

REVIEW ARTICLE

Job seeker value proposition conceptualised from the perspective of the job choice theory

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Abstract: The job seeker value proposition (JSVP) can be defined as a set of benefits or values a firm promises its job seekers to deliver once they join it, signifying an indicator of its employer brand as well as focusing on job seeker attraction because it carries some information that helps the decision-making process of the prospective employees. In this concern, the job choice theory interprets the actual factors of a job seeker's decision-making process, and therefore, it could be effectively used in conceptualising the JSVP. However, it is claimed that, in most cases, the job choice theory is not considered the basis for developing the construct of the JSVP. Therefore, taking the job choice theory into consideration, this paper aims to develop a framework for conceptualising the JSVP from a new perspective. Thus, through a systematic literature review, eight factors that explain the conceptual domain of the JSVP are discovered and, on the basis of them, eight propositions are made in developing a measurement scale for the JSVP. This study discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the proposed factor-based structure for the JSVP. Subsequently, the limitations in the present research are discussed, and suggestions are made for future research concerning JSVP constructs.

Keywords: Job seeker value proposition, employer brand, job choice theory, job seeker attraction.

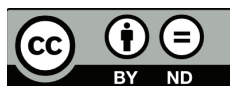
INTRODUCTION

It was reported that, by April 2020, the unemployment rate in the United States of America (USA) had risen up to 20% due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Montenovo *et al.*, 2020). Similarly, today the unemployment rates have gone up in other parts of the world as well. However, there are certain industries where employers struggle to

fill vacancies due to a shortage of talent. For example, in the American job market, there is a severe shortage of talent for cyber security professionals (Rogers & Spring, 2020). The demand for cybersecurity professionals has gone up considerably as companies have shifted from the traditional mode of working in the office to working from home. Prior to the pandemic, there was a prediction that by 2030, there would be a shortage of 4.3 million workers with digital talent and an unrealised business opportunity worth \$450 billion in technology, media, and telecommunications (TMT) industries (Binvel *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, although unemployment in general, might fluctuate due to the prevailing socio-economic conditions at the time, talent shortage can be a severe challenge for human resource management professionals regardless of the business environment.

In industries with a talent shortage, job seekers with the right competencies enjoy a demanding power because of the abundance of opportunities. Such a job market is called an employee's market (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). In a situation where job seekers have demanding power, employers are deemed to maintain an information-rich employee value proposition (EVP) that can provide necessary inputs to the decision-making process of job seekers (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). The EVP would help prospective employees understand fully the scope of the job and the firm, evaluate the job opportunity in their decision-making process before making an application for a job vacancy as well as at the point of accepting the offer (Pounder & Merrill, 2001).

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Thus, the EVP becomes a primary source of information for a job seeker.

In the past, several researchers tried to characterise EVP as a sub-component of the broader concept of employer brand that establishes the identity of a firm as an employer among job seekers and existing employees (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Furthermore, EVP is the instrument that differentiates a firm from its direct competitors by communicating its central message to persuade the prospective employees to apply for its job vacancies or accept its job offers and the existing employees to stay with the firm (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Banerjee, Saini & Kalyanaram, 2020). However, some scholars (Berthon *et al.*, 2005; Gowan, 2004; Sengupta *et al.*, 2015) propose that instead of a single EVP, a firm should communicate one value proposition to the prospective employees and another to the existing employees. They argue that the psychology of a job seeker is completely different from that of an existing employee (Degbey *et al.*, 2021; Sengupta *et al.*, 2015). This difference occurs due to the fact that the mood of a job seeker in making a job choice decision might be completely different from that of an existing employee in deciding to stay on or to leave the job (Sengupta *et al.*, 2015).

In this backdrop, it can be argued that there are two types of value propositions embodied in an employer brand, not just one. One type focuses on the retention of the existing employees; hence, it can be referred to as EVP, and the other aims to attract prospective employees and is termed as a job seeker value proposition (JSVP). Thus, the JSVP is a set of benefits or values a firm promises to deliver once job seekers join the firm (Gowan, 2004). In an employee market, the JSVP is meant to carry certain information that becomes inputs to the decision-making process of prospective employees. Therefore, from a firm's standpoint, it is vital to have a clear understanding of the depth and breadth of the information to be included in a JSVP.

In the proposed factor structures for JSVP (Berthon *et al.*, 2005; Gowan, 2004; Sengupta *et al.*, 2015), a common weakness is that none of them have comprehensively studied any job choice theory research that suggests that job seekers engage in a goal-directed search process and evaluate each potential job relative to their alternatives. Their choice decisions are shaped by the attributes of various jobs and firms, and the job choice theory details what persuades job seekers to apply for a job and, if they are offered a job, to accept it (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). More importantly, most of the research on the job choice theory empirically tests the psychology of the actual job seekers. Hence, the relevant research outcomes provide

evidence-based materials to the firms on the kinds of information the job seekers collect when evaluating a job during their decision-making process. When a firm could develop a JSVP with a proper understanding of the perspectives of the job seeker, its employment scheme would be optimal and unique (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2010). Therefore, the theorisation of JSVP without a comprehensive review of research on the job choice theory can be considered a limitation of its existing factor structures. Based on this background, to overcome the limitation of existing factor structures of the JSVP, this study presents a scholarly dialogue that critically examines the following research problem.

According to the job choice theory, what firm and job-related characteristics does a job seeker envision as benefits that would persuade him/her to apply and/or join a firm?

By exploring the research problem, this study proposes a factor structure for the JSVP from the perspective of the job choice theory. Furthermore, while broadening the understanding of the JSVP, this study synthesises two fragmented research areas, employer branding and job choice theory. Several studies have acknowledged the positive effect employer brand equity has on job choice (Banerjee *et al.*, 2020). However, none of the past studies has gone to the extent of synthesising the two research areas and suggesting a way of utilising the existing research on the job choice theory to enrich research on the employer brand. The JSVP is embodied in the employer brand. Job choice theory has the potential to provide inputs for the creation of the JSVP before embodying it in the employer brand. Therefore, the job choice theory is a concept that can be used to develop a superior employer brand among prospective employees. While presenting the synthesis of the employer brand and the job choice theory which has so far drawn little attention in the previous research, this study makes a proposition for developing a factor structure for the JSVP from the perspective of the job choice theory.

