Antecedents of Met-Expectations of Newcomers: A Longitudinal Analysis

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July 2002

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Abstract

The study examined the antecedents of met expectations. It combined three streams of research, namely, the "strength of weak ties hypothesis" (Granovetter, 1973, 1974) in accessing job opportunities, the effects of job sources on the initial expectations of the job seekers (Wanous, 1980, 1992; Wanous and Collela, 1989) and the effects of socialization on expectations (Irving and Meyer, 1994, Major, et al, 1995).

Data was collected from college graduates before and after they entered employment. The model was tested using hierarchical regression design. The results showed that prior work experience (number of years) was positively related to the use of referrals whereas the relatedness of work experience was positively related to rehiring and negatively related to the use of employment agencies. We did not find any relationships between job sources and initial expectations. Initial expectations and socialization had a main affected on met expectations. Socialization also acted as a moderator in the relationship between initial expectation and met expectations. Socialization had a greater impact at low levels of initial expectations than at high levels of initial expectations. A surprising finding was that referrals had a direct negative relationship with met expectations. The model explained 53.9% of the variance in met expectations and had a significant chi-square goodness of fit.

Introduction

Expectations of employees are an important variable in Industrial and Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior literature and have been examined both at an individual and organizational level. Met expectations have been posited to be important in research on turnover, with turnover being effected by unrealistic or unmet expectations (Louis, 1980; Wanous, 1976, 1977). They have also been important from a newcomer socialization perspective, the aim of socialization being to realign the expectations of a newcomer to a realistic level and thus reduce turnover (Louis, 1980; Major, Kozlowski, Chao, and Gardner, 1995). However, "The concept of met expectations in the research literature of industrial and organizational psychology and organizational behavior has been mentioned frequently over the last 30 years, but less frequently studied" (Wanous, Poland, Premack, and Davis, 1992, p. 288).

The objective of this paper is to examine the antecedents of met expectations. It seeks to connect three different streams of research that are important in predicting the degree to which expectations are met. The first stream of research deals with the importance of informal relationships or "weak ties" in accessing job opportunities (Granovetter, 1973, 1974, 1982). The second stream of research is related to the first and deals with the effects of job sources on the initial expectations of the job seeker (Wanous and Collela, 1989; Wanous, 1976, 1978, 1980, 1992). The third stream of research deals with the effects of socialization in alleviating the effects of unrealistic preentry expectations (Irving and Meyer, 1994; Louis, 1980; Major, et al, 1995).

For the purpose of this paper the preentry expectations will be referred to as initial expectations, the degree to which expectations are met after the newcomers join an organization will be referred to as met expectations and the post entry experiences will be referred to as socialization.

We will start off with a brief discussion of met expectations and try to place them in terms of the current research that has been done on the topic. Next, we will examine relevant research in each of the streams of literature outlined above and propose hypothesis. Then we will test the hypothesis using a regression design and discuss the results of the empirical tests. Finally, we will conclude the paper, discussing the limitations and propose future research avenues.

The Importance of Met Expectations

Porter and Steers (1973) defined met expectations as "the discrepancy between what a person encounters on the job in the way of positive and negative consequences and what they expected to encounter" (p. 152). In other words, the difference between newcomer initial expectations and early job experiences is unmet expectations. Louis (1980) has differentiated between unrealistic expectations, unmet or undermet expectations and initial expectations. Underlying this differentiation is a notion of disconfirmed expectations which amounts to a "broken promise effect" (Louis, 1980, p228). Though distinct conceptually, newcomers coming into an organization can be expected to have both unrealistic expectations and high initial expectations about various aspects of their jobs. These initial expectations may be either unmet or partially met or met.

The concept of met expectations has been important in theories dealing with the effectiveness of the recruiting sources (e.g., Wanous & Collela, 1989), theories of socialization and adjustment to working conditions (e.g. Feldman, 1976, 1989; Louis, 1980; Schein, 1971), and theories dealing with individual careers in organizations (Feldman, 1989). The concept of met expectation has also been important in dealing with notions of achieving a match or a fit between the organization and the individual as in the attraction-selection-attrition model (Schneider, 1987).

