

Voluntary intentions: An attribution perspective

INTRODUCTION

The voluntary sector has an important role in the development of society as well as economy (Bussell and Forbes, 2001). In the UK, this sector dedicates approximately 41% of their resources to social services, cultural and religious activities (Keen and Audickas, 2017). Voluntary organisations contribute over £17 billion to the UK economy (NCVO100, 2019). A quantifiable growth of this sector leads to an increasing demand for volunteers, who are considered as the backbone of non-profit organisations (Emens et al., 2014). On the other hand, a downturn in the number of people participating in voluntary activities between 2015 and 2019 was reported (NCVO). In 2019, 39% of population worked as volunteers at least once a month. This represents a decline of 5% compared to the same period in 2014 (Clark, 2020). 45% of the participants of the study undertook by Charity Commission for England and Wales in 2018 report that they do not trust voluntary organisations (Populus, 2018). Whilst these organisations complain that they are negatively affected by media coverage and people who do not understand the importance of voluntary activities, studies show that poor HR planning is prevalent in this sector. It has been suggested that development of an effective strategy for recruiting volunteers is necessary to increase the number of volunteers, however, there is no agreement on how to fulfil it (Cuskelly et al, 2006).

A recruitment process contains of two stages (1) applicant attraction and (2) selection. This study focuses on the first stage of recruitment - applicant attraction because ‘the more effective organisations are at identifying and attracting a high-quality pool of job applicants, the less important the selection stage of hiring becomes’ (Taylor and Collins, 2000, p. 304). Applicant attraction is the activities designed to increase the number of people who will apply for jobs within the respective organisation (Bratton and Gold, 2013). It is likely that ‘the more effective organisations are at identifying and attracting a high-quality pool of job applicants, the less important the selection stage of hiring becomes’ (Taylor and Collins, 2000, p. 304). In the voluntary sector, applicant attraction is to identify individuals who are willing to volunteer for specific events, and keeping them loyal (Randle and Dolnicar, 2012). The methods of executing volunteer attraction activities are different compared to applicant attraction

in paid organisations. This is because of the typical characteristics of the voluntary sector. For example, volunteer recruitment requires attracting suitable candidates quickly and inexpensively. Expensive recruiting channels such as agencies and head-hunters, which are widely utilised in the paid organisations, are not applicable here. Instead, voluntary firms mostly approach low-cost media channels such as local newspaper, volunteering and publicly funded websites, and word of mouth to invite friends and colleagues to tackle the recruitment issues (Whithear, 1999).

Applicant perspectives have long been emphasised to tap people's interests and motivation behind their participation. Paid organisations may use pay schemes, power structures and other economic benefits as the motivation to attract applicants (Wilkinson and Redman, 2013). Motivating volunteers cannot not depend on such explicit elements. Instead, non-profit firms mostly rely on intangible values derived from the voluntary activities themselves to attract volunteers. Some people may be attracted to the social interactions in volunteering whilst others cherish a sense of compassion and enthusiasm for development of the community (Alfes et al., 2017). Nevertheless, questions are to what extent such elements act as motivation to volunteers? Are there any other elements that can help encourage volunteer participation?

Many voluntary organisations tend to apply the existing practices that are deployed in paid organisations (Peterson, 2004). Unfortunately, such practices may hardly be transferable to the voluntary context due to the unique differences of this sector. Volunteers work in an unpaid condition where formal rewards and a power structure to motivate participation are not in place (Clary and Snyder, 2002). It is unlikely that these motivations can be embedded in the volunteer organisation's hierarchy and influenced by policies and procedures (Alfes et al., 2017). Therefore, emphasis on volunteers' intrinsic needs and intangible values, which are accrued from the voluntary work itself, are likely a preferable method to attract applicants (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2009). This raises a need to understand what these intrinsic elements are and how they work to attract applicants.

As such, this study, emphasising on cognitive aspects, takes into consideration attribution theory and social exchange theory as a lens to explain a causal link between perceptions of volunteer recruitment, attitudes, and behaviours. We develop a model

of recruitment attributions, which focuses on the principles of attribution theory. Attribution theory refers to attributions as explanations that people make about a course of events they experience. Such attributions play a controlling role for future expectations, emotions, and actions (Hewett et al., 2018). People can come to very different conclusions about the same event due to their attributions that lead to a variety of consequent reactions (Weiner, 2008). This perspective is applicable to the work context where employees seem to vary in explaining ‘why’ organisational practices are in place. Employees, who attribute organisational practices to manager’s intended care for quality of service or employee welfare will accept these rewards as the motivation for increasing their enthusiasm and commitment to the organisation. In contrast, attributions to manager’s intentions ‘to get the most work out of employees may cause demotivation and withdrawal intentions (Nishii et al., 2008). In this light, it is likely that attributions about the intentions of the volunteer recruitment practice deployed would either negatively or positively influence people’s trust and intentions to take part in voluntary work.

