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Author(s):	Qamar Ali ¹ , Muhammad Fayyaz Sheikh ¹ , Bilal Latif ²
Affiliations:	¹ Lyallpur Business School, Government College University, Faisalabad ² Department of Leadership and Management Studies, National Defence University Islamabad, Pakistan
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How Much Does the Recruitment Channel Really Matter: Recruiters' and Applicants' Behaviors in the South Asian Context

Qamar Ali^{1*}, Muhammad Fayyaz Sheikh¹ and Bilal Latif²

¹Lyallpur Business School,
Government College University Faisalabad, Pakistan
²Department of Leadership and Management Studies,
National Defence University Islamabad, Pakistan

Abstract

In this paper, we discern the inclinations of recruiters and applicants towards recruitment channels. By drawing on a contextualized perspective of human resource management (HRM), we argue that a country's national institutional environment greatly influences the recruiters' choice of the recruitment channels and the applicants' attractiveness towards jobs. Using an experimental methodology (n = 200 graduate students) and by conducting in-depth interviews of 10 human resource managers, we found that a) although recruitment channels positively affect applicants' perceptions of organizational attractiveness, they have no significant impact on applicants' intentions to apply for the advertised jobs and b) even though online recruitment channels are widely believed to have a greater impact on organizational attractiveness, still recruiters in South Asia continue to prefer paper-based recruitment channels. The current study provides interesting insights into the process of recruitment by explicating that socio-cultural and economic context greatly shapes both the recruiters' and the applicants' preferences of recruitment channels.

Keywords: company websites, contextual HRM, Facebook, LinkedIn, paper-based recruitment, South Asia, web-based recruitment

Introduction

Recruitment literature suggests that the content, style, and channel of job advertisements significantly impact the applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness and intentions to apply for the advertised job. One stream of this literature (Belinda, Westerman, & Bergman, [2018](#); Puncheva-Michelotti, Hudson, & Jin, [2020](#); Younis & Hammad, [2020](#)), drawing mainly from the field of information and communication sciences, emphasizes the communication side of the advertised message and its relationship with organizational attractiveness. The other stream (Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, [2006](#); Braddy, Thompson, Wuensch,

*Corresponding Author: qamar.ali@uibk.ac.at

& Grossnickle, 2003; Frasca & Edwards, 2017) mainly focuses on the content of the companies' recruitment websites, particularly the availability of cultural information on them and its impact on the candidates' perceived organizational attractiveness and their intentions to apply for the advertised jobs. However, the findings of both of these research streams are primarily based on empirical evidence gathered from academically and industrially developed countries. Therefore, drawing on the contextual perspective of HRM, we assume that these findings are not generalizable to the relatively less developed parts of the world, such as South Asia, because of the significant socio-cultural and economic differences between them.

This study brings to the fore empirical evidence from Pakistan (a developing South Asian economy) to illustrate the relevance of contextual differences concerning the effectiveness of recruitment channels. With the help of an experimental study conducted on graduate students and complimented by subsequent in-depth interviews of the recruiters, we reached interesting results. The findings of our empirical study illustrated that recruitment channels affect job applicants' perception of organizational attractiveness but do not affect their intentions to apply for the job. Furthermore, it also showed that online recruitment channels significantly impact the applicants' perceived organizational attractiveness compared to paper-based recruitment channels. However, our analysis of in-depth interviews of recruiters indicated that organizations in Pakistan mostly prefer traditional recruitment channels (such as newspapers).

We attribute the unique empirical findings of the current study to the distinct socio-cultural and economic environment of Pakistan. Based on the analysis of in-depth interviews with several recruiters and experts in the field of HRM in Pakistan, we concluded that because of the scarcity of job opportunities and a serious lack of entrepreneurial orientation in the educated masses of the country, job applicants have very limited priorities in terms of choosing between jobs. Therefore, in most cases, individuals tend to show high intentions to apply for the job regardless of how attractive the host organization is for them. On the other side, because of high unemployment rates and an abundance of university pass-outs each year, recruiters are always overwhelmed with the number of applications against each advertised position. Consequently, they showed minimal tendency to shift to a more attractive recruitment channel.