Met expectations have been conceptualized both as an independent and as a dependent variable. As a independent variable, it has been related to various important and desirable organizational outcomes like commitment (Tannenbaum, Mathieu, Salas, and Cannon-Bowers, 1991; Wanous, et al 1992), job satisfaction (Greenhaus, Seidel, and Marinis, 1983; Wanous, et al, 1992) self-efficacy (Tannenbaum, et al, 1991), job performance (Wanous, et al, 1992) and motivation (Tannenbaum, et al, 1991). Unmet expectations on the other hand have been associated with dysfunctional organizational outcomes like absenteeism (Porter and Steers, 1973) turnover intention (Wanous, et al, 1992) and turnover (Porter and Steers, 1973; Wanous, et

al, 1992). The above studies indicate that an understanding of the factors which affect met expectations may be helpful in reducing the dysfunctional organizational outcomes.

As a dependent variable, degree to which expectations are met have been assumed to be important and be effected by other variables like recruiting sources (Gannon, 1971; Granovetter, 1974; Katzell, 1968; Rees, 1966; Ullman, 1966), and organizational experiences (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, Gardner, 1994; Major, et al, 1995). However, very few studies have actually measured expectations. Major, et al (1995) measured expectations but limited their measurement to role clarity, role conflict and acceptance. Given that met expectations have been associated with a variety of positive organizational outcomes, it is important, both from an academic and a practitioner's perspective, to understand the factors which affect met expectations and how these factors can be influenced so as to be able to make the entry of the newcomers a positive experience such that they are satisfied and committed and intent to stay with the organization, rather than leave.

This paper seeks to fulfill this gap by examining the antecedents of met expectations and trying to integrate three streams of literature's which have been thought to effect the degree to which expectations are met. Specifically, we will propose a causal model which connects these three streams of literature and test this model using a longitudinal, preentry postentry design in a hierarchical regression analysis. The first stream of literature deals with the effects of work experience on the use of formal and informal job sources (Granovetter, 1973, 1974) The second stream of literature examines the effects of job sources (which serve as sources of various degrees of information about the job) on the initial expectations of the newcomers (Wanous, 1980, 1992). The third stream of literature deals with the affects of socialization and treatment of the newcomers once they enter the job in mitigating unmet expectations and reducing dissatisfaction (Louis, 1980, Major, et al, 1995). The above three set of variables are proposed to affect met expectations.

In the following sections we discuss each of the three streams of literature followed by the test of the proposed model, presentation of results and discussion of the study.

Impact of Experience on Job Sources

Granovetter (1973, 1974) analyzed social networks in the context of job search with a sample of professional, technical and managerial workers (PTM workers). He divided job sources into formal (impersonal intermediary), personal contacts (individual whose original acquaintance was unrelated to the job), and direct application (direct contact with the firm without the use of a formal or a personal contact). He found that people got information about a job through weak contacts or others with whom they were casually acquainted. 56% of his sample used personal contacts, 18.8% used formal means and 18.8% used direct application, the rest using miscellaneous means (p. 11).

He found that younger workers with insufficient work experience were more likely to use family contacts. He also found that people in managerial occupations were more likely to use personal contacts than people in professional or technical occupations (p. 19, table 6). People in the managerial field were more likely to develop contacts outside the company since they deal with general matters which require them to keep in touch with various external constituencies and interact with them more frequently than technical or professional people. There was some evidence to show that participants with average tenures of 5 years or more were likely to use personal contacts in 58.3% of the cases, whereas participants with an average tenure of 2 to 5 years were likely to use personal contacts in 67.5% of the cases, and those below 2 years were likely to use personal contacts 72.5% of the cases (p. 86, table 22).

Nan Lin and associates (1981a, 1981b, 1982) have proposed that the use of social contacts should be seen as part of a broader phenomenon of the exploitation of the persons social resources. They predict that individuals have differential access to social resources depending on their structural and personal characteristics which they can exploit for gaining valued resources like wealth, status, and power. Lin and Dumin (1986) found that relatives provided a limited access to jobs whereas friends provided a better access to jobs. Moreover, they found that people had access to a broader range of occupations through friends than through relatives or acquaintances. They also found differences between the position of the person and his

access to jobs. They concluded that both, status of the person and strength of the relationship, affects access to high prestige jobs and range of jobs available.

Bridges and Villemez (1986) found that people finding jobs through work related contacts had higher incomes. They found that the effects of work related ties were limited to professional and semi-professional workers and were affected by the tenure of the person with the current employer. They concluded that work experience contributes to buildup of social capital or resources which in turn are important for gaining employment. Wright (1993) analyzed job opening advertisements in sociology departments before and after affirmative action hiring programs and found extensive use of informal contacts for filling new positions especially in the elite Ph.D. departments (95.2% of the positions) but also overall (53.4% of the positions).