Social exchange theory makes its way into explaining the causal relationship between attributions and intentions by highlighting fairness as key in any exchange relationship. Exchange parties engage more in such relationships when they perceive proportions of rewards to investments as fair or profitable. If people ever experienced unfair treatment, they would inevitably react to restore balances to their investments (Blau, 1964). Embedded in these perspectives of social exchange, we focus on the perceived fairness of the volunteer recruitment practice. Perceptions of interactional and informational fairness, hereafter refer to as *fair recruitment*, can lead to positive attributions of recruitment activities because these perceptions are unique (Leventhal., 1980; Barsky, Kaplan and Beal, 2001).

This study makes several contributions. First, we offer insights into how individuals develop attributions of the intention of volunteer recruitment. Organisational researchers have emphasised the impact of social exchange on the employee-employer relations. Said impact sheds light on the ways employees react to organisational policies and practices (Nguyen, 2019). Although, employee recruitment is considered one of the best HR practices that help achieving organisational performance goals, only a handful studies use SET to predict the outcomes of this practice. Similarly, research on employee attributions has focused on a causal link

between employee attitudes and HR system attributions, whilst the role of recruitment attributions on candidates' attitudes and intentions is mostly left uncovered. Of few studies examining attributions within the context of recruitment, only one study was conducted within the context of applicant attraction (Hewett et al, 2018). Such a study employs Heider (1958)'s principles to examine how external factors influence people's interests in the organisation where vacancies are advertised (Tomlinson and Carnes, 2015). This research, by focusing on the impact of recruiter's interactional and informational standards on the applicant attitudes and behaviours, offers an avenue to better understand organisational factors.

Second, the concept of '*trust*' lies in the heart of the voluntary sector. It has been playing a key role in economic theories of the voluntary associations (Sargeant and Lee, 2001). The relationship between trust and employee behaviour such as confidence, loyalty and commitment were reported (Cunningham (2017)). Despite such results, no research in the voluntary setting has examined what role *trust in the organisation* might play in motivating people's intention to participate in voluntary activities. In other words, the precise role of voluntary organisations in fostering trust are left unspecified. It remains unclear on how and under what conditions such organisations preserve trust. To this end, this research emphasises the initial interactions between recruiters and applicants and takes into consideration people attributions of '*why*' organisations recruit volunteers as essential antecedences which might lead to a causal trust. How such attributions link to voluntary intentions is also measured in this research.

Third, the UK voluntary sector has grown significantly since the early 1990s (Cunningham 2014). As such HRM in the voluntary sector has become an area of interests to academics and practitioners. Current studies focus on the impact of organisational relations on numerous employment issues such as employee commitment, pay and conditions, and unionisation and HR policies (Cunningham, 2008; Alatrasta and Arrowsmith, 2004; Parry and Kelliher, 2009). Yet, no studies have shed light on the initial stage of recruitment – volunteer attraction and its procedure within the voluntary setting. This study therefore constitutes a step forward providing understanding of the relationship between perceptions, attributions, and intentions to apply for a voluntary role. By doing this, this research will be able to offer concrete guidance to voluntary organisations in order to develop an effective recruitment

process. We also envisage an impact on organisations outside the voluntary setting who are seeking ways to improve their recruitment practice. For example, small organisations might gain insights into how to build organisational brand and attract candidate when their budgets for this task are limited. Medium and large organisations may gain an understanding about the balance between the utilisation of financial elements and non-financial elements in drawing their management practices, including recruitment.

