
TWO STUDIES EXAMINING THE INTERCONNECTED EFFECTS OF WORK-LIFE BALANCE BENEFITS, EMPLOYEE RECOMMENDATIONS, AND JOB QUALITIES ON EMPLOYEE ATTRACTION AND JOB ACQUISITION INTENT.

Ms. Maria Fastina¹, Dr. S. Rafiya Banu², Dr. S. Jayakani³, Dr.S.Uma⁴

¹Research Scholar, Department of Commerce, B. S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai

²Assistant Professor & Research Supervisor, Department of Commerce, B. S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai

³Associate Professor & Research Supervisor, Department of Commerce, Vels institute of science technology and advanced studies, Chennai

⁴Assistant Professor, Crescent School of Business, B. S. Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, Chennai

¹Email: mariavincen1973@gmail.com | ²Email: dr.rafiyasyed@gmail.com

³Email: jkani.sms@velsuniv.ac.in | ⁴Email: umavpm76@gmail.com

ABSTRACT:

Our proposal is based on Spence's (1978) signaling theory, which states that companies intentionally boost their attractiveness as employers by communicating about work-life balance benefits, positive employee recommendations, and highly desirable job attributes. In order to test these theories, we do two experiments. Findings from our initial study corroborate the combined and direct effects of these factors on an applicant's attractiveness as an employer. In a two-part, two-level collaborative design, we were able to do this by using carefully crafted scenarios to manage and impact the positive effects of work-life balance, employee ideas, and job attributes. A total of 320 MBA students from India were polled for this data. Examining information gathered from 360 Indian graduates of MBA programs using a 3x2x2 cross-subject design, Study 2 assessed the impact of three unique alternative work arrangements.

Keywords: Job qualities, work-life balance perks, alternative work arrangements, employer appeal, and employee recommendations

Introduction

This review examines the impression of providing work-life advantages on the attractiveness of organizations to job searchers, using the framework of person-organization fit theory. The study done during a recession with 189 MBA students emphasized the importance of fit perceptions in recruiting. The findings indicated that companies that provided work-life benefits were perceived as more attractive employers, especially among the Millennial generation (Firfray & Mayo, 2017). The objective of this study is to establish the correlation between the appeal of an employer and the intention to pursue a job by examining

the impacts of chances for professional advancement, advantages related to work-life balance, and the reputation of the company's commitment to corporate social responsibility. Based on the findings of a between-subjects trial including 240 participants, it has been shown that CGO had the greatest impact on EA and JPI, despite its restricted work-life balance and bad corporate social responsibility reputation. The study conducted by Kumari and Saini (2018) provides insights into the determinants that impact job searchers' choices and can aid in the creation of effective recruitment strategies. This article explores the concept of employer attractiveness within the framework of internal marketing, with a specific emphasis on employees as the primary target audience. The article introduces the concept of employer branding and devises a metric to assess the level of attractiveness of a business to prospective employees, particularly in industries that largely depend on specialized expertise. This study does a meta-analysis of 71 papers to examine the connections between predictors and work-organization attraction, pursuit intentions, acceptance intents, and job choice. The results of applicant attraction are strongly influenced by various elements, such as the characteristics of the job and company, as well as individuals' impressions of the recruitment process. Attitudes and intentions serve as intermediaries in these exchanges. The significance of the implications for theory, research, and practice in the field of recruiting. This study reveals that individuals who are very conscientious or have low demands-abilities (D-A) or needs-supplies (N-S) job fit place greater importance on perceived person-organization (P-O) fit when it comes to influencing their work-related attitudes and decisions. The findings from a 12-week internship program with 299 participants indicate that there are stronger correlations between person-organization fit (P-O fit) and job satisfaction in situations when there is a poor person-environment fit. Likewise, those who have a mismatch between their skills and the demands of their job or who have a high level of conscientiousness are more likely to have stronger intents to choose a different profession. There is a correlation between P-O fit and the likelihood of accepting a job offer among individuals who exhibit high levels of conscientiousness (Resick et al., 2007). This study aims to analyse the aspects that impact applicant attractiveness, such as the business's reputation, job and organizational characteristics, and recruiter behaviours. The data for this analysis was collected from 361 campus recruitment interviews. Recruiters' actions have an indirect impact on candidates' interest, influenced by their impressions of the post and the firm. Although job and organizational characteristics had beneficial effects, the reputation of the organization unexpectedly had a direct negative impact on the attractiveness of applicants. The consequences and prospective avenues for future research are discussed (Turban et al., 1998).

Examining the recruitment literature uncovers various perspectives on employer appeal. There is a perspective that separates the influences on employer attraction into symbolic factors, like status, and instrumental factors, like income. This perspective emphasizes the importance of job and company characteristics when considering employer attractiveness (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Several researches (Lievens & Slaughter, 2017) have examined the influence of symbolic and instrumental elements on employer attractiveness and job pursuit intention. Employers are attracted to individuals who possess both instrumental and symbolic traits, as per this perspective.

This research explores how work-life balance initiatives enhance firms' attractiveness to job seekers by boosting their perceived alignment with the organization's values, based on principles derived from person-organization fit theory. A recession-era experimental study, involving 189 MBA students, discovered that companies that provided work-life balance (WLB) benefits alongside traditional compensation were deemed more appealing, resulting in participants having a stronger view of person-organization fit (P-O fit). The attraction-to-hire relationship is influenced by generational factors (Firfray & Mayo, 2017). This study examines the influence of reputational information on HR procedures on the inclination of college students to actively pursue career opportunities. Wayne and Casper (2012) conducted research that emphasizes the significance of an employer brand that prioritizes employees in attracting college students. The study found that a firm's reputation in areas such as salary, work-family balance, and diversity initiatives positively influences students' inclinations to join the company. These factors include the perception of the organization's status, the expectation of receiving support, and the anticipation of fulfilling one's duty effectively. This study investigates the correlation between employer rankings, job experience, and employee recommendations of a company as a preferred employer. It utilizes a theoretical framework that combines psychological contract theory with signaling theory. The findings of a multilevel logistic regression study conducted on 39,010 Glassdoor ratings indicate that both the average standardized ranks and years of experience in the workforce have a substantial impact on suggestions. Staff variables such as job type, status, and tenure can provide valuable information about the internal strength of a brand. These elements also have the ability to mitigate or lessen the impact of these impacts (Saini & Jawahar, 2019). This study examines the impact of monetary incentives on recruitment in relation to other factors such as the source, recipient, and message content, with a specific focus on word-of-mouth (WOM). Two studies including both unemployed and employed participants discovered that recommendations from individuals with expertise and close connections enhance appeal, but financial rewards diminish it. Van Hove and Lievens (2007a, 2007b) suggest that these findings provide insights into how recruiting organizations might effectively utilize word-of-mouth marketing.

