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Data: 16/10/2026 04:11:54

DOI: 10.17951/ijsr.2015.4.1.53

The Study of Realistic Job Previews for the Position of Recruiter in Poland: Qualitative Research Results

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Abstract:
Purpose – The main aim of the paper is to test to what degree information supplied to the job candidate by means of internet advertisement are realistic in Polish reality.
Methodology – To achieve this aim, a study on 117 job advertisements for the position of recruiter, located on eleven job recruitment portals, was performed. 43 characteristic keywords were identified within each job ad. The next step involved comparing those results with the analysis of qualitative data gathered from three persons hired for the position of a recruiter at least two years ago. The data received from three recruiters were analyzed following Eisenhardt's (1989) suggestions and grounded theory approach.
Findings – Research results reveal that majority of tasks performed in the position of recruiter were placed within recruitment advertisement. The tasks that were not enclosed in recruitment ads and indicated by recruiters as important are as follows: HR processes modeling, taking care of company blog and holding employee meetings. Research results suggest that, despite the notion of realistic job previews (RJPs), in Polish conditions they do not necessarily lead to dissatisfaction from the job in the three analyzed cases.
Limitations – The main limitation of the paper is the restriction of realistic job previews to information regarding job duties and tasks of only one position – recruiter. The study signals RJP's importance in Poland and we believe further research on the issue is necessary.
Keywords – realistic job previews, recruitment, qualitative research results
Paper classification – Research paper.

1. Introduction

As Earnest, Allen, and Landis (2011) claim, organizations are continuously struggling to attract, select and retain well-fitted employees while it is essential for organizational performance. However, these goals are not easily accomplished and recruitment and selection processes remain one of the key tasks of human resources management since they supply organizations with necessary resources – employees'

synergia
International Journal of Synergy and Research
Vol. 4, No. 1, 2015
p. 53–61

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competences (Ordanini and Silvestri, 2008; Parry and Wilson, 2009; Patterson *et al*., 2008). However, attracting and selecting appropriate employees comprises just of a first step enabling effective use of their competences. It is the retention process that helps to fully capitalize on acquired competencies. Therefore, indicators of employee absenteeism and turnover (which result from, for example, the lack of satisfaction from the job) as well as spillover during the attraction process are among the main measures of organizational capability in managing human capital (Bret Becton *et al.*, 2009; Wheeler *et al.,* 2010). As Rynes and Barber (1990) state, there are numerous factors influencing recruitment process, including the message sent to attract applicants. The confrontation of the message sent to applicant with the 'reality' of the job allows to state if the message – preview information – was realistic or not. If it was, the job candidate and further, employee, will probably remain satisfied with the job, since it is what he or she expected. If not, the employee may become dissatisfied and this is reflected in absenteeism, and further, turnover intentions. Therefore, the RJP, the realism of the information sent to job candidate, remains one of important predictors of employee intentions to leave and it became a significant topic in management research (Suszko and Breaugh, 1986).

The issue of realistic job previews, grounded strongly in recruitment literature, has received significant attention over the years (Breaugh, 1983; Dugoni and Ilgen, 1981; Earnest *et al.*, 2011). However, research results, as it is in other fields of management, are not conclusive (Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Langhammer *et al.*, 2012). While research on the topic is not convincing, the main aim of the paper is to test to what degree information supplied to the candidate, with the use of internet advertisement, is realistic in Polish conditions. Therefore, it is a pilot, initial, exploratory (rather than explanatory) study that focuses on the level of issue that is poorly recognized in Polish conditions.

2. Realistic job previews: The premise of satisfied, well-performing employee

Realistic job previews, grounded strongly in recruitment literature, has received significant attention over the years (Billings, 1986; Bretz and Judge, 1998; Richardson *et al.*, 2008). However, research results, as it is in other fields, are not definite. The idea of a realistic job preview lays in supplying job candidate with appropriate, adequate information about the job itself, including requirements, offer, the future supervisor, team composition, work style, and organization itself (Breaugh, 1983). The information supplied to job candidate prevents the dissatisfaction resulted from discrepancies between the perception of a job, supervisor, and organization and the reality, which he or she meets after getting the job. In short, it helps to increase the fit between the new employee and conditions met in the workplace (Cable and Judge, 1997). Because of the crucial issue of fit between the candidate and the job in both recruitment and selection, as well as the rest of human resource management practices, realistic job previews consist of a critical issue to address (Kristof-Brown *et al.*, 2005).

