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How recruitment ad informativeness influence application intentions: Mediating role of perceived fit and moderating role of employment experience

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Abstract: Business organizations use job advertisements to find and attract the high-quality workforce they need. Skillfully crafted job advertisements not only provide job-related information to job seekers but also help develop a strong employer brand in the employee market. Based on signaling theory and person-environment fit theory, we propose that the content and specificity of information provided in job advertisements influence job advertisement effectiveness through various mechanisms. In a scenario-based experiment on 310 young job seekers, we probed the direct and indirect effects of job advertisement informativeness on job pursuit intentions. Using structural equations modelling and multi-group path analysis, the mediating roles of perceived job appropriateness and ad truthfulness, along with the moderating role of previous employment experience, were examined. By manipulating the information content of a hypothetical job advertisement, we demonstrated that: a) both advertisement informativeness and perceived job appropriateness had positive direct effects on application intentions, while the latter had a greater effect; b) perceived job appropriateness mediated the relationship between advertisement informativeness and job pursuit intentions; c) the indirect (mediated) effect of advertisement informativeness on application intentions was moderated by previous employment experience; d) perceived ad truthfulness did not exert any significant effect on application intentions. These findings imply that HR practitioners should provide specific information in job postings to help candidates, especially those with less work experience, evaluate how well the job suits them and increase their motivation to apply.

Keywords: job advertisement; recruitment advertisement; information content; person-job fit; applicant attraction

1. Introduction

In today's fiercely competitive environment, gaining sustainable competitive advantage relies on having talented employees. Human resources managers who are on the front line in "talent wars" strive to attract and retain high-quality employees. Attracting scarce profiles, developing a talent pool, and establishing long-term relationships to ensure mutual satisfaction between employees and the organization are among the priority tasks of strategic human resources management. A growing body of research investigates how to attract, retain, and manage talented employees (Boštjančič and Slana, 2018; Collings and Melah, 2009; Lewis and Heckman, 2006).

A successful recruitment process is at the core of talent pool development. Effectively managing the recruitment process is an essential part of creating a favorable employer brand. In the recruitment process, the first contact between the candidate and company is often through job advertisements published in various

media. Job advertisements, also called recruitment advertisements or job announcements, not only announce open positions but also help develop a good initial organizational perception (Barber and Roehling, 1993) and a favorable employer brand that attracts talent to the company (Chapman et al., 2005; Neely-Martinez, 2002). The main functions of job advertisements are to attract the attention of the candidates, to arouse interest for the job advertised, to create a desire and ultimately to lead them to actual job application (Belt and Paolillo, 1982). Effective job advertisements improve perceived attractiveness of an organization and dissuade jobseekers from actively searching for additional job vacancies or receiving biased information from unreliable sources (Liu, 2020).

There is a plethora of studies examining the factors influencing the effectiveness of job advertisements (Mahjoub and Kruyen, 2021). Aesthetics and design issues (Burt et al., 2010; Kaplan et al., 1991), information content (Acarlar and Bilgiç, 2013; Carballo-Penela et al., 2020; Feldman et al., 2006; Highhouse et al., 1999; Heath et al., 2023; Liu, 2020; Roberson et al., 2005), media strategies (Buda, 2003; Baum and Kabst, 2014; Kim and Angnakoon, 2016), communication characteristics (Allen et al., 2013; Carpentier et al., 2019; Hentschel et al., 2021; Wille and Derous, 2017), individual differences (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2020; Koçak et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2008), and organizational characteristics (Barbosa and Oliveira, 2021; Hoppe et al., 2021; Llanos-Contreras et al., 2024) are among the top researched topics in job advertisement studies.

Among others, the content of job advertisements and the information presented have a significant influence on job seekers' attitudes and application decisions. Several empirical studies have documented that job ads providing relevant and specific information about the advertised job and company will be perceived more positively (Abraham et al., 2024; Feldman et al., 2006; Liu, 2020; Walker et al., 2008; Yüce and Highhouse, 1998), and that including compensation and benefits information in the advertisement will boost application intentions (Verwaeren et al., 2017). However, research examining the interactions between job advertisement information content and candidate characteristics is relatively scarce. Moreover, with a few exceptions (Acarlar and Bilgiç, 2013; Muruganantham et al., 2021), most of the empirical research on job advertisement effectiveness is conducted in the US, UK, and Europe, resulting in a strong Anglo-Saxon influence. Therefore, the subject needs to be further studied in different cultures and especially in developing countries with different macroeconomic conditions. Accordingly, the current study aims to contribute to the recruitment literature by investigating the interrelation between job advertisement content and candidate characteristics in a developing country context. Guided by signaling theory (Spence, 1973) and person-environment fit theory (Caplan, 1987), we proposed that advertisement informativeness has positive effects on ad truthfulness and perceived appropriateness of the advertised job, which in turn will enhance application intentions. To test the proposed relationships, we conducted an experimental study on young job seekers and performed a moderated mediation analysis by using structural equation modeling.