Contextual Perspective of HRM

The proponents of the contextual perspective of HRM argue that US models of HRM cannot be generalized to other regions (Diaz-Carrion, López-Fernández, &

Romero-Fernandez, [2018](#); Kaufman, [2020](#); Mayrhofer, Brewster, & Farndale, [2018](#)). Brewster, Mayrhofer, and Farndale ([2018](#)) challenged the universal viability of the American model of human resource practices and stressed an indigenous European HRM model informed by the local institutional context. Do et al. ([2020](#)) argued for local studies in Asian countries, drawing attention towards the context-bound nature of HR practices in different Asian countries. Other studies highlighted the importance of context-based understanding of HRM in developing countries such as Pakistan (Ali & Brandl, [2017](#), [2018](#)).

Researchers have started focusing on different levels of analysis—region, country, industry, sector, and organization—for theorizing about HRM in Asia (Budhwar, Varma, & Hirekhan, [2018](#); Harzing & van Ruysseveldt, [2017](#); Ren, Tang, & Jackson, [2018](#)). The influence of economic, political, legal, and social conditions on HRM at the regional and country levels is currently studied in most South Asian countries (Budhwar et al., [2018](#); Kumar & Budhwar, [2020](#)).

There is a dire need to study rationalization processes behind different organizational practices such as recruitment in developing countries. To what extent the thinking of individual and corporate actors is informed and influenced by global standards, scripts, and benchmarks remains an open question. Similarly, to what extent it is still dominated by indigenous cultural, political, religious, and legal circumstances needs to be explored.

Despite its cultural and ethnic diversity, a large population, nuclear power, strategically important geographical location, eventful social and political history, and rich institutional and religious context, HRM research has rarely focused on Pakistan. Very few HRM studies have been conducted in the Pakistani context (Allen, Wood, & Saqib, 2021; Khan & Rasheed, [2015](#); Khilji, [2001](#)). However, most of these studies are not very insightful and provide only a surface-level analysis of HR practices in Pakistan. These studies rarely account for indigenous institutional and conventional mechanisms in their original settings. The purpose of the current research is to understand the rationalization of recruitment channels adopted in Pakistan. It intends to understand and interpret the reasons and motives that shape the recruiters' and applicants' thinking and actions related to the recruitment channels in Pakistan.

Literature review

Studies related to web-based recruitment and its outcomes can be broadly divided into two streams. One stream focuses explicitly on the communication side of the advertised message (Belinda et al., [2018](#); Puncheva-Michelotti et al., [2018](#); Younis

& Hammad, [2020](#)), bringing to the fore the literature from the field of information and communication sciences. The other focuses on the role of the content of the website other than the recruitment message, particularly the role of information available on recruitment website about the culture of the organization (Braddy et al., [2006](#); Braddy et al., [2003](#)).

Recruitment advertisement refers to any kind of paid promotion of jobs offered by a firm (Kotler & Armstrong, [1991](#)). Examples include job postings and recruitment brochures. According to the definition, advertising is a private means of an organization to transfer an organizational message to prospective individuals directly. A vital component of recruitment is to captivate individuals to apply for jobs in an organization (Barber, [1998](#)). Firms that end up with more suitable candidates have a relatively larger pool of applicants to start with (Boudreau & Rynes, [1985](#)). Moreover, if candidates do not apply in the first place, all subsequent steps in the recruitment process become irrelevant (Barber & Roehling, [1993](#); Rynes & Barber, [1990](#); Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, [1991](#)). Therefore, many researchers have highlighted the need for more research about investigating the determinants of organizational attractiveness in the first step of the recruitment process, where the applicant pool is generated (Boudreau & Rynes, [1985](#)). As a result, recruitment advertising is getting the attention of researchers, who have shown that ‘advertisement attributes’ considerably influence perceived organizational attractiveness (Highhouse & Hoffman, [2001](#); Judge, Boudreau, & Bretz, [1994](#); Walker, Feild, Giles, Armenakis, & Bernerth, [2009](#); Yüce & Highhouse, [1998](#)).

