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Author(s): James A. Breaugh

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# ***Relationships between Recruiting Sources and Employee Performance, Absenteeism, and Work Attitudes***

**JAMES A. BREAUGH**

University of Missouri-St. Louis

*This field study sought to determine whether the sources through which employees are recruited are related to subsequent job performance, absenteeism, and work attitudes. The study found strong source-of-recruitment effects. Newspapers and college placement offices were, in general, poorer sources of employees than journal/convention advertisements and self-initiated contacts.*

Although the importance of research dealing with recruiting sources (e.g., employment agencies, employee referrals) has been well recognized (Gannon, 1971; LIMRA, 1962; Malm, 1954), studies in this area have been limited in both number and scope. To date, the few studies that have been carried out have focused on recruiting sources as they relate to subsequent employee tenure with the organization. In general, this line of research (Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Gannon, 1971; Reid, 1972) has shown that employee referrals are among the best sources of long tenure employees and newspaper advertisements and employment agencies are among the worst sources.

In reviewing these sources of recruitment studies, it becomes apparent that several important research questions remain. At present, although recruiting sources have been linked to employee turnover rate, whether such sources also are systematically related to worker performance, absenteeism, and attitudes (e.g., job satisfaction) has not been documented. In addition, because of the types of samples used in the previous studies (e.g., bank tellers, insurance agents, clerical employees), some relatively common sources of recruitment (e.g., college placement offices) have not yet been examined. Clearly, additional research on sources of recruitment is needed.

Building on the work of previous researchers, for example, Decker and Cornelius (1979) and Gannon (1971), the present study was designed to examine whether the source by which an individual was recruited (college placement office, newspaper, journal/convention advertisement, self-initiated) is related to employee performance, absenteeism, and work attitudes (work satisfaction, job involvement, supervisory satisfaction). Because of the lack of research in this area, no *a priori* hypotheses were made.

## METHOD

The sample for this study was composed of 112 research scientists (70 males and 42 females) who were doing applied research for a large mid-western organization. These individuals had degrees (bachelor's, master's, or doctorates) in either biology or chemistry. Data were gathered both directly from these employees and from their personnel files. The self-report data were gathered during working hours by means of a short questionnaire.

The source through which an employee was recruited was determined from the personnel file. This organization categorizes its recruiting sources as follows: newspaper advertisement, college placement office, professional journal/convention advertisement, self-initiated, and referred by a current employee. The original sample to be used in this study consisted of 115 scientists; however, only 3 scientists had been recruited by present employees. Given the small number in this category, no statistical analyses could be carried out. Therefore, these persons were dropped from the sample. The remaining 112 individuals were distributed among the four remaining recruiting sources as follows: newspaper ( $n = 30$ ), college placement ( $n = 24$ ), journal/convention advertisement ( $n = 26$ ), and self-initiated ( $n = 32$ ).

Absenteeism and performance data also were garnered from personnel records. Absenteeism, as reported in this study, reflects the total number of days an employee was absent in the previous 12 months. Supervisory ratings of four different performance dimensions (quality, quantity, dependability, and job knowledge) were recorded for each of the study's participants. Each of the performance ratings was made on a 5-point continuum (1 = unsatisfactory . . . 5 = exceptional). These performance ratings were collected shortly after the self-report data were gathered as part of the individual's annual performance review.

Biographical information and work attitude data were gathered by a research questionnaire. The biographical information included: employee age, sex, years of education, years with the company, years in the current position, and years under present supervisor. Three different work attitudes were assessed. Satisfaction with work (e.g., "Generally speaking, I'm very satisfied with this job") and satisfaction with supervision (e.g., "I am satisfied with the overall quality of supervision I receive from my

supervisor”) were measured by instruments developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975); job involvement (e.g., “I am very much involved personally in my work”) was evaluated by Lawler and Hall’s (1970) measure.

The recruiting strategy utilized by this organization is as follows. Because of frequent job openings, research scientists are recruited year-round. All of the recruiting sources outlined earlier are used concurrently in attempting to fill the various job openings.