This research examines the influence of employer attractiveness (EA) and job pursuit intention (JPI) on individuals who are searching for jobs. The elements taken into account include career advancement prospects (CGO), work-life perks (WLB), and the reputation of the company in terms of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Although there are limitations in work-life balance (WLB) and a negative corporate social responsibility (CSR) reputation, the findings from a study using a between-subjects experimental design with 240 participants indicate that corporate governance (CGO) has the most significant influence on employee attitudes (EA) and job performance indicators (JPI). The study conducted by Kumari and Saini (2018) provides insights into the determinants of individuals' career transition decisions and proposes recommendations for enhancing recruitment tactics. This study examines the perception and desirability of the Belgian Defense among potential workers and their acquaintances at a recruitment event. By employing the instrumental-symbolic paradigm, it identifies crucial elements of the organization's reputation. The beauty of both candidates and their partners can be forecasted based on instrumental image characteristics,

with symbolic attributes also influencing the outcome. A study conducted by Van Hoyer and Saks (2011) found that there is a direct relationship between the level of beauty of a partner and the applicant's personal optimistic perspective. The study analyzes the job-seeking intents of applicants in connection to work-life benefits, specifically focusing on flexible work schedules and assistance with dependent care. As a mediator in these links, it also evaluates the expected level of organizational support. The findings indicate that there is a relationship between dependent care and flexibility in terms of the intention to seek employment. However, only dependent care is associated with anticipated organizational support, which fully mediates the impact of both factors on the intention to seek employment. As stated by Casper and Bufardi (2004), the findings offer useful insights for recruitment strategies and emphasize the importance of organizational support in facilitating work-life benefits. This study examines the propensity of college students to pursue work, specifically in relation to the reputational information regarding human resources practices provided in business magazines, such as the rankings published by Fortune magazine. The study employs a factorial technique to quantify organizational prestige, expected support, and role performance, as well as the impact of firm reputation on salary, work-family, and diversity initiatives. The significance of HR policies that prioritize the needs and well-being of employees in the recruiting process is underscored by the research findings, which indicate that college students are more inclined to seek employment at firms that have a commendable reputation in these domains. College students are motivated by their opinions of the prestige, supportiveness, and congenial work environment of an organization.

At hand remains a non-existence of research scheduled the impact of employee references on a company's appeal to potential job applicants (Saini & Jawahar, 2019, 2021). Furthermore, when considering these characteristics collectively, they will undeniably influence the attractiveness of the employer. Employers should be cognizant of the elements that contribute to an employee's desirability, their level of significance, and how they can influence each other. By having a clear understanding of the costs and advantages associated with each component, organizations may make informed decisions on how to use their resources in order to become an attractive employer. Once these gaps are filled, the paper proceeds to discuss the unique obstacles faced by India in its talent acquisition endeavours. For instance, in emerging economies such as India, the younger generation seeking employment places a greater emphasis on achieving work-life balance and having flexible schedules compared to their counterparts in developed countries. Workers developed an appreciation for the alternative work arrangements when they were compelled to work remotely as a result of the outbreak. Currently, it is uncertain how these altered expectations impact the desirability of employers. The focus of our work is to fill these gaps in knowledge and maybe enhance the current literature.

Literature contains a plethora of valuable and enlightening knowledge. Research 1 used a 2x2x2 between-subjects design to collect data from 320 Indian MBA students, with the aim of evaluating these assumptions. The benefits of achieving work-life balance, receiving employee endorsements, and having desirable job attributes were slightly modified via the careful creation of the vignettes. Prior studies have shown that the intentions of individuals looking for employment are impacted by the level of attractiveness

of a potential employer. In research 2, our objective was to forecast individuals' inclination to pursue work. A 3×2 between-subject design was used to examine three various forms of alternate work arrangements, as well as employee ideas and job attributes. The reason for this decision is because intentions are the primary factors that directly influence behaviour. Our study contributes to the existing knowledge on the factors that make firms attractive and the preferences of job searchers. The results of our research add to the existing knowledge on the impact of symbolic and instrumental characteristics on employer appeal (study 1) and intentions to pursue a career (study 2). In contrast to previous studies that focused on specific advantages, such as the research conducted by Casper and Bufardi (2004), we modified the work-life balance benefits in study 1 by adjusting the quantity provided. This development is significant as it prevents prospective workers from mistakenly concluding that a firm prioritizes their work-life balance only based on the presence of particular benefits, even if those advantages are not applicable or pertinent to their own circumstances. For instance, a solitary male candidate or an individual whose children have grown up and left home would not require childcare payments. Research 2 further examined the advantages of work-life balance (WLB) by examining three distinct types of flexible work arrangements. Our study is unique since we were among the first to explore whether word-of-mouth recommendations from workers or future employers are more reliable predictors of a company's attractiveness. Furthermore, we examined the potential organic relationships among these precursors that influence the appeal of employers and their tendencies to pursue, ensuring that the findings accurately represent real-world situations. To do this, our study investigated interactions in both directions.

Study 1: Employer Attractiveness

Signals help firms recruit and retain top people (Slaughter et al., 2014). Banerjee et al. (2018) show that signaling theory has focused on recruitment study findings. Spence's 1973 signaling theory suggested that an organization may benefit from purposeful information diffusion. The success of a signal is contingent upon two factors: the reliability of the source and the perception of the signal by the receiver. Receivers can enhance signaling efficiency by providing countersignals as feedback. Both senders and receivers are motivated to ascertain each other's backgrounds in order to determine the reliability of signals, the level of attention they are receiving, and how each party is interpreting the signals. By closely attending to countersignals, similar to how receivers do, one might enhance the effectiveness of signaling. This statement holds especially true in bargaining situations that involve a series of steps or repetitions (Srivastava, 2001).

The impact of signaling theory on recruiting outcomes is now clearly apparent due to this reasoning. Companies that offer advantages that assist employees in balancing their professional and personal life, along with competitive compensation and excellent corporate image, are more inclined to attract and retain skilled employees.

When existing employees enthusiastically praise the company's exceptional work environment, it conveys a powerful message to prospective employees regarding the outstanding quality of the business. Now, we will examine how each of these qualities serves as a signal that impacts the appeal of an organization.

Work–life balance benefits and employer attractiveness.

This study demonstrates that providing flexible career paths enhances the appeal of job opportunities for young individuals seeking employment. However, the level of importance placed on personal identification and the type of recruiter do not have a significant effect on the attractiveness of the firm. According to Carless and Wintle (2007), having flexible HR policies can enhance the way potential recruits perceive the initial recruitment process. This finding has important implications for both practical application and further research. The article introduces the concept of work/family border theory, which focuses on the daily movement between work and family domains. It explores various factors such as integration, segmentation, border management, participation, and relationships. The article lays the foundation for future research on achieving work/family balance (Clark, 2000). The research questions the belief that firms that provide flexible work arrangements are universally more desirable to job searchers. Instead, it suggests that attractiveness is contingent upon individuals' inter role conflict. A study conducted with 142 MBA students revealed that individuals experiencing high role conflict were more inclined towards organizations that provided flex time, whereas those with low role conflict preferred telecommuting options. This suggests the significance of matching work arrangements with the preferences and requirements of job applicants (Rau & Hyland, 2002).

A reputation mostly influenced by the perks and non-monetary advantages offered by the employer (Casper & Bufardi, 2004). Work-life balance (WLB) benefits demonstrate to potential candidates that organizations prioritize the well-being of their employees and their families (Carless & Wintle, 2007), hence enhancing the attractiveness of the employer. Theoretical foundations for workplace branding in academic research are currently underdeveloped, despite its recognition in practitioner circles. This article aims to establish a connection between workplace branding and product marketing techniques, namely by drawing parallels with widely recognized "best employer" polls. The text outlines prevalent HR best practices based on surveys and suggests potential areas for future research (Love & Singh, 2011). Potential employees might be informed about the advantages of work-life balance through early recruitment initiatives. Job seekers' decision to apply for a position is influenced by their perception of a positive work environment within the organization. This perception is communicated to them through multiple channels, such as the company website, social media page, online and print job advertisements, and employee testimonials (Ahamad, 2019). Providing work-life balance perks enhances an organization's reputation and increases its attractiveness (Rau & Hyland, 2002; Turban, 2001).