Based on the above it can be hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1:
Work experience will be positively related to the use of informal sources and negatively related to the use of formal sources.

Effect of Job Sources on Expectations

Recruiting sources have been thought to be an important determinant of organizational outcomes like performance, absenteeism, tenure, and turnover (Wanous and Collela, 1989). Recruiting sources have been divided into formal sources and informal sources. Formal sources are those in which there is no contact between the perspective employer and the job seeker and no intermediary who is known both to the perspective employer and the job seeker. It includes sources like newspapers, employment agencies, professional journals, etc. Informal sources are those for which there is either personal contact between the perspective employer and the job seeker or there is a common intermediary who is known both to the perspective employer and the job seeker. It includes sources like rehires, employee referrals, in-house notices, friends and family contacts, etc.

Formal sources were traditionally considered superior for hiring applicants (Cohen, 1960). Rees (1966) and Ullman (1966) proposed that informal sources like employee referrals may provide better information to the applicants which may reduce turnover and improve performance. Other studies have also found that informal sources provide more information (Breaugh and Mann, 1984; Quaglieri, 1982) and reduce turnover (Gannon, 1971; Reid, 1972; Ullman, 1966) and improve performance (Breaugh and Mann, 1984; Blau, 1989).

The two dominant theories proposed to explain the effect of sources deal respectively with the amount of information provided by various sources and the kinds of applicant population that various sources reach. These ideas were proposed by Rees (1966), and Ullman (1966) and have been further developed by Wanous (1976, 1978, 1980, 1992) and Schwab (1982) respectively.

First, the realistic job preview (RJP) stream of research as developed by Wanous (1976, 1978, 1980, 1992) suggests that the effectiveness of the source depends upon the degree to which it is able to reduce the information asymmetry between individual's perception about the job and the reality of the job. Informal sources provide more realistic information about the job than formal sources. People recruited through informal sources have lower turnover because of (a) better matching between the newcomer and the job through self selection, (b) reduction and adjustment of expectations to more realistic levels, and (c) allowing newcomers to choose freely, and (d) by helping them cope with unpleasant aspects of the job due to prior knowledge of these. Granovetter (1973, 1974) found that the information received through personal contacts was of a higher quality and more intensive in nature than that available by other means. Moreover, personal contacts led to a higher quality of jobs and a higher satisfaction with the jobs (p. 13, table 1). Thus, informal sources serve to provide more accurate information about the job and help the newcomers adjust their expectations to realistic levels. This *results in the newcomer's expectations being met* which in turn lead to satisfaction and reduced turnover (Ilgen, 1975; Ilgen and Dugoni, 1977; Wanous, 1977, 1980).

Second, the individual differences hypothesis (Schwab, 1982) proposes that different recruiting sources reach different populations of individuals. These populations have job relevant characteristics which affect their performance, satisfaction, attendance, tenure, and

turnover. Organizations should target job sources and consequently population of applicants who have a better fit with the job requirements of the organization.

Most prior research cited above has inferred differences in prehire knowledge and expectations by relating the effects of recruitment sources on post hire outcomes like turnover and performance (Williams, Labig, and Stone, 1993). Williams, et al, (1993) dealt with some of the shortcomings of prior research by trying to determine if the subjects use more than one information source for screening perspective employers. Use of more than one source would amount to more than one treatment effect. They found that applicants used multiple recruitment sources and assigning these applicants to a single source changed turnover related results. They found that "among applicants, recruitment sources collectively accounted for a sizable variance in prehire knowledge (R-square=.27, p < .01)" (p. 167). Applicants using at least one informal source had more prehire knowledge than applicants using only formal sources. Also, applicants using multiple sources had more prehire knowledge than applicants using only one informal source. However, contrary to previous claims employee referrals were found to have "less knowledge than rehires, multiple informal, or mixed multiples" (p169).

Gannon (1971) in a study with bank employees found that employees hired through informal sources had lower turnover rates than those hired through formal sources and this trend was consistent over a period of four years. Wanous (1976) in a study with MBA students found that the process of entering an organization had an impact on the lowering of expectations regarding intrinsic factors (the intangibles) but not so much on the extrinsic factors (the tangibles). He speculated that this might be because it is difficult to get information on the intrinsic factors as compared to the extrinsic factors. This was consistent with his earlier study with telephone operators (Wanous, 1972) where initial expectations of telephone operators were lowered within 1 to 3 months of entry.