In the next section, we provide a literature review on recruitment advertising and develop our research hypotheses. We then outline our sample and research methodology, analyze the data, and present the findings. In the last section, we discuss

the theoretical and practical implications, address study limitations, and present future research directions.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Attributes of job advertisements

Job advertisements (or recruitment advertisements) are an important tool for organizations to find and attract the high-quality workforce they need. Job advertisements are announcements published in newspapers, magazines, the internet, or other channels to inform potential employees about open positions in a company and to create a large pool of suitable candidates. In an effective recruitment process, the main goal for the company is to create a large and qualified pool of candidates from which they can acquire the employees they need, and to draw the right candidates. From the perspective of job seekers, the aim is to be employed in the best possible conditions through a realistic job search process. A realistic job search process increases productivity for both the employee and the employer by decreasing turnover and increasing commitment in the future (Meglino et al., 2000; Wanous, 1978). During the job search process, recruitment advertisements are the most important sources of information that signal potential employees about job opportunities, and potential employers (Rynes 1991; Turban and Greening 1996). They play an important role in the initial stages of the recruitment process by providing information about the job and employer from many different aspects. Main dimensions of job advertisement consist of job and work characteristics (tasks, duties, and responsibilities, skills required), organizational and job attributes (corporate image and identity information including logo, mission and vision statements, working environment), aesthetic appeal (size, position on the page, use of color, headlines, logos, borders, layout, artwork etc.), human resources offerings (compensation package, training and development opportunities, salary, rewards and other benefits etc.), contact details and application procedure, and other symbolic attributes (including employee portrayals and testimonials) (Muruganatham et al., 2018). Customizing the design, information content, and media preferences in accordance with the target audience and recruitment objectives, and other features of the job advertisement can increase communication success (Fatfouta, 2023; Petry et al., 2021). While all these features are important, the information content can significantly change the communication effects (Barber and Roehling, 1993; Cable and Judge, 1994; Feldman et al., 2006; Horvath and Sczesny, 2016; Yuce and Highhouse, 1998). Candidates generally evaluate job advertisements' information content in four main categories: information about the organization, description and content of the job, qualifications sought, skills required in candidates, the benefits and opportunities offered to the employees (Belt and Paolillo, 1982; Schmitz et al., 2021). Each of these elements can dramatically affect how candidates respond to a job advertisement.

2.2. Effects of information specificity

The literature provides equivocal results on the effects of job advertisement message specificity on job seekers' attitudes and intentions. Although a vast majority

of the literature indicates that providing rich and detailed information in job advertisements has positive effects on ad credibility, organizational attractiveness, and application intentions (Acarlar and Bilgic, 2013; Barber and Roehling, 1993; Highhouse, 1998; Kaplan et al., 1991; Verwaeren et al., 2017; Yüce and Feldman et al., 2006), some researchers reported non-significant effects of message amount and specificity on job pursuit intentions (Belt and Paolillo, 1982; Roberson et al., 2005). However, some argued that providing more detailed information in a job advertisement may increase applicant pool quality at the expense of pool quantity (Belt and Paolillo, 1982; Premack and Wanous, 1986). To reconcile these conflicting findings, Liu et al. (2016) proposed job seekers' decision-making style as a moderating variable. In a similar vein, work tenure or job search experience was also analyzed to draw boundary conditions (Walker et al., 2008). Depending on the job seeker's decision-making style and previous experience, the signal received from message specificity may differ.

Signaling theory (Spence, 1973) can explain how information provided (or omitted) in job advertisements can be used by job seekers as signals or cues that identify the superiority or attractiveness of an unknown recruiting firm (Derous, 2017; Muruganatham et al., 2021; Story et al., 2016; Turban and Cable, 2003; Wille and Vogel et al., 2023). In a realistic job search process, individuals look for specific information about job requirements, compensation, rewards and other benefits, and work environment (Cable et al., 2000; Strassburger et al., 2022). When there is no (or insufficient) direct information, indirect cues (such as amount of information and specificity) may be used as a proxy by job seekers, to base their decisions (Wille and Derous, 2017). Job ads that provide more detailed information can grab the attention of job seekers by signaling the image and reputation of the employer company, thus increasing their job pursuit likelihood. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis.

H1: Ad informativeness positively influences application intentions.

Job seekers look for job opportunities that fit their knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as their personal needs and interests (Walker et al., 2008). A job seeker who receives specific information about the necessary skills and job requirements will evaluate the suitability of the position and make the decision to apply accordingly. On the other hand, when the job seeker receives little concrete information about the potential job, he or she tends to remove such postings from the evaluation set to devote time and energy to other posts that are more suitable. Consequently, job ads that contain comprehensive and specific information are more likely to be viewed as relevant by job seekers.

H2: Ad informativeness positively influences perceived job appropriateness.