Based on this background, this paper strives to discover a solution for the research problem, discuss implications, show limitations, suggest ideas for future research, and draw a conclusion. Since it was required to identify, appraise, and summarise the results of individual studies to identify the factor structure of JSVP with special emphasis on job seeker psychology, this study adopts a *systematic literature review* as the research methodology. At the end of the literature review, the postulated factor structure of JSVP is presented. The fourth section discusses the theoretical and practical contributions, limitations, and suggestions for future researchers, followed by the conclusion of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The main objective of the literature review is to extract outcome data from the 58 shortlisted articles and summarise the best available evidence to address the review question (Jones & Evans, 2000). During the process, this study mainly focused on extracting and summarising firm and job-related characteristics that impact a job seeker's decision to apply for a job and, if offered, accept a job. According to the job choice theory, those are the two behaviours that a firm expects a job seeker to perform after acquiring firm and job-related information through various channels and evaluating them (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Based on this background, the rest of the literature review is dedicated to discussing the findings of the systematic review.

Proposed factor structure of JSVP

As an initial finding, this study found that the research on the job choice theory can be grouped into four main categories: research on job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, career choice decision and job pursuit decision to identify factors that drive a job seeker's decision to apply for a job or accept a job or do both together. The reason is that research on job attractiveness, firm attractiveness and career choice decision has predominantly investigated the factors that impact a job seeker's decision to apply for a job, and research on job pursuit decision has investigated the factors that impact a job seeker's decision to accept a job.

After reviewing the four categories of studies, 18 firm and job-related factors were extracted that can impact the job choice decision of a job seeker. A summary of the 18 factors is given in Table 1 which summarises the studies that claim that each factor can impact job choice decisions and the contexts in which each factor has been empirically tested.

The following sections discuss each factor in detail and explain their impact on job seekers' choices.

Autonomy at work

Autonomy at work is the amount of discretion a firm allows its employees to determine schedules and work methods for achieving the required outputs (Williams *et al.*, 2020). A large body of extant literature on job choice theory suggests that this is a factor that contributes to driving firm attractiveness, job attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice of a job seeker (Table 1). This

finding suggests that job seekers acquire information related to the amount of autonomy a firm offers when deciding to apply and, if offered, accept a job offer.

Job seekers are aware that autonomy at work can increase job satisfaction and reduce work-related dissatisfaction (Dutta & Punnose, 2010). That is the main reason they seek information about the level of autonomy they are accorded at work. Therefore, when creating recruitment campaigns, firms should develop strategies to disseminate information among job seekers regarding the level of autonomy they offer their employees.

Pay

According to the Towers Perrin model of total rewards, the pay consists of base pay, contingent pay, cash bonuses, long-term incentives, stock ownership plans, and profit-sharing plans (Armstrong *et al.*, 2010). Of the 58 shortlisted research articles, 17 (Table 1) present findings to suggest that pay is a significant factor that affects the job choice decision of a job seeker. Recent literature on job choice decisions argues that pay is no longer the most dominant factor determining a job seeker's job choice decision (Lis, 2018). However, job seekers are not ignoring pay when evaluating a job opportunity and a job offer because they have the perception that pay is the most significant factor that determines their assurance of existence and quality of life (Uggerslev *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, any firm must communicate information related to pay through various channels as part of their recruitment strategies.

Job security

Job security is "a job situation which leads to assurance for continued employment, either within the same company or within the same type of work or profession" (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt, 1984). Job seekers consider job security as a factor that impacts firm attractiveness, job attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice (Table 1). Therefore, firms should develop strategies to broadcast positive stories regarding job security to the external environment where job seekers receive those stories as signals (Jain & Bhatt, 2015). According to the job choice theory, when signals are positive, the evaluation process of the job seeker will produce a positive result that will ultimately drive the job seeker to apply for the job and, if offered, accept the job (Celani & Singh, 2011; Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Therefore, this study considers job security as a potential indicator of the JSVP.

Table 1: Summary of the systematic literature review

Factor	Authors, year, and the category of each study	Contexts that the factor has been empirically tested
Autonomy at work	Dutta & Punnose (2010), job pursuit decision Phillips, Phillips & Cappel (1994), firm attractiveness Posner (1981), job attractiveness Wong, Wan & Gao (2017), career choice	USA, India and Macau
Pay	Appiah-Padi (2014), job attractiveness Baum & Kabst (2013), job pursuit decision Casper & Buffardi (2004), job attractiveness Cable & Judge (1994), job attractiveness Datta & Punnose (2010), job pursuit decision Feldman & Arnold (1978), job attractiveness Fisher & Yuan (1998), firm attractiveness Laker & Gregory (1989), job pursuit decision Lis (2018), firm attractiveness Mahony, Modello, Hums & Judd (2006), job pursuit decision Newton, Giesen, Freeman, Bishop & Zeitoun (2003), job pursuit decision Pounder & Merrill (2001), job attractiveness Boswell, Roehling, Lepine & Moynihan (2003), firm attractiveness Tong & Tong (2012), career choice decision Tetrick, Weathington, da Silva & Hutcheson (2010), job attractiveness Turban, Eyring and Campion (1993), job pursuit decision Yasmin, Mahmud & Afrin (2016), job attractiveness Williamson, Cope, Thompson & Wuensch (2002), job attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, Germany, Bangladesh, India, Canada, China, and Macau
Job security	Choi (2016), career choice decision Jain and Bhatt (2015), firm attractiveness Phillips <i>et al.</i> (1994), firm attractiveness Posner (1981), job attractiveness Roehling & Winters (2000), job attractiveness, Turban <i>et al.</i> (1993), job pursuit decision Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice Word & Park (2015), job attractiveness	USA and India
Type of work	Boswell <i>et al.</i> (2003), job attractiveness Grund (2013), job pursuit decision Phillip <i>et al.</i> (1994), firm attractiveness Posner (1981), job attractiveness Turban <i>et al.</i> (1993), job pursuit decision Turban, Forret & Hendrickson (1998), firm attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, Germany, and Macau
Career development opportunities	Agarwala (2008), career choice decision Baum & Kabst (2013), job pursuit decision Laker & Gregory (1989), job pursuit decision Tong & Tong (2012), career choice decision Williamson <i>et al.</i> (2002), job attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice Word & Park (2015), job attractiveness	India, USA, Germany, Macau and Malaysia
Benefits	Boswell <i>et al.</i> (2003), job attractiveness Choi (2016), career choice decision Laker & Gregory (1989), job pursuit decision Phillips <i>et al.</i> (1994), firm attractiveness Tetrick <i>et al.</i> (2010), job attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice Yasmin <i>et al.</i> (2016), job attractiveness	USA, Bangladesh and Macau