Hypothesis 1A Motives that promote a healthy work-life balance will increase the attractiveness of employers.

Employee recommendation and employer attractiveness

This study contributes to the current literature on recruitment by examining the influence of corporate reputation on job seekers and by offering novel criteria for evaluating recruitment effectiveness. Studies indicate that individuals' perceptions of an organization's reputation significantly influence their job search behaviour. This is because reputation serves as an indicator of the desirable attributes that employers

seek in potential applicants, and it also impacts individuals' expectations of the sense of satisfaction and accomplishment they anticipate from being associated with that particular business. Individuals also retain a greater amount of specific information from job advertisements when they are already acquainted with the organization, and they are willing to accept a reduction in salary in order to become part of a well regarded enterprise. Job seekers' impressions remain untouched by reputation advertising. These findings indicate that it might not be appropriate to generalize the results of prior research on fictitious organizations to real-life businesses (Cable & Turban, 2003). Prior research on recruitment overlooked the influence of social factors on the appeal of organizations, as it primarily focused on individual decision-making. The findings of this study, which involved 171 participants, indicate that word-of-mouth significantly influences the perceived attractiveness of an organization. Moreover, it was shown that bad word-of-mouth diminishes the efficacy of recruiting advertisements. When offered after recruitment advertising, strong-tie word of mouth is perceived as more reliable, which is advantageous for individuals with high self-monitoring. The influence is partly influenced by the perceived legitimacy of the recruitment advertisement (Van Hove & Lievens, 2007a). This article analyses the indicators and factors that influence perception, specifically focusing on the reliability of information in online contexts. Utilizing empirical evidence to enhance comprehension and practical implementation, this source presents novel perspectives, research methodologies, and a suggested framework (Wathen & Burkell, 2002). The candidate acquires vital understanding from a reference letter that succinctly outlines the employee's most pertinent professional background. The assertions made by employees on the company's exceptional work environment will thus exert a substantial influence on the company's appeal to prospective job applicants (Van Hove & Lievens, 2007a, 2007b).

Hypothesis 1B Employee recommendations will positively enhance an employer's attractiveness.

Job attributes and employer attractiveness:

This article reviews all of the research on employer branding and image that has been published since 2001. It delves into the theoretical underpinnings and practical outcomes of employer branding and image, as well as its development, effects, antecedents, and conceptualization. Lievens and Slaughter (2016) analyse several perspectives and provide research directions for employer brand management. Considering individual dispositional features, this study examines how pay preferences impact job search decisions and how compensation determinants impact applicant appeal to organizations. Companies that provide competitive salaries, a range of perks, individualised compensation plans, and clear policies about overtime are more likely to attract qualified candidates, according to studies done in both labs and in the real world. When an individual's traits are highly congruent with the company's pay structure, these factors may become even more attractive (Cable & Judge, 1994). By surveying a large group of Turkish college students, this research delves into the instrumental-symbolic paradigm in a non-Western, collectivistic society. According to the findings, an organization's allure is enhanced by both its practical (working circumstances) and symbolic (competence) components. It appears that the framework can be used across different cultures since symbolic features are more influential and better at differentiating organizations (Van Hove et al., 2013).

Benefits, career progression, and remuneration upgrades have been studied (Berthon et al., 2005; Peluso, 2017; Rampl, 2014; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Wayne & Casper, 2012). Turban (2001) found a strong link between workplace attractiveness and employment stability. Research shows that firms like symbolic people. Authenticity, CSR, corporate image, employer brand image, workplace culture, and company culture were examined. Research has examined corporate social responsibility and organizational culture. Only a few studies (Kumari & Saini, 2018; Van Hove & Saks, 2012) have studied the simultaneous impacts of symbolic and instrumental features on workplace appeal. Lievens (2007) and Van Hove et al. (2013) imply that having candidates' choices match an organization's symbolic intangible features might boost job searchers' interest. Companies with intangible assets like a strong brand or social standing are more likely to hire competent workers. According to Ahamad's research (2019), while symbolic elements may be appealing and fulfil higher-level demands, instrumental attributes like money are essential for meeting basic needs. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis predicated on the premise that symbolic attributes exert a greater impact on determining attractiveness in the professional environment compared to instrumental attributes.

Hypothesis 1C Elements of the job, particularly symbolic ones, will increase an employer's allure more so than instrumental ones.

This study examines the complicated link between work-life balance, employee feedback, and job characteristics.

An organization that prioritizes the well-being and contentment of its staff would be more appealing to prospective employees if it provided advantages that promote a healthy work-life equilibrium, as previously noted. As the link strengthens, employees will increasingly regard the organization as an excellent employer. Hence, we anticipate that the appeal of a job will be influenced by the interplay between employee endorsements and the stability between employment and individual life.

Hypothesis 2A The correlation between the equilibrium of work and personal life and the likelihood of employees recommending their employer will have an effect on the attractiveness of the employer. Employers who offer more advantages for work-life balance and employee recommendation are more appealing than those with less benefits and no employee recommendation.

A recent research analysed work-life balance's benefits on job characteristics. Job candidates choose work-life balance over health care, consistent income, and salary, according to Firfray and Mayo (2017). Work-life balance was prioritized lower than financial compensation and benefits, however the emphasis was on tangible advantages. However, they found that achieving a balance between work and personal life is more crucial than job characteristics in terms of enticing potential job applicants. It provides a more distinct representation of the company's concern and dedication to its personnel. Studying the relationship between work-life perks and instrumental and symbolic features in assessing an employer's attractiveness is a crucial topic of research. The presence of enhanced work-life balance incentives demonstrates that the firm places a high priority on the well-being of its employees. One's look is crucial as it symbolizes the high status associated with being employed by the firm. Our hypothesis posits that the positive relationship between

work-life balance (WLB) benefits and the appeal of an organization will be intensified when symbolic characteristics are present. In line with prior research and theoretical claims (Van Hoyer et al., 2013), we propose the following hypothesis: symbolic traits are likely to be more significant than instrumental aspects.

Hypothesis 2B The attraction of an employer will be influenced by the combination of work-life balance and job characteristics, where a high level of work-life balance and symbolic job qualities will be more desirable to employers compared to a low level of work-life balance and instrumental job attributes.

According to the findings of Saini and Jawahar (2019), prospective job seekers are significantly impacted by positive feedback from employees regarding the organization's reputation as a desirable workplace. Employers who maintain a favorable corporate reputation and offer competitive tangible benefits (such as salaries and compensation) will attract a substantial number of highly qualified applicants. According to Van Hoyer et al. (2013), this is especially true when there are symbolic characteristics that include instrumental qualities. The symbolic features of a firm indicate its level of desirability as an employer. When numerous employees speak well of the organization, this effect is magnified. Thus, we present the subsequent hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2C The desirability of an employer is determined by the interplay between the characteristics of a job and the endorsement of the company by its employees. More precisely, the presence of job features and employee recommendation increases employer appeal compared to situations where workers' suggestions are absent but key attributes are present.