The more specific information provided in a job advertisement can be interpreted as a signal indicating a sincere and honest partner who communicates openly. Thus, it increases the perceived truthfulness of the message and subsequent intentions to apply for the job. When job ads contain specific information, job seekers think that real job opportunities exist and that organizations are serious about hiring people with the specified qualifications (Feldman et al., 2006). On the other hand, low message specificity reduces the credibility of claims and increases negative attitudes towards the message (Snyder, 1989). Thus, we propose the following hypotheses:

H3: Ad informativeness positively influences perceived ad truthfulness.

H4: Perceived ad truthfulness positively influences application intentions.

2.3. The mediating role of perceived fit

Person-environment (P-E) fit theory (Caplan, 1987), posits that the fit between people and their environment affects behavior and psychological function. The match of people's knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) with the requirements of the job can explain why some job seekers are more inclined to pursue certain employers (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005; Phillips et al., 2023). Lack-of-fit theory (Heilman, 1983), on the other hand, suggests that people make fit assessments by comparing their self-characterizations with the characteristics they perceive to be required for a certain position, and a mismatch reduces their interest in pursuing such opportunities (Hentschel et al., 2021; Stich et al., 2021). A job seeker who receives specific information about job requirements and necessary skills can better evaluate the match (or mismatch) between the job characteristics and their KSAs (Roberson et al., 2005; Vanderstikken et al., 2019). In a similar approach, need-supply fit (Bretz et al., 1994) or person-reward fit (Verwaeren et al., 2017) can also be used to explain job advertisement attractiveness. Providing detailed information on rewards and compensation packages will enable job seekers to better assess whether the offered package meets their needs and expectations (Verwaeren et al., 2017). Job seekers will be more likely to apply to job postings when they deem them more appropriate for their abilities, and expectations. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.

H5: Perceived job appropriateness positively influences application intentions.

It is anticipated that the message specificity in job advertisements will enable job seekers to make a more accurate assessment of the fit between their skills and expectations and the job. Consequently, message specificity may exert an indirect effect on application intentions through perceived fit. Therefore, the effect of message specificity on application intentions will be further strengthened by the effect of perceived person-job fit. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis on the mediating role of fit:

H6: Perceived job appropriateness mediates the effects of ad informativeness on application intentions.

2.4. The moderating role of prior employment experience

Variations in job seekers' individual characteristics may change the effects of information specificity on application intentions. Beyond their demographics, many psychological, cultural, and experiential characteristics of job seekers can influence their responses to informational content in job advertisements. In addition to studies examining the effects of job seekers' information processing and decision-making styles (Liu et al., 2016), there are few studies examining the effects of work tenure and job search experience on reactions to job advertisements. Previous work experience can influence job seekers' reactions to job postings through their perception and information processing mechanisms (Wille et al., 2020). When exposed to job postings, people with previous employment experience have a greater ability to identify key organizational and job characteristics (Feldman and Arnold, 1978). Due

to perceptual alertness and selective attention, they can better process organizational information and evaluate the effects of the fit between person-organization fit and person-job fit (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). Moreover, they can establish a more accurate link between what is written in the advertisement and the situation they will encounter at work, because they may have experienced or witnessed the consequences of a good and a bad fit. Walker et al. (2008) found that the content of job advertisements influences the organizational attitudes of experienced job seekers more than those of their inexperienced counterparts. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H7a: Previous employment experience moderates the effect of perceived job appropriateness on application intentions, such that the effect would be stronger with high employment experience compared to low employment experience.

On the other hand, job seekers with less previous work experience will be more influenced by the information in the job advertisement when making the decision to apply for a job. These people, who have less information about the situations they may encounter in the workplace, will want to draw more conclusions from the information in the job advertisement. In this case, more detailed job advertisements will exert a stronger influence on less experienced job seekers in their decision to apply for a job. In line with this reasoning, the following hypothesis is developed:

H7b: Previous employment experience moderates the effect of ad informativeness on application intentions, such that the effect would be stronger with low employment experience than with high employment experience.

The proposed hypotheses were tested on young job seekers. **Figure 1** depicts the proposed model and research hypothesis.