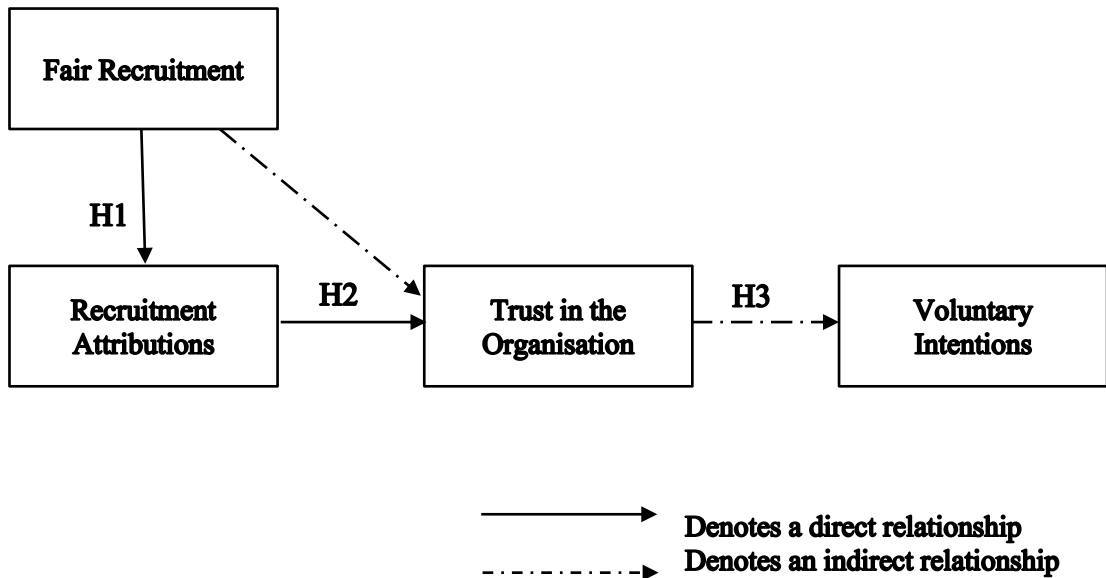


Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the study

RECRUITMENT ATTRIBUTIONS

Attribution theories come into existence as an empirical work that provides explanations for judgment procedures which typically embark upon available information (Fiske and Taylor, 1991). Three theories of attribution, considered as foundations for the development of later attribution theories applied to HRM, are Heider's 'common-sense' psychology, Kelley's attribution theory and Weiner's attribution theory. Heider (1958) focused on individual common sense as basis to predict or make sense of the events, given that perceived causality influences actions and responses of the perceiver. Perceived causality is influenced by numerous factors such as environment, individual motivation and ability and preferences that the perceiver uses to attribute why an event occurred. Expanding the work of Heider, Kelley (1967) drew attention to how people gather information to explain causes of an

event or a person's behaviour. Levels of distinctiveness, consistency and consensus in the way a person or an event occurs determine the attributions of such a person's behaviour or an event.

Unlike Heider and Kelley, Weiner (1979) focuses on specific contexts and oftentimes in explaining how causal attributions influence future expectation, attitudes and behaviours. For example, in an achievement context, people respond either negatively or positively to their success or failure based on the attributions that they make about the reasons for behaviour after an event occurs (Weiner, 2008). Such tenets of Weiner's attribution theory confirm the work of Nishii et al (2008), which is employed to gain insight into the voluntary recruitment practice in this research. Nishii and her colleagues focus on individual attributions of the meaning behind the application of HR practices, suggesting that such attributions can either positively or negatively affect employees. Positive attributions - commitment attributions are developed when employees attribute intended HR practices to their wellbeing or service quality, whilst negative attributions – control attributions are fostered when employees interpret HR practices as management mechanisms, which the managers use for exploitation and cost saving. In acknowledgement that in the voluntary context, attributions of 'why' companies recruit volunteers may influence the attributors' intention to sign up for vacancies, this study employs Weiner (1979) and Nishii et al. (2008)'s attribution theories to gain insight into both commitment and control attributions alike.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY – AN APPROACH TO RECRUITMENT ATTRIBUTIONS

Emerged in the 1920s, social exchange theory (SET) is mostly known through the conceptual paradigms developed by Blau (1964) that emphasise causal relationships between social interactions and behaviours. Self-esteem is considered as the motivation for the development of social interactions. The purpose of exchange is to satisfy individual self-esteem that is constructed from psychological and economic desires (Molm, 2003; Roloff, 1981). There are no 'saintly' individuals who 'selflessly work for others without any thought of reward or expecting gratitude' (Blau, 1964, p. 16, 60). Instead, people expect payback for what they have given. Altruism or coercion therefore does not exist in the social exchange setting (Fremeaux and Michelson, 2011; Kaynak and Marandu, 2006).

One of the basic principles of SET is that exchange relationships are developed and maintained by trust, loyalty, and mutual commitment. Exchange parties must comply with exchange rules that might be determined by *reciprocity* - non-negotiated exchange or *equilibrium* - negotiated agreements in exchanges. Whilst for many people, non-negotiated exchange may lead to their obligations to social services (Freneau and Michelson, 2011), others consider negotiated agreements as the rules in their exchange relations (Molm et al., 2003). Participants who follow negotiated agreement rules tend to engage in exchanges that promise proportional benefits to their investments (Homans, 1961; Zafirovski, 2005). Such negotiated agreements take fairness as the fundamental element of exchange processes, given that people perceive fairness as a benefit of a worthy exchange (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). Participants are rational in their social interactions. They perform based on ‘the returns they are expected to bring’ (Blau, 1964, p. 91) and tend to engage in exchange relations, which promise benefits proportionate to their investments (Homans, 1961; Zafirovski, 2005).

Fairness in Blau’s work reflects upon *just* ratios of investment to rewards. In an equation of worth, these just ratios are calculated by subtracting investment from rewards. A *positive* value of worth can motivate a relationship to continue, whilst a *negative* worth reflecting unjust rewards might lead to the termination of the same relationship (Monge and Contractor, 2003). This equation allows an efficient method to measure explicit profit in the economic exchanges. Social exchange relationships not only consist of economic transactions but also reflect interpersonal attachment between parties (Organ et al. 1988). As such, fairness goes beyond the economic justice ratios, it emphasises intangible values such as trust and causal reactions (West and Turner, 2007). This perspective provides a framework to explain the employer-employee relationship in the work context (Rhoades and Eisenberger, 2002). For example, employees receiving management support reciprocate by increasing their enthusiasm and efforts (Masterson et al. 2000; Van Dyne, Graham and Dienesch, 1994). They will appear demotivated and withdraw from showing positive behaviours if they experience unfair treatment (West and Turner, 2007).