Considering the above review it is clear that informal job sources provide more information to the applicants and help in reducing their initial expectations of the job they are about to enter. Based on the findings of Williams, et al, (1993) and others (Azevedo, 1974; Reid, 1972; Dayton, 1981) it is clear that individuals are likely to use several job sources and are more likely to have prior information and initial expectations about the organization and jobs they are about to enter. These may be partly realistic and partly inflated. The probability of finding pure types, i.e., people using only job source, is likely to be low. Based on the above, the following hypothesis are advanced.

Hypothesis 2
(a) Newcomers using primarily informal sources will have lower initial expectations.
(b) Newcomers using primarily formal sources will have higher initial expectations.

So far we have reviewed the relationship between work experience of applicants and the impact that has on their use of job sources and the effect of job sources on the initial expectations of applicants. Next we will review the effects of initial expectations of applicants on met expectations and how these effects may be moderated by the socialization process of the applicants.

Impact of Initial Expectations on Met Expectations and Turnover

Ross and Zander (1957) identified five needs that they thought were critical for satisfaction with a job. They postulated that if the needs for affiliation, achievement, autonomy, recognition and fair evaluation were met, then the person would be less likely to quit their job. They found that people who left were dissatisfied in the areas of recognition, need for achievement, experienced autonomy, and degree of fairness of the company. They did not find any difference between those who left and those who stayed in the dissatisfaction experience due to affiliation, both groups experienced the same degree of dissatisfaction with respect to affiliation.

Katzell (1968), in a study in the school of nursing came up with similar conclusions. She found that nursing students who continued in the program were those whose expectations were confirmed by their experience in the program. The author concluded that confirmation of expectations in the areas important to the students led to experienced satisfaction which in turn reduced turnover. The students who left experienced greater dissatisfaction and stress which in turn increased their dropout rates.

Dunnette, Arvey, and Banas (1973) found that the recruits had expectations on common dimensions coming into the organization. The first job assignment was a turning point for both the group which stayed with the organization and the group that left the organization. "The first job with the company was seen as one that severely frustrated their high hopes and expectations of opportunities to use their abilities." (Dunnette et. al., 1973, p31). The first job served as a "reality shock" (Hughes, 1958) or a "surprise" (Louis, 1980) incongruent with the initial expectations they had at the time of entry. The largest discrepancies were in four out of the five job characteristics considered to be important by the new recruits, namely, feelings of accomplishment, interesting work, opportunity to use abilities, and opportunities to get ahead (Figure 3, p. 28). Only the salary level expectations were met. These were also the job characteristics that were most important for the management. From their analysis they concluded that those who stayed moved into jobs which were a better fit with their initial expectations whereas those who left were unable to find a fit between their initial expectations and their job assignment.

The Management Progress study by Bray, Campbell, and Grant (1974) at AT&T further highlighted the importance of expectations in the entry process. Their results showed that recruits had unrealistic initial expectations about their jobs and expected to find a perfect match between their expectations and desired jobs. In subsequent measures there was a steady downward trend in expectations showing that the reality of organizational life was different from what had been expected before joining the job. This declining trend was evident for both high and low performers, performance being measured by the ability of the recruit to reach the middle management by the eighth year.

The above studies clearly demonstrate that newcomers tend to have initial expectations about different aspects of their jobs and these expectations are generally inflated. Additionally, the degree to which initial expectations are met is important in the development of subsequent attitudes like satisfaction and job commitment, which in turn are related to turnover.

Impact of Socialization as a Moderating Variable

Socialization of the newcomer may moderate the relationship between initial expectations and the degree to which these expectations are confirmed or disconfirmed. Socialization serves to reduce the information asymmetry between what the organization expects of the individual and what the individual thinks is expected of him by the organization. The information provided by the organization helps the newcomer get an accurate picture of what is expected of him and what are the rewards and sanctions involved in deviating from set organizational requirements. Expectations are communicated to the newcomers in terms of the task assigned to them at the time of entry, in the way the supervisors and co-workers treat them, in terms of company rules and procedures, and in terms of the cultural practices of the organization (Katz, 1978; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Socialization has been shown to affect commitment (Berlew and Hall, 1966; Buchanan, 1974), longevity (Katz, 1978, 1980; Wanous, 1973, 1980), satisfaction and feeling of personal worth (Feldman, 1976), and role orientation (Graen and Ginsburg, 1977; Jones, 1986). The following in not intended to serve as a literature review on socialization and will only touch on areas relevant to the paper.

