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**THE EFFECT OF JOB TITLE AND INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES ON
APPLICANT REACTIONS**

A Thesis in
Human Resources and Employment Relations

by
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Abstract

A job advertisement is one of the earliest sources of information for job applicants. There are many ways to tap into talent pools, but using a job advertisement is one of the most frequently used methods to gain the attention of potential applicants. With the increasing popularity of job search websites, where job applicants can easily compare and contrast different job advertisements from different companies, job advertisements should be given more attention to see if they can better attract potential applicants to the job. This study examined the effect of job titles in job advertisements on applicants' attraction to a job in a fictional company. The proposed theoretical model suggests individual differences in core self-evaluations and status aspiration influence whether an applicant is attracted to a particular type of job advertisement. The model was tested through a series of moderated regression analyses with data gathered from 197 working professionals who completed surveys through Amazon's Mechanical Turk Program. The results are somewhat contradictory to what was predicted, but perceived person-job fit and perceived job prestige were found to be positively related to job attraction. The implications for future theory on applicant attraction as well as recruitment practices are considered in the discussion of key findings.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Recruiting employees has always been a popular topic for researchers and practitioners (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Barber, 19998; Breugh & Mann, 1984). Research on recruitment sources, recruiters, and realistic job previews have been among the most widely studied topics. Recruitment advertising, the importance of the site visit, and timing issues have been identified as areas in the recruitment literature that have not been widely studied (Breugh & Starke, 2000). There have been a number of studies conducted to identify what factors influence an applicant's intention to pursue a job. According to a meta-analysis, the strongest predictors identified are job and organizational characteristics, especially those related to the type of work and organization attributes (Chapman et al., 2005).

With the rise of Big Data and HR analytics, more interest has shifted to specific areas in the recruiting literature, identifying indicators of fit between applicants and the company and indicators of applicant's potential loyalty to the company (SHRM, 2016). Recruiting the right people from the beginning could become more plausible with such tools because organizations could tailor their advertisements to attract people who will show a greater fit with the company (Cable & Judge, 1996; Phillips, Gully, McCarthy, Castellano, & Kim, 2014). There are many ways job advertisements can be tailored to target specific people, and research has found a strong relationship between intentions to pursue the job and certain job characteristics described in the advertisement (Barber &

Roehling, 1993). Other research has found that job applicants infer certain information from the wording of a job advertisement (Highhouse, Beadle, Gallo, & Miller, 1998), indicating the importance of configuring job advertisements to convey certain messages, and preventing potential applicants from misinterpreting it. However, these studies did not look into how people are attracted to an advertisement message or what factors lead the applicants to develop an intention to apply to the company. Past studies have been focused on which characteristics of a job applicants would be attracted to and how they relate to their intention to pursue the job when they see a job advertisement.

Some companies create job titles that are not clearly representative of the employee's actual status. There could be different reasons for this practice, but sometimes it is to reward employees without financial expenditures, and sometimes it is used to attract people to the company. Companies that implement this practice believe that they are saving money because they can attract talent without raising pay or offering better benefits (Greenberg & Ornstein, 1983). Theoretically, taking a self-enhancement perspective, people have a desire to self-enhance (Pfeffer & Fong, 2005). A person's job is part of who he or she is, and as a result, having a high status job title is one way to fulfill the need to self-enhance without much cost for the company (Grant, Berg, & Cable, 2014). However, whether job titles actually increase job attractiveness for job applicants has not been studied in depth. Job titles have previously been studied in relation with other job characteristics such as challenging/interesting work and opportunity to use abilities (Posner & Powell, 1990). As a result, it is unclear whether job titles by themselves are useful in increasing job attractiveness for applicants.

There are mixed findings about the effect of job titles on potential applicant behavior. Some studies argue that a job title has no effect on applicant's behavior (Posner, 1981) while other studies have found conflicting results regarding job titles' effects on applicant behavior (Barber & Roehling, 1993). This study will explore the relationship between job titles and applicants' attraction to the job. By doing so, this study strives to produce findings that will provide clear direction for practitioners when recruiting employees. This is significant because previous studies show conflicting effects of job titles on applicant behavior, and this study will contribute to the empirical body of evidence regarding job title effects in the current literature. In addition, this study will explore the link between perceived prestige of the job and job attraction, which is a relatively unexplored area in the recruiting literature, and could potentially improve the effectiveness of recruiting for organizations.

In addition, this study will enhance our understanding of past studies from looking at effects of job titles after employment to looking at effects of job titles prior to employment. Previous studies have researched how job titles influence employees. Studies claim that job titles contribute to reduced emotional exhaustion, improved productivity, increased sales, and enhanced organizational reputations (Grant et al., 2014; Martinez, Laird, Martin, & Ferris, 2008). However, research on the effects of job titles prior to organizational entry is limited, and this study will contribute to the literature by examining the relationship between job titles and applicant behavior and findings can help companies create more effective job advertisements to attract more applicants.

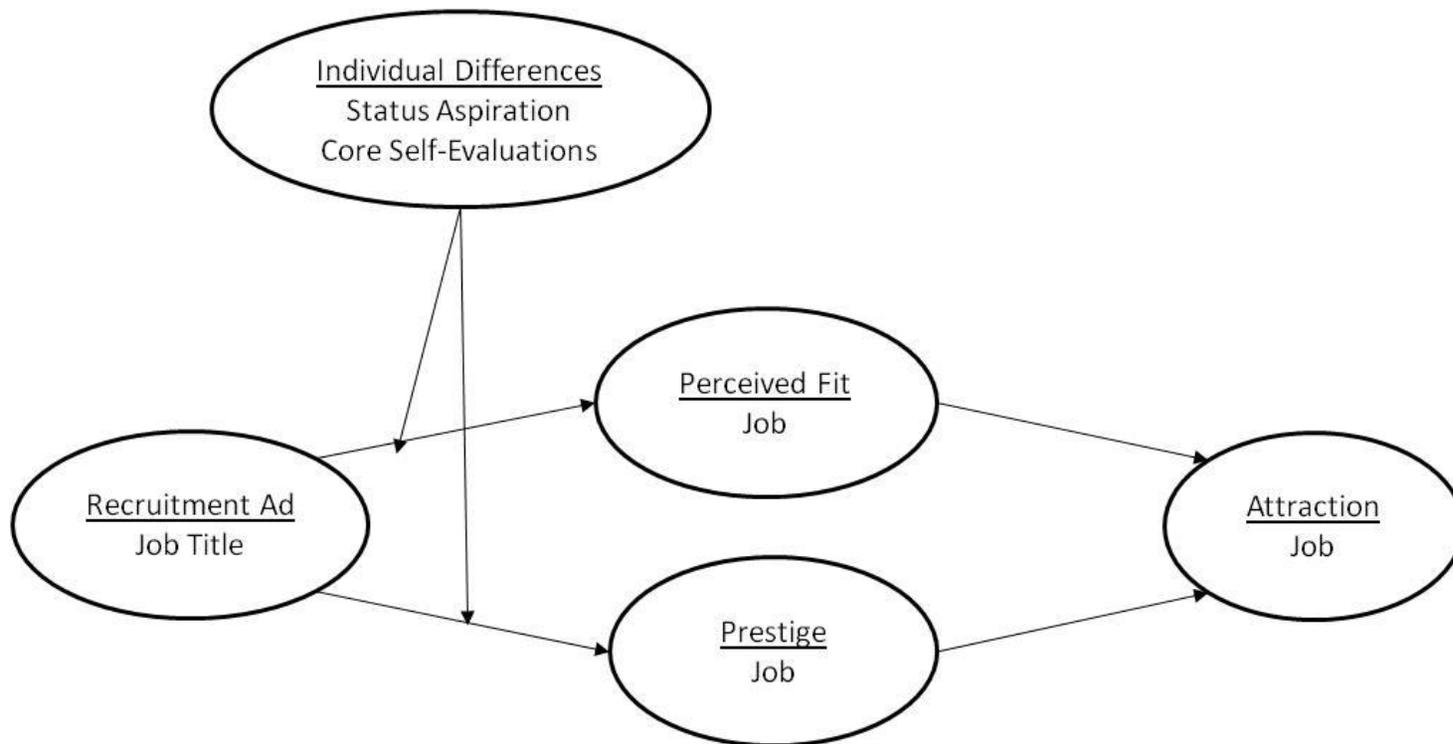


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Job Title Influences on Applicant Reactions

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Hypotheses

Theoretical Development

Figure 1 introduces the theoretical model underpinning the hypothesis introduced in this thesis. In a study comparing recruiter, student, and faculty perceptions of important applicant and job characteristics, job title was one of the least important job characteristics to students (Posner, 1981). However, in a study by Barber and Roehling (1993), they investigated how specific job characteristics influence individuals' decisions to interview with the company and found that location, salary, benefits, and industry of the company were given the highest attention by study participants. However, job title was one of the most mentioned items when participants gave reasons for their decision to interview with the company. Although job titles were shown to have influence in drawing potential applicant's attention, not much attention had been given to studying how job titles can influence applicants' attraction to a job. In a different study, Chapman et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis to summarize the predictors of applicant attraction to jobs and job choice. According to this study, perceived work environment had the strongest relationship with attraction, and fit and image also had significant effects in predicting attraction. Most studies, including Chapman et al. (2005), do not include job titles as a variable. However, there have been a few studies that have shown that it is one of the factors applicants take into consideration when they think about the attractiveness

of a job (Posner, 1981; Barber & Roehling, 1993). This indicates that this area in the literature needs further investigation, and this is what this study aims to examine.