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Previous research has extensively undertaken the issue of realistic job previews and the complete review of existing literature is beyond the scope of the paper. Therefore, chosen research results are briefly described to show the essence and the very nature of realistic information supplied to a job candidate. Barksdale Jr. and colleagues (2003), on the basis of research carried out in 54 companies concluded that realistic job previews are an important source of job satisfaction (resulting in lower turnover rates) and they are also helping to improve salesperson performance by improving the role clarity. As such, RJPs are also strongly related to the perception of training. Similar results were also found by Costigan (1996), on the basis of research carried out on the sample of university students. The scholar found out that the time of message delivery is important for the comprehension of the job and that social cues play an important role in the impression of the job.

Bretz and Judge (1998) focused on two aspects of RJP, namely the weight that job candidates place on negative information and differences in which the best applicants react to negative information. They conclude, on the basis of research carried out in a sample of voluntary 83 graduate students, that job applicants pay significant attention to the negative job information and best candidates are less willing to pursue job opportunities if presented with an undesirable preview. In the same vein, Buda and Charnov (2003), on the basis of information from 200 respondents, analyzed the effectiveness of the message framing in the context of measures of job attractiveness perceptions, willingness to accept a job offer, and expectations. They conclude that the effect of message framing becomes more salient under low need for cognition of a candidate, and such candidates are more prone to the influence of negatively framed messages. On the other hand, respondents with a high need for cognition were much less affected by the negative aspects of job information. Haden's research (2012) revealed that individuals reporting higher duty self-efficacy expectancies set higher speed and more precise aims for the job task ascribed to them. He identified relationships between job previews and expectations, personal goals, and finally, individual performance.

Job previews were also studied as a dependent variable, specifically by Meglino *et al.* (1993), in a longitudinal field experiment where participants divided into two groups were exposed to realistic and unrealistic job previews. The study found that the preview resulted in a lower ratio of job acceptance among candidates with no earlier job experience. Their results suggest that previous experience modifies the approach to the job preview interpretation. Phillips (1998), performing a meta-analysis on 40 empirical studies on RJPs assessed both the job recruitment attrition on the basis of the level and accuracy of initial job expectations, as well as affective reactions, job performance and turnover. He found out that RJPs were related to higher performance and lower attrition from the recruitment process as well as lower voluntary and overall turnover rates. He concludes that timing and medium of information play an important role in effectiveness of preview, and that well-crafted methods have further organizational outcomes.

In contrast to other studies, Reilly and others (1981) found out, on the basis of analysis carried out in a sample of 842 job candidates, that RJPs did not influence the job acceptance, job commitment or turnover and expectations. However, they conclude

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that RJPs tend to be more effective with more complex jobs, but in other cases they do not help to explain differences in organizational outcomes.

To summarize the brief literature review, RJPs are believed to help job candidates make better choices and reduce dissatisfaction and turnover. These results are obtained by adjusting initial job expectations influencing job recruitment and attrition processes. RJPs are also supposedly explaining differences in individual performance, however, despite abundant studies, up-to-date research results are not conclusive. While the issue in Poland is barely studied and poorly emphasized in the literature, we suppose that organizations will relatively unlikely present realistic job preview to job candidates. In order to study to what extent the job preview is realistic in Polish conditions, we carried out a two-step research process, which we describe further in the text.

3. Methodology

The first step of the study encompassed analysis of 117 job advertisements for the position of recruiter, located on eleven job recruitment portals[1], performed in August 2014. The majority of job ads were placed on the portals by recruitment agencies willing to offer a recruiter job. We concentrated only on one aspect of realistic job previews – the duties and tasks enlisted in the job ad. The basic question was if the information regarding duties and tasks in the job ads is consistent with what a recruiter actually does in his or her job. In order to identify duties and tasks that are supposed to be performed by a recruiter, suitable job ads were analyzed. At this stage, a list of keywords was created. Duties and tasks were grouped according to semantic similarity to form similar duties or tasks to shorten the list.

In the next step, to gather information of typical recruiter duties and tasks we conducted an analysis of qualitative data gathered from three persons hired for the position of recruiter at least two years before the date of the interviews. Respondents were working in recruitment agencies. The data from three recruiters was analyzed (Eisenhardt, 1989). Suggestions, case study methodology and coding characteristic for grounded theory approach were used. In the final stage of the research, results of job ads with the data from three interviews was compared. Results are presented in the following part.

