose to remain with an organization. Meaning, prospective applicants are attracted to organizations that are congruent to their own personal attributes (interests, needs, preferences and personality); the organization selects people who fit to the staff and expects employees who do not fit to leave. This attraction results from the fact that both the individual and the organization are making decisions about one another: On the one side, selection and recruitment processes enable organizations to find the individuals that best fit with their needs and expectations. On the other hand, individuals make a selection among a number of organizations on the basis of previous experiences, interests, needs, preferences and their personality. Hence, the

theory argues that both parties reinforce the best fit approach, which in turn determines not only the attraction but the retention of employees as well. In addition, individuals will react differently to recruitment activities depending on their personality, needs, preferences and values [17].

2.2 Conceptual Perspective

A large body of work has focused on the overall organizational attractiveness; however, researchers addressed organizational attractiveness from different points of view. For instance, some scholars discussed organizational attractiveness from the person-organization fit (p-o fit) perspective [9,17]. They defined organizational attraction as favourable interaction between potential applicants and the images, values and information about an organization and opined that person-organization fit (p-o fit) is the congruence between the norms and the values of organizations and the values of persons. [18] noted that p-o fit is underpinned by the assumption that attitudes, behavior and other person level outcomes result not from the person or the work environment independent of each other, but rather from the relationship between the two.

Judge and Cable [15] and Catanzaro et al. [19] discussed the organizational attractiveness through organizational culture. The attraction process involves a jobseeker's estimate of how well their personnel needs and values fit the organization's culture [19]. Therefore, organization's culture should reflect values that will attract a diverse population of qualified job applicants. By doing so, organizations would have wide range of options in terms of applicant diversity which allows them to be more selective in the hiring process [19]. [15] found out that job seekers' preferences for organizational culture are based on their personality and they are attracted to organizational cultures that match their values.

Recruitment advertisements and organizational attractiveness relation is another subject at issue recently [13,20]. Recruitment advertisements can be a critical medium for potential employees deciding on whether to apply for jobs [13,20] noted that recruitment-related information sources and their characteristics can be important antecedents of organizational attractiveness. Both internal and external recruitment sources have effect on job seekers' attraction to organizations and their potential job

choices. In their "social influences on organizational attractiveness" study, [18] found out that negative word of mouth decreased the effect of recruitment advertising on organizational attractiveness as an external information source. They suggested organizations to stimulate positive word of mouth through indirect strategies such as campus recruitment and internship.

Corporate social performance and organizational attractiveness is another combination that draws attention [21,22]. According to [21], firm's CSP provides potential applicants with signals about the organization's value system, which influences applicants' perceptions of working conditions and subsequent attraction to the organization. Another study indicated that the firms higher in CSP are perceived as more attractive employers than firms lower in CSP and that prospective applicants' job pursuit, probability to interview, and probability to accept a job offer are positively associated with a firm's CSP [22].

In their current study [23] described corporate social responsibility as doing good for society as one ethical behaviour of corporations. They searched out how company's corporate social responsibility performances affect p-o fit, organizational attractiveness, and intent to apply among potential job seekers. Their results indicate that students were more likely to perceive a company as attractive which incorporates in CSR activities.

2.3 Organizational Attractiveness and Individual Characteristics

Here, individual characteristics refer to prospective applicants' characteristics such as personality and demographic characteristics that may influence perceived attractiveness of an organization. There are several studies that examined the influence of personality traits on organizational attractiveness [15,17]. [17] investigated how personality characteristics, which were measured by using the Big Five personality factors moderate the effects of organizational characteristics on organizational attractiveness. They found that participants that scored high on conscientiousness were more attracted to large-sized organizations. Furthermore, people who are high on openness to new experiences are more attracted to multinational organizations.

Peteraf and Barney [24] examined the effect of gender on organisational attractiveness. The

results suggest that stereotypes about women may reduce the attractiveness of women as employees to some organisations with jobs that are tagged masculine jobs. [25] showed in their study that race representation in organizations is important to minority applicants (in this case Hispanic and Black participants), whereas White participants are unaffected by whether they have representatives in their race or not. The researchers examined this by measuring the impact of race in recruitment advertisements on applicant attraction. Also, studies have shown that there are factors that are equally important across genders as well as gender specific factors of organizational attractiveness. For example, in the study conducted by [26], the provisions of childcare benefits were perceived as more important by women than by men.