Some may question the importance of job titles because it is no more than just a “title.” However, recent findings indicate that having the right job title can reduce emotional exhaustion for employees because it is a way for the employee to express themselves, which reduces stress (Grant et al., 2014). This means that job titles do influence employees, and they should be given more attention for research. The study suggests that self-reflective titles reduce emotional exhaustion for employees through self-verification, psychological safety, and external rapport. Job titles that reflect the self are a tool for expressing one’s identity, and it reduces the stress for the individual because it allows the individual express him or herself.

According to Cable and Kay (2012), upon organizational entry, individuals strive for self-verification. They argue that upon organizational entry individuals worry about high expectations that were displayed during the interview process, and strive to act like the person they perceive was displayed. In the process, the individual’s ability to work is hindered and his or her cognitive and emotional energy is wasted in unnecessary effort to portray themselves in a particular light. In short, the article claims that self-verification theory predicts that people will strive to show their true selves to others, or how they perceive themselves to be to others (Swann, 2012). In this situation, having a self-reflective job title could help reduce this anxiety upon organizational entry, and help employees to perform better without wasting resources.

Applicants are attracted to and act favorably towards jobs with which they feel they fit. When applicants see job titles on job advertisements that reflect their beliefs

about themselves, they may develop a stronger sense of fit, perceive the opportunity as more prestigious, be more attracted to it, and eventually establish a stronger job pursuit intention (Chapman et al., 2005). In this study, core self-evaluations and status aspiration, which will be explained in more detail in the following sections, are used to test individual differences because they are believed to be critical views of the self. These characteristics will be examined to see if they influence the relationship between job titles and perceived prestige and fit. It is predicted that positive self-beliefs (higher levels of core self-evaluations and status aspiration) will moderate the relationship between job titles and fit/perceived job prestige, and person job fit/job prestige will be positively correlated with job attraction. In this relationship, self-verification would be the dominant reaction from applicants and it would predict that the potential applicant would try to apply to a job that would verify their views of themselves because they would feel better fit with titles that reflect their beliefs about themselves.

Self-Verification Theory in Job Applicants

According to self-verification theory, people wish to verify themselves. They prefer others to see themselves in the way they see themselves, even when those self-views are negative. As individuals form relationships, they are more prone to choose interaction partners that confirm their self-views, and when the individual is faced with a person who sees them in a more positive or negative light than expected, individuals will put in more effort to receive self-verifying feedback from those people (Swann, 2012).

There are opposing views on the practicality of self-verification as a theory because it is more intuitive for people to think that they would want to enhance themselves. It is thought to be counter intuitive to consider individuals as viewing themselves negatively and verifying that negativity to others. This is because people are believed to have a tendency to self-enhance. Also, previous literature claims that in most cases, self-enhancement is the dominant strategy and self-verification only happens under certain boundary conditions. For one, when the individual faces a high risk of rejection, they will self-enhance rather than self-verify (Kwang & Swann, 2010). Also, when the individual's self-worth is tied to a particular domain, the individual will self-enhance, but in contrast if it not important to self-worth the individual will self-verify (Ferris, Lian, Brown & Morrison, 2015). However, when the individual believes that the relationship with the organization is long-term, he or she will self-verify instead of self-enhance, possibly to keep expectations in line with reality (Wiesenfeld, Swann, Brockner, & Bartel, 2007).

When thinking about the logical process of job applicants, applicants would want to stay with the company they are applying to for as long as possible if their perceived fit with the job is high and they are attracted to the job. As a result, it can be said that although the person may try to self-enhance during the job interview to increase their chances of being hired (Cable & Kay, 2012), in the initial job search process, applicants would strive to find a job that would verify their beliefs about themselves. This is because individuals would want to increase their chances of being offered a job. Applicants would think that they would be capable of doing a job with which applicants feel a strong fit

with than a job that seems to be a poor fit for the person. As a result, the applicant would feel more attracted to a job that would verify their beliefs about themselves.

Applicants determine perceived prestige and their fit with the job from the information they obtain from job advertisements. Information about a specific job can be found from a job advertisement, especially from the job title, as this is the most prominent information that catches applicants' attention. The job title represents the characteristics of the job and how the organization thinks of a certain job. A title implies at least three important dimensions about the job: (1) knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs); (2) status and power levels; and (3) responsibilities of the job holder (Martinez et al., 2008). It is suggested that applicants will process this information and create a perception of the company (fit with the job and the prestige of the job) and compare this perception with self-views to see if it verifies beliefs about themselves.

To see if there is a relationship between job titles and applicants' desire to self-verify, it is crucial to know how the individual views him or herself. There are many different ways to measure one's perceptions of oneself, but one of the most widely used concepts is core self-evaluations (CSE), introduced by Judge, Locke, and Durham (1997). This study examines how individual CSE perceptions may influence the self-verification process an individual goes through in the process of developing intent to pursue the job after reviewing the job advertisement. It is hypothesized that the applicant's CSE will moderate the intensity of the relationship between job titles and perceived fit and perceived prestige of the job.

Another important individual difference characteristic for understanding individual behavior is achievement motivation, as investigated by Cassidy and Lynn

(1989). In their study, they found that achievement motivation is comprised of seven factors (Work Ethic, Acquisitiveness, Dominance, Excellence, Competitiveness, Status Aspiration, and Mastery). Each of these will be described in detail in the following paragraphs. Among them, status aspiration was chosen in this study as an individual difference that may be relevant to applicant reactions to job titles. Someone who scores high on status aspiration may be more likely to have a sense of fit with a job opportunity with a high status title compared to someone who does not have high status aspiration. In addition, a person with a higher sense of status aspiration may perceive a job with a higher status title as more prestigious. This is likely because the individual would want to verify their self-beliefs through the job they choose to pursue.

Core Self-Evaluations (CSE)

CSE was introduced by Judge et al. (1997). It was first developed as an individual disposition predicting job satisfaction, but it has expanded to predict other outcomes. It is comprised of 4 different categories: self-esteem, generalized self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability. Self-esteem refers to how an individual feels about his or her self-worth and generalized self-efficacy refers to beliefs that an individual can be successful in a wide variety of achievement oriented contexts (Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001). Locus of control refers to beliefs that one is in internal control of what happens and emotional stability (low in neuroticism) refers to the ability to effectively regulate and maintain one's emotions (Judge et al., 1997).

Core self-evaluations are important for companies because it is positively related to job and life satisfaction, stronger work commitment, more motivation for work, better work performance, more OCBs, perceived positive job characteristics, and less occupational stress (Bono & Judge, 2003; Judge, 2009; Chang, Ferris, Johnson, Rosen, & Tan, 2012; Judge, Erez, & Bono, 1998). These relationships provide support to why CSE is an important aspect of self-view or self-perception. Early findings have inspired increasing amounts of research on CSE, suggesting this trait may be important for organizations. CSE is an important disposition that companies should be looking for in an applicant.

When thinking about CSE and whether an individual would self-verify to match their self-view and the job they will be applying to after reviewing a job advertisement, there could be two ways to think about it. First, an individual high in CSE would see him or herself as a capable person overall and thus would have a positive self-concept (Judge et al., 1998). In this case, self-verification theory would predict that the person would view him or herself positively and wish to verify it by showing how capable he or she is to others. As a result, when the individual is presented with a job advertisement with a high status job title, the individual is more likely to feel that he or she fits with the job. The higher the status of a job title, the more authority it is perceived to have and the more capable the job holder seems to be (Martinez et al., 2008). In contrast, when the individual has low CSE, self-verification theory would suggest that the individual would be less likely to feel that he or she “fits” with the job, especially a high status position. This would be because low levels of CSE would suggest that the person has a negative self-view and thinks that he or she is unskilled. Also, because a high CSE person would

want to verify their self-view as a competent person, he or she would perceive greater prestige in the higher status job title compared to an individual who would have low status aspiration.