This study is embedded in such social exchange perspectives, emphasising on perceived fairness in recruitment processes to identify the conditions in which parties participating in the recruitment processes are willing to approve. We also employ the

fairness principles of SET to identify intangible elements, which shape the attributions that people make about the recruitment practices deployed in voluntary organisations. Attribution researchers suggest that attributions are informed by three elements, i.e., information about the stimulus, beliefs based on prior experiences, and motivation to make attributions (Kelley and Michela, 1980; Heider, 1958). In this study, we focus on the information about the stimulus because people might get to know the organisation through the initial interactions and information the recruiters provide. We develop a framework of recruitment attributions drawing on the principles of attribution theory. Interactional and informational fairness are taken into consideration as the antecedents of recruitment attributions, which directly link with the level of trust and voluntary intentions. This approach provides a theoretical grounded model for how voluntary intentions are formed.

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Fairness: An antecedent to recruitment attributions

SET highlights fairness as a vital element in fostering social exchange relationships. Fairness can be distinguished between two forms – (1) interactional fairness refers to the degree people perceive that they were treated with dignity and respect, whereas (2) informational fairness refers to adequate explanation and information about why certain procedures were used. Although, interpersonal and informational fairness are highly correlated, they help understanding unique variance in individual outcomes (Colquitt, 2001). These types of fairness are vital because people tend to make their attributions based on their evaluations of their experience of organisational practices (Greenberg, 2003). With respect to recruitment, fairness might be perceived through the communication standard that recruiters uphold in the initial contact with candidates (Bauer et al. 2001; Ryan et al. 2000). Such perceived fairness impacts subsequent reactions from the candidates regarding the recruiting activities and organisational attractiveness (Bauer et al., 2001; Gilliland and Steiner, 2001; Macan et al, 1994). For example, if candidates are impressed by respect, honesty and accurate information that recruiters exhibit while answering recruiting enquiries (Rynes, 1993), they will trust and cast positive perceptions about the organisation (Lee and Ok, 2012).

Nishii et al. (2018) categorise attributions into two dimensions (1) commitment attributions (2) control attributions. Whilst commitment attributions relate to contributors' welfare or service quality, control attributions refer to economic profits such as cost-cutting or exploitation. Under the work context, attributions have been used to explain the interactive link between employee reactions and many of specific HR domains. It is most unlikely that all employees will attribute an HR practice in the same way. An HR practice may not be able to automatically cause expected effects on employee perceptions, instead, they are impacted by the feelings that employees attach to this practice (Nishii et al. 2008).

We embed to Nishii et al.' (2018) two dimensions of internal HR attribution and find theoretical reasoning to suggest that fairness perceptions can positively predict commitment-focused attributions, whilst negatively predict controlled-focused attributions. We base this on the proposition that fairness features people's attitudes and behaviours. In organisational context, perceived fairness can encourage employees to engage with the organisation more and accept organisational practices as supportive mechanisms through which the organisation care for employee welfare and development (Greenberg and Colquitt, 2005). This theory and research guide us to predict that:

Hypothesis 1: Perceptions of interactional and informational fairness of the recruitment process are positively related to commitment-focused attributions and negatively related to control-focused attributions.

Recruitment attributions and trust in the organisation

Trust is defined in various ways due to its 'multifaceted phenomenon' (Northaven, 1996). Some investigate the role of trust in other people in general - generalised trust, whilst others look at the impact of trust in institutions - constitutional trust (Sargeant and Lee, 2001). Generalised trust is formed from a cohesion of collective values, social networks and cultural ethics that facilitate an economic growth (Fukuyama, 1995; Uslaner, 1997). This research does not cover this area of trust, instead, it emphasises constitutional trust which takes into account specific contexts such as stakeholder-organisation relationship, or negotiation situation (Sargeant and Lee, 2004) as the possible bases of trust.

As mentioned earlier constitutional trust is referred to as ‘a willingness to increase one’s vulnerability to an another whose behaviour is not under one’s control (Zand, 1972, p. 230). In the voluntary context, constitutional trust is ‘the reliance by one person, group or firm upon a voluntarily accepted duty on the part of another person, group or firm to recognize and protect the rights and interests of all others engaged in a joint endeavour or economic exchange’ (Hosmer, 1995, p. 393). This is a reliable statement since voluntary organisations seem to take into consideration volunteers as key to organisational construct, who facilitate the organisation in achieving desired performance goals. Trust does not just derive from cognitive expectation that people will cooperate not only because it is in their own interest to do so, but also due to their perceived intrinsic trustworthiness (McAllister, 1995; Ring and Van de Ven, 1992, 1994). Empirical studies provide insights into trustworthiness in terms of *whom* to trust. This investigation falls into only one side of an exchange relationship. In this research, we advance our understanding by investigating to what extent perceived fairness in the recruitment process render recruiters and their organisation trustworthy.