## RESULTS

Before examining whether the source by which an employee was recruited is related to performance, absenteeism, or work attitudes, it is important to determine whether the four sources of recruitment groups differed on demographic variables. Univariate analysis of variance was used to test for the existence of such group differences. No statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) differences were found for employee age ( $F_{3,108} = .84$ ), sex ( $F_{3,108} = 1.02$ ), years of education ( $F_{3,108} = 2.40$ ), years with company ( $F_{3,108} = 2.31$ ), years in present position ( $F_{3,108} = 1.25$ ), or years under present supervisor ( $F_{3,108} = 1.06$ ). Overall, the employees averaged 36.4 years of age, 17.7 years of education, 8.4 years with the company, 5.7 years in present position, and 3.5 years under their present supervisor.

The intercorrelations of the dependent variables examined in this study are reported in Table 1. As can be seen, the four performance ratings are somewhat intercorrelated. The three work attitude measures are also somewhat interrelated. Because of the intercorrelations just discussed, multivariate analysis of variance was used to examine the effects of source of recruitment on the performance and work attitude variables. Due to its general lack of association with the other dependent variables, employee absenteeism differences were tested by univariate analysis of variance.

Highly significant ( $p < .01$ ) multivariate effects were found for both employee performance ( $F_{8,212} = 5.29$ ) and worker attitudes ( $F_{6,214} = 3.46$ ). Univariate  $F$  ratios were computed to assess the individual significance of the performance and work attitude measures as well as to test for a source of

**TABLE 1**  
**Intercorrelations of Dependent Variables<sup>a</sup>**  
**( $N = 112$ )**

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Quality	—							
2. Quantity	.20	—						
3. Dependability	.63	.24	—					
4. Job knowledge	.55	.19	.55	—				
5. Absenteeism	-.16	.11	-.09	-.15	—			
6. Work satisfaction	.41	-.01	.18	.15	-.09	(.84)		
7. Job involvement	.28	-.18	.12	.00	-.13	.36	(.82)	
8. Supervisory satisfaction	.10	-.11	-.02	.06	-.20	.51	.14	(.87)

<sup>a</sup>Diagonal entrees are coefficient alpha reliability estimates for multi-item self-report variables.

**TABLE 2**  
**Source of Recruitment Differences: Group Means and Summary**  
**of the Analysis of Variance**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Convention/ Journal Ad</i>	<i>Newspaper</i>	<i>College Placement</i>	<i>Self- Initiated</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Percent of Variance</i>
Quality	4.15 <sub>a</sub>	3.86 <sub>a</sub>	3.33 <sub>b</sub>	3.94 <sub>a</sub>	7.07**	16
Quantity	3.69	3.60	3.58	3.56	.15	—
Dependability	4.15 <sub>a</sub>	3.73 <sub>b</sub>	3.67 <sub>b</sub>	4.13 <sub>a</sub>	3.84**	10
Job knowledge	4.23	4.13	4.00	4.01	.54	—
Absenteeism	1.61 <sub>a</sub>	7.47 <sub>b</sub>	3.50 <sub>a</sub>	3.75 <sub>a</sub>	10.86**	23
Work satisfaction	5.33	5.26	4.75	5.23	.86	—
Job involvement	3.62 <sub>a</sub>	3.71 <sub>a</sub>	2.63 <sub>b</sub>	3.44 <sub>a</sub>	3.92**	11
Supervisory satisfaction	5.51 <sub>a</sub>	5.51 <sub>a</sub>	4.67 <sub>b</sub>	5.46 <sub>a</sub>	3.31*	9

Note: Means that do not share the same subscript are significantly different at the .05 level by Duncan's Multiple Range Test. Larger means reflect higher levels of the variables.

\* $p < .05$

\*\* $p < .01$

recruitment effect for absenteeism. The results of these analyses are reported in Table 2 along with the raw cell means for each of the variables. As is apparent, several strong recruitment effects were detected.

## DISCUSSION

### Review and Interpretation of Findings

From the data presented, it is clear that for this sample the source through which an employee was recruited is strongly related to subsequent job performance, absenteeism, and work attitudes.