Hypothesis 1: When core self-evaluations is high, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be strong and positive. When core self-evaluations is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be weak or negative.

Hypothesis 2: When core self-evaluation is high, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be strong and positive. When core self-evaluation is low, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be weak or negative.

Status Aspiration

Status aspiration refers to an individual's achievement motivation reflecting the desire to be dominant in a social hierarchy (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989). Research on status aspiration has been scarce. Murphy (2004) found that the higher the status aspiration of the salesperson, the greater the tendency to use less problematic behaviors. Especially regarding its relationship to job applicants, there have been no studies conducted on the topic. However, it is logical to say that people who have a strong aspiration for higher status would feel that they would fit with jobs that have higher status job titles. In addition, the individual would also put more emphasis on the prestige of a high status opportunity and be more attentive to it if they had strong status aspiration.

A job title is one of the first things that a job applicant may see on a job advertisement. From that job title, the applicant would know the status of that position, and may develop an idea of the type of work he or she would be doing if he or she were to be hired for that job (Magnus, 1988). The status difference between a ‘Junior Project Manager’ and a ‘Senior Project Manager’ can be easily noticed just by comparing the term junior and senior. For applicants of a job, there are many factors that they would take into consideration before applying for the position, but the title of the job is one of the more clear ways to determine the status of the job. Also, because applicants have limited information about a job, they are most likely to determine the status of a job by looking at the title.

In a study by Burnstein, Moulton, and Liberty (1963), when a job demands high levels of excellence, it confers prestige and it is positively related to the job’s attractiveness. This has been found to be especially true for individuals high in achievement motivation. In the current study, job titles that indicate higher status can be seen as requiring excellence in the job because higher status jobs normally require greater skills and higher performance. Thus, a person with strong status aspiration may perceive a job title representing higher status as more prestigious than a person who has low status aspiration because they care more about status and yearn for higher status. Likewise, a person with high status aspiration is more likely to perceive strong fit with an opportunity describing a high status position as compared to someone with low status aspiration.

Hypothesis 3: When status aspiration is high, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be strong and positive. When

status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be weak or negative.

Hypothesis 4: When status aspiration is high, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be strong and positive. When status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be weak or negative.

Person-Job Fit

Person-job fit, or P-J fit, is another important factor that companies should take into consideration during the recruiting process. As used in this study, P-J fit is the perceived match between individual characteristics and job characteristics (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). The sense of "fit" differs between individuals as they have different perceptions about themselves and are interested in different aspects of a job. Studies have found support for the idea that applicants seek jobs that they perceive as fitting their values or ideas (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992). Kristof (1996) found that applicants interpret the characteristics of the job to determine their fit with the job. When there is congruence between the applicant's values and that of the job, it has been found to be associated with positive affect and a stronger possibility of the individual staying in their jobs (Mount & Muchinsky, 1978; Spokane, 1985).

It has been shown in studies that applicants develop a sense of fit with a company or job that has similar values (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Kristof, 1996). Job titles represent values and norms of the job that act as factors that job applicants can

use to assess their fit with the job (Magnus, 1988; Martinez et al., 2008). Fit is positively related to job attraction, and it influences attraction during the entire recruitment and selection process (Carless, 2005). Therefore, applicants that see a job title that they perceive as “fitting” their values or beliefs, they would be more likely to develop attraction toward the job.

Hypothesis 5: Perceived fit will be positively related to opportunity attraction.

Prestige

Prestige is defined as a widespread respect and admiration felt for someone or something on the basis of a perception of their achievements or quality (Oxford Dictionary, 2016). According to research conducted by Hodge, Siegel, and Rossi (1964), and an update by Nakao and Treas (1994), research confirms the idea that job titles influence the perceived prestige of individuals to a certain job with the title. In this research, occupation titles were listed, and the prestige of each title was measured and showed changes in the perceived prestige of different job titles over a 30 year interval. This means that perceptions of prestige are influenced by job titles.

Prestige is a factor that applicants take into consideration when they develop an attraction to the job. Posner (1981) found that the reputation of a company and the type of work or service performed are some factors that job applicants look at when deciding to apply for the job. In addition, there has been a study demonstrated that when the job demands excellence, it confers prestige and it is positively related to the job’s attractiveness (Burnstein et al., 1963), indicating that prestige is positively related to

opportunity attraction. These findings suggest that positive perceptions of prestige will lead to greater attraction to job opportunities.

Hypothesis 6: Perceived prestige will be positively related to opportunity attraction.

Attraction to the Job

Job attraction refers to job applicants' preliminary attitudes about the company as a potential place for employment (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003). Attraction to a job is important because it is one of the major predictors of job pursuit intentions. Attraction itself is a passive reaction to the given situation for a potential job applicant, while job pursuit intentions are actual behaviors that are the result of being attracted to a job (Chapman et al., 2005; Highhouse et al., 2003). A person may develop an attraction towards a company but may not apply for the job but attraction is generally positively related to pursuit intentions (Phillips et al., 2014).

P-J fit has been found in many studies to have a strong relationship with intentions to pursue the job. A recent study by Bednarska (2016), found a strong relationship between P-J fit and intentions to apply for the job. Another study found that job attraction mediated the relationship between P-J fit and job pursuit intentions (Phillips et al., 2014). It is logical that a person wishes to pursue a job because he or she believes that the job is attractive. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between person job fit and job attraction.

Table 1: List of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:	When core self-evaluations is high, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be strong and positive. When core self-evaluations is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be weak or negative.
Hypothesis 2:	When core self-evaluation is high, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be strong and positive. When core self-evaluation is low, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be weak or negative.
Hypothesis 3:	When status aspiration is high, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be strong and positive. When status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be weak or negative.
Hypothesis 4:	When status aspiration is high, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be strong and positive. When status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be weak or negative.
Hypothesis 5:	Perceived fit will be positively related to opportunity attraction.
Hypothesis 6:	Perceived prestige will be positively related to opportunity attraction.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Sample

The goal of this study was to examine the effect of job titles on applicants' attraction to a job. As a result, the participants in this study were not limited to college students. The study utilized Mechanical Turk, an online crowd sourcing marketplace, to obtain 201 participants (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). The study was designed as a 2 by 3 between subjects study with job title (2 levels) manipulated as a substantive variable and organizational size (3 levels) manipulated as an experimental control.

Procedure

Surveys were used to collect data for the study. The survey was collected through Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants had to be registered as workers in the MTurk website to participate in the study. Participants had access to the survey upon entering the website and if they were qualified to answer the survey. To participate in this study, MTurk workers had to have a historical work approval rate higher than 95%, and the number of work that had been approved needed to be greater than 1000. These criteria were enforced to ensure the quality of the participants. When they met the qualifications, they were shown the consent form to participate in the study. If they agreed to participate then they were presented with items measuring their core self-evaluations and status

aspiration. Next they were randomly presented with one of six possible job advertisements. Three ads were low in status and three were high in status. Each of the three ads for each status condition represented small, medium, and large firms, so firm size could be experimentally controlled.

After reading the advertisement, participants were asked to fill out a survey. The survey included items that measured P-J fit, job prestige, and job attractiveness. Demographic characteristics were asked at the end. The study also asked individual's job experience for participants because a lack of experience could influence the individual's decision to apply toward the higher status job title because they may lack the ability to assess whether the job's scope matches its title. In addition, current employment status was also taken into consideration because the individual's current state could also bias the individual to not want to apply to a position and those without a job may be more willing to apply to any kind of job they could apply to. Upon completion of the survey, participants were given a debriefing form that briefly explained the objective of the study.

Participants

There were 201 participants in the study, but data from four participants were dropped because two failed to properly answer the attention check questions in the survey, and the other two participants appeared as outliers. After checking, their responses showed inconsistencies when they were answering the questions that seemed like they were randomly selecting answers to the survey questions, even though they passed the attention check questions. The mean age of the group was 37.32 years (S.D. = 11.96).

The gender ratio of the participants was 45% male and 55% female. The average work experience for participants was 6.62 years (S.D. = 7.98). About 46.2% of the participants had less than a bachelor's degree in education, but about 67.68% of the participants had some type of college education.

According to Cohen (1992), with six groups and alpha set at .05, assuming a small effect size, 215 participants were needed to have a power of .80 to detect an effect. With a medium effect size only 35 participants were needed. Given that the effect was expected to be between small and medium in effect size, aiming for approximately 200 participants seemed reasonable for a power of .80.

Analyses included ANOVA and regression to test for interaction effects (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2013) and PROCESS to evaluate the size of the mediating indirect effects through the intervening constructs (Hayes, 2013).