Attributions of ‘why’ the practice is in place can determine employees’ responses and acceptance towards this practice. The practice is regarded as a motivation instrument if it reflects management concerns about employee welfare or service quality. It may produce adverse effects on employee perceptions if its application is all for the cost-cutting or employee exploitation (Voord and Beijer, 2015). In this sense, if volunteering candidates attribute recruitment to organisational intentions for the betterment of community and for volunteers’ development, they would trust and be willing to engage further with the organisation. In contrast, if candidate attribute volunteering recruitment as ways to advance financial benefits for the organisation, they will be reluctant to join the organisation. In other words, recruitment attributions can either positively or negatively affect level of trust in the organisation. The hypothesis 2 is drawn as follows:

Hypothesis 2: Recruitment attributions will positively/negatively relate to trust in the organisation, such that commitment attributions link with high level of trust whilst control attributions links with low level of trust.

The mediating role of trust

Trust plays an important role in predicting manners, expectations and behavioural intentions (Blau, 1964; Andeson, and Narus, 1990, Bromiley and Cumming, 1995). Trust can promote positive perceptions of the relationship and increase compassion in the relationships' parties (Luchies et a., 2013; Molden and Finkel, 2010; Rempel, Ross and Holmes, 2002). As such, stable and well-functioning relationships feature trust as one of the most important elements in their construct (Simpron, 2007). When trust is well placed, that trust can produces substantial outcomes (Yip and Schweitzer, 2015).

In the volunteering context, it is argued that higher degrees of trust lead to greater willingness to engage in voluntary activities (Sargeant, 1999; Saxton, 1995). This is logical, given that people are more likely to offer help and support through voluntary work if they trust that the organisation will effectively utilise their knowledge and abilities to serve the betterment of society and community. As such, the impact of fair recruitment on volunteer intentions can be viewed as direct or indirect through trust. Hypothesis 3 is drawn as follows,

Hypothesis 3: The relationship between fair recruitment and volunteer intentions will be mediated by trust.

EMPIRICAL STUDY

Participants and procedure

This research involves two parallel studies (Edmonds and Kennedy, 2017). The first study is embedded in the qualitative process. We interviewed 26 volunteers, who either worked or have been working for a voluntary organisation in the UK. Four of them were working fulltime and other eleven were working part-time. As the study was undertaken during the peak period of Covid-19, when the lockdown was strictly enforced across the UK, we contacted these participants via WhatsApp. It took longer to arrange interview appointments with founder volunteers as many of them have resided in other countries. The interview questions were drawn around the aspects of fair recruitment, recruitment attributions and trust in the organisation, and the relationship between perceived fairness, trust, and voluntary intentions.

The second study is quantitative data collection, aims to confirm the proposed hypotheses drawn on the relationship between fair recruitment, recruitment

attributions, trust, and people's tendencies to participate in voluntary work. The findings will be compared to qualitative results in order to provide new insights beyond the separate results of the quantitative and qualitative study. Participants for the second study were selected from volunteers working in various fields such as sport, culture, health, environment and animal protection. Data were collected online for seven weeks. Relevant data presented in the quantitative stage were collected at the same time and based on two different sources – (1) volunteers from two voluntary companies, which were approached before the nationwide lockdown and (2) voluntary groups on Facebook. Both participants have access to the same survey (22 items) which was conducted to measure perceived fairness volunteer recruitment, recruitment attributions, trust, and intention to work as a volunteer again in the future. From this, a cover letter explaining the study, which was rewritten, and contact details of the researcher were also included.

Qualtrics records a total of 321 responses for this study. There is a big gap in the number of males and females working as volunteers. Male volunteers account for 28.3% whilst female employees account for 60%. 11% of participants chose 'rather not say' about their gender. Statistics also show a large number of participants 25-54 years old, which accounted for 64 %. 24% of participants are above 55. Many participants have been working as volunteers alongside their fulltime or part-time job that account for 69.7%. In regard to education, 75.6% have either bachelors or postgraduate degrees. The rest of participants hold either vocational or other professional degrees/diplomas.

Measures for the quantitative study

Alpha coefficients for all scales are reported in Table 1.

Fair recruitment

Fair recruitment is measured using nine items developed by Colquitt (2001). These items emphasise opinions participants have towards how the recruiters treat them in the early stages of recruitment. Measuring items are slightly adjusted when they are deployed in this research. As such, each item refers participants to a specific recruitment process. Sample items are (1) 'The recruiters refrain from improper remarks or comments', and (2) 'The recruiters communicate details in a timely

manner' Measures were aggregated using a 5-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree'. Sample items are 'The recruiter treated me in a polite manner' (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'); and 'The recruiter was candid when communicating with me' (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'). Cronbach's alpha was high with $\alpha = .92$.