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Factor	Authors, year, and the category of each study	Contexts that the factor has been Empirically Tested
Learning and development opportunities	Agarwala (2008), career choice decision Baum & Kabst (2013), job pursuit decision Boswell <i>et al.</i> (2003), job attractiveness Dutta & Punnose (2010), firm attractiveness Laker & Gregory (1989), job pursuit decision Phillips <i>et al.</i> (1994), firm attractiveness Terjesen <i>et al.</i> (2007), firm attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, Germany, India, Macau, and UK
Responsibility at work	Dutta & Punnose (2010), firm attractiveness Pounder & Merrill (2001), job attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, India, and Macau
Working conditions	Baum & Kabst (2013), job pursuit decision Dutta & Punnose (2010), firm attractiveness Fisher & Yuan (1998), firm attractiveness Phillips <i>et al.</i> (1994), firm attractiveness Turban <i>et al.</i> (1998), firm attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, Germany, China, India, and Macau
Work-life balance	Baum & Kabst (2013), job pursuit decision Boswell <i>et al.</i> (2003), job attractiveness Casper & Buffardi (2004), job pursuit decision Jain & Bhatt (2015), firm attractiveness Stone, Johnson, Stone-Romero, and Hartman (2006), firm attractiveness Thompson & Aspinwall (2009), job pursuit decision Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice Word & Park (2015), job attractiveness	USA, Germany, India, and Macau
Company culture	Boswell <i>et al.</i> (2003), job attractiveness Judge & Bretz (1992), job attractiveness Tanwar and Kumar (2019), firm attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, India, and Macau
Person-organisation fit	Cable & Judge (1996), firm attractiveness Judge & Bretz (1992), job attractiveness O'reilly, Chatman & Caldwell (1991), job choice decision Resick, Baltes & Shantz (2007), job choice decision Tanwar & Kumar (2019), firm attractiveness Van Hooft, Born, Taris, & Van der Flier (2006) - Job Choice Decision Wang & Chang (2019), job choice decision Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, Taiwan, UK, India, and Macau
Company reputation	Albinger & Freeman (2000), firm attractiveness Backhaus, Stone & Heiner (2002), firm attractiveness Cable & Turban (2003), job pursuit decision Dutta & Punnose (2010), firm attractiveness Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager (1993), job attractiveness Highhouse, Lievens & Sinar (2003), firm attractiveness Jain & Bhatt (2015), firm attractiveness Laker & Gregory (1989), job pursuit decision Lis (2018), firm attractiveness Lynne & Therese (2014), firm attractiveness Sohn, Sohn, Klaas-Wissing & Hirsch (2015), firm attractiveness Presley, Presley & Blum (2018), firm attractiveness Stone <i>et al.</i> (2006), firm attractiveness Turban & Cable (2003), firm attractiveness Turban Eyring, Campion (1993), job pursuit decision Williamson <i>et al.</i> (2002), job attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, Germany, India, Australia, and Macau

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Factor	Authors, year, and the category of each study	Contexts that the factor has been empirically tested
Co-workers (competent and sociable)	Posner (1981), job attractiveness Uggerslev, Fassina & Kraichy (2012), firm attractiveness Wong <i>et al.</i> (2017), career choice	USA, Canada, and Macau
Geographical location	Boswell <i>et al.</i> (2003), job attractiveness Lis (2018), firm attractiveness Mahony <i>et al.</i> (2006), job pursuit decision Phillips <i>et al.</i> (1994), firm attractiveness Rynes & Lawler (1983), job attractiveness Turban, Campion & Eyring (1995), job pursuit decision Turban Eyring, Campion (1993), job pursuit decision Williamson <i>et al.</i> (2002), job attractiveness	USA and Germany
Recruitment activities	Carless & Imber (2007), job attractiveness Madan & Madan (2019), firm attractiveness Rynes, Bretz & Gerhart (1991), job pursuit decision Turban & Dougherty (1992), firm attractiveness Turban (2001), firm attractiveness	USA and India
Diversity management	Lee & Zhang (2021), firm attractiveness Ng & Burke (2005), firm attractiveness Tanwar & Kumar (2019), firm attractiveness	USA, Canada, and India
Person-job fit	Acikgoz (2019), job and firm attractiveness Carless (2005), firm attractiveness and job pursuit decision	Australia

Type of work

According to the extant literature, the type of work determines the extent to which an employee's duties and responsibilities are challenging and interesting to the employee (Boswell *et al.*, 2003; Posner, 1981). Therefore, when evaluating a job opportunity, job seekers investigate whether the type of work they must perform is challenging and interesting (Boswell *et al.*, 2003; Turban *et al.*, 1998). The reason for this is present-day job seekers are aware that, if the work is intrinsically motivating, the chances of them performing better on the job are higher, and as a result, the incentives will follow (Kuvaas *et al.*, 2017). Hence, extant research on the job choice theory claims that the type of work is a factor that impacts job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision and career choice (Table 1). This implies that job seekers collect information related to the type of work before deciding to apply for a job and in the event of accepting it. Therefore, it is claimed that the type of work is also a factor that should be in the factor mix of the JSVP.