Experimental Design

Research Design

There were 6 advertisements used in this study where two levels of job titles (Junior Project Manager and Senior Project Manager) and organizational size (Small, Medium, and Large) were manipulated in the job advertisements. Other content, including job descriptions, were the same for each job advertisement. As this study aims to examine the reactions of potential applicants to job advertisements, this type of experimental survey seemed to be a reasonable method to use. A field study may have

been able to identify better potential applicants, but due to practical reasons, this study implemented a survey based methodology to test its hypotheses.

Although there were 3 levels of organizational size, it was an experimental variable and was not used in analyzing the results, and only the two levels of job titles were used to analyze different applicant behaviors. Size was included as a control variable in all analyses. Each participant was given one job advertisement to refer to when answering items given in the survey. This study was designed to examine applicants' reactions (attraction to the job) to one of the six scenarios. Individual differences were measured to search for possible moderators in the relationships among the variables. The items in the survey measured individual differences such as core self-evaluation (Judge, Erez, Bono, & Thoresen, 2003) and status aspiration (Cassidy & Lynn, 1989).

Measures

Individual Differences

Core Self-Evaluations ($\alpha = .917$, 12 items).

To assess core self-evaluations of job applicants, participants were provided with a 12 item measure developed by Judge et al. (2003). A seven point Likert scale from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7 was used to assess CSE. Example items

include: “I am confident I get the success I deserve in life,” “Sometimes I feel depressed,” “When I try, I generally succeed,” and “Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless.”

Status Aspiration ($\alpha = .814$, 4 items).

Status Aspiration was assessed with a scale developed by Cassidy and Lynn (1989). The study adopted four items from the original scale, and used a seven-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 7. A sample item is “I would like an important job where people looked up to me”

Independent Variable

Job Title

There were two types of job titles used in this study. One was representative of a Higher Status (Senior Project Manager) and the other was representative of a lower status (Junior Project Manager). The titles were randomly shown to survey takers and they had to read the assigned advertisement to answer questions in the survey. Job titles were chosen so that they were representative of a job that could be applied to various situations. As this study did not focus on one specific industry, it was necessary to create job titles that could be universally adapted to in different contexts. Also, because the participants of this study could not be specified in advance because this study used MTurk as the method to collect data, job titles had to be applicable to various industries and positions in the job market.

In addition to external factors, internal factors such as the difficulty of showing a high/low status for entry level jobs prevented this study from using an entry level job title. On the other hand, an executive level job title is difficult to use as a job title showing lower status, and it would be hard for the general survey participants to relate themselves to being considered for an executive level job. As a result, this study used a middle level manager position to test its hypotheses; Senior project manager and Junior project manager.

The job descriptions were collected from O*NET and Monster by searching for similar titles. These were used to create a job description that could be applied to both of the job titles by adopting job descriptions from both senior project managers and junior project managers. For example, the job description included tasks such as:

- Manage various projects from beginning to end
- Work with senior level business executives and business program resources to plan and execute the project and manage stakeholder expectations

More detailed versions of the job advertisements are included in the appendix.

Dependent Variables

P-J Fit ($\alpha = .728$, 3 items).

Cable and Judge's (1996) three item scale was used to assess job applicant's perceived P-J fit. The original scale measured P-O fit, so items were replicated and

wording changed to become more job related terms to measure P-J fit. Survey participants responded using a seven point Likert scale (“1”= Strongly Disagree and “7”= Strongly Agree). An example of an item is “My values ‘match’ or fit this job.”

Prestige ($\alpha = .907$, 5 items).

Prestige was assessed using five seven-point Likert scale items adapted from Highhouse et al. (2003). Originally, the scale measured organizational prestige, so items that represented an organization’s prestige were replicated and changed to words that referred to job aspects when measuring job prestige. An example of an item is “People are probably proud to say they work at this type of job.”

Attraction ($\alpha = .916$, 4 items).

Job attraction was measured with a three item measure adapted from Highhouse et al. (2003). Job attraction was measured by using the organizational attraction items, but replacing words that represent an organization to words that indicate job aspects when measuring job attraction. Participants indicated their agreement with the given statements on a 7 point Likert scale (“1”= Strongly Disagree and “7”= Strongly Agree). An example of an item is “For me, this job would be a good opportunity to work.”

Manipulation Check

Near the end of the survey, four manipulation check items were included to test the effectiveness of the manipulations in the job advertisements. Two of the questions asked participants if they perceived the organization's size as large or small, and the other two asked participants to assess if they thought the job title was showing a high status or a low status. These items were not used to screen participants out, but were used to see if survey participants perceived the manipulations the way this study was intended to influence them.

As these four questions were not used to screen participants out, there were five questions that were used to check how much attention survey participants were paying to answering the questions. These five questions were used to screen out participants who were answering the questions without reading them carefully. The questions were simple and asked participants to select the item indicated in the question. When the participant failed to answer the item correctly, there was a warning sign that asked participants to pay attention to the questions. When the same person made the mistake twice, the survey automatically directed the participant to the end of the survey and stopped the participant from answering the survey any longer. Two participants out of the four participants that were rejected were kicked out from the survey because they failed to answer these questions correctly.

Control Variables and Demographic Questions

In this study, demographic information such as gender, age, ethnicity, and GPA were gathered in addition to control variables such as number of years with related experience, current employment status, and individual preference when applying for jobs. Number of years with related experience asked participants to indicate the number of years of experience in managerial positions, for which the average was 6.62 years. This was asked because people with no experience in managerial positions could be biased in determining whether they would have P-J fit with the job because they have never experienced it. Table 1 shows more details about the study sample's demographic data.

Also, current employment status was also asked to survey participants because depending on whether the individual has a job, the individual may feel different levels of attraction to other jobs and it may take more than just a title to determine whether they feel fit and are attracted to a job or not. Survey participants were also asked if they think the job, organization providing the job, or both would be important in whether they are attracted to a certain job because individuals can put different emphasis on different items which could affect how attracted to the job the individual is after looking at the job advertisement.

Chapter 4

Results

Data Cleaning Procedures and Descriptive Statistics

After all the surveys were collected, all of the responses were gathered and recorded on one Excel sheet, and then transferred to SPSS 24. From a total of 201 responses, two participants failed to pass the attention check questions that were included in the survey and had to be taken out from the data. The survey had a total of five attention check questions that said:

This question is a dummy question. Please check [Strongly disagree/Disagree/Somewhat disagree/Neither agree nor disagree/Somewhat agree/Agree/Strongly agree] if you have read this question.

When the participant failed to select the indicated item, in the first attempt, there was a warning signal that asked survey takers to pay attention to the questions. However, when the participant failed to answer the same attention check question for the second time, the survey directed the participant to the end of the survey and thanked the participant for his or her time. This participant was unable to finish his or her survey, and as a result, his or her data could be used in the analyses.

Table 2: Demographics of the Sample

Variables	Jr Project Manager (N=99)		Sr Project Manager (N=98)		Overall (N=197)	
	Mean(n)	SD(%)	Mean (n)	SD(%)	Mean (n)	SD(%)
Age	38.14	13.652	36.49	9.955	37.28	11.939
Education	15.23	2.342	15.14	2.173	15.18	2.254
High school	31	31.31%	25	25.51%	56	28.43%
Vocational/Technical certification	2	2.02%	4	4.08%	6	3.05%
AA/AS	10	10.10%	19	19.39%	29	14.72%
BA/BS	44	44.44%	43	43.88%	87	44.16%
MA/MS	6	6.06%	7	7.14%	13	6.60%
PhD	2	2.02%	0	0.00%	2	1.02%
JD	3	3.03%	0	0.00%	3	1.52%
Other	1	1.01%	0	0.00%	1	0.51%
Experience	6.43	8.367	6.81	7.599	6.59	7.966
Gender Male	45	45.45%	44	44.90%	89	45.18%
Female	54	54.55%	54	55.10%	108	54.82%
GPA	3.414	0.39776	3.4759	0.3963	3.4438	0.3965

Note. N=197 except Gender (N=196) and SA(N=195). Where applicable, coefficient alpha reliabilities are included in parentheses. CSE=Core Self-Evaluation; SA = Status Aspiration; PJ Fit = Person-Job Fit; JA = Job Attraction.

There were two other people who were also removed from the dataset because their answers were inconsistent, and it seemed that they were randomly answering questions rather than carefully reading through the questions. After the data cleaning process, there were 197 data cases left for further analysis. Missing data in the existing data were replaced by the mean for each item. Reverse-coded items were given the reversed values through Excel.