Similarly, [27] looked into the relationship between age and organisational attractiveness. They found that young people are more aware of their abilities and capacity, and that they are open and more attracted to organisations that will support their growth needs. Also they found that younger people are more likely to be attracted to foreign firms or organisations in foreign countries. This they explained is because working for international firms may increase relocation likelihood, which, in turn, could increase work-family conflict, which negatively relates to career satisfaction for older individuals. In terms of education, students with high cognitive ability and all types of high achievement place greater importance on interesting and challenging work and will be attracted to organisations that offer such opportunities [28]. Thus, more-educated applicants may prefer working for foreign-headquartered and more international firms, which may present more challenging and interesting work opportunities than domestic firms. Similarly, [17] observed national organizations as less likely to attract open, creative, and independent individuals because these individuals find multinational organizations more attractive. As higher educated people tend to possess these traits, they may be more comfortable interacting with foreign nationals than people with less education.

2.4 Organizational Attractiveness and Organizational Characteristics

There are three sets of organizational attributes on which basis prospective applicants develop beliefs about an organization. These include

employer information characteristics (e.g. size and geographical dispersion of the organization, concern for the environment); job information characteristics (e.g. pay levels, opportunities for advancement); and, people information characteristics (e.g. attributes of potential co-workers and supervisors) [29]. [30] investigated how factors like gender, race, age and educational level interact with foreignness in predicting organizational attractiveness. Foreignness refers to whether the organization has foreign headquarters as well as to their degree of internationalization. The results indicated that having foreign headquarters relates negatively to organizational attractiveness, while internationalization is positively correlated. Results concerning age indicate that older employees value more the opportunities offered by foreign firms than young people do. Education level is strongly related to attraction to foreign and international firms. This makes sense considering the fact that high achievers are attracted to challenging jobs. Moreover, international firms are able to offer a larger variety of job and career opportunities.

Li and Roloff [31] found out in their study that prospective applicants are least attracted to organizations that have seniority-based compensation systems (salary and benefits) relative to those using a mixed system or one entirely based on merit. In addition, their results indicated that psychological contract of organizations using merit-based systems were usually perceived as relational as and less transactional than those using seniority-based compensation systems. [32] have examined the influence of specific development programme information on organizational attractiveness and job application intentions. This was measured by using an experimental design which manipulated the amount of specific professional development programme information in a recruiting message. The result showed that specified information about development programmes is positively correlated with job application intentions/job pursuit intentions.

2.5 Objectives:

1. Identify the demographic characteristics of the youths
2. Assess the pattern and status of organizational attractiveness of the youths
3. Estimate the organizational job attractiveness index of the youths

4. Examine the variations in the organizational attractiveness status of the youths

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted in a public university located in Uyo in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The target population of the study comprised all the final year undergraduates of Accounting Department of the university because of the proximity to the researchers. This set of students was chosen because they were expectant of choiced desirable career. The scale to measure organizational attractiveness was adapted from a questionnaire earlier used by [33]. The researchers' adapted questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity. The instruments were trial-tested through pilot study using ten undergraduate students. The pilot study helped in fine-tuning the items in the questionnaire and enhanced the validation process. Cronbach Alpha reliability statistics was adopted to test the reliability of the instrument with ten [10] items having a reliability coefficient of 0.62. The validated questionnaire was then used in collecting data from the respondents. The instruments were administered and retrieved the same day. Descriptive statistics (simple percentages and frequencies), composite index analysis, independent T-test and ANOVA were used to analyse the data. The composite index approach had index range that lied within 0.00 and 1.00. As the respondents estimated index of overall response tended towards 1.00, it implied that their extent of response was extremely high and vice versa as it tended towards 0.00. However, for ease of analysis, the index of each respondent was distributed along a categorized level of contribution based on common intervals, such that 0.00 – 0.399 indicated low or poor level of attractiveness, 0.4 – 0.699 indicated average attractiveness level while 0.7 – 1.00 indicated high attractiveness level.

4. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic Characteristics of the Youths

Information generated by the survey as indicated in Tables 1 and 2 revealed that men had dominance over the women during the exercise. The male category represented 54.8% while the remaining 45.2% were of the female category.