Career development opportunities

According to the human capital theory, individuals develop a specific set of constituents of human capital

(knowledge, skills, abilities, and other characteristics) with a career aspiration through personal, educational, and professional development strategies (Harris *et al.*, 2015). Since a considerable effort is made to develop the human capital, job seekers who possess the human capital necessary for a particular career evaluate whether the job opportunity that they are about to apply for or accept fits their career aspirations (Harris *et al.*, 2015). The extant literature on job choice theory also confirms this by demonstrating that the information related to career development opportunities impacts job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice decision (Table 1).

Firms that offer career development opportunities possess the know-how to guide, support and encourage their employees to fulfil their potential and develop successful careers with the firm aligned with their talents and aspirations (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Since seekers are keen to receive information regarding a firm's know-how on guiding, supporting, and encouraging its employees to develop themselves and achieve career aspirations, firms should have a mechanism to communicate this information among prospective employees.

Benefits

According to the Towers Perrin model of total rewards, *benefits* consist of pensions, holidays, health care, other perks, and flexibility (Armstrong *et al.*, 2010). Job seekers collect information related to benefits when evaluating a job opportunity. Similar to pay, benefits also have become a component that determines an assurance of existence and quality of life (Yasmin *et al.*, 2016). The extant literature argues that when a firm offers time-offs (e.g., paid leave) or concessions (e.g., sharing the cost of personal insurance premium) to employees through benefits, it sends a positive signal to prospective employees (Tetrick *et al.*, 2010).

According to the extant literature on job choice theory, those signals can impact job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice (Table 1) of a job seeker. This implies that benefits are a factor job seekers consider when applying for a job or accepting a job offer. Therefore, firms should possess reliable recruitment strategies that could transmit positive signals regarding benefits among job seekers.

Learning and development opportunities

Learning and development (L&D) ensure that a firm has the knowledgeable, skilled, and engaged workforce it needs to perform daily operations and projects effectively and efficiently (Yadapadithaya & Stewart, 2003). It is a responsibility of a firm to train and develop employees. Therefore, prospective employees collect information related to L&D opportunities provided by firms when evaluating job opportunities. It is confirmed by the extant literature on the job choice theory that L&D opportunities are a factor that impacts job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice (Table 1). Job seekers use collected information regarding L&D opportunities in the decision-making process to decide whether to apply for a job vacancy or accept a job offer.

The rationale behind this behaviour is that job seekers expect that the firm they are willing to join would facilitate their desire to continuously develop human capital by offering continuous L&D opportunities (Gelens *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, firms have a responsibility to broadcast positive signals regarding their L&D programs among the prospective employees to make their decision-making process more manageable.

Responsibility at work

Responsibility at work can be defined as the pivotal power one possesses in performing the duties of a job

while provoking or preventing subjectively crucial adverse outcomes within an organisation (Rhéaume *et al.*, 1995). The present-day job seekers understand that responsibility at work is a factor that augments their career development and human capital (Yadapadithaya & Stewart 2003). Therefore, they are keen to collect information on aspects such as job rotation, job enlargement, and job enrichment which determine the level of pivotal power one possesses to perform one's job effectively and efficiently (Williams *et al.*, 2020).

Based on this background, the extant literature on the job choice theory also proposes responsibility at work as a factor that impacts job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, and career choice (Table 1). There is hardly any evidence suggesting responsibility at work as a factor that impacts a job seeker's decision to accept a job offer. However, the extant literature on the job choice theory suggests that job seekers use information related to responsibility at work when deciding to apply for a job. Since the number of applications received by a recruitment campaign indicates success or failure, firms should take the necessary actions to disseminate information related to job design practices among job seekers.

Working conditions

According to the extant literature, job control, job complexity/variety, task-related stressors (Grebner *et al.*, 2003), employee health and well-being (Wilson *et al.*, 2004) are the components that define the working conditions of a firm. Job seekers perceive that a firm has a good work climate when the most working conditions are favourable (Baum & Kabst, 2013). For example, Lievens (2007) argues that the firms that promote teamwork are most likely to have favourable working conditions because teamwork reduces task-related stressors created by job complexity/variety and ultimately improves employee health and wellbeing. In addition to teamwork, firms do many other things to offer favourable working conditions to their employees, such as investing in infrastructure improvement projects, offering work-from-home opportunities, *etc.*

The extant literature on the job choice theory also implies that firms should broadcast information about their working conditions because it impacts their firm attractiveness, job pursuit decisions, and career choices (Table 1). In other words, job seekers use information on working conditions when deciding whether to apply for a job vacancy or accept a job offer. Therefore, firms should devise strategies to disseminate among prospective employees positive information regarding the working conditions their current employees are entitled to.

Work-life balance

If an individual maintains a work-life balance, it can be assumed that they are effectively dividing or coordinating matters pertaining to life and work respectively to accomplish a satisfying quality of life and less strain or worry about conflicting job requests (Blyton *et al.*, 2006). It is generally accepted that employees should receive the support of their firms to maintain their work-life balance (Armstrong & Taylor 2014; Schlachter *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, since a majority of job seekers are keen to maintain a work-life balance, they expect to receive more information on how firms ensure the work-life balance of their employees (Proost & Verhaest, 2018). Research on the job choice theory also confirms this behaviour of job seekers by revealing that information on the work-life balance impacts job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice (Table 1). This directly implies that job seekers use information regarding work-life balance when deciding to apply for a job vacancy or to accept a job offer.

Some studies indicate that modern-day firms are reluctant to reveal information related to work-life balance to their prospective employees (Proost & Verhaest, 2018). However, research on the job choice theory highlights the importance of rethinking this strategy and disclosing as much information as possible to job seekers regarding the work-life balance options offered to employees.

Organisational culture

Organisational culture is a set of key values, beliefs and attitudes shared by the employees within a firm (Williams *et al.*, 2020). The extant literature argues that firms with key values, beliefs and attitudes that promote adaptability, employee engagement, a clear vision, and consistency perform better than the rest (Williams *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, job seekers are keen on joining such firms (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). To be more exact the job seekers are willing to join firms that have a dominant culture driven by two types of firm-level traits, namely, relationship-based traits (that promote open communication, equality, cooperation, and sharing) and responsive traits (that promote awareness of the external environment, competitiveness and realisation of new opportunities) (Jain & D'lima, 2017).