There are two basic options for the organizations to choose from in deciding about job postings: web-based / online and traditional / paper-based methods. Web-based sources of advertising positions and attracting applicants are less costly than the conventional sources of advertising jobs (Lievens, Van Hove, & Anseel, [2007](#)). Many studies on applicant pool construction focused on printed (or conventional) recruitment advertisements to examine their impact on perceived organizational attractiveness (Van Hove & Lievens, [2005](#)). Some researchers studied the differences between conventional and web-based recruitment strategies in terms of their effects on organizational attractiveness and applicants’ intentions to join (Collins & Stevens, [2002](#); Williamson, Lepak, & King, [2003](#); Zusman & Landis, [2002](#)). Broadly, these studies found that recruitment advertisements indicate different features of an organization to potential candidates, consequently affecting the chances of the applicants joining the organization (Lievens et al., [2007](#); Sylva & Mol, [2009](#); Thompson, Braddy, & Wuensch, [2008](#)).

However, studies so far have not explicitly focused on the differences among many web-based recruitment methods, such as recruitment through LinkedIn, Facebook, and company websites, and how they attract applicants. Organizations' websites have now become the main tool for them to create their applicant pool. Apart from the websites, companies have started advertising their jobs through social and professional networks such as Facebook pages, LinkedIn profiles, etc. As a result, organizations now have multiple web-based or online recruitment methods to choose from. Although third-party job search engines such as rozee.pk are familiar sources for potential candidates to know about different job openings in Pakistan, many firms are increasingly using corporate websites, Facebook pages, and LinkedIn profiles for posting job advertisements. Most often, the goal of search engines like rozee.pk is to connect candidates with recruitment portals used by the companies. Therefore, company-used recruitment portals and pages have a key role in the online recruitment process, and they can potentially create many advantages for the firms. One advantage of using online recruitment methods is reduced expenditure. Internet-based recruitment also quickens the process (Dineen & Soltis, [2011](#)).

Similarly, online recruitment makes it possible to reach a reasonably wide range of individuals (Stevens & Szmerekovsky, [2010](#)). Conventional recruitment approaches typically reach a comparatively limited target audience, such as individuals from a city who read the specific paper or magazine where the job was advertised. On the other hand, web-based recruitment empowers organizations to attract local as well as foreign applicants. To sum it up, web-based job postings allow organizations to advertise jobs, create pools of candidates, and interact with the applicants much faster than conventional recruitment methods (Crispin & Mehler, [1997](#)).

Hypothesis 1: Web-based job advertisements more effectively attract job applicants compared to traditional paper-based methods.

Many researchers have empirically proved that applicants' perceptions about organizational attractiveness positively affect their intentions to apply for a job in the respective organization (Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, [1993](#); Turban & Greening, [1997](#)); therefore, it is commonly assumed that perceived organizational attractiveness is positively related to the intentions to apply for a job.

Hypothesis 2: Web-based job advertisements more effectively influence the individuals' intentions to apply for the job than traditional paper-based methods.

Even though organizations' recruitment websites are crucial media considered

by potential candidates for collecting initial information about the respective organizations, there are very few studies available that investigate which particular web-based medium(s) most significantly affect job applicants' perception about an organization's attractiveness and their intentions to join it. Many researchers have established the relevance of the job advertisement presentation and its attributes for organizational attractiveness in the applicants' minds. Howell, Williams, and Lindsay (2003) reported that many college students decline potential job offers due to the improper websites designed by the organizations. Cober, Brown, Keeping, and Levy (2004) examined the extent of the influence of a company's website over the potential candidates' perceived organizational attractiveness in an experimental study. Their study shows a strong correlation between the recruitment website's orientation towards the person-organization fit and the candidates' perceived organizational attractiveness. Dineen, Ash, and Noe (2002) examined the effectiveness of online recruitment methods and concluded that the effectiveness of web-based recruitment is strongly determined by the appearance and structure of the recruitment website. It means that the advertisement's content is important, but how the information is presented is also very important in shaping the candidates' perception of the organization and their intention to pursue applications in it.

There are multiple mediums available for web-based advertisements, which are different in presenting, designing, and structuring the advertisements' information. For example, LinkedIn provides a particular design option for organizations to post jobs through its profiles, which is quite different from the typical recruitment websites used by employers. Similarly, job advertisements on Facebook have unique features regarding their structure, color, and design courtesy to the unique features offered by the Facebook pages, which are different from other media. In addition, it is commonly understood that professional social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn develop and design pages more professionally and suitably, which makes them more attractive compared to the typical design features used by corporate recruitment websites, particularly in developing countries.