Means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients, and correlations between variables are shown in Table 3. From Table 3, it can be seen that experience is highly correlated with age, which is reasonable, because the older you are, the more experience you are likely to have ($r = .512, p < 0.01$).

Status aspiration was unique that it showed significant correlations with education ($r = .258, p < .01$), gender ($r = -.171, p < .05$), experience ($r = .151, p < .05$), and core self-evaluations ($r = .341, p < .01$). This would mean that the more education a person receives, the greater his or her status aspiration or conversely, the higher the aspiration, the more education. It is logical to assume that the more knowledge a person has the more likely that the person would want more status and vice versa. The significant correlation between experience and status aspiration could also be explained in a similar manner. The strong and significant relationship between core self-evaluation and status aspiration would be explained as a person who has positive beliefs about themselves would want more status and the reverse would also be logical. However, it was shown that women are less aspiring for status compared to men. In addition, job attraction and person-job fit and job attraction and job prestige both showed a high correlation which was expected from findings of prior studies ($r = .605, p < .01$; $r = .544, p < .01$).

Table 3: Correlations

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Age	37.3198	11.9546	1								
2. Education	15.1878	2.25431	-0.038	1							
3. Gender	0.54592	0.49916	-0.015	-0.05	1						
4. Experience	6.61929	7.97587	.512**	-0.021	-0.044	1					
5. CSE	5.01639	1.11116	0.045	-0.045	0.01	0.106	(.917)				
6. SA	4.25342	1.34658	-0.056	.258**	-.171*	.151*	.341**	(.814)			
7. PJ fit	5.53807	0.92664	0.049	-0.118	0.049	-0.016	.250**	-0.039	(.728)		
8. Prestige	5.3	0.92823	0.075	-.216**	0.1	0.049	0.098	-0.023	.571**	(.907)	
9. JA	5.42809	1.27004	-0.021	-0.108	-0.031	0.077	.179*	0.042	.605**	.544**	(.916)

Note. N=197 except Gender (N=196) and SA (N=195). Where applicable, coefficient alpha reliabilities are included in parentheses. CSE=Core Self-Evaluation; SA = Status Aspiration; PJ fit = Person-Job fit; JA = Job Attraction.

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

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

Hypothesis Testing

Linear regression was used to investigate the interactions between job title, PJ fit, job prestige, job attraction and moderating variables. PROCESS by Hayes was also used for the regression analyses. All of the variables were mean-centered when the regression analyses were conducted. Interaction terms were created through PROCESS for each moderation interaction.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that when core self-evaluation is high, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be strong and positive, and when core self-evaluation is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceive fit will be weak or negative. However, regression results show that there is no interaction effect from individual differences in core self-evaluations. Overall, there was a borderline relationship with nine predictors altogether in predicting the relationship between job title status and person job fit ($p = .06$). However, this relationship can be because there were too many variables that confounded the results, and most importantly, there was no interaction effect from the interaction term $adstatus \times CSE$ ($p = .49$). As a result, hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that when core self-evaluation is high, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be strong and positive. When core self-evaluation is low, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be weak or negative. In this relationship, there was an overall significant effect of all the nine variables including the independent variable, proposed moderator, and all the control variables predicting job prestige ($p = .02$). However, there is no interaction effect from

the interaction term $\text{adstatus} \times \text{CSE}$ ($p = .26$). As a result, hypothesis two was also not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that when status aspiration is high, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be strong and positive. When status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be weak or negative. In this relationship, status aspiration had a borderline effect ($p = .052$) in predicting person job fit, and the interaction was significant ($p = .015$), meaning there is a significant moderating effect of status aspiration on the effect of advertisement's job title status on perceived person job fit. However, the effect of the job title in the ad was only significant when the participant had a low status aspiration, meaning that when status aspiration is low, the advertisement's job title has a positive effect on perceived fit but when status aspiration is high, the advertisement's job title had no significant effect. This result is contradictory to what hypothesis 3 had predicted because it predicted that when status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit would be weak or negative. As a result, it can be said that although there is a moderating effect from status aspiration, it is opposite to what the hypothesis had originally predicted, so hypothesis 3 is only partially supported.



Figure 2: Moderating Effect of Status Aspiration on the Relationship between Job title and Person Job Fit

Hypothesis 4 predicted that when status aspiration is high, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be strong and positive. When status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and prestige will be weak or negative. Overall, all of the nine variables including control variables predicted the relationship between job titles and job prestige. However, status aspiration did not show a significant relationship with job prestige ($p = .08$) and the interaction effect was not significant as well ($p = .11$). Both relationships were close to a significant effect, but overall, hypothesis 4 was also not supported.

Hypothesis 5 predicted that perceived fit will be positively related to opportunity attraction (job attraction). This relationship was tested through model 7 in PROCESS that tests the moderated mediation relationship between job title, person-job fit, moderator

variable, and job attraction. The analysis result shows that job attraction is predicted by all of the variables included in the regression analysis, person job fit predicts job attraction after controlling for all the other predictors that were included in the regression equation ($p < .001$). In addition, person job fit predicted attraction beyond all other variables in the model. As a result, hypothesis 5 was supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that perceived prestige will be positively related to opportunity attraction. This relationship was tested through model 7 in PROCESS, in the same way as hypothesis 5. Results indicate that all of the variables that were included in the regression equation together predict job attraction. However, job prestige predicts job attraction after controlling for all other variables, and it predicts job attraction beyond all other variables in the model ($p < .001$). As a result, hypothesis 6 was also supported.

Table 4: Regression Results

Predictors	<i>Dependent variables (βs)</i>		
	PJ fit	Prestige	Job attraction
Step 1 – Individual differences			
CSE	0.309	0.117	0.199
SA	-0.144	-0.063	-0.026
Change R ²	0.086	0.013	0.037
Total R ²	0.086	0.013	0.037
Step 2 – Job Advertisement			
CSE	0.315	0.121	0.199
SA	-0.144	-0.063	-0.026
Job title	-0.055	-0.032	-0.001
Change R ²	0.003	0.001	0.000
Total R ²	0.089	0.014	0.037
Step 3 – Individual Differences and Job Advertisement			
CSE	0.345	0.086	0.130
SA	-0.013	0.017	0.080
Job title	0.446	0.046	0.002
Job title × CSE	-0.090	0.204	0.381
Job title × SA	-0.464	-0.299	-0.398
Change R ²	0.019	0.001	0.013
Total R ²	0.108	0.020	0.050
Step 4 – PJ fit			
CSE		-0.123	-0.078
SA		0.025	0.088
Job title		-0.224	-0.266
Job title × CSE		0.259	0.435
Job title × SA		-0.018	-0.119
PJ fit		0.606	0.601
Change R ²		0.328	0.322
Total R ²		0.348	0.371

Step 5 – Job Prestige

CSE	.298	-0.039
SA	-.022	0.080
Job title	.421	-0.196
Job title × CSE	-.203	0.354
Job title × SA	-.299	-0.114
PJ fit		0.411
Job Prestige	.552	0.313
Change R ²	.298	0.064
Total R ²	.406	0.435

Step 6 – Job attraction

CSE	.267	-.098
SA	-.048	-.003
Job title	.429	-.138
Job title × CSE	-.302	.117
Job title × SA	-.212	.021
PJ fit		.411
Job Prestige	.354	
Job attraction	.367	.325
Change R ²	.089	.066
Total R ²	.496	.414

Chapter 5

Discussion

According to the results, there was no moderating effect of individual differences (cores self-evaluation and status aspiration) on the relationship between job titles shown on job advertisements and person-job fit/job prestige, except for one relationship. This was the relationship predicted in hypothesis 3 which suggested that when status aspiration is high, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be strong and positive. In addition, it also predicted that when status aspiration is low, the relationship between status of the job title and perceived fit will be weak or negative. The results indicated that job title in the ad only had an effect when status aspiration was low. Other hypotheses predicting the positive relationship between person job fit and job attraction and job prestige and job attraction were supported and the relationship was significant.

Supplementary Analyses

The counter-intuitive results from testing hypotheses 1 to 4 called for additional analysis to search for other moderators or factors that could have influenced the results. Many variables were tested, but most did not show any significant relationship until employment status was considered. In this study, there are 197 participants who were used for analysis. Among them, 155 were full time employees, 20 were part time

employees, 2 were unemployed and were searching for jobs, and 19 were not employed and not searching for jobs. Employment status has been used as a moderator in many studies (Conway & Briner, 2002; Dooley, 2003), so it was reasonable to see if employment status had any effect on how survey participants reacted to the job advertisement.