Incentives for work-life balance, employee recommendations, and job attributes certainly all have a role in an employer's popularity. It is difficult to determine the exact form of the relationship in advance due to the paucity of study on the topics; nonetheless, it is reasonable to presume a three-way interaction. Due to the anticipated amplification of these elements in naturally occurring circumstances, studying the three-way interaction enhances the ecological validity of the study. Our present understanding is based on this hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3 An employer's appeal is influenced by a combination of work-life balance advantages, employee referrals, and job qualities.

Method

Participants

The study included MBA students in their last year who were preparing to embark on their professional careers.

Researchers have conducted large-scale studies on employer attractiveness using MBA students as participants (e.g., Baum & Kabst, 2014; Firfray & Mayo, 2017). MBA students encompass individuals who are both novice and seasoned job seekers. All MBA applicants originated from renowned Indian universities that have been awarded the highest recognition, a "A" rating, by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council.

We first calculated the sample size using G*-power 3.1.9.2. A model with eight variables and four degrees of freedom needs 252 samples for 0.9 power and 2.41 F value. The conditions are fulfilled with an

effect size of 0.25 and four interaction effects. As a result, our objective was to collect data from a total of 252,329 students, and we achieved this goal by inviting 531 students to take part in the study. We randomly selected 320 responses out of a total of 329 to ensure that the sample sizes were comparable. The mean age of the 320 participants was 27.48 years, with males comprising 65% of the sample. Out of the participants, 67.5% were unmarried and 33.7% had prior work experience.

Study design and procedure

A 2x2x2 between-subjects investigation examined work-life balance (good vs. terrible), job attributes (important vs. symbolic), and employee recommendation. These three distinct features were examined to understand how they affect job prospect appeal. A factorial design lets us study the impacts and interactions of several components, according to Zikmund et al. (2013).

The research examined data from five schools. These schools have started campus placement. One author requested that all university students attend a job-searching session with approval from each school's administration. After the lecture, students were requested to join the study. Participants were briefed on the study. Eight experimental conditions were then randomly selected from the student pool. The research finished by expressing gratitude and providing a detailed explanation to the participants.

This paper explores the efficacy of scenarios as instruments for decision-making, tracing their origins and discussing the diverse interpretations and objectives they serve among managers. It categorizes different scenario approaches, evaluating their advantages and disadvantages in aiding managers' strategic thinking amidst uncertainty (Mietzner and Reger (2005)). This study examines the underlying assumptions of measurements used to assess the appeal of organizations, specifically differentiating between attractiveness, prestige, and behavioral intents. The results obtained from the study including 305 undergraduate participants indicate that these elements may be accurately distinguished and are consistent with Fishbein and Ajzen's theory of reasoned action in connection to organizational pursuit behavior (Highhouse et al., 2003). Participants were asked to rate the statement "I find this company appealing as a prospective place of employment." The scale went from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The employer attractiveness scale's Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.89, indicating reliability. We also considered participants' gender, age, marital status, career history, and principal source of income. A binary scale was used to evaluate control variables, whereas age was continuous. Participants were randomly assigned to eight experimental conditions.

To mitigate prejudice towards a particular corporation and avoid any inadvertent harm to the reputation of a well-known organization, a fictional company name was utilized (Turban & Cable, 2003; Harris et al., 2006). The study only included individuals who were actively looking for a job in order to increase the importance of the tasks. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a, 2007b) observed that the company, job title, and work location remained the same in all situations, which were also pretested in a pilot study.

Pilot test

The level of "scenario realism" and the efficacy of varying independent variables were evaluated in a pilot study that we conducted. The pilot research had forty participants. After reading the stories, the

participants were to assess how truthful their bosses were. Table 1 shows the mean values together with their standard deviations. The results of a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that different independent variables had significantly different impacts on workplace attractiveness, with $F(7,32) = 193.16, p < 0.001$. According to the descriptive statistics shown in Table 1, there was a significant difference in the average values of employer attractiveness among each group. The use of experimental concealment, in which participants were not informed about the hypotheses, also helped to diminish the demand characteristics. The experiment's strict protocols for data separation and restriction were put into place with the full power of law.

Manipulations and manipulation checks

There were experiments to test if the circumstances were understood. Employees' motivation to suggest, work-life balance, and symbolic or instrumental job characteristics all indicated control. Our revised descriptions of these levels were compiled from organization websites and older publications.

There were high and low operationalizations and adaptations of work-life balance. Through job sharing, flexible work hours, wellness packages, on-site childcare, parental leave, and employee assistance programs, the company fosters work-life balance. These benefits allow workers to balance work and life. The employer's restricted family-friendly policies cause work-life imbalance. Flexible work hours, job sharing, health programs, on-site daycare, parental leave, and other work-life balance policies are not offered. Without benefits, employees struggle to combine work and life. From 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), the degree of manipulation was assessed to establish the firms' workers' work-life balance.

Table 1 Study 1: Scenario wise mean and standard deviation of pilot test for employer attractiveness	Work – Life Balance	Employer Attractiveness							
		Employee recommendation- Present				Employee recommendation- Absent			
		Symbolic		Instrumental		Symbolic		Instrumen tal	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
		High	6.56	0.33	5.88	0.33	5.12	0.30	4.48
Low	4.28	0.27	3.20	0.32	2.32	0.27	1.56	0.17	

The approaches Van Hove et al. (2013) employed to characterize and measure work characteristics determined symbolic and instrumental levels. Above-market salaries and compensation packages, together with career growth and other financial incentives, were the company's key selling features. The company's reputation, employees' job happiness, and social recognition warranted the symbolic reward giving. To evaluate the efficiency of modifying employment features, "the company offers exceptional practical (or symbolic, if applicable) job characteristics" was scored on a seven-point scale from 1 to 7. Due to unconsidered employee remarks, there is no clear definition. "A significant majority of the company's employees highly endorse the organization as an excellent workplace" was used to increase employee

referrals. Instead of employee recommendations, "there was a lack of data regarding the percentage of employees at this company who endorse it as a favorable workplace." It was definitely incorrect. Participants rated "Access to information regarding employee recommendations for this organization is either possible or impossible, depending on the situation" on a seven-point scale, with 1 indicating strong disagreement and 7 firm agreement.

Split samples in half. A t-test assessed variable change dispersion. The intervention had a favorable influence on work-life balance, as evidenced by a significant difference between individuals with low and high scores ($M = 1.5$, $SD = 0.54$ and $M = 6.65$, $SD = 0.55$), $t(8) = 15.01$, $p < 0.001$. Differences in symbolic job features ($M = 1.2$, $SD = 0.44$) and instrumental work characteristics ($M = 6.8$, $SD = 0.45$), $t(8) = 19.79$, $p < 0.001$, indicate that the revisions were beneficial. A significant difference was seen when a suggestion was given compared to not (mean = 1.3, standard deviation = 0.44), $t(8) = 19.6$, $p < 0.001$. Participants assessed their workplaces' attractiveness after reading these brief tales, which altered their perspectives on work-life balance advantages, qualities, and suggestions.

Results

Table 2 displays the mean values and variability, as indicated by standard deviations, of employer attraction for each individual instance. To evaluate our hypotheses, we employed an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) as presented in Table 3. The ANCOVA tests have several benefits, including increased statistical power, accurate identification of effects, improved estimation of interaction effects, and reliable correction of measurement errors in variables (Little et al., 2000). In accordance with the suggestions of Bernerth and Aguinis (2016), we have presented the findings both with and without controlling variables.