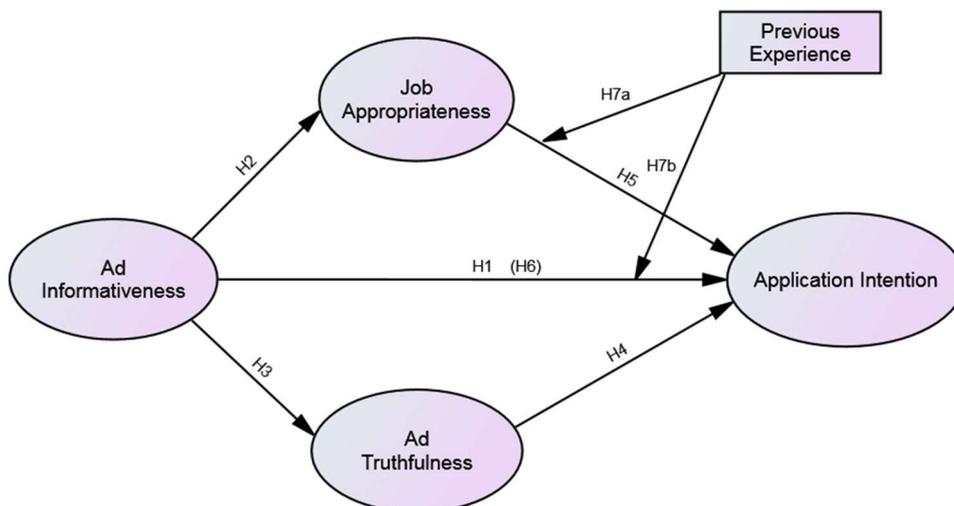


Figure 1. Proposed model and hypotheses.

3. Materials and methods

3.1. Sample

In order to test the study hypothesis, we conducted research on young job seekers. Research data were collected from a convenient sample of 310 undergraduate students (169 females, 141 males, mean age 22.2 years, SD = 1.53; range: 20–30 years)

attending various departments at a Turkish state university. About half of the participants (166) were in their third year, and the rest (144) were either senior students or those undertaking extended studies. Two-thirds (212) of the participants were business and management students, and the rest (98) were students attending technical departments (engineering, science, and technology). Respondents volunteered to take part in the study in return for extra course credits. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of a Turkish University. Even though using student samples in social science research has some limitations, university students are considered to be a suitable target group for this study, as they constitute a particular audience that is about to enter the business world and are actively seeking employment opportunities.

3.2. Procedure

Study hypotheses were tested using a survey-based between-subjects experiment. A hypothetical job advertisement was used as the experimental stimulus. To manipulate the perceived informativeness of the job advertisement, researchers created three different versions by changing the compensation and benefits information. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental groups and were exposed to only one of these three versions.

Research data were collected by an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire consisted of four sections, beginning with the demographic questions (age, gender, study field, class, and prior employment experience). After responding to the demographic questions, respondents were randomly assigned to one of the three experimental conditions. They were instructed to “carefully read the job advertisement which was recently posted on a career website and then answer the questions.” The sector (banking and finance) and position (sales rep) in the job posting were chosen based on a pilot study, and qualitative judgments. The banking and finance sector is frequently presented in the labor market. After examining recent job postings published in newspapers and career sites, it was determined that the most common entry-level position was the sales representative. Although this position seems to be more suitable for business and management graduates, the job advertisement stated that anyone with a university degree can apply. By doing so, we aimed to create a variation in the perceived job appropriateness of participants from different study fields.

In order to prevent attitudinal bias, the employer company name was not disclosed. Instead, the job advertisement was prepared as if a career consultancy company had published it. In the title part of the advertisement, included are the name, logo of the brokerage firm, and the name of the vacant position. The phrase “We are looking for ‘Customer Representatives’ to work in one of Türkiye’s leading banks” is placed just below the title. After this sentence, job description, required skills and qualifications, compensation and benefits offered, and other information about the position are presented. In consultation with experts in the field of career management, three versions of the job advertisement were developed by manipulating the information on compensation and benefits. In the first version, no information was provided on compensation and benefits offered. In the second version, vague information is provided (i.e., satisfactory salary, promotion and career development

opportunities, bonuses, social support). In the third version, detailed, concrete, and specific information about compensation and benefits that is offered is given. In this version, beginning salary was also given explicitly. The amount of salary was set at a reasonable level that is attractive to new graduates, but not exaggerated. The shape, border, size, color, and other features of the advertisement were identical in all three versions.

After reading the job advertisement, participants were asked to respond to questions to capture perceived informativeness and credibility of the ad, job appropriateness, and their intentions to apply for the vacant position. Manipulation check questions were added in the last section of the questionnaire.

3.3. Measures

Respondents' age, gender, study field, class, and previous employment experience (how many months they have worked full-time) were measured by direct questions. As the sample comprised 115 respondents aged 23 and over (the typical age for graduation), a number of the respondents also had full-time work experience. These individuals were extension students, attending the university on a part-time basis in order to complete the remaining courses. After the demographic questions have been answered, a number of multi-item scales are used to measure the study variables.

Advertisement Informativeness was measured by the 7-item unidimensional scale developed by Feldman et al. (2006). A sample item from the scale is "I believe this job advertisement is very informative."

Ad Truthfulness was measured by the 5-item unidimensional scale adapted from Feldman et al. (2006). A sample item from the scale is "The information contained in the job advertisement is credible."

Job Appropriateness was measured by the 5-item unidimensional scale adapted from Feldman et al. (2006). A sample item from the scale is "The jobs being offered seem appropriate for someone with my education and interests."

To measure the intention to apply for the advertised job, a 7-item Likert-type scale derived from Highhouse et al. (2003), Feldman et al. (2006) and Walker et al. (2008) was used. Sample items from the scale are: "I'm considering applying for the advertised job" and "I would accept a job offer from this company."