When the regression analysis was conducted on the 155 full time employees, there still was no significant effect on any of the moderating effects. For hypothesis 1, which hypothesized that positive relationship between advertisement's job title status and person job fit would be moderated by CSE, the interaction term ad status \times CSE did not show a significant effect on the relationship between the status of the job title and person job fit ($p = .98$), so hypothesis 1 was not supported when the sample was reduced to only full time employees.

In hypothesis 2, which predicted the positive relationship between advertisement's job title status and perceived job prestige moderated by core self-evaluation, the interaction term ad status \times CSE was also not significant ($p = .21$), meaning hypothesis 2 was also not supported as well.

Hypothesis 3, which predicted that status aspiration would moderate the positive relationship between job title's status and person-job fit, the interaction term ad status \times statasp was not significant ($p = .13$). Hypothesis 3 was also not supported when it was tested with the sample of full time workers.

Hypothesis 4 hypothesized that status aspiration would moderate the positive relationship between status of the job title in the job advertisement and perceived job prestige. However, the interaction term ad status \times statasp was not significant ($p = .46$),

indicating that there was no moderating effect from the proposed moderator, status aspiration. As a result, when the data was modified to contain only the full time workers, there was no significant moderation effect on any of the proposed relationships.

Next, part time employees who responded to the survey were examined. There were a total of 20 part time employees in the study. In the same way as the total sample and full time employees, regression analysis was conducted on this sample. The results were similar to the results of regression analysis conducted with only full time employees. None of the predicted hypotheses were supported with the part time employee sample. For the interaction term in hypothesis 1, the p value was .79, in hypothesis 2, it was .63, in hypothesis 3, it was .90, and for hypothesis 4, the interaction term's p value was .91. The p values may be low because of the very small sample, but all of the values indicate that hypotheses 1 to 4 were all not supported even in the sample with part time employees.

However, in the last set of samples with all of the unemployed ($N = 2$) and not employed ($N = 19$) participants, there was a significant change in the regression analyses. In testing hypothesis 1, overall, all of the variables including the constant, moderator, and control variables did not predict person job fit. However, the interaction term ad status \times CSE was significant ($p < .05$), suggesting that there is a moderating effect of CSE on the relationship between the status of the job title shown in a job advertisement and person job fit. As a result, hypothesis 1 was partially supported in the modified sample of unemployed and not employed people. However, the conditional effect of job title status on person job fit at different levels of the moderator, CSE, was not significant except for a small portion where CSE was highest, detected by the Johnson – Neyman technique. The general trend was still contrary to the prediction because as CSE levels increased,

there was a negative effect. This means that as CSE levels increase, people feel less person job fit with higher status job titles.

In hypothesis 2, contrary to the result seen in hypothesis 1, when all of the variables were put together in the regression equation, there was a significant effect of those variables predicting perceived job prestige ($p < .05$). Also, the interaction term $adstatus \times CSE$ was significant, indicating a significant moderating effect of CSE on the relationship between job title status and perceived job prestige. These results show that hypothesis 2 is partially supported in the sample of unemployed and not employed people. This is because the effect of job title in the ad was only significant when CSE was low, and the results indicated that for people with low CSE, they would feel more job prestige when the status of the job title is higher. Figure 3 shows in more detail about when the moderating relationship exists.

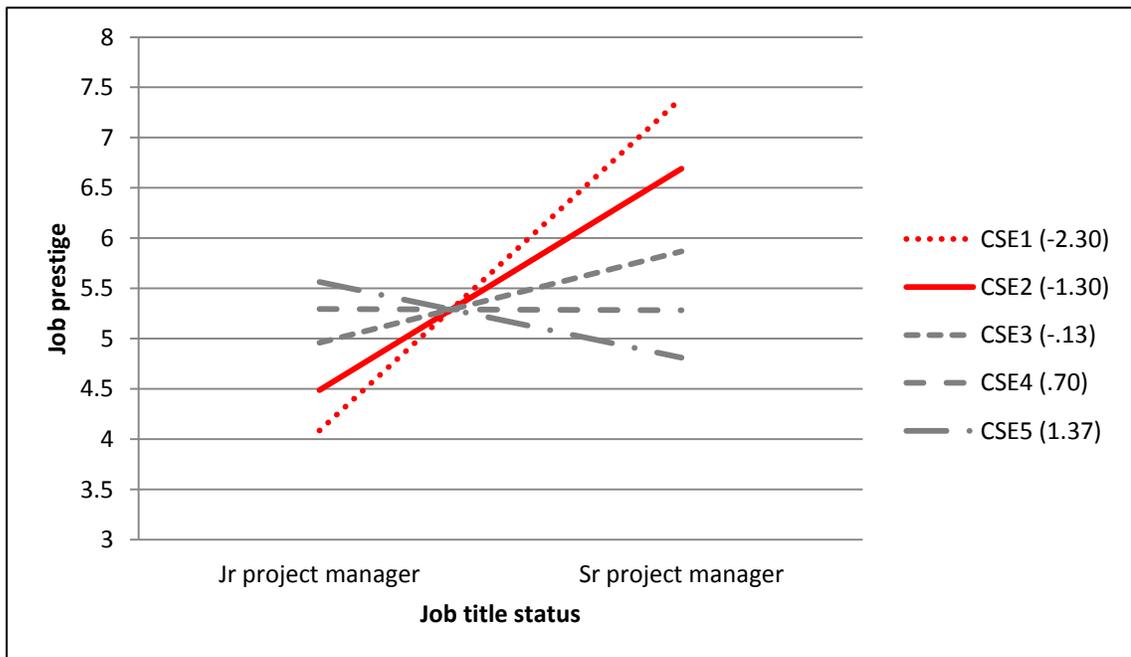


Figure 3: Moderating effect of Core Self-Evaluation on the relationship between Job Title and Job Prestige

Hypothesis 3 was also tested using this sample, and it was found that the regression equation with all of the variables included did not predict person job fit ($p = .12$). However, the interaction term $adstatus \times statasp$ was significant ($p < .05$), meaning status aspiration did moderate the relationship between job title status and person job fit. However, similar to previous results, as status aspiration increased, the effect of job title status decreased on perceived person job fit. As this is the opposite of what the hypothesis had predicted, hypothesis 3 was also only partially supported in this dataset.

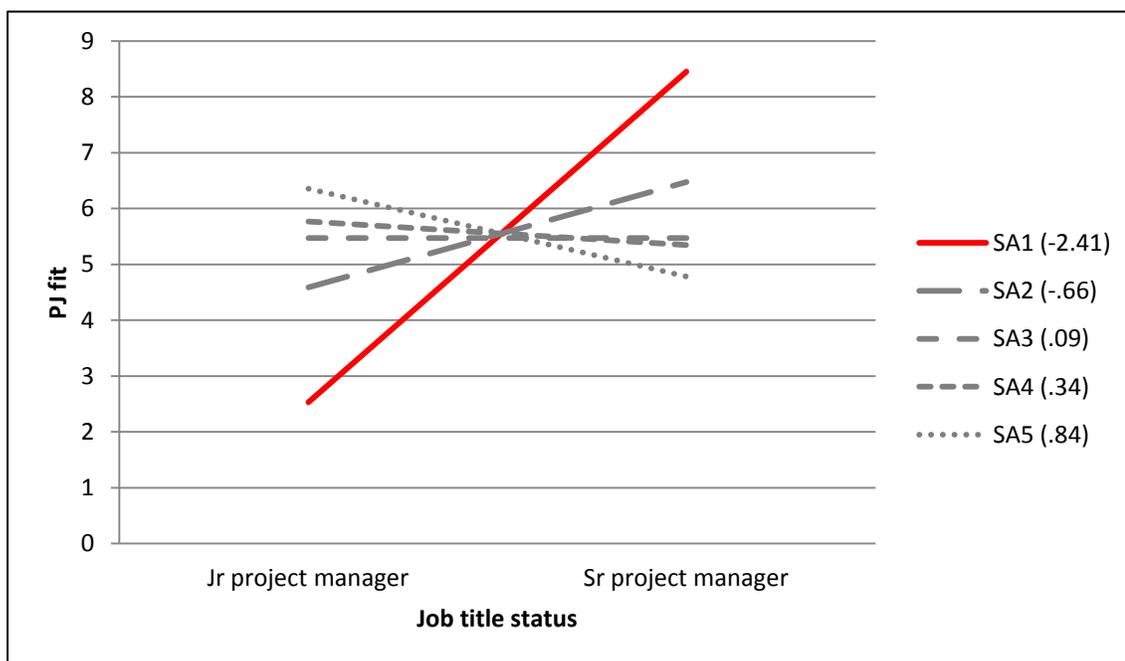


Figure 4: Moderating effect of Status Aspiration on the relationship between Job Title and Person Job Fit

Hypothesis 4 was a little different from other hypothesis analysis results in that there were no significant results found in this analysis. Job prestige was not predicted by

all of the variables in the regression equation ($p = .42$), and the interaction effect also did not exist ($p = .09$). As a result, hypothesis 4 was not supported at all even in this dataset.