Those between the ages of 21-25 constituted 62.9% of the population, 27% were between 26-30 years while 9.7% were those of 31-35years bracket. A total of 88.7% were not employed, while 11.3% were currently of the working class category. In paid job preference, the private sector caught the fancy of respondents with higher percentage points of 64.5% with the oil sector topping the list. The perceived employing sectors of the economy were the civil service 35%, telecommunications sector 21%, the oil industry 4% and the banking sector 2%. The perceived employing sectors were those the respondents believed were recruiting personnel at the time. And job seeking preference indicated sectoral employment interest of the respondents given an employing economy situation.

4.2 Pattern of Organizational Attractiveness among Youths

Further clarifications were made from the information from Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5. These indicated the distribution, index, magnitude as well as the variations in organizational attractiveness.

4.3 Pattern and Status of Organizational Attractiveness among Youths

4.3.1 Pattern of organizational attractiveness among youths

Training and development of employees as an organizational characteristic was very important to the respondents as all were in agreement; 82.3% were in strong agreement. Almost 76% of respondents supported the feature that the organization must have clear opportunities for long term career progression as against the less than 7% level of those in strong disagreement. Over 80% would accept variety in daily job description; about 27% were against moving people around different departments of the organization. 93.6% of respondents would prefer reward system based on performance and only 14.5% preferred working for large organizations. Standard and flexible working hours were generally acceptable at varying levels by most respondents while organisations with overseas working opportunities attracted 51.6% of respondents. 95.2% of respondents would prefer organizations acknowledging university degree skills and about 54% of respondents broadly anchored on high starting salary.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents based on demographic characteristics

Item	Demographic characteristics	Frequency (n=62)	Percent
a.	Sex		
	Male	34	54.8
	Female	28	45.2
b.	Age		
	21 – 25	39	62.9
	26 – 30	17	27.4
	31 – 35	6	9.7
c.	Employment status		
	Yes	7	11.3
	No	55	88.7
d.	Perceived reward structure		
	Highly secured lowly paid	22	35.5
	Highly secured highly paid	31	50.0
	Less secured highly paid	9	14.5
e.	job sectorial interest		
	Public	22	35.5
	Private	40	64.5
f.	Perceived employing sector		
	civil service	35	56.5
	oil industry	4	6.5
	Telecommunication industry	21	33.9
	Banking industry	2	3.2
g.	Job sector seeking preference		
	civil service	22	35.5
	oil industry	31	50.0
	Telecommunication industry	4	6.5
	Banking industry	5	8.1

Source: field survey 2013

Table 2. Distribution of respondents based on components of organizational attractiveness

Item		SD	D	A	SA
1	Such organization must invest heavily in the training and development of their employees	0.0	0.0	17.7	82.3
2	Must have clear opportunities for long term career progression	6.5	0.0	17.7	75.8
3	Must have variety in daily work	11.3	4.8	30.6	53.2
4	Must have opportunity in the early years to move around the organization and work in different areas	6.5	21.0	40.3	32.3
5	Rewards and promotions based on performance	0.0	6.5	9.7	83.9
6	Must be a small organization	33.9	51.6	9.7	4.8
7	Must require you to work standard working hours	4.8	1.6	27.4	66.1
8	Must have relative stress-free working hours	4.8	3.2	22.6	69.4
9	Must provide opportunity to work and live abroad	32.3	16.1	27.4	24.2
10	Must employ people with whom you feel you will have things in common	25.8	35.5	21.0	17.7
11	Really care about employees as individuals	4.8	0.0	9.7	85.5
12	Widely regarded as a highly prestigious employer	9.7	6.5	35.5	48.4
13	Must have a very high starting salary	29.0	17.7	19.4	33.9
14	Must have flexible work hours	0.0	4.8	48.4	46.8
15	Must use your degree skills	4.8	0.0	22.6	72.6

SD = Strong Disagreement, D = Disagreement, A = Agreement, SA = Strong Agreement

Source: field survey 2013

4.3.2 Status of organizational attractiveness index (JAI)

Attractiveness extent among individuals denoted diverse dimensions of magnitude and direction. In an attempt to further understand the status of organizational attractiveness, we mapped the magnitude of the behaviour towards particular career types. The level was estimated using composite index analysis. Table 3 shows the index categories, its interpretation and distribution of respondent performances on organisational attractiveness across the various status of attractiveness. The result revealed that 31.0% of the respondents fell into the poor level of organisational attractiveness, 36.0% fell into average level of organisational attractiveness while 33.0% fell into high level of organisational attractiveness. This shows that majority (93.5%) of the respondents had high level of attractiveness to their idealistic organisations.