Hypothesis 3: Web-based recruitment through professional networks (Facebook pages and LinkedIn) has a greater influence on perceived organizational attractiveness than the typical recruitment website.

Hypothesis 4: Web-based recruitment through professional networks (Facebook pages and LinkedIn) more effectively influences the intentions of the individuals to apply for the job compared to the typical recruitment website.

Study Methods

Study Participants

In the first phase of the study, we recruited 200 graduate students (100 boys, 100 girls) from a public sector university in Punjab, Pakistan. Volunteers were offered additional assignment grades in the course they were recruited from as a reward for their contribution. The participants were selected based on their work experience to make the task of measuring ‘organizational attractiveness’ more realistic. As most of the participants would most probably be searching for a position similar to the one used in this experiment soon, they were considered as prospective candidates for the job used in the experiment (Barber & Roehling, [1993](#); Saridakis, Lai, & Cooper, [2017](#); Weller & Gerhart, [2018](#)).

Design and stimuli

We allocated each study participant to one of the four experimental conditions: newspaper, company website, Facebook, and LinkedIn. The participants were equally assigned to each one of them. The participants were asked to read a real job posting on the respective medium in all four experimental conditions. The job posting in all four experimental categories was the same in its content, such as job characteristics, compensation, and benefits, but different in features such as design, color, structure, and outlook depending on the nature of the medium used. For paper-based job postings, the actual newspaper advertisement was used in this experiment. Furthermore, the same job was used for evaluation in the LinkedIn-based experimental condition. Similarly, the same job was advertised on the Facebook page of the same company. Finally, we used the company's actual recruitment website to evaluate the job postings in the company website-based experimental condition.

Measures

Perceived organizational attractiveness was measured using a five-item measurement instrument developed by Turban and Keon ([1993](#)). Job applicants’ intentions to pursue job opportunities were measured through a questionnaire developed by Taylor and Bergmann ([1987](#)). Two items measured the intentions to apply, and another two items measured the intentions to join the company if the job is offered. All items were evaluated based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The employed scales in this study are well-validated and have reported high-reliability scores in past studies (Hentschel, Braun, Peus, & Frey, [2020](#); Ouyang, Zhang, & Hu, [2020](#)).

Procedure

Study participants were randomly allocated to four different experimental conditions. The experiment was conducted in small groups with all students experiencing the same experimental condition in a particular experimental session. After they reached the study session, the students were asked to sensibly read the specific job posting assuming that they were already searching for a similar position. Next, job advertisements on the company website, Facebook, and LinkedIn were viewed on computers. After they finished viewing the job advertisements, the participants were asked to fill the questionnaire. Once they filled the questionnaire, the participants were debriefed, and the study was concluded.

In-depth Interviews

In the second phase, we conducted in-depth interviews with ten HR managers to gauge their views and understanding regarding the recruitment channels they use. Moreover, the interviews were also aimed to get an overview of the rationalization of their decision concerning the selection of the recruitment channel and their experiences and levels of satisfaction with different channels (Deterding & Waters, 2018). The respondents were selected based on their experience in the area of recruitment. We made sure that we interviewed only those HR managers who had a direct experience of supervising the recruitment function. Interviews were conducted in informal settings to ensure that the respondents shared their insights without any hesitation or restrictions. Tape-recordings of the interviews were subsequently transcribed and translated into English (as many respondents shared their views in Urdu and Punjabi). Themes were generated through open coding of the interview transcripts to explicate the organizations' recruitment agendas and approaches.