Recruitment attributions

Recruitment attribution is measured using four items adopted from the research of Nishii et al. (2008). This scale mostly focuses on either commitment or control attributions that participants make about the meaning behind the application of volunteer recruitment. Measure items are divided into two groups. One group encompasses commitment statements such as volunteer recruitment exists 'in order to help volunteers deliver quality service to their community'; and 'so that they will feel valued and respected'. The other group has a combination of control statements such as volunteer recruitment is 'to try to keep costs down'; and 'in order to get the most work out of volunteers' (Nisshii et al, 2008). Measures are aggregated by using the 5-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree' for the group of commitment statements; and 1 = 'strongly agree' and 5 = 'strongly disagree' for the group of control statements. Cronbach's alpha was good with α (commitment) = .67 and α (control) = .80.

Trust in the organisation

Measure items on trust are adopted from the work of McKnight et al. (2002). Measuring items are adjusted before utilising in this study. Each item refers how participants perceive benevolence and integrity of the voluntary organisation. Measures were aggregated using a 5-point Likert scale with anchors of 1 = 'strongly disagree' and 5 = 'strongly agree'. Sample items are 'If I require help, I believe that this organisation would do its best to help me' (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'); and 'I believe that this organisation would act in my best interest' (1 = 'strongly disagree' to 5 = 'strongly agree'). Cronbach's alpha was high with $\alpha = .95$.

Volunteer intentions

The measure item on volunteer intentions is developed based on the guideline of Ajzen (2002). The statement is 'I intend to apply for the volunteer vacancies in the

forthcoming days. Participants are required to rate the statement on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = ‘very much disagree’ to 7 = ‘very much agree’).

Analytic strategy

96 (30%) out of 321 responses for this research were invalid as most of the questions in the questionnaire were not answered. Therefore, these answers were deleted. After clearing invalid questionnaires samples, data gathered from the questionnaires of 225 participants were exported to an Excel spreadsheet. Headings were inserted representing different variables measuring perceived fairness in volunteer recruitment, recruitment attributions, trust, and voluntary intention. Contact details of participants (email address and personal codes) were separately stored. Statistics were then entered into IBM SPSS for data analysis. Results are reported in Table 1.

Controls

Controls for volunteer characteristics are applied since Jensen et al. (2013) found that demographic differences empirically affected employee perceptions of HRM within the organisation. The controls on four demographic characteristics were shown as follows: gender (1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = others), age in years (1 = below 25; 2 = 25 - 34; 3 = 35 - 44; 4 = 55 - 64; 5 = 65 and over), employment (0 = student; 1 = part-time, 2 = fulltime; 3 = retired; 4 = unemployed), and education (0 = vocational, 1 = bachelor; 2 = master, 3 = doctor, 4 professional, 5 = other). These variables were calculated based on data gathered from surveys.

RESULTS

Qualitative results

Summary of individual unstructured interviews is reported in Table 2

Quantitative results - Hypothesis testing

Fair recruitment – Attribution relationship

The first hypothesis aims to identify a relationship between fair recruitment and recruitment attributions in the voluntary setting. To test this hypothesis, fair recruitment was added to the second step of a hierarchical regression, accounting for

the independent variable. Recruitment attributions, including commitment attributions and control attributions, were added as the dependent variables. The results show a very highly significant correlation between fair recruitment and commitment attributions ($\beta = .61, p = 0$), whilst the correlation between fair recruitment and control attribution is highly negative ($\beta = -.24, p = 0$). 36% of variability in commitment attribution can be accounted for by fair recruitment ($r^2 = 36$) whilst only 15% of variability in control attribution can be accounted for by fair recruitment ($r^2 = 15$). Hypothesis 1 was fully supported.

Recruitment attributions – Trust relationship

Hypotheses 2 investigates a relationship between recruitment attributions and levels of trust in the organisation. To test this hypothesis, recruitment attributions including commitment attributions and control attributions were added to the second step of a hierarchical regression, accounting for the independent variables. Trust was added as the dependent variable. The results show a very highly significant correlation between commitment attributions and trust ($\beta = .67, p = 0$), whilst the correlation between control attributions and trust is negative ($\beta = -.36, p = 0$). 46% of variability in trust can be accounted for by commitment attribution ($r^2 = 46$) whilst only 14% of variability in trust can be accounted for by control attribution ($r^2 = 14$). Hypothesis 2 was fully supported.