Willing to join a firm with a culture driven by the above traits, job seekers collect information on the organisational culture when evaluating whether to apply for a job vacancy (Table 1). This indicates that firms should possess recruitment strategies that can

potentially communicate vital information regarding the organisational culture among prospective employees.

Company reputation

Company reputation is a set of attributes imputed to a firm, deduced from the firm's previous activities and future prospects compared to close competitors (Weigelt & Camerer, 1988). Suppose a firm's reputation is comparably higher. In that case, it empowers a positive sentiment inside the brains of its clients, employees, prospective employees and all the partners associated with the firm (Chun, 2005). This implies that if a firm's reputation is higher, it can create a positive perception of the firm within the minds of job seekers (Auger *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, the extant literature on employer branding reveals that company reputation is a factor that directly impacts the success or failure of a recruitment campaign (Auger *et al.*, 2013).

The question regarding this study is, does company reputation impact a job seeker's decision to apply for a job vacancy or accept a job offer? According to the extant research on the job choice theory, it impacts both decisions because company reputation impacts a job seeker's job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice (Table 1) because it is the aspect that provides credibility to other features communicated through the JSVP (Auger *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, it is mandatory for a modern-day firm to communicate information regarding its reputation to its prospective employees through the JSVP.

Corporate social responsibility activities

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities consist of the organisational activities intended to benefit society and the environment beyond the organisations' immediate financial interests or legal obligations (Williams *et al.*, 2020). It is a well-known fact that a majority of job seekers are interested in observing the CSR activities conducted by the firms because they are keen to join the firms that are ethical and socially responsible (Auger *et al.*, 2013). The job choice theory also discusses CSR activities as a factor that impacts firm attractiveness and career choice (Table 1). Therefore, it is possible to safely argue that CSR activities are a factor that impacts a job seeker's decision to apply for a job vacancy. However, the extant literature on the job choice theory does not suggest CSR activities as a factor that impacts job seekers' decision to accept or reject a job offer.

Despite the significance of CSR activities, this study does not consider it a factor that should be included in the factor-mix of the JSVP because the extant literature

captures CSR activities as an indicator that defines the multi-dimensional construct of a company's reputation (Auger *et al.*, 2013; Chun, 2005).

Person-organisation fit (P-O Fit)

Person-organisation fit refers to the compatibility between a person and a firm. It emphasises how a person and a firm share similar industrial interests or meet each other's needs (Kristof, 1996). Extant research on the job choice theory reveals that P-O fit impacts job seekers' job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, career choice decision, and job pursuit decision (Table 1). It implies that P-O fit is a factor that job seekers consider when deciding whether to apply for a job or accept a job offer. Therefore, the recruitment strategies of a firm should have provisions to communicate information that will support job seekers to evaluate and decide the extent of the P-O fit between a job seeker and the firm.

Based on this background, from a firm's perspective, they should be crystal clear on what they will share regarding the P-O fit with the prospective employees. Studies such as Lovelace & Rosen (1996), and Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith (1995) could assist firms in identifying the aspects of P-O fit that they should be communicating with job seekers. According to the extant literature, job seekers can capture the aspects of P-O fit by evaluating the information they receive about the company culture and work-life balance. However, that is not sufficient. There are some other aspects, such as goals and objectives, structures, processes, and corporate governance practices, that a job seeker needs to evaluate the P-O fit properly (Schneider *et al.*, 1995). Even though crystallising the components of P-O fit does not belong to the scope of this study, the authors decided to provide a heads-up to the topic because they felt that the concept is complicated compared to all the other concepts being discussed.

Co-workers (competent and sociable)

A competent and sociable co-worker is someone whom an employee works with, especially someone with a similar job or level of responsibility. Co-workers can assist an employee, either directly or indirectly, to enhance their job performance (Bowler & Brass, 2006). Job seekers are aware of this, and as a result, they are keen to join firms with competent co-workers who are dedicated to maintaining a fun-loving and enjoyable working environment. Therefore, job seekers seek information regarding the co-workers when evaluating a job opportunity and deciding whether to apply for a job vacancy or not (Table 1). However, there is not much evidence to support that job seekers collect

the information regarding co-workers when deciding whether to accept a job offer. Based on this background, firms should find innovative ways to share information with prospective employees on how competent and sociable their employees are.

Geographical location

The geographical location of a potential workplace is a factor that job seekers consider when evaluating a job vacancy and deciding whether to apply for or accept a job offer. The extant literature discusses various reasons for this behaviour of job seekers. Their awareness of that the firm is located near to other important firms (Lis, 2018) creates in them a sense of assurance. Also, their awareness that the firm is surrounded by amenities (e.g., cultural and leisure facilities) that will provide them some respite during their leisure time (Lis, 2018). Furthermore, it is argued that family-owned-firms tend to experience higher employment growth rates than non-family-owned ones in rural areas (Backman & Palmberg, 2015). Based on this background, it is possible to argue that firms should develop strategies to disseminate appropriate information on the geographical locations of potential workplaces among job seekers. Hence, this study considers it a factor that should be in the factor mix that conceptualises the JSVP.

Recruitment activities

According to the extant literature, the effectiveness and efficiency of the *recruitment activities* depend on the recruiter's behaviour and timing of communication with prospective employees, and the overall recruitment practices (impressive or unimpressive) (Rynes *et al.*, 1991) which is an important attribute of a recruitment campaign because the job seekers believe that it portrays the post-hire outcomes such as job satisfaction, on-the-job performance, and organisational commitment (Uggerslev *et al.*, 2012).