Table 2 Study 2: Descriptive statistics of main study	Work – Life Balance	Employer Attractiveness							
		Employee recommendation- Present				Employee recommendation- Absent			
		Symbolic		Instrumental		Symbolic		Instrumen tal	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
High	6.39	0.30	5.85	0.40	4.97	0.35	4.51	0.37	
Low	3.71	0.49	2.96	0.36	2.31	0.27	1.97	0.42	

WLB work-life balance, JA job attribute, ER employee recommendation Private equity (PE) relies on employee executive recruiting suggestions for revenue. PE succeeds due to employer attractiveness (EA), marriage status (MS), gender (GN), job experience (WX), and work-life balance (WLB).

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig	Partial Eta squared
Corrected model	741.35	12	511.58	.000	.952
Intercept	29.36	1	243.11	.000	.442
Control variables					
Age	.14	1	1.16	.283	.004
PE	.03	1	.22	.638	.001
MS	2.13	1	17.60	.000	.054
GN	.13	1	1.04	.308	.003
WX	1.72	1	14.23	.000	.044
Main effect					
WLB	446.62	1	3698.4 2	.000	.923
JA	17.88	1	148.03	.000	.325
ER	104.85	1	868.27	.000	.739
Interaction effect					
WLB×JA	.37	1	3.05	.082	.010
WLB×ER	.06	1	.51	.478	.002
JA×ER	1.43	1	11.82	.001	.037
WLB×JA×ER	1.42	1	11.78	.001	.037
Error	37.07	307			
Total	6121.60	320			
Corrected total	778.42	319			

Main Effects

The statistical study results demonstrated a substantial impact of work-life balance benefits on the attractiveness of firms, providing support for Hypothesis 1A ($F(1, 307) = 3698.44, p = 0.000, \eta^2 = 0.923$). The findings indicated that employees had a greater preference for firms that offered a favorable work-life balance (mean=5.43, standard deviation=0.81) compared to those that provided an unfavorable work-life balance (mean=2.74, standard deviation=0.77). The averages and standard deviations for all of the situations may be seen in Table 3.

The results of the study provided strong support for Hypothesis 1B, as employee recommendations had a significant impact on job attractiveness ($F(1, 307) = 868.27, p = 0.000, \eta^2 = 0.739$). Workers who give ideas have a higher favorable perception of their firm ($M=4.72, SD=1.48$) compared to those who do not ($M=3.45, SD=1.36$). The results strongly support Hypothesis 1C, as the job feature type has a significant effect on employer attractiveness ($F(1, 307) = 148.03, p = 0.000, \eta^2 = 0.325$). Employers place a higher emphasis on symbolic skills compared to instrumental ones, with a mean score of 4.34 and a standard deviation of 1.55. The hierarchy of significance is as follows: job qualities ($\eta^2=0.325$), work-life balance ($\eta^2=0.923$), and employee recommendation ($\eta^2=0.739$).

Two-way interaction effects

The interaction between work-life balance and employee recommendation did not affect company attractiveness ($p=0.478$), challenging Hypothesis 2A. Figure 1A supports Hypothesis 2B that work-life balance and job characteristics affected employer attraction. A statistical study showed an F-value of 3.05, a p-value below 0.10, and an effect size (η^2) of 0.010. The discovery that job kinds do not effect work-life balance is significant. Good work-life balance and symbolic job attributes were more desirable to employers ($M=5.68, SD=0.78$) than poor work-life balance and instrumental benefits. The study indicated that organizations with high work-life benefits and symbolic benefits are more desirable than those with poor ($M=3.01, SD=0.80$) or excellent ($M=5.18, SD=0.77$) balance. Figure 1B shows that job attributes and employee endorsement greatly impact employer desirability, supporting Hypothesis 2C. Statistics confirm this, with a significant F-value of 11.82 ($p = 0.001$) and an effect size (η^2) of 0.037. According to Table 3, employers preferred jobs with symbolic job characteristics and the chance to promote them. Jobs without tangible perks or employee support were less appealing.

Three-way interaction effects

A statistical research found that work-life balance, job attributes, and employee recommendation substantially affect an employer's attractiveness ($F(1, 307) = 11.78, p = 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.037$). Figures 1C and D illustrate this outcome, supporting Hypothesis 3.

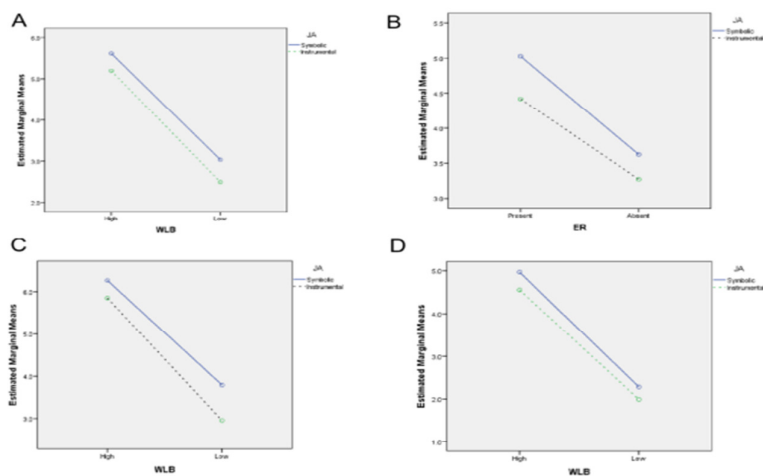


Fig. 1 Study 1: **A** 2-way interaction effect of WLB and JA on EA. **B** 2-way interaction effect of ER and JA on EA. **C** 3-way interaction effect of WLB and JA on EA (employee recommendation present). **D** 3-way interaction effect of WLB and JA on EA (employee recommendation absent)

Discussion

The first study's findings confirmed the noticeable impacts and the three-way interaction between work-life balance benefits and job traits, employee endorsement, and work itself. All things considered, these numbers point to the fact that work-life balance (WLB) features, benefits, and employee recommendations play a significant role in deciding a job's attractiveness. In line with other studies, companies were shown to be more attractive when they offered incentives for work-life balance, as opposed to the other two groups. According to research by Firfray and Mayo (2017), the way workers feel about their work environment greatly affects their opinion of their company, which in turn affects the results of recruitment efforts. Educating potential employees on the benefits of a good work-life balance yields the highest returns for companies, our study found. Human resource management plans and procedures include the aforementioned benefits. The benefits of a healthy work-life balance were the most influential factor in the evaluations of worker desirability, even though the majority of participants were single.

Numerous nations were impacted by the COVID epidemic, which forced many Indians to remain at home and work remotely. With the opportunity to work remotely, young Indians have gained greater freedom and are able to spend more time with their families, which is especially meaningful considering the typical situations of young Indians living with their parents. The significance of work-life balance was perhaps more clearly understood by the participants after these exercises than by the average individual. Consideration of the particular sample is an additional possible factor. Earning a Master of Business Administration degree from a prestigious university opens many doors financially and makes graduates highly sought after by employers. Based on these findings, participants may be keen to learn about businesses that value work-life balance as much as they value meeting professional obligations (Carless & Wintle, 2007). Consequently, we have devised a plan to conduct more studies to identify the advantages of work-life balance programs. Following the demonstration of these attributes' effects on an employer's attractiveness, Research 2 examined their effect on individuals' propensity to seek employment.