Table 1: Descriptive statistic, Reliability estimate, Variable interrelations, and Cronbach's α of the Study

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender (0 = female) ¹	.52	.70								
2. Age (years) ²	2.35	1.57	-.11							
3. Employment ³	2.15	1.19	.09	.43**						
4. Education ⁴	2.22	1.36	-.2**	.29**	.06					
5. Fair recruitment	4.28	.6	-.01	.08	.00	.15*	.92 ^a			
6. Commitment attribution	4.12	.7	-.09	.03	-.00	.05	.6**	.67 ^a		
7. Control attribution	3.16	1.12	.01	-.22**	-.13*	-.18**	-.27**	-.4**	.80 ^a	
8. Trust	4.11	.72	.04	.04	-.09	.06	.74**	.67**	-.34**	.95 ^a
9. Voluntary intention	4.06	1.04	-.02	.05	-.01	.03	.42**	.39**	-.31**	.62**

Notes:

¹. Gender coded 0 = Female; 1 = Male, 2 = Rather not say.

². 0 = 18-24; 1 = 25-34; 2 = 35 – 44; 3 = 45 – 54; 4 = 55- 64; 5 = 65 and over.

³. 0 = Student; 1 = Part-time job; 2 = Full-time job; 3 = Retired; 4 = Unemployed.

⁴. 0 = Vocational; 1 = Bachelor; 2 = Master; 3 Doctor; 4 Professional; 5 = Other.

^a. Cronbach's α .

*. $p < .05$, **. $p < .01$, ***. $p < .001$. N = 252.

Table 2: Summary of individual unstructured interviews

Fair recruitment	Attributions and trust	Volunteering intention
<i>The team welcomed me as if I was family. I felt like at home although I was thousand miles away from my country.</i>	<i>No, I don't think I was exploited. This company benefited me indeed.</i>	<i>Working for such genuine company, why not! I decided to do my internship in this company after having a good chat with the team.</i>
<i>They never cast any improper remarks or comments.</i>	<i>They treat me like family, trustful and honest. I believe that they would act in my best interest.</i>	<i>I was happy to join the team.</i>
<i>Love the way they communicated with me - respectful and polite!</i>	<i>I was completely persuaded and inspired by what the organisation team was doing with the Vietnamese community in Nottingham.</i>	<i>Much appreciated being part of the team.</i>
<i>Clear explanation delivered in a good timely manner</i>	<i>I trusted that the organisation would support me, and I was right.</i>	<i>It would be encouraging to work in such a supportive environment.</i>
<i>I have no complaint about the recruiter's communication.</i>	<i>Never thought that this organisation was trying to take advantage of volunteers.</i>	<i>It would be an interesting way to learn about other cultures.</i>
<i>I sent an enquiry for further information and received a swift response with detailed information regarding their recruitment process. Absolutely satisfied!</i>	<i>I believe that I would have the opportunity to improve my English and learn about British culture by having a hand in organising and running events for local community.</i>	<i>Will definitely work for this company again in the future.</i>

Mediating Effect of Trust on the Fair Recruitment – Voluntary Intention Relationship

Hypothesis 3 proposes a mediating effect of trust on the relationship between fair recruitment and voluntary intention. To test the hypothesis, four steps in Baron and Kenny's (1986) method were followed.

In Step 1 of the mediation model, variables fair recruitment and voluntary intention were included in a hierarchical regression as the initial independent variable (IV) and the dependent variable (DV) respectively. Statistics showed a very high significant correlation between these variables ($\beta = .42, p = 0$), indicating effect of fair recruitment on voluntary intention.

Step 2 confirmed the significant correlation between the initial IV and the mediator. This step included fair recruitment and trust as the variables. The results also showed a very high significant correlation between these variables ($\beta = .74, p = 0$).

Step 3 examined whether there was a significant relationship between the mediator and the DV. In this step, fair recruitment and trust were included as the predictors of voluntary intention. This is to confirm whether trust, as the mediator, exerts an effect on voluntary intention when this variable, together with fair recruitment, plays the predictor roles of team performance. Statistics showed that trust controlling for fair recruitment was highly significant ($\beta = .67, p = 0$).

Step 4 of the mediation model examined the meaningful reduction in effects of the relationship between fair recruitment and voluntary intention in the presence of trust. Statistics showed that, controlling for the mediator (trust), fair recruitment was no longer a significant predictor of voluntary intention ($\beta = .14, p = .3$). In other words, the coefficient relating fair recruitment to voluntary intention is larger than that in the regression, with both fair recruitment and trust predicting voluntary intention.