Results: Phase 1

Organizational Attractiveness

To measure the statistical significance of the differences between various experimental groups in terms of their perceived organizational attractiveness and intentions to apply, we performed one-way ANOVA coupled with a Tukey (HSD) post hoc test. Tables 1 and 2 show the results for organizational attractiveness. There is a statistically significant difference regarding organizational attractiveness among the four groups of participants as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(3,196) = 14.731, p = .000$). The significant results for ANOVA (Table 1) suggest that at least one study group must be different from others. To figure out exactly which group(s) depict significantly different results, we conducted a Tukey (HSD)

post hoc test (Table 2). It revealed that the participants who viewed Facebook and paper-based advertisements demonstrated significantly lower perceived organizational attractiveness as compared to the participants who viewed LinkedIn and website advertisements. Hence, Hypothesis 1 is only partially supported. Overall, organizations' websites produced the highest perceived organizational attractiveness (M=6.69), whereas advertisements on Facebook pages produced the lowest perceived organizational attractiveness (M=4.93). This finding nullifies the Hypothesis 3.

Table 1

One-way ANOVA (Organizational Attractiveness)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	97.835	3	32.612	14.731	.000
Within Groups	433.906	196	2.214		
Total	531.741	199			

Table 2

Tukey (HSD) Post-Hoc Test (Organizational Attractiveness)

(I) Group	Mean	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Paper Based	5.4080	LinkedIn	-.90800*	.29758	.014	-1.6791	-.1369
		Facebook	.47600	.29758	.381	-.2951	1.2471
		Website	-1.28000*	.29758	.000	-2.0511	-.5089
LinkedIn	6.3160	Paper Based	.90800*	.29758	.014	.1369	1.6791
		Facebook	1.38400*	.29758	.000	.6129	2.1551
		Website	-.37200	.29758	.596	-1.1431	.3991
Facebook	4.9320	Paper Based	-.47600	.29758	.381	-1.2471	.2951
		LinkedIn	-1.38400*	.29758	.000	-2.1551	-.6129
		Website	-1.75600*	.29758	.000	-2.5271	-.9849
Website	6.6880	Paper Based	1.28000*	.29758	.000	.5089	2.0511
		LinkedIn	.37200	.29758	.596	-.3991	1.1431
		Facebook	1.75600*	.29758	.000	.9849	2.5271

Note: *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Intentions to Apply for the Job

Contrary to perceived organizational attractiveness, one-way ANOVA results ($F(3,196) = 1.584, p = .195$) for the intentions to apply for the job surprisingly did not show a statistically significant difference among the four groups of the participants. A p-value greater than .05 (Table 3) shows that none of the study groups was significantly different from others. The Tukey (HSD) post hoc test (Table 4) revealed that the participants who viewed Facebook and paper-based advertisements and who demonstrated significantly lower perceived organizational attractiveness also showed high intentions to apply ($M = 6.18, M = 6.08$ respectively), almost as much as the participants who viewed LinkedIn and website advertisements. This finding nullifies Hypothesis 2 and 4 entirely.

Table 3

One-way ANOVA (Intentions to Apply for the Job)

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	8.840	3	2.947	1.584	.195
Within Groups	364.660	196	1.861		
Total	373.500	199			

Table 4

Tukey (HSD) Post-Hoc (Intentions to Apply for the Job)

(I) Group	Mean	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Paper Based	6.0800	LinkedIn	-.28000	.27280	.734	-.9869	.4269
		Facebook	-.10000	.27280	.983	-.8069	.6069
		Website	.30000	.27280	.690	-.4069	1.0069
LinkedIn	6.3600	Paper Based	.28000	.27280	.734	-.4269	.9869
		Facebook	.18000	.27280	.912	-.5269	.8869
		Website	.58000	.27280	.148	-.1269	1.2869
Facebook	6.1800	Paper Based	.10000	.27280	.983	-.6069	.8069
		LinkedIn	-.18000	.27280	.912	-.8869	.5269
		Website	.40000	.27280	.460	-.3069	1.1069

(I) Group	Mean	(J) Group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Website	5.7800	Paper Based	-.30000	.27280	.690	-1.0069	.4069
		LinkedIn	-.58000	.27280	.148	-1.2869	.1269
		Facebook	-.40000	.27280	.460	-1.1069	.3069

Results: Phase 2

In order to grasp fully the results of the experiments conducted and compare the findings with what is happening in the industry and how recruiters perceive it, we interviewed 10 HR managers from the local garment manufacturing industry.