Study 2: Job Pursuit Intentions

In our initial study, we discovered that providing more extensive work-life balance (WLB) advantages enhances the appeal of a firm. In the second research, we conducted a comparison of the impacts of three different alternative work arrangements (AWA), each of which contributes a distinct benefit to achieving a better work-life balance (WLB). We conducted a focused investigation to determine the correlation between workplace characteristics and staff suggestions that affect individuals' intentions to pursue employment. Additionally, we examined the influence of flexible work hours, work environments, and career paths on these intentions, as well as any association with the concept of Alternative Work Arrangements (AWA).

Alternative work arrangements

COVID-19 is forcing companies and people to embrace once-luxury work arrangements (Johnson et al., 2008; Mas & Pallais, 2017). While their form may vary, these agreements often incorporate telecommuting, flexible work hours, and career opportunities (Tsen et al., 2021a). Flexible work hours affect

employee health and retention (Tsen et al., 2021b). Flexible work hours can help employees prevent illness, reduce pain, and improve their physical health, according to the study.

Deloitte found in 2016 that 67% of millennials desire flexible work schedules. A 2018 Deloitte research found that millennials value work-life balance and the freedom to choose their own hours first, followed by pay and benefits. The ability to set their own work schedule was the most sought-after benefit for 88% of Harvard Business Review poll respondents in 2017. Lambert et al. (2008) said job searchers want flexible hours. This is because remote work lets job searchers control their tasks, manage their time, and avoid conflicts between tasks (Rau & Hyland, 2002). Allowing staff to choose their own schedules shows care and respect. Employees are more likely to look for new jobs when they feel valued.

Technology allows employees to operate remotely more easily. Hill et al. (2001) and Rau & Hyland (2002) found that younger workers prefer telecommuting and other flexible work choices. Sullivan and Smithson (2007) found that flexible employment arrangements improve work-life balance. Job seekers say this adaptability motivates them (Shamir & Salomon, 1985; Troup & Rose, 2012).

The flexible career path, developed by Hall (1990), varies from traditional and dual career paths (Carless & Wintle, 2007). This notion works for both men and women and lets workers leave, return, or stay. According to Honeycutt and Rosen (1997), professional development boosts company desirability. Since company attractiveness strongly influences job choices, these goals are likely to be linked to a flexible career path.

Additional research examined how three degrees of alternative work arrangements affected job search intention. Options include flexible job location, hours, and career path. This study used extant literature and early research to draw conclusions. Most Indian MBA applicants seek large loans from private banks to cover the high costs of attending a top university. Despite being the main earners, these students are unlikely to have a flexible career path due to their focus on corporate hierarchy and earning a profitable position after graduation. Some Indians own homes in India's main cities, while most live in tiny apartments. If uninterrupted functioning is crucial, a flexible work location may not be the best option. Scheduling flexibility helps most Indians balance work and family. Due to these characteristics, we believe flexible work schedules will appeal to more highly competent job seekers than flexible work locations or career path work-life balance.

Hypothesis 1 Compared to flexible work locations and flexible career paths, hours that are flexible will have a greater impact on job pursuit intentions.

Staff recommendations and alternative employment arrangements:

Employee morale, loyalty, and advocacy increase when they see their supervisor doing their job. Some employees even write favorable internet reviews of their employer. Flexible schedule and positive employee reviews attract highly competent candidates and increase the chances of them applying for jobs.

Hypothesis 2A The existence of employee endorsement strengthens the job pursuit intents more than the lack of it for a specific AWA (flexible work location, flexible work hours, or flexible career path).

Alternative work arrangements and job attributes

Job qualities have a crucial role in job offers and greatly influence individuals' inclinations to apply. Van Hoyer and Saks (2011) discovered that symbolic job traits hold greater significance than instrumental work aspects since they mirror and correspond to the ideals of job seekers. A candidate who is passionate about advocating for social causes and contributing to the overall welfare of society would be attracted to working for a firm that has a strong and well-established corporate social reputation. As a result, individuals looking for jobs are more likely to be attracted to and willing to apply to companies that provide symbolic employment characteristics, such as flexible working hours, in addition to any further work arrangements. Consequently, we put up the subsequent theory.

Hypothesis 2B Symbolic job traits and flexible work hours influence job pursuing intents more than instrumental employment aspects like work location or career path.

Employee referrals and job characteristics:

Prospective job applicants are more inclined to submit their applications to a company if they receive favourable feedback about it from existing employees. Employees who value the symbolic attributes linked to the firm will experience a greater feeling of affiliation with the organization compared to those who do not. Therefore, the absence of employee recommendations and the presence of appropriate work attributes will significantly impact job search objectives.

Hypothesis 2C In comparison to the lack of employee recommendations and the availability of instrumental job features, the presence of operative references and symbolic job attributes will raise the intents of job seekers.

Scheduling, job features, and employee recommendations:

Companies that provide flexible work schedules and symbolic employment characteristics would be perceived as more attractive if they are recommended by an employee, in contrast to organizations that are not endorsed by workers. The advantages of work-life balance (WLB), the features of the job, and recommendations from employees are all factors that might potentially interact and impact a person's tendency to pursue a profession.

Hypothesis 3 The combination of alternative work arrangements, job qualities, and employee recommendations will impact individuals' inclinations to pursue a job.

Method

Participants

A total of 360 MBA seniors, who were on the verge of commencing their professional journeys, took part in the placement interviews. The students were selected from each of the five prestigious Indian institutions that received "A" marks from the National Assessment and Accreditation Council. Out of the total 527 individuals that took part in the survey, 360 provided complete and comprehensive replies. The survey was completed by a total of 210 individuals. The age range spanned across a wide spectrum, with a

difference of 25.83 years between the youngest and oldest individuals. The whole population consisted of 62.52 percent single individuals and 39.4 percent individuals with previous job experience.

6.2 Research design

A 3×2×2 between-subjects design was employed to investigate the influence of job attributes (symbolic and instrumental), employee recommendation (present or absent), and benefits of alternative work arrangements (flexible work hours, flexible work location, and flexible career path) on the intention to seek employment. Every student was assigned twelve distinct scenarios at random. Before announcing their decision to apply for the position, they thoroughly evaluated the conditions that were presented to them. The researchers evaluated the participants' intentions to pursue work using the 5-item Highhouse et al. (2003) assessment. Frequent comments such as "I would prioritize this company as one of my top choices for employment" are commonly heard.

Manipulation checks

All three independent variables were utilized in the process. In order to modify work characteristics and include employee recommendations, we implemented the identical manipulation approach utilized in research 1. In this study, the researchers implemented a strategy to modify an alternative work arrangement, namely a work-life balance benefit that had not been utilized before.

"Flexible job hours" let employees balance work and life. Worker shift start, end, and breaks are entirely up to them. If "flexible work location" were better defined, employees may work remotely from home, a co-working space, or another location. By allowing individuals to pick a flexible career path, unique career routes were emphasized. Employees may choose and tailor their jobs to their requirements. An employee can take a short sabbatical for family or job reasons and return to work easily. Individuals can quit, seek a new employment, or stay in their existing post. A therapy efficacy assessment was done.