To check the effectiveness of experimental manipulations, subjects' levels of agreement with three statements were captured. At this stage, respondents were not allowed to go back and view the job advertisement again. The statements were "This job posting provides a) comprehensive b) in-depth c) detailed information."

All measures relied on 5-point Likert-type reflective scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). We used the translation (in Turkish) and back-translation (in English) procedure to maintain semantic equivalence of the scales.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Manipulation checks and control variables

One hundred and ten participants were randomly assigned to the low

informativeness condition, one hundred and one participants were randomly assigned to the medium informativeness condition, and ninety-nine to the high informativeness condition. One-way ANOVA revealed significant differences among each group in the manipulation check questions. The mean score of the manipulation check questions in the “low informativeness” condition was 2.92 (SD = 0.66), whereas it was 3.09 (SD = 0.75) for the medium informativeness condition and 3.40 (SD = 0.74) for the high informativeness condition ($F_{2,307} = 11.58, p < 0.001$). These findings confirmed that the message framing manipulations worked properly.

In addition, the level of perceived job appropriateness by the respondents from different fields (management vs. technical), was compared to check whether there was significant variance. Independent samples *t*-test confirmed that business students perceived the advertised job as more appropriate ($M = 3.16, SD = .88$) compared to students studying in technical departments ($M = 2.58, SD = 1.03$) ($t = 5.125, p < 0.001$).

A correlation analysis has been conducted to check the relationships between the control variables (age, gender, year of study, job experience) and summated study variables (ad informativeness, ad truthfulness, job-appropriateness, and application intentions). **Table 1** shows descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables. None of the control variables had a statistically significant relationship with the study variables. Harman’s single-factor test was used to probe the common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Factor analysis revealed four factors explaining 69.2% of the variance. The largest factor accounted for 37.3% of the total variance. This finding suggested that common method bias is not likely to confound the results.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations among study variables.

Variables	Mean	Std. dev.	Correlations						
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Age (years)	22.21	1.54							
2. Gender (female = 1, male = 2)	1.45	0.50	0.135*						
3. Year of study (3 and 4)	3.46	0.50	0.377**	0.033					
4. Previous employment experience (range 0 - 96 months)	8.37	12.89	0.348**	0.189**	0.182**				
5. Ad informativeness	3.16	0.79	-0.032	0.001	-0.046	-0.049			
6. Ad truthfulness	3.45	0.78	-0.015	0.102	-0.072	0.007	0.376**		
7. Job appropriateness	2.98	0.97	-0.057	0.038	-0.074	-0.071	0.275**	0.210**	
8. Application intention	3.04	0.98	-0.041	-0.011	-0.120	-0.104	0.374**	0.179**	0.562**

*: Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

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

In addition, we made a median split of the previous employment experience variable, to produce “high experience” and “low experience” groups in the dataset. Individuals with less than three months of prior work experience, including those with no previous employment, were classified as belonging to the “low experience” group. Those with more than three months of previous work experience were assigned to the “high experience” group. The low experience group ($n = 170$) has, on average, 1.3 months of employment experience (range 0–3 months), while the high experience

group ($n = 140$) has, on average, 16.95 months of employment experience (range 4–94 months). Although the discrepancy between the two groups in terms of work experience may appear insubstantial, mean difference is statistically significant ($t = -15.65, p < 0.001$) and may provide valuable insights into perceptual and attitudinal differences pertaining to job search behavior.

4.2. Measurement model and CFA

We performed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the measurement model. Data exhibited an insufficient fit to the measurement model and some convergent and discriminant validity issues (low factor loadings, insufficient composite reliability scores, and AVEs) arose. To improve model fit and construct validity, we had to remove three items from ad informativeness, job appropriateness, and application intention scales (one from each). We also removed two items from the ad truthfulness scale. In the revised model, fit statistics showed a good fit to the data: $\chi^2 = 206.7, df = 111$; CMIN/DF: 1.86; GFI: 0.93; TLI: 0.96; CFI: 0.97; RMSEA: 0.053. Scale items obtained high standardized factor loadings (between 0.871 and 0.553), and reliability statistics (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Descriptives, factor loadings and reliability of the constructs.