With regard to employee performance, the results of the multivariate and univariate analysis of variance show strong source-of-recruitment differences. Individuals recruited through college placement offices and, to a lesser extent, those recruited via the newspaper were inferior in performance (i.e., quality and dependability) to individuals who made contact based on their own initiative or a professional journal/convention advertisement. In terms of absenteeism, another strong source of recruitment effect was demonstrated. Those recruited through newspaper ads missed almost twice as many days as did those referred by any of the other sources. The results of analyses on work attitudes also documented recruiting source differences. College placement office recruits reported significantly lower levels of job involvement and satisfaction with supervision than did employees recruited in other ways. Taken as a whole, these results demonstrate that college placement offices and newspaper advertisements were poorer sources of employees than were journal/convention advertisements and self-initiated contacts.

## **Concluding Remarks**

This study expanded the scope of previous source of recruitment studies (Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Gannon, 1971) by including measures of performance, absenteeism, and work attitudes. In addition, a common source of recruitment, the college placement office, that previously had not been empirically examined was investigated. As with the results of any study based on one sample drawn from a single organization, caution needs to be exercised in generalizing the results of this study. However, as this and other studies have demonstrated, the sources through which employees are recruited can have powerful effects. Recruiting source differences in turnover rate have been found for a variety of samples (e.g., bank tellers, clerical employees, insurance agents, trade workers); and in the present study, employee performance, absenteeism, and work attitudes were shown to be related to source of recruitment. Based on the findings of these studies, it appears that organizations may benefit greatly from systematically examining the recruiting sources that they are currently utilizing.

The need for additional research dealing with recruiting sources should be emphasized. Although the current study and previous ones have documented important recruitment source differences (e.g., performance, turnover), the reason for these differences is not entirely clear. Research more theoretical in nature is required to understand the cause of source differences.

A conceptual framework, which appears to offer promise for explaining recruiting source differences, has recently been put forth by Wanous (1978). Wanous posits that individuals who possess more accurate and more complete information about a job will be both more productive and more satisfied than will individuals who have less accurate and less complete information. Although Wanous's (1978) model is complex, a simplification of the logic that underlies it follows. With regard to performance, Wanous argues that individuals who have more complete and accurate information will have a clearer view of what the job entails (role clarity) and thus will be more likely to perform the job well than will individuals lacking such information. Concerning satisfaction, Wanous suggests that individuals possessing more complete information will not be likely to consider jobs that do not match their needs. Thus those individuals who chose to join the organization will be more satisfied with their jobs than will individuals who possessed less complete and less accurate information.

Obviously, Wanous's (1978) model helps explain source differences only if one can show that some recruiting sources do, in fact, provide more information than do others about what a job entails. Fortunately, a number of writers (Azevedo, 1974; Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Hawk, 1967) have addressed this issue. For the most part, these authors concur on the relative accuracy and completeness of the information provided by

various recruiting sources. In general, these researchers agree that individuals applying directly to organizations (self-initiated) or who are recruited at professional conventions possess more accurate and more complete information about the work situation than do individuals recruited via newspapers or college placement offices. The logic explaining such informational differences is quite complex and beyond the scope of this paper. However, one can see that by combining the work of Azevedo (1974), Decker and Cornelius (1979), and Hawk (1967) with Wanous's (1978) model, the findings reported in this paper are readily understandable. In this study it was found that individuals recruited by means that have been suggested (Azevedo, 1974; Decker & Cornelius, 1979) to provide less accurate and less complete information (i.e., newspapers and college placement offices) did not work out as well (e.g., performance) as did individuals recruited via sources that have been suggested to provide more accurate and more complete information (i.e., convention/journal ad and self-initiated).

In sum, it appears that Wanous (1978) has provided a conceptual framework that may help explain source-of-recruitment differences. However, other explanations for source differences also exist (e.g., individuals may be treated differently depending upon how they were recruited). Clearly, theoretically based research, which systematically assesses the information provided by various recruitment sources, is needed.

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