For example, the extant research provides evidence to support the fact that if the effectiveness and efficiency of the recruitment activities carried out by a firm are high, job seekers perceive that the employment experience with that firm would also be of high quality (Rynes, 1991). Therefore, the job choice theory argues that recruitment activities are a factor that impacts a job seeker's decision to apply for a job or to accept a job offer. In this background, firms must seriously take care of the effectiveness and efficiency of their recruitment activities across the various stages of a recruitment campaign because they are a source of information for job seekers on the firm's operational behaviour.

Diversity management

Diversity management is the process of managing “a variety of demographic, cultural and personal differences among a firm’s employees and customers” (Williams *et al.*, 2020, p. 208). Managers should manage two diversity types; surface-level and deep-level diversity when dealing with employees.

The surface-level diversity factors such as race, age and gender can be identified by external observation. The deep-level diversity factors such as skills, abilities, knowledge, and personality types cannot be observed externally. Managers must interact closely with their subordinates for a considerable period of time to identify their deep-level diversity factors. The extant literature on diversity management reveals that firms that manage deep-level diversity factors have a higher possibility of performing better because it creates a high level of social integration (i.e., the psychological attractiveness between employees to work with each other to achieve team, divisional or organisational goals and objectives) (Williams *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, proper diversity management promotes employee well-being and job satisfaction.

Due to the above aspects, the extant literature on the job choice theory proposes diversity management as a factor that job seekers evaluate when deciding whether to apply for a job. However, there are hardly any studies that suggest diversity management as a factor driving a job seeker’s decision to accept or reject a job offer. Nonetheless, firms should have a strategy to disseminate information among prospective employees on managing diversity (especially deep-level diversity). In other words, diversity management should be a component of the JSVP that communicates the set of benefits or values a firm promises to deliver to prospective employees once they join it.

Person-job fit

Person-job fit is defined as “the match between the individual’s knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA) and the demands of the job” (Carless, 2005). It is argued that job seekers assess congruence between the KSA and the job requirements when evaluating a job opportunity (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). The level of congruence is a factor that determines a job seeker’s job attractiveness, firm attractiveness and job pursuit decision (Table 1). Therefore, person-job fit can be considered a factor that impacts a job seeker’s decision to apply for a job and accept a job offer. Hence, in their assessment process, employers should disseminate practical and accurate job information among prospective employees (Carless, 2005). Furthermore, the information disseminated

in advance should convince prospective employees that congruence exists between the KSA and the job requirements. Hence, the dissemination of information has to be done by incorporating person-job fit related information in the JSVP. Therefore, the person-job fit should be a component of the JSVP.

Total reward strategy

Armstrong Brown Reilly (2010) defines total reward strategy as a model incorporating all types of strategic rewards, including indirect and direct rewards and intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. They argue that it is possible to categorise autonomy at work, job security, pay, type of work, career development opportunities, benefits, learning and development (opportunities), responsibility at work, working conditions, work-life balance and company culture under the umbrella of the concept of total reward. O’Neal (1998) also presents a similar categorisation and lists the factors of total reward components. Furthermore, this categorisation is used in various studies on attraction, retention, motivation, and reward (Colvin & Boswell, 2007; Medcof & Rumpel, 2007).

Based on this background, it is suggested that job seekers envision eight different firm-related and job-related characteristics (i.e., total reward strategy, company reputation, P-O fit, competent and sociable co-workers, geographical location, recruitment activities, diversity management and P-J fit) as benefits and values that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm. In other words, from an employer branding perspective, a consumer (i.e., a job seeker) in an employee market might collect information related to 8 firm-related and job-related factors before actioning the purchase decision (i.e., applying for a job or accepting a job offer). Different audiences might have interests in different factor mixes. However, a seller (i.e., a firm) in an employees’ market should possess strategies to disseminate information related to each of the eight factors through the employer brand. Then only the firm will be able to cater for all the segments in the job market and gain a competitive advantage. Against this backdrop, this study proposes the following eight propositions that future researchers could exploit in developing a measurement scale for the JSVP from the perspective of the job choice theory.

Proposition 1 – Job seekers envision total reward as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Proposition 2 – Job seekers envision person-organisation fit as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Proposition 3 – Job seekers envision company reputation as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Proposition 4 – Job seekers envision co-workers (competent and sociable) as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Proposition 5 – Job seekers envision geographical location as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Proposition 6 – Job seekers envision recruitment activities as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Proposition 7 – Job seekers envision diversity management as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Proposition 8 – Job seekers envision person-job fit as a benefit or a value that would persuade them to apply for and/or join a firm.

Furthermore, the findings of this study can be used to synthesise research on the job choice theory and employer branding in a novel way. As discussed earlier, hardly any past study has suggested a method of utilising the existing research on the job choice theory to enrich research on employer branding. According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), both the JSVP and the EVP are embodied in the employer brand, and therefore, they should be components of the construct of the employer brand. In research that explores the job choice (i.e., intention to apply and accept an offer) of a job seeker, the JSVP should become dominant (Banerjee *et al.*, 2018)

while in that explores employee retention, EVP should become dominant.

So, it is evident that the proposed factor structure of the JSVP has the potential to advance the existing research on employer branding that predominantly focuses on the job choice. However, considerable effort is required to understand the factors that characterise the JSVP in different contexts (countries, industries, professions, etc.) before using it as an indicator of the employer brand because the factors applicable in one context might not be applicable in another context.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Since systematic literature review (SLR) is a method that similar past studies have employed (Macke & Genari, 2019; Sarfraz *et al.*, 2018), this study also carried out an SLR to explore the answer to the research problem by identifying, appraising, and summarising the results of the previous studies on the job choice theory. When conducting the SLR, the following steps were carried out based on the recommendation of Jones & Evans (2000).

- Preparing a review question.
- Selecting criteria for inclusion of articles in the review.
- Systematically searching the published and unpublished literature.
- Determining which articles meet the predefined inclusion criteria.