To examine the significance of the indirect effect of fair recruitment on voluntary intention, the bootstrap resampling method with replacements to generate 5000 subsamples of the entire data set was used. Results of this test showed that the effect size was .4930, with a 95% confidence interval of .3510 and .6537 ($z = 8, p = 0$). Since this confidence interval is greater than zero, the mediation relationship was statistically significant. As every steps satisfied all the conditions for mediating testing, showing that trust fully mediated the relationship between the perceptions of fair recruitment and voluntary intention. Therefore,

hypothesis 3 is fully supported. A summary presenting the statistics of the regression for the mediating effect of high level of trust on the relationship between fair recruitment and voluntary intention is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of mediating regressions for the effects of trust on the relationship between fair recruitment and voluntary intention

Steps	Hypothesised steps	β	SE	t Value	p Value
Step 1 (IV to DV)	Fair recruitment $\rightarrow$ Voluntary intention	.42***	.058	7.275	0
Step 2 (IV to mediator)	Fair recruitment $\rightarrow$ Trust	.74***	.043	17.13	0
Step 3 (Mediator to DV)	Trust $\rightarrow$ Voluntary intention	.67***	.074	9.127	0
Step 4 (Mediating effects)	Fair recruitment $\rightarrow$ Voluntary intention ¹	-.07	.073	-1.02	.3
	Fair recruitment $\rightarrow$ Voluntary intention ²	.493 ³	.061	8 ⁺	0

Notes:

¹. Direct effect of fair recruitment on voluntary intention in the presence of trust.

². Indirect effect of fair recruitment on voluntary intention in the presence of trust.

³. Indirect effect value of fair recruitment on voluntary intention in the presence of trust.

⁺. z value.

*. $p < .05$, **. $p < .01$, ***. $p < .001$. N = 252.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Discussion

Participants for the qualitative study expressed their trust in the organisation that was initially developed from the interactions with the recruiter. It is likely that the motivation and condition for participants to approach the organisation varied. For example, for some, it was to develop social skills whilst for others, it was in search of an organisation for their internship. Some were nervous and unconfident whilst other did not take it seriously. However, after communicating with the recruiter, participants believed that their needs would be met if they could be part of the organisation.

This is in line with social exchange principles, given effective communication that the recruiter upholds to answer their enquiries significantly either directly or indirectly influence their tendency towards the voluntary role. Specifically, a high standard of communication – fair recruitment leads to positive attributions – commitment attributions. Through such a consideration, commitment attributions demonstrate vital role in featuring intrinsic motivation that we can assume have spill over effect towards levels of trust in the organisation and people's intentions to engage themselves forward with unpaid work. Such findings match with the quantitative results, which show a highly significant relationship between fair recruitment and commitment attributions, whilst also validating inverse relationship between fair recruitment and control attribution. This means the more people positively perceive of voluntary recruitment, the fewer chances are that they develop negative attributions about such a practice.

Defined as 'a willingness to increase one's vulnerability to an another whose behaviour is not under one's control (Zand, 1972, p. 230), trust plays a vital role in the relationship between fair recruitment, attributions and voluntary intentions. Participants in the qualitative study expressed their trust in the organisation. Such a trust developed not just from their positive feelings about warm greetings and genuine manners that the recruiter performed in dealing with their enquiries, but also from positive attributions about the meaning behind that application of voluntary recruitment. Attributing this recruitment practice to either their development or community benefits, participants were happy to engage themselves further with unpaid work at the organisation. The findings highlight a fact that trust does not just derive from cognitive expectation that people will cooperate not only because it is in their own interest to do so, but also due to their perceived intrinsic trustworthiness (McAllister, 1995; Ring and Van de Ven, 1992, 1994). In light with the qualitative findings, quantitative results display a mediating role of trust in the link between fair recruitment/commitment attribution and voluntary intention. Such a finding sheds light on the social exchange relationship which can develop in the initial stage of recruitment namely applicant attraction. The way fair recruitment promotes voluntary behaviours through enhancing organisation trustworthy was also revealed.

In summary, this research has shed light on the domain of applicant attraction in the voluntary setting. On the assumption that existing methods of candidate attraction that are deployed in paid organisations, these methods may hardly be transferable to the voluntary context due to the unique differences of this sector. Therefore, emphasis on volunteers' intrinsic needs and intangible values, which are accrued from the voluntary work itself, is likely

a preferable method to attract applicants (Boezeman and Ellemers, 2009). This research findings provide understanding of what these intrinsic elements are and how they work to attract applicants. Going beyond arguments on whether people participate in voluntary activities for their self-esteem or self-benefits, this study underpins the communication standard which the recruiter upholds in interacting with candidates as an effective predictor of candidates' attributions, trust and intentions.

Implications for practice

The findings highlight factors leading to unwilling behaviour towards voluntary activities. These factors include (1) ineffective communication standards which the recruiter displayed during the interaction with candidates, and (2) negative attributions about 'why' the company recruits volunteers. Such factors lead to low levels of trust in the organisation, therefore increased hesitancy from the candidates in signing up for voluntary work. HRM literature highlights high standard of communication within the organisation as a vital role of a strong HR system. Consistent and consensual communication in the management level play key role in the development of such a system (Bowen and Ostroff, 2004). The recruitment incident at the organisation shows that poor communication in the management level regarding the volunteer recruitment practice led to candidate withdrawal. Therefore, the study suggests that recruiters should focus on the communication procedure applied at the management level in order to engender perceptions of fairness when implementing recruitment practices. This helps to positively inform employees' attributions of intent. Apart from retaining high communication standards while interacting with work candidates, the management team should develop an effective communication protocol within it.

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