Construct	Indicator items	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. loadings	Cronbach alpha
Ad informativeness	INF_5 The information given in the advertisement is satisfactory.	3.12	0.958	0.789	0.797
	INF_6 The information given in the advertisement is well organized.	3.32	0.943	0.772	
	INF_7 The amount of information I get from the advertisement about the job is enough to make a decision.	3.00	1.069	0.722	
	INF_1 This posting gives all the information necessary about the content of the job.	3.19	1.031	0.553	
Job appropriateness	APPR O_2 I believe the company is seeking to hire people like me.	2.90	1.173	0.871	0.851
	APPR O_1 The job being offered seems appropriate for someone with my education and interests.	3.25	1.154	0.809	
	APPR O_4 The job being advertised here is appropriate for me, given the level of work experience I have had.	2.76	1.204	0.682	
	APPR O_5 I have all the qualifications to apply for this post.	3.00	1.125	0.63	
Ad truthfulness	CRED_2 The information contained in the job advertisement is credible.	3.49	0.873	0.866	0.777
	CRED_1 The ad appears to be a genuine job advertisement.	3.52	0.971	0.797	
	CRED_4 It is considered that the information contained in the ad is believable.	3.34	0.978	0.577	
Application intentions	INT_2 I can apply for the advertised job	2.92	1.202	0.866	0.913
	INT_1 I would like to work in the advertised job.	2.90	1.206	0.855	
	INT_5 I would make a significant effort to get this job.	2.92	1.246	0.818	
	INT_4 I would accept a job offer from this company'	3.23	1.172	0.808	
	INT_3 If this company invited me to a job interview, I would go.	3.33	1.150	0.792	
	INT_6 I would like to apply for other postings at this company.	2.96	1.095	0.607	

Table 3 shows the Heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of the correlations among study constructs, composite reliability (CR) for internal consistency, average variance extracted (AVE) for convergent validity, maximum shared variance (MSV), and the correlation matrix of latent variables for discriminant validity. HTMT results indicate no issues regarding discriminant validity according to HTMT85 criterion (Henseler et al., 2015). All of the constructs had CR values greater than 0.8, indicating that they are reliable (Hair et al., 2010). Strong standardized factor loadings (ranging between 0.87 and 0.55) of indicators to respective constructs and AVE values that are higher than the 0.5 threshold indicate that convergent validity was also attained (**Table 2**). All MSV values are less than AVEs and the square root of AVEs is greater than inter-construct correlations, confirming no concerns about discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). These findings clearly indicate that the measurement model with four reflective constructs established convergent and discriminant validity and reliability.

Table 3. Validity and reliability indicators.

	HTMT analysis				CR	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	1	2	3	4
	1	2	3	4								
1. Informativeness					0.80	0.51	0.19	0.823	0.715			
2. Appropriateness	0.337				0.84	0.57	0.46	0.868	0.341***	0.754		
3. Truthfulness	0.479	0.255			0.80	0.57	0.18	0.84	0.427***	0.267***	0.757	
4. App intention	0.440	0.637	0.213		0.91	0.63	0.46	0.922	0.434***	0.679***	0.205**	0.796

4.3. Structural model and hypothesis tests

Before testing the specific hypotheses, the overall fit of the structural model was examined. The overall fit indexes of the structural model were satisfactory: $\chi^2 = 210.744$, $df = 112$; CMIN/DF: 1.882; TLI: 0.956; CFI: 0.964; RMSEA: 0.053. Next, we tested direct and indirect causal relationships between the structures. **Table 4** shows path coefficients and corresponding significance levels, 95% bias corrected confidence intervals, and coefficients of determination.

Table 4. Direct, indirect and total effects (mediated model).

Regression path	Unstd. estimates (<i>t</i> -values)	<i>p</i>	Std. estimates	95% bias-corrected CI (LL-UL)	Variance explained (<i>R</i> ²)
Informativeness → appropriateness	0.428 (5.094)	<0.001	0.352 ***	0.287 0.582	0.124
Informativeness → truthfulness	0.319 (5.538)	<0.001	0.435 ***	0.192 0.463	0.189
Informativeness → application intention (direct effect)	0.336 (3.856)	<0.001	0.250 ***	0.165 0.508	
Truthfulness → application intention	-0.101 (-0.955)	0.339	-0.055	-0.315 0.135	
Appropriateness → application intention	0.667 (9.643)	<0.001	0.603***	0.505 0.687	
Informativeness → appropriateness → application Intention (indirect effect)	0.254	0.001	0.189***	0.089 0.298	
Informativeness → application intention (total effect)	0.590	<0.001	0.439***	0.321 0.555	0.514

*** $p < 0.001$ (bootstrap sample size = 2000).

Based on a bootstrap test with 2000 re-samples (Preacher et al., 2007), we found that advertisement informativeness exerted significantly positive direct effects on application intentions ($\beta = 0.25, p < 0.001$), perceived job appropriateness ($\beta = 0.352, p < 0.001$), and ad truthfulness ($\beta = 0.435, p < 0.001$). These findings provided support for H1, H2, and H3. Further, perceived job appropriateness exerted a significantly positive effect on application intentions ($\beta = 0.603, p < 0.001$); this finding supports H5. Contrary to our expectations, ad truthfulness did not exert a significant effect on application intentions ($\beta = -0.055, p = 0.339$). Hence, H4 was not supported.