Analyses of manipulation checks included an independent t-test and one-way analysis of variance. One-way analysis of variance shows that work-life balance benefits changed significantly. Workplace flexibility—the ability to choose one's schedule, employment location, and career path ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 0.707$)—distinguishes from the competition. A statistically significant difference between symbolic ($M=1.6$, $SD=0.894$) and instrumental ($M=6.2$, $SD=0.837$) job characteristics was found in the independent t-test, with a t-value of 8.398 and a p-value of less than 0.001. A significant difference exists between employee endorsements ($M=5.8$, $SD=0.840$) and their absence ($M=2.2$, $SD=0.837$) ($t(8)=6.830$, $p<0.001$).

Results

Data analysis and hypothesis testing

Table 4 displays the mean and standard deviation of job search intentions for each circumstance. Refer to Table 5 for the ANCOVA data that support our claims. The statistical analysis yielded a significant F-value of 3698.42 with a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong relationship between different kinds of work arrangements and individuals' likelihood to seek employment. Furthermore, the effect size, as measured by η^2 , was found to be 0.923, suggesting that employment arrangements had a major impact on individuals' inclination to seek employment. Table 5 displays the results that support the first premise. The findings

indicate that flexible work hours ($M=4.23$, $SD=1.89$) had a more significant influence on intentions to seek employment compared to flexible work location ($M=4.12$, $SD=1.89$) and flexible career route ($M=3.51$, $SD=1.41$).

The relationship between employee endorsement and alternative work arrangements has a considerable impact on the motivation to actively pursue employment, as seen in Table 4 and Fig. 2A. The statistical analysis ($F(2,342)=142.78$, $p=0.000$, $\eta^2=0.46$) confirms the support for this result and verifies Hypothesis 2A. Table 5 demonstrates that endorsing the firm leads to increased job pursuit intentions compared to not recommending a specific Alternative Work Arrangement (AWA), such as flexible work hours, flexible work location, or flexible career path.

The study revealed a significant correlation between alternate work arrangements and job qualities in relation to job pursuit intentions, therefore providing evidence in favor of Hypothesis 2B. The statistical analysis produced a significant outcome with an F-value of 60.22, degrees of freedom of 2 and 342, a p-value of 0.000, and an effect size of 0.260 (Fig. 2B). This suggests that the characteristics of the job and different work arrangements have a significant effect on several levels and affect the motivations of job applicants to seek employment.

Table 4 study 2: descriptive statistics

Alternative work arrangements	Job pursuit intention	Job pursuit intention							
		Employee endorsement-Present				Employee endorsement-Absent			
		Symbolic		Instrumental		Symbolic		Instrumental	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	Flexible working hours	6.39	0.30	5.85	0.40	4.97	0.35	4.51	0.37
	Flexible work location	3.71	0.49	2.96	0.36	2.31	0.27	1.97	0.42
	Flexible career path	5.63	0.34	3.79	0.29	2.67	0.19	1.98	0.24

Table 5 Study 2: tests of between-subject's effects (dependent variable: job pursuit intention)

Source	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig	Partial Eta squared
Corrected model	1093.93	12	1396.27	.000	.986
Intercept	35.52	1	766.37	.000	.691
Control variables					
Dps	.575	1	12.47	.000	0.035
MS	.183	1	3.97	.047	0.11

GN	.199	1	4.33	.038	0.12
WX	2.676	1	58.06	.000	.145
PE	.079	1	1.72	.191	.005
Age	.188	1	4.08	.044	.012
Main effects					
AWA	446.62	1	3698.42	.000	.923
JA	17.88	1	148.03	.000	.325
ER	104.85	1	868.27		.739
Interaction Effects					
AWA×JA	5.55	2	60.22	.000	.260
AWA×ER	13.16	2	142.78	.000	.455
JA×ER	.06	1	1.24	.266	.004
AWA×JA×ER	15.09	2	163.74	.000	.48
Error	15.76	342			
Total	6736.08	360			
Corrected Total	1109.70	359			

PE (Primary earner), MS (marriage status), GN (gender), WX (years of experience), AWA (alternative work arrangements), JA (job characteristics), ER (employee referral), and JPI (job pursuit intention) are utilized. Descriptive statistics summarize data... Table 5 shows that symbolic advantages and flexible work hours had a higher mean job pursuit intention score (M=4.79, SD=1.81) than instrumental benefits and flexible work hours (M=3.68, SD=1.75).

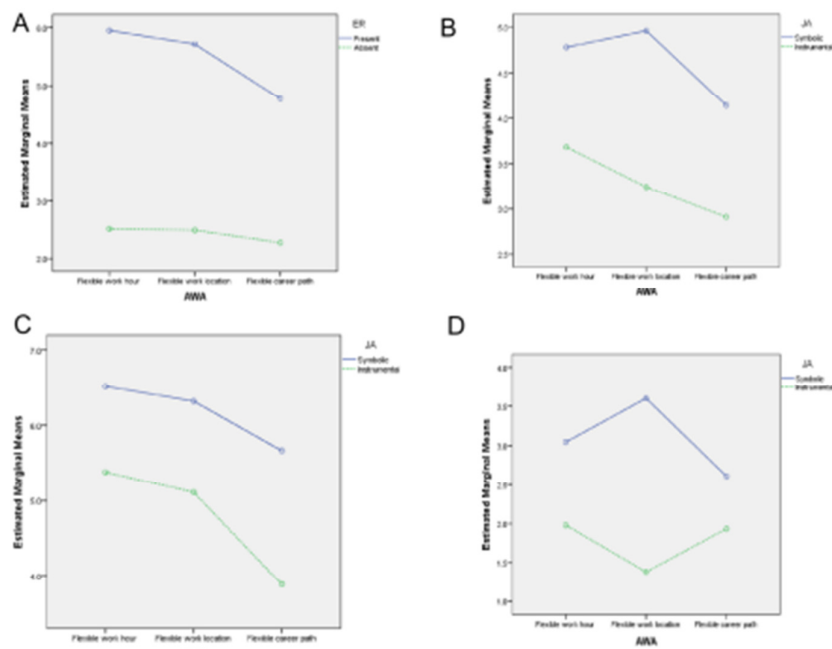


Fig. 2 Study 2: **A** 2-way interaction effect of AWA and ER on JPI. **B** 2-way interaction effect of AWA and JA on JPI. **C** 3-way interaction effect of AWA and JA on JPI (employee recommendation present). **D** 3-way interaction effect of AWA and JA on JPI (employee recommendation absent)

Since job qualities and employee recommendation do not interact, Hypothesis 2C is not supported. Three-way interaction of independent variables is statistically significant, supporting Hypothesis 3. Results from Figures 2C and D confirm this, with $F(2, 342) = 163.74$, $p = 0.000$, and $\eta^2 = 0.489$. This suggests that the three elements affect job-seekers' business engagement in different ways.

For a firm to be sustainable, it is crucial to attract talented individuals. Therefore, it is in our best interest to study the success of our recruitment efforts. Assuming that the recruiting process is executed accurately,

According to Baum and Kabst (2014), if the company improves its image, potential employees will be more interested in applying for jobs. Few studies have looked at how symbolic and instrumental work traits compare to one another, despite the fact that both have an impact on employer attractiveness and career pursuit intentions (Kumari & Saini, 2018). Despite the increasing availability of data, previous study on how work-life balance affects job seekers' perceptions of workplace attractiveness was constrained by many factors. A large number of the work-life advantages mentioned in a study by Casper and Bufardi (2004) did not apply to the people who took part in the research. Research on the benefits of WLB and occupational characteristics has omitted some important elements.