Table 2: Criteria for inclusion

Characteristic	Inclusion Criteria
Publication medium	Peer-reviewed journal, conference, and book chapters
Language	English and Sinhala
Period	From 1978 to 2021 (inclusive)
Research design	Conceptual and empirical
Content	Any study that has used job choice theory to determine the factors that impacts job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice decision
Source	Scopus and Google Scholar databases

Table 3: A summary of the article search process

Step	Inclusion Criteria	Search Criteria	Search Criteria Determined by	Literature Source	Number of Articles Shortlisted
Step 1		Phrases, <i>job choice</i> , <i>job choice decision</i> and <i>job choice theory</i> were searched	Authors	Scopus database	n=5002
Step 2	Articles should be written in English	Articles that had <i>career choice</i> , <i>choice behaviour</i> , <i>job search</i> , <i>job choice</i> and <i>job finding</i> as keywords were searched	Two experts in management	Scopus database	n=855
Step 3	Journal articles, book chapters and conference papers should be peer-reviewed	The word <i>recruitment</i> was searched since this research falls under the broad category of recruitment research	Two experts in management	Scopus database	n=207
Step 4	Only empirical studies on job choice theory were considered	The abstract of each study was reviewed	Authors	Publisher databases	n=64
Step 5		All the studies were thoroughly reviewed. 18 factors were identified	Authors	Publisher databases	n=46
Step 6		Phrases, <i>job choice</i> , <i>job choice decision</i> and <i>job choice theory</i> were searched again with a separate search engine. 12 studies were identified	Authors	Google Scholar	n=58
Step 7		Newly identified studies were systematically reviewed. No new factors were identified. The review process was stopped due to the saturation of factors	Authors	Publisher databases	N=58

- Critically appraising the quality of the research, extracting outcome data from the research report.
- Summarising the best available evidence on the topic of interest.

The research problem was considered as the review question, on the basis of which, article inclusion and search criteria were determined as shown in Table 2 below:

When determining the inclusion criteria, this study decided to search articles written in English and Sinhala languages because the authors are not proficient in any other language like in several other review articles (Jayasinghe *et al.*, 2022; Schlachter *et al.*, 2018). The authors decided to shortlist only peer-reviewed journal articles, book chapters, and conference papers after observing this as an inclusion criterion in review articles published in top-tier journals (Jayasinghe *et al.*, 2022; Lozano-Reina & Sánchez-Marín, 2020; Schlachter *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, the authors, based on the recommendations of Jayasinghe *et al.* (2022) and Lozano-Reina and Sánchez-Marín (2020), decided to consider job choice decision-related articles published between 1978 and 2021 to ensure discussions that use job choice theory to determine factors that impacts job attractiveness, firm attractiveness, job pursuit decision, and career choice decision.

Subsequently, the article search process was carried out as shown in Table 3.

- Step 1 – Scopus, which is considered the search engine capable of producing the most extended list of relevant references (Paul & Criado, 2020), was selected to systematically peruse the relevant literature. Through the understanding gathered from the preliminary literature review, searches were made under the phrases: job choice, job choice decision and job choice theory and for articles only from the three subject areas: business, management and accounting, psychology, and social sciences. Thus 5002 unique search results were obtained in step 1.
- Step 2 – From a massive bulk, the most relevant articles were shortlisted for reference as recommended by Bettany-Saltikov (2012) using the keywords option in the Scopus database. Accordingly, articles that had *career choice*, *choice behaviour*, *job search*, *job choice* and *job finding* were shortlisted, and 855 unique search results were obtained.

- Step 3 – Of the 855 search results, 207 journal papers and book chapters were returned as they did not have any explanation of the term *recruitment* to match the research paradigm.
- Step 4 – After reviewing the abstracts of the shortlisted articles, 133 articles were disregarded because they did not discuss firm or job-related characteristics that a job seeker might envision as benefits that would persuade him/her to apply and/or join a firm. Finally, only 64 articles were retained to review further.
- Step 5 – The 64 shortlisted articles were retrieved from publisher databases, and a detailed screening process was carried out. At the end of the screening process, 18 firm and job-related factors that a job seeker envision as benefits and values that would persuade his/her job choice were retrieved. Accordingly, 18 factors were retrieved from 46 articles, and as 18 articles did not provide any substantial insights related to a firm- or job-related factors that a job seeker envision as benefits and value, they were rejected.
- Step 6 – To ensure that this study captures a substantial collection of the articles on job choice theory, another keyword search (i.e., job choice theory, job choice decision, and job choice) was carried out with the Google Scholar search engine. Each phrase was searched, and results of up to 10 pages were screened. The screening process was carried out by reading the abstracts of each study. At the end of step 6, 12 more studies were considered for further review.
- Step 7 – The 12 shortlisted articles in step 6 were retrieved from publisher databases, and a detailed screening process was carried out. By reviewing ten articles, any new factors apart from the 18 factors identified in step 5. Couldn't found based on this background, article searching process was stopped since the process reached saturation.

A detailed discussion of the findings of the systematic literature review is presented in the following section.

DISCUSSION

This study broadened the view of the JSVP by proposing eight factors capable of conceptualising it from the perspective of the job choice theory. The research findings offer several important implications for both theory and practice. The rest of this section discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the study.

Furthermore, the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are also discussed.

Theoretical implications

The previous research on the JSVP appears to have ignored certain significant firm and job-related factors that the job seekers envision as benefits that boost their job choice. For example, Berthon *et al.* (2005) fail to capture P-O fit, P-J fit, diversity management and competent co-workers as components of the JSVP. Sengupta *et al.* (2015) fail to capture P-O fit, P-J fit, geographical location, competent co-workers, and diversity management as components of the JSVP. By proposing the above eight factors recommended for use while conceptualising the JSVP from the perspective of the job choice theory, this study strives to reinforce the existing understanding of the JSVP. For example, Saini *et al.* (2014) use components proposed by Berthon *et al.* (2005) to measure the JSVP. However, the conceptualisation of Berthon *et al.* (2005) does not cover certain aspects of the JSVP. Therefore, re-doing Saini *et al.* (2014) study together with the factor structure proposed by this study has the potential to generate novel outcomes.