These results were quite surprising because at first, as the sample size was so small, the results were not expected to be so significant. However, most of the results were strongly supportive, which calls for additional research to be conducted on this topic to investigate further into this phenomenon.

Implications for Theory

Job Titles

From the research on previous literature that I have conducted for this study, I found that there is a lack of research on the effect of job titles on applicants. Some research on what factors influence applicants to be attracted to the job have been conducted in the past and there were conflicting results about the effect of job titles in attracting job applicants (Posner, 1981; Barber & Roehling, 1993). Despite these results, job titles were never a major subject of interest. In most studies where job title was used, job title was only used as one of the factors that could predict how attractive the job advertisement was to the applicant (Posner & Powell, 1990). In a meta-analysis conducted by Chapman et al. (2005), predictors of applicant attraction were; job and organizational characteristics, recruiter characteristics, perceptions of the recruitment process, perceived fit, perceive alternatives, and hiring expectancies. Normally, in past studies that have been conducted, job titles were not studied individually, and were

grouped together with other job and organizational characteristics or were not discussed at all (Chapman et al., 2005).

However, there have been recent studies on the positive effects of job titles on job title holders (Grant et al., 2014; Martinez et al., 2008). This may be because companies have started using job titles as one way to attract applicants. I have heard personal stories about consulting firms trying to scout their competitor's employees by providing them with a higher status job title than their previous job, and it is a well known trend that it is occurring in many organizations ("Too many chiefs", 2010). However, there is no study that has actually looked into the effect of providing higher status job titles to make the job more attractive. This study was useful in that it was able to partially detect the types of people that are attracted to these manipulations, but further research in the future is necessary to identify the effect of job titles in more detail.

Self-Enhancement Theory

Contrary to what the study had originally hypothesized, the results of the study showed that there is a tendency for low CSE and status aspiration people to perceive more person job fit and job prestige when they see a higher status job title in the job advertisement. The study had originally based hypotheses on the theory of self-verification. This was because as an applicant for a company, he or she would wish the relationship between the job and themselves as long lasting rather than lasting for only a short period of time (Wiesenfeld et al., 2007). However, the results say that there was actually self-enhancement rather than self-verification happening in the sample.

Originally, it was expected that the results would not differ for employed and not employed people, so the hypothesis did not consider the different psychological states of the participants depending on their employment status. However, after seeing the results, it seems likely that there is a clear effect of employment status on the psychological information processing procedures. According to Ferris et al., (2015) if an individual's self-worth is tied to a particular domain, the individual would self-enhance in that domain. It may have been that for employed people, they did not need to self-enhance because the domain, job searching/applying for a job, was not tied to their self-worth. Employed people already had a job, and therefore an imaginary job seeking situation did not affect their self-worth.

However, for participants who did not have a job, it was a critical domain that greatly influenced their self-worth. According to a study conducted by Cohn (1978), unemployment does lead to greater dissatisfaction with self. There may be many alternative reasons that can be used to understand the behavior of this sample (not employed and unemployed). However, it seems logical to attribute the effect on self-enhancement motives by the unemployed/not employed people to protect their beliefs about themselves. By thinking they are a better fit with jobs that have higher status, perhaps they would see themselves as more competent, and this could compensate for their felt incompetency which comes from being unemployed. Further research should be conducted to test this idea and see if this is a valid idea or not.

Job Attraction

As previously mentioned, in a meta-analysis conducted by Chapman et al. (2005), factors leading to job attraction were job and organizational characteristics, recruiter characteristics, perceptions of the recruitment process, perceived fit, perceive alternatives, and hiring expectancies. This study used person job fit and perceived job prestige to predict job attraction. As has already been studied by previous research, person job fit did predict job attractiveness for applicants (Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005; Phillips et al., 2014).

Compared to person job fit, job prestige was not as frequently studied. However, there were a few studies that have investigated the relationship between job prestige and job attraction and found that there is a positive relationship (Burnstein et al., 1963; Posner, 1981). This study adds support to the results of the current literature, and helps to strengthen them.

Implications for Practice

The results of this study show that organizations may attract different types of people depending on their job advertisements. The most significant finding that has implications for practice is the fact that there is no significant moderating relationship from individual characteristics such as core self-evaluation and status aspiration on the relationship between job titles and applicants feeling fit with the job or perceiving the job as more prestigious. However, for the additional analysis that was conducted on a smaller dataset with only unemployed and not employed participants, there was a significant moderating effect from core self-evaluations on the relationship between job title status and job prestige/person job fit, and a moderating effect of status aspiration on the relationship between job title status and person job fit.

One consistent regression result was the result from hypothesis 3 which predicted that status aspiration will moderate the relationship between job title status and person job fit. The moderating effect was only significant when status aspiration of the individual was low, and contrary to what the hypothesis predicted, when status aspiration was low, people felt less person job fit with the lower status job title and felt greater fit with the higher status job title. Perhaps the external title serves as a substituting effect for low status aspiration for the individual. In addition, in all of the hypotheses tested in the supplementary analysis and had significant effects, the effect of the job title advertisements was only significant where core self-evaluation and status aspiration was low, and the result was opposite to what the hypothesis had predicted because when core

self-evaluation and status aspiration was low, people felt more person job fit or job prestige with the higher status job title.

This implies that when organizations post job advertisements with job titles that are high status, it may not be effective for attracting the employed. However, it may have an effect on attracting unemployed people. Depending on what kind of employees the organization wishes to attract (or dissuade), the organization might create different ways to attract different types of people. If the organization wishes to poach from competitors, it may be a better idea to provide other types of incentives for the potential applicants rather than using just a higher status job title. However, for people that do not have a job, a higher status job title may have a greater effect on making the job seem more attractive.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

There are a few limitations that exist in this study that need to be addressed. The first is the configuration of the sample. Due to limitations that existed, this study was unable to target specific groups of samples. First, in MTurk, there are various types of people so it may be hard to target a specific group of people that would be necessary for this study. For example, the job titles junior project manager and senior project manager may not be applicable to all of the survey participants. Some may not have enough experience in these types of jobs to be able to picture themselves applying for these positions. Other people may have trouble because the industry that they work in may not have similar roles, so it may be difficult for them to imagine working in that role. Also, as this study has already highlighted, there appears to be important differences between

employed and unemployed/not employed people in how they perceive a job advertisement. In future studies, it may be better to gather enough participants for each employment status and see if the effects are still valid in the unemployed/not employed dataset and not valid in the employed dataset. Therefore, a more specific set of participants with adequate years of experience and equal numbers of participants in each employment status category would be necessary for the study to investigate the effect of job titles on applicant behavior in more detail.

The validity of the job advertisement is another limitation of the study. This study was focused on creating a general job advertisement that everyone could relate to. As a result, it failed to tailor the job advertisement to the sample. This limitation is linked to the first limitation in that if a study were able to obtain samples that actually represented job seekers in a certain industry, a more realistic job advertisement could have been created. Job titles could have been tailored to the actual job titles that are used in the industry, and various job descriptions would have been created to fit the jobs that the individual would actually expect them to be doing if they were in that position. This would have created a more realistic atmosphere for the participant and it may have led to clearer results on the effect of job titles.

There is the potential for concern over whether the differing job titles displayed actually imply status or simply imply different job roles. According to the manipulation check items, survey participants did feel the status difference in both job titles, but it would have created a better perception of status if the job advertisement could have been more tailored to a specific industry, going back to the limitation that was addressed in the previous paragraph.

In the same line of thought, the status manipulation may not have been correctly perceived by the participants in the way originally intended. The title of the job indicates both the level of the job's authority and also the status of the job. The two concepts are intertwined, so the title presented to the participants may be vague in terms of the authority and status. Additionally, it is possible that the status manipulation was not strong enough in the sense that high status aspiration people may have felt that any project manager title (junior or senior) was low in status as compared to being a vice president or some other differentially titled position. This may influence how the job was perceived by the participants and it may have influenced how they answered the survey.

Finally, one of the factors that were not looked into was the difference of reactions to job titles depending on the participant's gender. According to Sewell, Hauser, & Wolf (1980), there is a significant difference in gender in maintaining their occupational status over a long period of time. Women were more likely to lose their status in the long term compared to men. This may be because women tend to give up their career to look after children after they are married because the study also showed that the occupational attainment is similar for men and women without children. This difference could affect how much status women perceive in higher status job titles, and it may even influence whether women feel attracted to a job in the first place.