Keeping these constraints in mind, we undertook two experiments. Tools for work-life balance, employee recommendations, and symbolic and instrumental job features were the focus of the first research that looked at how these factors affected company attractiveness. We used a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ experimental design with carefully constructed vignettes to change the workers' instrumental to symbolic features, the amount of work-life balance benefits, and whether employees were asked for or not given ideas. Using MBA students' opinions on the desirability of employers in the job market, we tested our predictions. Factors pertaining to work-life balance, employee recommendations, and personal traits were the most important in determining the success of the hiring process. Benefits for work-life balance, employee referrals, and job attributes all had a role in how appealing firms were. In addition, it was shown that there was a substantial three-way interaction that affected the attractiveness of employers.

In research 2, we looked at people's propensity to look for work. Considering that being physically appealing is frequently viewed as an essential need for posting a job application. We performed research to find out how work-life balance is affected by various forms of workplace flexibility, including remote work, adjustable hours, and different career trajectories. This is due to the fact that prior research demonstrated that, as compared to job characteristics or employee suggestions, work-life balance perks were of more importance to employers. Of the three advantages, the ability to choose one's own work schedule is the most influential on job-seekers' intentions, according to study 2. A lot of young Indians live in close quarters with their parents, siblings, and even grandparents, which makes it hard for them to get any work done while they're at home alone. A large portion of Indian society places a premium on professional success and displays materialistic inclinations as a result of the high cost of higher education. For the reasons listed below, flexible work hours are more appealing than either a certain location or a specific professional path. If you want to climb the corporate ladder, working remotely is a great choice since it gives you more

opportunities to network and sets you apart from the competition. Employee recommendations, job features, and the benefits of a flexible work schedule all work together to boost career aspirations, according to the study. Consistent with the results of the first study, a three-way interaction was seen, suggesting that the aforementioned factors interact to predictably impact job aspirations.

Theoretical implications

Based on Spence's (1973) signaling theory, we postulated that companies consciously employ signals to cultivate positive impressions and entice prospective employees. If you want to recruit more top talent, signaling theory says you might highlight things like work-life balance benefits, positive employee references, and highly valued job characteristics. Our findings provide solid evidence in favor of the core concept of signaling theory, which states that these criteria clearly and predictably influence employer attractiveness and job pursuit intentions.

Important information are included in the results from the primary impacts. After employee referrals ($\eta^2=0.739$) and WLB benefits ($\eta^2=0.923$), features ($\eta^2=0.325$) were the most influential in research 1. The importance of a work-life balance cannot be overstated for job searchers. Companies who offer excellent benefits in this area should ensure their workers are aware of them. In contrast to flexible work locations or job options, research 2 found that flexible work schedules were more significantly connected with employment goals. It would indicate that valuing a good work-life balance is more significant than workers' thoughts about the company's performance and reputation in the market.

Inviting a candidate into an organization benefits the company in three ways: work-life balance, employee recommendations, and personal attributes. A three-way interaction and two two-way interactions (WLB and job characteristics and employee recommendation and work qualities) provide indications that signals might magnify the effect of other signals; however, further study is needed to confirm this.

Company endorsements, work-life policies, and positive corporate attributes increase the likelihood that qualified candidates will apply for a position with a certain organization, according to our study. We also made a difference by finding out that different signals have different effects; for instance, we found that the work-life balance signal was the most impactful in study 2 and research 1, respectively. Capability to determine best-case scenarios and weigh the pros and cons of each option is the last enhancement. The quest for more powerful signals and how they combine with other signals, such work-life balance and strong employer recommendations, raises both theoretical and practical questions.

Practical implications

These outcomes highlight how critical it is to market the organization's tangible advantages. Motivating and inspiring potential employees to join your company is as simple as making the advantages of working there clear to them (Kumari & Saini, 2018). Several factors could affect the outcome of the hiring process. When contrasted with previous research that has focused on a smaller number of factors, the ecological validity of this study's conclusions is higher. This is because we used a more comprehensive model that accounts for all relevant factors.

You may learn everything about the many factors, such as main and interaction effects, that affect recruitment outcomes by looking at the average values in Tables 3 and 5. Companies lose some of their competitive edge when they pay their employees generous wages and other forms of compensation, which drives up labor costs. Even when competing job qualities like symbolic and instrumental variables are not present, our study shows that organizations may nevertheless influence candidates' perceptions of organizational attractiveness and their motivations to pursue jobs through staff recommendations and benefits related to work-life balance. In order to make the most of work-life balance benefits, it's important to let employees know how much they're worth so they don't take them for granted. Companies will incur substantial costs, even if the monetary impact of creating an environment that encourages employees to give recommendations is slow to materialize. It would be helpful to have a better understanding of how job attributes, work-life balance perks, and employee endorsements affect the attractiveness of companies and the likelihood that people will seek employment. Reason being, it might guide companies in strategically investing in work-life balance (WLB) benefits and features that workers will love and that will encourage them to spread the word about their great experience.

Potential limitations and future research directions

Although there have been breakthroughs, it is important to consider any restrictions before making any judgments. Before anything else, remember that there may be constraints on how you draw conclusions from the data. Regardless of the aforementioned factors, most of the MBA students in our sample were unmarried. Firstly, it is worth noting that most MBA students are single, which means that they are free from domestic duties as they prepare to embark on their professional careers. There was a marked improvement in their mindset and ambitions after implementing a work-life balance program. The relative persuasiveness of work-life balance benefits to family-oriented, seasoned job searchers should be the subject of future study. Additionally, for the sake of clarity and practicality, we reframed the work-life balance benefits as high vs low rather than presence against absence. The survey also took place in patriarchal India, a nation where many young people still live with their extended families and where collectivism is highly valued. When preparing to enter the workforce, they were relieved of certain family duties. There was a marked improvement in their mindset and ambitions after implementing a work-life balance program. The relative persuasiveness of work-life balance benefits to family-oriented, seasoned job searchers should be the subject of future study. Additionally, for the sake of clarity and practicality, we reframed the work-life balance benefits as high vs low rather than presence against absence. The survey also took place in patriarchal India, a nation where many young people still live with their extended families and where collectivism is highly valued. As a result, males, who often contribute significantly financially to the family, enjoy more privileges than their Western counterparts. In a more independent culture, when men and women do roughly the same amount of housework, this study needs to be revisited. Thirdly, someone's family history may play a big role in how they are rated for a job. A person from a low-income background may place a higher value on pay and benefits, whereas someone from a rich family may place a higher value on social status and work-life balance benefits.

Conclusion

Businesses are believed to strategically employ signals such as a balance between work and life benefits, positive employee recommendations, and highly valued job attributes to enhance the appeal of their organization to potential employees and their interest in working there. This is based on signaling theory (Spence, 1973). The research included meticulously constructed vignettes to evaluate the administration of work-life perks, employee endorsements, and job features. We analyzed data obtained from MBA students throughout their job search to validate our conclusions that these characteristics directly and positively influenced employers' interest in them and their desire to hire them.

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