Moreover, perceived job appropriateness was found to mediate the relationship between advertisement informativeness and application intentions. Path analysis revealed a statistically significant indirect effect of advertisement informativeness on application intentions ($\beta = 0.189; p = 0.01$), through perceived job appropriateness. The 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (lower and upper levels) do not contain zero. The relationship between advertisement informativeness and application intentions is strengthened by the mediating role of perceived job appropriateness (total effect $\beta = 0.439; p < 0.01$). Thus, H6 was also supported. Advertisement informativeness and perceived job appropriateness were significant predictors of application intentions and together they accounted for 51.4% of the total variation in application intentions. Among these variables, perceived job appropriateness was found to be the strongest predictor of application intentions.

To test proposed moderation effects of previous employment experience, a multi-group analysis was performed to check the significance of model invariance (Jöreskog and Sörbom, 1993). Based on a median split of previous employment experience, the high experience group had 140 participants, whereas the low experience group had 170 participants. The moderation effect is analyzed by examining significant differences in beta values of the regression paths for the two groups. **Table 5** shows the results of the multi-group analysis.

Table 5. Multi-group analysis.

Regression path	High experience		Low experience		$\Delta\beta$	Z score	Moderation effect
	β	R^2	β	R^2			
Appropriateness → application intention	0.613***	0.513	0.608***	0.522	-0.005	-0.833	Not significant
Informativeness → application intention (direct effect)	0.293**		0.216**		-0.077	-0.811	Not significant
Informativeness → appropriateness → application intention (indirect effect)	0.101		0.256***		0.155*		Significant
Informativeness → application intention (total effect)	0.394***		0.472***		0.078		Not significant

Significance of estimates: *** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; † $p < 0.10$ (bootstrap sample size = 2000.)

As presented in **Table 5**, perceived job appropriateness exerted significantly positive effects on application intentions, both in the high experience group ($\beta = 0.613, p < 0.01$) and in the low experience group ($\beta = 0.608, p < 0.01$). The difference between β values was not statistically significant ($\Delta\beta = -0.005; z = -0.833$). Thus, we could not find enough evidence to support the moderation hypothesis (H7a) proposing that previous employment experience would moderate the effect of perceived job appropriateness on application intentions. For both groups, perceived job

appropriateness positively influenced application intentions.

Ad informativeness exerted significantly positive direct effect on application intentions both in the high experience group ($\beta = 0.293, p < 0.01$) and in the low experience group ($\beta = 0.216, p < 0.01$). Although the magnitude of this positive effect was smaller in the low experience group, the difference between the parameters was not statistically significant ($\Delta\beta = -0.077; z = -0.811$). Thus, we concluded that previous employment experience did not moderate the effect of ad informativeness on application intentions (H7b not supported). However, we found that ad informativeness exerted a significantly positive indirect effect on application intentions ($\beta = 0.256, p < 0.01$) in the low experience group, while this indirect effect was not statistically significant in the high experience group ($\beta = 0.101, p > 0.05$). Thus, we concluded that previous employment experience moderated the indirect effect of ad informativeness on application intentions. These findings are discussed in the next section.

5. Discussion

This study investigated the effects of recruitment ad-informativeness on application intentions of young job seekers. To better understand the relationship between advertisement informativeness and job attraction, both direct and indirect (mediated) effects were analyzed. For this purpose, the amount of information in the job advertisement was manipulated in an experimental setting. The mediating roles of perceived job appropriateness and ad truthfulness, along with the moderating role of previous employment experience, were examined by utilizing structural equation modeling and multi-group path analysis. To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study that demonstrates the independent and joint effects of advertisement informativeness, perceived job appropriateness, and ad truthfulness on application intentions while controlling the moderating effect of previous employment experience within the context of a developing country. By manipulating the information content of a hypothetical job advertisement, we demonstrated that: a) both advertisement informativeness and perceived job appropriateness had positive direct effects on application intentions, while the latter had a greater effect, b) perceived job appropriateness mediated the relationship between advertisement informativeness and application intentions, c) the indirect (mediated) effect of advertisement informativeness on application intentions was moderated by previous employment experience, d) perceived ad truthfulness did not exert any significant effect on application intentions.

Our findings suggest that providing detailed information in job advertisements contributes to reducing information asymmetry by making it easier for candidates to evaluate how well the job suits them. Detailed information in job advertisements improves the perceived appropriateness of advertised jobs for potential applicants and enhances the perceived truthfulness of the advertisement. Although some studies revealed that detailed job ads may decrease applicant pool quantity (Belt and Paolillo, 1982), our findings indicate that candidates who receive detailed information about the vacant position, compensation, and benefits offered show a higher intention to apply for the position. This may be because detailed information strengthens the

perceptions of person-job fit (Feldman et al., 2006). Our findings indicate that perceived job appropriateness mediates the relationship between advertisement informativeness and application intentions. These findings are in line with previous studies showing the positive outcomes of providing detailed information in job advertisements (Acarlar and Bilgiç, 2013; Barber and Roehling 1993; Feldman et al., 2006; Kaplan et al., 1991; Turban et al., 1998; Verwaeren et al., 2017; Walker et al., 2008). Contrary to our expectations, advertisement truthfulness did not exert a direct effect on application intentions. A weak positive correlation was observed between ad truthfulness and job pursuit intentions. However, ad truthfulness was found to have no significant effect on intention to apply for the job when analyzed together with other study variables. One possible explanation for this unexpected finding is that the strong effect of perceived job appropriateness overshadowed the effect of ad truthfulness. However, examining ad credibility from different perspectives still warrants more careful attention in future studies.