4.4 Variations in the Organizational Attractiveness Status of the Youths

4.4.1 Variations in mean organizational attractiveness status by age and reward structure

Respondents were attracted to diverse job opportunities. As shown in Table 4, Item 1, those

within 31-35 years old exhibited more attraction though with no clear pattern across the three age grades. The significant value revealed that there was no statistical significance as sig-value (0.893) was greater than p-value (0.05). In the perceived reward structure, there variations across its categories showed no regular pattern. Statistically, those highly secured but lowly paid and less-secured with high pay categories showed differences in their mean index. Despite the variations in the mean index, the sig-value (0.575) was greater than p-value (0.05), thus not statistically significant.

4.4.2 Variations in mean organizational attractiveness status of the youths by sex and job sectoral interest

The variation in mean organizational attractiveness by gender and job sectoral interest showed a pattern similar to Table 4. As shown Table 5, Item 1, the t-test value was 1.283 while sig-value (0.205) was greater than the p-value (0.05); statistically not significant. This means that variation in organizational attractiveness status due to sex was virtually the same. With regards to job sectoral interest, as shown in table 5, item 2, the t-test value was 0.84 with the sig-value (0.406), meaning that there was no job sectoral interest variations between public and private organizational attractiveness.

Table 3. Distribution of respondents across the status of organizational attractiveness

JAI ranges	JAI range interpretation	Frequency	Percent
0.0 – 0.399	Low	0	0.0
0.4 - 0.699	Average	4	6.5
0.7 - 1.0	High	58	93.5
Total		62	100.0

Source: computed based on field survey data (2013)

Table 4. ANOVA results in respect of organizational attractiveness status of the youths

Item	Variables	N	Mean	f-value	Sig	p-value	Remark
1	Age			0.113	0.893	0.05	Nsign
	21 - 25	39	0.7499 ^a				
	26 - 30	17	0.7405 ^a				
	31 - 35	6	0.7519 ^a				
2	Reward structure			0.559	0.575	0.05	Nsign
	Highly secured lowly paid	22	0.7374 ^a				
	Secured highly paid	31	0.7570 ^a				
	Less secured highly paid	9	0.7395 ^a				

Source: computed based on field survey data (2013)

Table 5. T-test results in respect of the organizational attractiveness status across the youths

Item	Variables	N	Mean	t-value	df	Sig	p-value	Remark
1	Sex			1.283	60	0.205	0.05	Nsign
	Male	34	.7578					
	Female	28	.7349					
2	Job sectoral interest			-.837	60	.406		Nsign
	Public	22	.7374					
	Private	40	.7531					

Source: computed based on field survey data (2013)

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the literature in a number of ways. It confirms the robustness of the ASA model of [16] in reinforcing the understanding that organization attraction is beyond the traditional job description approach. Broadly speaking, the study agrees with earlier studies including [3,34]. Contextually, the entrepreneurial attributes of the respondents could be assumed in their risk propensity to high paid but less-secured private sector jobs. Also, interest in small size organizations respondents suggested detest for bureaucracy and tall structures; an assurance of availability and readability of talents to work in SMEs that occupy more than 90% of the enterprise space in Nigeria.

Responses from perceived reward structure and job sector seeking preference segments of the questionnaire are in agreement. Higher percentage points were given the well developed sectors of the economy in terms of longevity and engagement. The oil sector for an example is the main stay of the national economy while the Civil Service is as old as formal employment in Nigeria. This commonality indicates familiarity, hence the attraction. Organizational attributes and applicants' impression of organization are key attraction factors which job interviews should include and rank the attributes according to importance to each applicant. Understanding this reality will enable creative, balanced and flexible recruitment process that will result in the person-organization fit model for better output and performance. Remarkably, an insight to an applicants' impression of organization is suggested before recruitment.

6. LIMITATION

The study utilized a small convenient sample of one institution and there was no regional comparison. Notwithstanding the above, the

result cannot be invalidated and there is a provision of a base for further examination.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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