The interpretive analysis of the transcripts of these interviews revealed a number of interesting insights into the recruitment process and the mediums used by the employers in the garment industry of Pakistan. Our respondents revealed that they mostly do not use channels other than newspapers to place job advertisements; very few talked about the websites as a reliable channel. However, almost no organization is using LinkedIn and Facebook as their main recruitment channels. The respondents believed that it is because of the adequate number of applications produced by newspaper advertisements that they do not shift to any other channel. According to one respondent (an HR manager at a large textile mill), he never fell short of applicants against any announced job.

“Frankly speaking, we entirely rely on newspapers and websites, instead, I must say basically only newspapers. In my five years’ experience with this organization as HR manager, I never felt we are short of applicants against a job announcement, we are always overwhelmed with applications against each advertised job.”

Another interesting phenomenon prevailing in the industry is the use of newspaper advertisements as a source for creating a large pool of candidates sufficient for the next few years. Applicants are invited for interviews from that pool when the need arises. A large number of direct applicants is another reason stated by the respondents for not emphasizing the need for multiple recruitment channels. One respondent, a General Manager (GM) HR, described it in the following words:

“Well, first of all for most of the jobs we have a lot of direct applicants. Only when a new project is established which is very rare you know our industry is already shrinking, then we collect a pool of candidates through a newspaper advertisement, and that, once collected, serves our purpose for the next two-three years.”

Given the lack of growth in the garment industry due to the energy crisis and poor policies at the government level, there are very few new job openings throughout the year which makes recruitment a relatively less emphasized area of concern for the organizations. On the other hand, the lack of new job openings augments the rate of unemployment each year; thereby making the job market ever more competitive for the existing applicants. One respondent explained this very clearly in the following words:

“People apply for once and if we invite them after three years they still intend to join, that’s either because they are still unemployed or because they are doing a kind of compromised job where they are basically underemployed which is also very common in our industry.”

Underemployment is increasing due to the competitiveness of the job market. Consequently, applicants with higher education are willing to take up jobs of a clerical nature. Applicants just go for whatever is offered to them, they do not even wait for the proceedings of the job announcement to be completed and avail other substandard opportunities at hand. Thus, they remain available to the recruiters for a long time, even two to three years after the actual advertisement of the job because they are either unemployed or doing an underrated job. This gives an opportunity to the recruiters to use the same pool of candidates for a longer period of time.

The utility of social networking sites including Facebook and LinkedIn is not yet established for professional uses such as recruitment in developing countries like Pakistan. People overwhelmingly believe that these forums are suitable only for informal recreational purposes and not for formal and professional purposes. They are not only considered unsuitable for recruitment purposes but even discouraged for such uses by the top management in most of the organizations. A respondent stated:

“Facebook is for social networking. Our CEO does not believe that it can be a useful medium for professional purposes like recruitment, so he discourages....”

Another respondent revealed a similar understanding about LinkedIn:

“Nobody uses LinkedIn here, may be only a fraction of graduates, it is more famous in other countries. Our people create accounts on such networking sites but they never come back to use them.”

The element of trust is also very important. Most organizations don't trust social networking sites as sufficiently reliable for creating a serious pool of candidates. Hence, they believe them to be counter-productive. Only the traditional methods are considered trustworthy, in this case only the newspapers. Company websites, although used widely for recruitment purposes at least symbolically, are also not considered useful and reliable as companies believe that their potential applicants don't visit their websites very often. A respondent explicitly mentioned this fact as follows:

‘I don't think even a single organization is using LinkedIn for recruitment in our industry, let alone this organization. In my opinion, the best medium for job advertisement in Pakistan is the newspaper, because our applicants widely trust this medium. All other mediums are less reliable as applicants tend to doubt the authenticity of the information, as you know fraudulent agencies are also very common in Pakistan, who create fictitious jobs and collect a lot of money in the name of processing charges from the applicants.’

The fraudulent elements are making these online forums notorious as there are frequent cases of fake jobs and fake companies which create fictitious job postings and collect a lot of money through these forums. As a result, people are losing trust in these channels and rely mostly on the traditional recruitment channels such as newspapers.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study contends the predominant assumptions in the recruitment literature by presenting unique findings that explicate how recruiters think and how job seekers respond to job advertisements placed through different recruitment channels. The study intends to address some important assumptions celebrated by the recruitment researchers. Below, we discuss these assumptions and describe how the findings of this study counters each one of them. Next, in order to appropriately contextualize the conclusions of this study, we identify some of the causes behind the distinctive findings of this study and detect potential areas for future research where these findings can be extended.