In future research aiming to understand the process of applicants being attracted to a job, the study should first try to gather adequate survey participants. These participants should have acceptable years of related experience, and preferably equal number of participants in all of the employment statuses (employed, part-time employed, unemployed, and not employed). Alternatively, it could focus on only one aspect of

employment status (e.g., currently employed). Also, the study should focus on one industry to create a more realistic job advertisement for the applicants, and ensure that the status difference is correctly perceived by the survey taker. The title of the job should also be carefully chosen. Different titles indicate different levels of authority so the level of authority may be drawing applicants instead of the titles. As a result, more data should be collected on what titles are actually used interchangeably in the industry. Finally, additional investigation on the effect of gender should be considered in more detail in future studies. It seems likely that future studies will be able to detect meaningful effects of job titles on applicant behaviors because current findings hint that such effects may exist.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

There are endless endeavors to understand the process of applying for jobs. Despite the volume of previous research, there still are many questions that need to be answered in the field. This study examined the effect of job titles and individual characteristics on the job seeking process to better understand applicant's perspectives and reactions. Results suggest that job titles, that have not been given much attention, may affect how certain types of applicants might feel about their fit with a job and how much prestige the person believes that job to have. This study also indicates that under certain conditions individual differences such as the level of core self-evaluation and status aspiration might moderate the suggested effect between job titles and person job fit/job prestige. However, there was no significant relationship between job titles and person job fit/job prestige when the initial regression analysis was conducted. After dividing the dataset into full time employees, part time employees, and unemployed and not-employed people, findings indicate there was a significant moderating effect for the participants who were unemployed and not-employed. In addition, the analysis from this dataset indicated that the job title advertisement effect is only significant when core self-evaluation or status aspiration is low, and that the low CSE or status aspiration people feel more person job fit/job prestige when job title status is higher. Further research is needed for a more detailed investigation in the differences that depend on employment status.

Appendix A

IRB letter/certification

PENNSTATE



IRB Program
Office for Research Protections

Vice President for Research
The Pennsylvania State University
205 The 330 Building
University Park, PA 16802

Phone : (814) 865-1775
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EXEMPTION DETERMINATION

Date: January 8, 2017

From: Jodi Mathieu, IRB Analyst

To: Young Lee

Type of Submission:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Job and organization information and applicant reactions
Principal Investigator:	Young Lee
Study ID:	STUDY00006262
Submission ID:	STUDY00006262
Funding:	Not Applicable
Documents Approved:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job title study (3.01), Category: IRB Protocol • Study Debriefing - Young Eun Lee.docx (0.01), Category: Other • Survey/ questionnaires (0.01), Category: Data Collection Instrument

The Office for Research Protections determined that the proposed activity, as described in the above-referenced submission, does not require formal IRB review because the research met the criteria for exempt research according to the policies of this institution and the provisions of applicable federal regulations.

Continuing Progress Reports are **not** required for exempt research. Record of this research determined to be exempt will be maintained for five years from the date of this notification. If your research will continue beyond five years, please contact the Office for Research Protections closer to the determination end date.

Changes to exempt research only need to be submitted to the Office for Research Protections in limited circumstances described in the below-referenced Investigator Manual. If changes are being considered and there are questions about whether IRB review is needed, please contact the Office for Research Protections.

Penn State researchers are required to follow the requirements listed in the Investigator Manual ([HRP-103](#)), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within CATS IRB (<http://irb.psu.edu>).

This correspondence should be maintained with your records.

Appendix B

Measures

Dependent Variables

Status Aspiration

Adapted from: Cassidy, T., & Lynn, R. (1989). A multifactorial approach to achievement motivation: The development of a comprehensive measure. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 62, 301–312.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I would like an important job where people looked up to me							
2. I like to be admired for my achievements							
3. I dislike being the center of attention							
4. I think I would find satisfaction in having influence over others because of my position in the workplace							

Core Self-Evaluation

Adapted from: Judge, T. A., Erez, A., Bono, J. E., & Thoresen, C. J. (2003). The core self-evaluations scale: development of a measure. *Personnel Psychology*, 56, 303–331.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I am confident I get the success I deserve in life							
2. Sometimes I feel depressed (r)							
3. When I try, I generally succeed							
4. Sometimes when I fail I feel worthless (r)							
5. I complete tasks successfully							
6. Sometimes, I do not feel in control of my work (r)							
7. Overall, I am satisfied with myself							
8. I am filled with doubts about my competence (r)							
9. I determine what will happen in my life							
10. I do not feel in control of my success in my career (r)							
11. I am capable of coping with most of my problems							
12. There are times when things look pretty bleak and hopeless to me (r)							

Instructions: Please keep in mind the characteristics of the job as you read through the questions and think of answers to them.

Job Attractiveness

Adapted from: Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E.F. (2003). "Measuring attraction to organizations," *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 63, 986-1001.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. For me, this job would be a good opportunity.							
2. The job is attractive to me as a position of employment.							
3. I am interested in learning more about this job.							
4. I would not be interested in this job except as a last resort							

Job Prestige

Adapted from: Highhouse, S., Lievens, F., & Sinar, E.F. (2003). "Measuring attraction to organizations," *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 63, 986-1001.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. People are probably proud to say they work at this type of job.							
2. People who did this job are highly respected.							
3. I would find this job to be prestigious.							
4. This is probably a popular job for people							

5. This job probably has a reputation as being an excellent job							
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Perceived P-J fit

Adapted from: Cable, D. M., & Judge, T. A. (1996). Person–Organization fit, job choice decisions, and organizational entry. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 67(3), 294-311.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. My values 'match' or fit this job							
2. I will be able to maintain my values at this job							
3. My values prevent me from fitting in at this job because they are different from the job's values							

Manipulation check questions

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Was the organization in the advertisement large?							
2. Was the organization in the advertisement small?							

3. Was the job status junior?							
4. Was the job status senior?							

Demographic Questions

1. What is your gender?
 - a) Male
 - b) Female

2. What is your age? (e.g., 19)
Please indicate:

3. What is your Country of citizenship?
Please indicate:

4. If you are from the United States, please indicate your ethnicity:
 - a) Arabic
 - b) Asian
 - c) Black/African American
 - d) Hispanic/Latino
 - e) Native American
 - f) White/Caucasian
 - g) Others:

5. What is your primary language of communication at home?
Please indicate:

6. What is your total years of education, including primary school (e.g. grade 10=10years, grade 12= 12 years, two years of college (additional education) = 14 years)
Please indicate:

7. What is your highest degree in education?
Please indicate:

8. What is your GPA in the highest level of education you received?
Please indicate:
9. How many years of work experience do you have?
Please indicate:
10. What is your current employment status?
- a) Employed
 - b) Part-time
 - c) Unemployed (searching for jobs)
 - d) Not employed (not searching for job)
11. In general, which do you think is more important when you apply for a job?
- a) The job itself
 - b) The organization providing the job
 - c) Both are equally important
12. If you have any suggestions or thoughts, please share with the researcher.

Appendix C

Advertisements

Instructions: You are presented with a job description. Please spend enough time (1 to 2 minutes) to read through the description. Also, please think carefully about how you feel about the job and the company.



YQL Inc. is [a small startup company with less than 10 employees in total/a medium company with approximately 300 employees in total/a large company with more than 5000 employees in total]. This company is projected to grow at a rate similar to the average growth rate of firms with comparable characteristics. Overall, this company is a stable company able to provide you with a job for a reasonable length of time.

You have the skills and capabilities and meet the criteria to be hired for this job. The salary for this position is competitive, and a package of benefits that is competitive with other jobs is provided as well, including retirement contributions, vacation, personal days, dental, vision, and healthcare. The following are specific job descriptions provided by the company.

Position description: [Junior/ Senior] Project Manager

Location: convenient. You can also be placed at your desired location.

- Manage various projects from beginning to end including
 - Assemble project teams
 - Assign responsibilities
 - Develop project goals and objectives with other professionals
 - Identify appropriate resources needed
 - Review and approve material, resources and equipment needs
 - Help gain support from leaders and groups you don't control
 - Develop schedules to ensure timely completion of projects by meeting project milestones
 - Schedule meetings, confirm participation, and prepare agendas and meeting minutes
 - Monitor and provide weekly cost reports
 - Analyze and forecast quarterly cost projection reports
 - Ensure high quality results and customer satisfaction at all times
 - Sign off completed projects
- Work with senior level business executives and business program resources to plan and execute the project and manage stakeholder expectations
- Coordinate with Project Supervisor in development of a project's plan
- Aid Supervisors in daily tasks as needed

YQL inc. is an Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Employer. All qualified applicants will receive consideration for employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, protected veteran status, or disability status.

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