This study further implies the importance of communicating a JSVP effectively and efficiently to target audiences. Gaining an understanding of the components of the JSVP do not guarantee the success of a recruitment campaign unless a firm has a clear strategy to disseminate the required information among the job seekers. It is well-known in the research fraternity on employer branding that prospective employees rarely have access to the perfect information about prospective employers and job vacancies (Wilden *et al.*, 2010). The findings of this study suggest that firms must think beyond the conventional methods of information sharing because disseminating information regarding multiple distinct aspects through one or two conventional channels are not possible. For example, how does a firm disseminate information regarding P-O fit? Some studies have investigated how signalling theory can be used to send perfect signals via an employer brand to prospective employees. However, there is hardly any study that has specifically proposed strategies to disseminate information regarding the P-O fit or any other JSVP indicators. This study highlights the components that should be communicated via employer branding. Future research should suggest information dissemination strategies that would be ideal for each component and how they could be disseminated among the prospective employees as an integrated message that is information-rich and easily understood.

This study also highlights the impact of the EVP on the JSVP. The main objective of the EVP is to retain talented employees by maintaining or improving the positive image of their employer among them ((Wilden *et al.*, 2010). The existing employees are a source of information for prospective employees. In other words, from the perspective of a firm, the existing employees are a channel of information dissemination. There is a high chance that a prospective employee might contact an existing employee to cross-check the information gathered through other channels (Cable & Judge, 1996). For example, Cable & Judge (1996) argue that when evaluating the P-O fit and company reputation, college students contact alumni and former interns to corroborate the information they gathered through various signals from the firm and other sources. Therefore, it can be argued that a sustained focus on the EVP and keeping it up to date with the latest information required to maintain the positive image of the firm among the existing employees are as important as designing an informative and well-focused JSVP for a recruitment campaign.

Practical implication

From a practical point of view, the proposed factor structure of the JSVP would be beneficial for recruiters in various industries. Recruiters can develop more focused recruitment campaigns using the proposed factor structure. For example, the benefits and values communicated to a data scientist in the Australian the context might not be suitable to attract a data scientist in the Indian context. Therefore, to get the maximum returns from a recruitment campaign, recruiters can carry out a market research project using the proposed factor structure to understand the psychology of the job seekers in the context where the recruitment campaign will be carried out before its designing phase. That will make future recruitment campaigns more focus-oriented and informative.

Limitations

While some valuable contributions are highlighted in this study, its limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, despite the logical process adopted to select research papers using keywords, there may be a chance to overlook other relevant keywords. Secondly, it is observed that about 70-65% of the studies included in this literature review have been carried out by collecting data from US-based university student populations. Hence, the practitioners and future researchers are cautioned regarding the generalisation of the propositions.

Suggestions for future research

Firstly, the proposed factor structure could be empirically tested to validate and develop a measurement scale for the JSVP. Future researchers could do that by using the standard approaches presented by Churchill (1979), DeVellis (2021), and MacKenzie *et al.* (2011). This could be done in various contexts (e.g., countries, industries, job types, etc.) because the factors that drive job seekers' job choices in various contexts could be unique to each context and different from each other. Therefore, factors that should be embodied in an employer brand through the JSVP could be context-specific.

When selecting contexts, future researchers could focus on contexts outside the US too because, when observing Table 1, it is evident that the focus of a majority of the research has been on the US. For example, there is hardly any research on the job choice theory that has been carried out in the South Asian (except India and Bangladesh) context. Compared to the amount of research that had been carried out in the US context, even the amount carried out in the Indian and Bangladeshi contexts is not sufficient to comment on the job choice of the job seekers in those markets.

This study formally specified the conceptual domain of the JSVP from the perspective of the job choice theory. According to MacKenzie *et al.* (2011), before validating a scale, the relationship between the factors and the latent variable (i.e., JSVP) should be formally specified. This study has not gone into that. Therefore, future researchers could determine whether the relationships between the factors and the JSVP are reflective and/or formative before moving into the validation phase. Besides, generating items for each factor with the support of the existing scales and expert opinions and testing content validity are two other essential steps future researchers should conduct before moving into the validation phase (MacKenzie *et al.*, 2011). Once a scale is ready, future researchers can use it as an indicator of the employer brand to generate new insights related to a job seeker's job choice in various employees' markets.

Developing a JSVP and embodying it in an employer brand is only the first step in developing a successful employer brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The second step is to communicate the JSVP among prospective employees and pursue their job choice. Therefore, the effectiveness of the information dissemination mechanism of each factor plays a vital role in developing a successful employer brand. Hence, future researchers should develop information dissemination strategies for each factor.

CONCLUSION

At present, in employee markets, the competition for talent is fierce. Therefore, modern-day firms need innovative solutions to successfully navigate the war for talent by attracting scarce talent. In the process of attracting new talent, communicating a job seeker's value proposition (JSVP) through an employer brand plays a significant role in determining the success or failure of the attraction process (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014) because job seekers evaluate a job vacancy through the information disseminated through the JSVP. Therefore, from a firm's point of view, a proper understanding of the concept of the JSVP is vital. Prior to this study, research on employer branding has proposed multiple conceptualisations to enhance the understanding of the JSVP. However, those studies are hampered by less attention to the job choice theory. This study identifies it as a gap in knowledge and tries to address it by conducting a systematic literature review of research on the job choice theory.

While addressing the research gap, this study offers a broadened view of the JSVP, founded on the research on the job choice theory, which emphasises the need to focus on eight factors when communicating a set of benefits or values a firm promises to deliver to its prospective employees once they join the firm. While expanding the view of the JSVP by proposing a factor structure that is distinct from the extant literature, this study brings several suggestions that will enrich research on the JSVP and the job choice theory in the future and ensure continuous corporation between the two research areas, employer branding and the job choice theory.

In summary, our conceptualisation helps identify and integrate the salient themes and concepts that assume considerable importance in formulating a JSVP. On the other hand, this study also reveals the important gaps in the understanding of the JSVP (e.g., context-based issue in research on job choice theory and how it impacts the proposed conceptualisation) and the potential future research on those issues. Based on this background, this study is meant to motivate further research on the job choice theory that will assist consulting firms operating in employee markets where the war for talent is extremely fierce to develop highly competitive employer brands.

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