4. Research results

Most typical duties that were identified within 117 studied recruitment ads for the position of recruiter are presented in Figure 1 (only 10 most common duties are presented).

As it can be noted from Figure 1, in most cases employees working as recruiters, are responsible for carrying out recruitment projects and active seeking of new job

[1] Recruitment portal name and the number of job ads found and included to the analysis between August 1 and 31: pracuj.pl – 39; praca.pl – 32; infopraca.pl – 20; gowork.pl – 10; monsterpolska.pl – 6; gazetapraca.pl – 4; praca.gratka.pl – 2; jobexpress.pl – 1; katowiczak.pl – 1; liderpracy.pl -1; praca.ccc.eu – 1.

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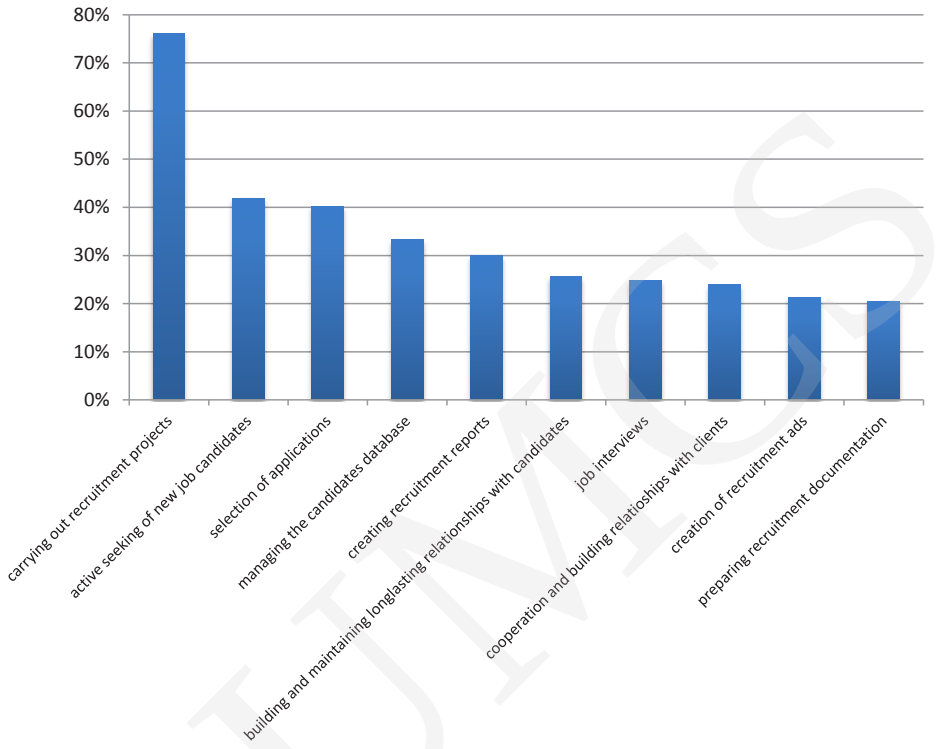

Source: research results

Figure 1: Percentage of recruitment ads containing listed duties

candidates as well as selecting applications. About one third of applicants are managing databases and creating reports. Only one fourth of future employees are building and maintaining long-lasting relationships with candidates and carrying out job interviews. About one fifth of job candidates are building relationships with clients, creating recruitment ads and preparing other recruitment documentation.

In the next step, we carried out interviews with three active recruiters and created a list of typical tasks performed by them at work. For illustrative purposes, in Figure 2, we present the comparison of main duties listed by interviewees and the content of analyzed recruitment ads.

While interviews' results should not be analyzed quantitatively, we presented Figure 2 only for illustrative purposes. Three things can be noticed from the graph analysis. First, there are common duties for three interviewees, and to some – usually significant – extent, they are also enclosed in analyzed job advertisements. Secondly, there are duties performed by one of three interviewees (modeling HR processes, mailbox management, carrying out employee meetings or managing the blog of a company) that consume significant amount of time or are requiring different knowledge and are not mentioned in the analyzed job ads. Thirdly, while the attention paid to diverse aspects of recruitment ads may be different and job candidates may actually need to perform divergent duties within organizations, results of this study should not be generalized.