One common finding of the recruitment literature is that recruitment mediums have a significant impact on job seekers' perceptions about the organizational

culture which increases their attractiveness towards the organization as well as their intentions to apply for the job (Barber, [1998](#); Gomes & Neves, [2011](#)). Cober et al. ([2004](#)), for example, studied the impact of the different features of recruitment websites on the initial affective behavior of job seekers which, they believed, played a significant role in shaping the perceptions about the organizational culture. Braddy et al. ([2006](#)) similarly found the impact of website design, features, and content regarding organizational culture on the impressions of job seekers. They argued that advertisement through professional recruitment websites provides applicants with more diverse information related to the job as well as the overall organizational culture as compared to the traditional recruitment methods which give limited information related only to job description.

Braddy et al. ([2003](#)) also validated the impact of the organizational website design features, including their navigational simplicity and text formatting, on the prospective applicants' evaluation of the recruitment advertisement and organizational culture. Other researchers have examined various recruitment mediums and their prospective effects on job seekers who search for jobs through various online recruitment portals and the information available on them (Coyle & Thorson, [2001](#); Agarwal & Venkatesh, [2002](#); Thompson et al., [2008](#)).

In sharp contrast to the findings of the above literature, this study shows that despite significant differences in the content, style, and medium of communication of advertisements and consequent differences in job applicants' perception of organizational attractiveness, there are no significant differences in their intentions to apply for the job. Secondly, despite significant differences in the mediums of communication used for job advertisement in terms of their ability to depict organizational attractiveness, recruiters have no such priorities in their mind while choosing between different recruitment mediums. These findings can be explained in the light of the distinct socioeconomic scenario of the study setting.

Due to the scarcity of job opportunities in urban areas, job seekers often find themselves with very limited options which makes job seeking an uphill task (Fields, [1975](#)). Labour in most developing countries is the cheapest resource, which is not only abundantly available but also inefficiently distributed across industries and geographical regions, making it more abundant in some geographical and sectoral clusters (Harris & Todaro, [1970](#); Maloney, [1999](#)).

There are also mobility barriers from one region to another in most cases (Cole & Sanders, [1985](#); Testaverde, Moroz, Hollweg, & Schmillen, [2017](#)). Individuals' job seeking behaviors as well as organizations' recruitment preferences, particularly in developing countries, are shaped by the levels of geographical and

sectoral surplus and the abundance of labour. Nilsson (2019) “From Dar-es-Salaam to Karachi to Caracas, from land surplus to labour surplus to capital surplus countries, one hears of the ever-increasing ... inability of the urban economy to provide permanent jobs for even a majority of these workers” (Todaro, 1969, p-138).

The literature on development economics categorizes labour markets into two broader sectors of employment namely informal and formal sector (Soundararajan, 2019). The informal sector is believed to be an outgrowth of labour competitiveness in the formal sector. Short of job opportunities in the formal sector, job seekers, as a last resort, enter into the informal sector (El Badaoui, Strobl, & Walsh, 2008; Günther & Launov, 2012). Individuals who remain mainly underemployed in the informal sector, when get a chance rush to the formal sector without showing any preferences.

Directions for Future Research

More in-depth studies aimed at the discovery and interpretation of the local meaning systems and values will help in understanding the rationalization of decisions and practices in the given context. Interpretative studies in the same direction can be useful in the future for the researchers to understand the reasons and motives behind particular actions and for the researched (subjects) to reflect on and evaluate their actions. The understanding and interpretation of the local meaning systems will be useful for the self-reflexivity of the participants and would also help explain decisions and actions in other similar settings. Further ideographic and inductive research may provide a detailed story of how recruiters think and feel about the recruitment channels and their importance in the context of Pakistan. In-depth interviews of recruiters and participation in and observation of recruitment related meetings, seminars, and conferences will help researchers in understanding the real-life experience of recruitment. Future studies should pay attention to all emotions, prejudices, vested interests, and irrationalities involved in the process of recruitment to understand the actors' local meaning system in real-life settings.

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