We found that job seekers with various levels of previous employment experience (low vs. high) may be affected differently by the amount of information in job ads. The direct effect of advertisement informativeness on the intention to apply is further reinforced by the indirect (mediating) effect of perceived job appropriateness, particularly in candidates with limited or no employment experience. For individuals with higher previous employment experience, no such effect was observed. This finding is in line with Walker et al. (2008). Job seekers with low employment experience interpret how suitable the job is for them by looking at the details in the advertisement when evaluating a recruitment ad. This, in turn, strengthens the effect of the informative nature of the advertisement on application intentions. For those who are new to the job search process, the quantity and quality of information provided in a job advertisement can influence their evaluation of whether the position aligns with their qualifications and interests, as well as their decision to pursue the opportunity.

Our findings have practical implications for human resources professionals in developing more effective recruitment advertisements. The results demonstrate that the inclusion of specific information has a generally positive effect on individuals' reactions to job openings for new entrants to the labor market. The provision of specific information may increase the likelihood of potential applicants believing that the job openings are genuine, while also increasing the perception of the credibility of the advertisement. Furthermore, providing detailed information may enhance applicants' perceptions of the suitability of the roles being advertised to them. It is the responsibility of HR professionals to identify the core requirements of the job, which may include skills, qualifications, experience, and competencies. These should be clearly stated in the job advertisement, presented in a concise and measurable format. Furthermore, the job description should highlight various aspects of the position, such as the benefits or challenges, depending on the attributes that appeal to the target candidates. It is also imperative to refrain from over-specification, which entails being excessively rigid or narrow in the delineation of the job description. Over-specification can constrain the talent pool, preclude diverse and qualified candidates, and engender unrealistic expectations. When targeting new entrants, it is also beneficial to emphasize potential, focusing on the future growth and development of the job and the candidate. Potential can attract and motivate candidates who are looking for

opportunities to learn, improve, and advance in their careers.

In order to hire the right talent with the optimal set of skills for a given business, it is essential to create a well-written job description. A good job description enables the identification of the most appropriate candidate, the elimination of those who are unsuitable, and the promotion of the business. Conversely, a poorly written job description attracts candidates who do not meet the specific requirements of the position. To create a large pool of candidates by receiving more applications for job postings, managers should ensure the job posts are as informative as possible and provide detailed information about the compensation packages and benefits offered. They should also provide information about the employing company, qualifications sought in the candidate, job responsibilities, and other details. Job advertising informativeness will be more effective on candidates with low employment experience, who will apply for entry-level positions. By comparing the requirements and promises of the vacant position with their own characteristics, candidates who do not find the post suitable for themselves will not apply, and thus, the right candidates will be found in the candidate pool. This will improve the effectiveness of the recruitment process and prevent the waste of time and resources.

This research has several limitations. First, although the use of hypothetical job ads is a practical approach for experimental control, it may not fully capture the complexities of real-world recruitment scenarios. It would be beneficial for future studies to consider how real-world factors, such as company/employer reputation or industry-specific norms, might influence job seekers. Next, as we portrayed an entry-level job for recent graduates in the experimental setting, it is necessary to examine how ad informativeness and truthfulness will affect intentions to apply for higher-ranks and executive positions.

Another limitation comes from the scope and content of the study. We manipulated only one aspect of job ads—information content—but there are other important attributes that need more attention. In future studies, apart from the informativeness of the job ad, the effects of the medium in which the advertisement is published, the aesthetic/design elements of the advertisement, and the language used (diversity and inclusion) in the advertisement on the intention to apply for a job should be examined.

Third, the effect of the image and reputation of the employer firm was excluded from the evaluation in this study, with the company name undisclosed. In future studies, using recruitment ads posted by real companies, including the company's name, may enable us to probe different interactions between the perceived company reputation and ad features.

Using university students with relatively little work experience as a sample is another important limitation. Considering that senior university students or recent graduates constitute a significant group in the job market, we can say that the data obtained from this sample provide important insights for recruitment professionals. Nevertheless, there is a need to consider the extent to which our findings can be generalized to more experienced job seekers. An important avenue for future research would be to examine the reactions of employees with different levels of work experience and at further stages of their career journey.

Finally, the dependent variable examined in the study is the respondents'

intention to apply for the job in the advertisement. Due to the inherent nature of the experimental setting, it was not possible to examine the actual behavior of the subjects. While intentions are an important antecedent of actual behavior, measuring actual behavior is crucial to validate the specified causal relationships in real-world settings.

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