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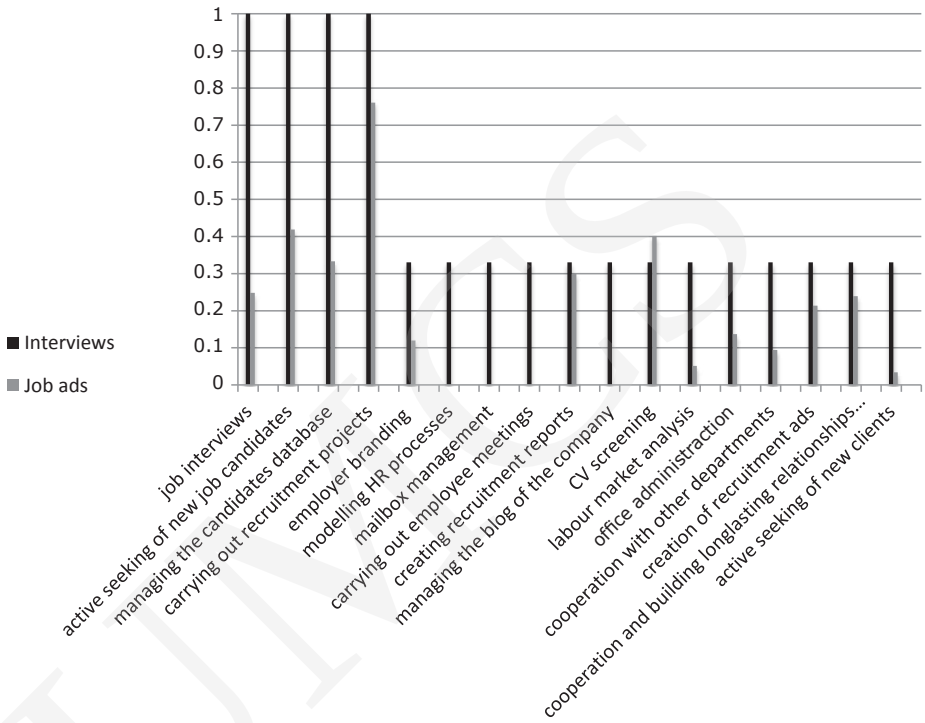

Figure 2: Comparison of main duties listed by interviewees and the content of analyzed recruitment ads

Source: research results

5. Discussion and conclusions

Research results reveal that majority of tasks performed in the post of a recruiter were placed within recruitment advertisement. The tasks that were not mentioned by recruiters included HR processes modeling, taking care of company blog as well as holding employee meetings. There were also interesting observation resulting from the qualitative data analysis – every single one of three respondents regularly performs tasks, of which he or she was not informed during the recruitment process, but none of them indicated dissatisfaction with that fact. This contradicts the basic assumption underlying realistic job previews stating that the lack of information about important tasks performed in the job leads to lack of fit between a person and a position and, subsequently, to dissatisfaction (Edwards, 2008).

There are at least two basic limitations of the study. Firstly, it would be more appropriate to analyze a certain amount of job ads and later, 'following' persons who actually received and accepted a job offer for that position to ask them what they knew before getting the job and what they actually do at work. However, such research design is hard to handle adequately, since it would require at least half a year contact with companies issuing recruitment ads with their and respective job candidates/employees permissions to carry it out. Secondly, the actual recruitment job in 117 recruitment ads may be diverse, so duties and tasks may, to some extent, vary. Therefore, a larger sample would allow for more accurate process of list creation.

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Presented research was designed as initial, exploratory study of the issue scarcely treated in management literature in Poland. We believe that further studies on the issue are necessary for both theory and practice, especially in post-transition Polish job conditions. Future studies could undertake the problem from diverse perspective analyzing RJPs as a dependent and independent variable, with diverse possible, individual, team, and organizational outcomes (Popovich and Wanous, 1982). To our knowledge, such studies have not been carried out in Polish conditions so far. For practitioners, this article draws attention to the problem of job candidates' perceptions and expectations. The implication of the study is that the information supplied to the candidate does not have to be exact all the time. However, one should bear in mind that the failure to inform job candidates for key positions about job, organization, supervisor or a team in which he or she will be performing duties may result in dissatisfaction, absenteeism and, finally, turnover (Vandenberg and Scarpello, 1990).

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The research project was financed from the sources of Polish National Science Center (NCN) on the basis of decision number DEC-2012/05/D/HS4/01521.

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