Socialization can be looked at from at least two levels of analysis, namely, from a macro organizational perspective and from a micro individual-group perspective. Depending on the level, different theories have been offered. For the purposes of this paper we are more interested in the dynamics between the individual and his immediate work group. This micro individual-work group interaction will be the main influence in shaping the expectations of the newcomer.

The literature on organizational socialization suggests that expectations are an important factor in the early postentry period of a new recruit (Feldman, 1976; Louis, 1980; Schein, 1978). Meglino and DeNisi (1987) proposed that newcomers come in with unreasonably high initial expectations which decline with experience on the job. They proposed that since experiences in the early stages of employment may seem unique to the uninitiated, the reduction in the level of expectations is highest during initial stages of entry since "..more disappointments are likely to take place early in the work experience." (Meglino and DeNisi, 1987; p.160).

Graen (1976) building on role theory proposed that the coworkers and supervisors comprise the immediate role set of the newcomer and thus influence the organizational role of the newcomer. They are an important source of information to the newcomer (Morrison, 1993) and can be particularly helpful in the process of entry of the newcomer (Chao, 1988; Louis, Posner, and Powell, 1983). Using supervisors and co-workers as a key source of socialization information has also been associated with greater satisfaction, commitment, and adjustment of the newcomer (Ostroff and Kozlowski, 1989, 1992). Two scales called the leader member exchange (LMX) (Scandura and Graen, 1984) and team member exchange (TMX) (Seers, 1989) respectively have been developed to capture the psychological support and the quality of interaction the newcomers have with their supervisors and co-workers. In a study to test the moderating effect of LMX and TMX between expectations and turnover, Major et. al. (1995) found that "higher quality LMX and TMX relations tended to ameliorate the negative effects of unmet expectations relative to those newcomers lacking such support." (p24). This showed that some of the effects of unmet expectations can be ameliorated by the social environment in the organization, especially the treatment newcomer receives from his co-workers and supervisor. We did not use the LMX and TMX scales in our study. We had items which approximated the experiences of the individual with their supervisors and coworkers.

Irving and Meyer (1994) in their longitudinal study of the met expectation hypothesis proposed three models of the effects of expectations and experience. In the Porter and Steers (1973) model, met expectations would be conceptualized as the difference between the initial and met expectations. The difference score would be regressed on outcome variables like satisfaction, commitment, turnover intention, etc, and the regression coefficients for expectations and experience would be significant and equal, but in the opposite direction. In the moderation model the regression coefficient for the interaction term of expectation and experience would be significant and negative irrespective of the significance of the main effects. This would mean that initial expectations might serve as a benchmark against which work experiences are evaluated. People who come in with low initial expectations might be influenced by positive work experiences to a greater extent than people who come in with high initial expectations. In the main effects model, both expectations and experience will to have independent effects on the outcome variable. In this, the regression coefficient for the main effects of expectations and experience would be significant. Using job satisfaction, organizational commitment and intention to leave as the dependent variables they found the strongest support for the experience main effects model, limited support for the met expectation model and no support for the expectation main effect or the moderation model. They concluded that "job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions are influenced by employees early work experiences independent of the preentry expectations" (p. 945). Further "... meeting employees expectations concerning various aspects of the job may be less important than providing positive work experiences regardless of their expectations" (p. 945).

Based on the above review it is clear that socialization experiences are critical in the relationship between initial and met expectation. The exact nature of the relationship would depend on the three models proposed by Irving and Meyer (1994). We could not test the met expectations model since our variable of interest is the post entry measure of expectations and we can not regress the difference between the pre and the post entry expectation measure with the post entry measure without confounding the results. Based on the above the following hypotheses are advanced.

Hypothesis 3
Initial expectations and socialization will be positively and independently related to met expectations.

Hypothesis 4
The relationship between initial expectations and met expectations will be moderated inversely by the socialization of the newcomer. That is, positive experiences will be have a greater impact on people with low initial expectations than people with high initial expectations.

The proposed model is presented in Figure 1.

Methodological Section

In the following section we will test hypothesis using a longitudinal hierarchical regression design. We start off by discussing the sample, data collection steps and issues of sample attrition, followed by the measure used for each variable and discussion of the methodological problems in the analysis of met expectations data. Finally, we discuss the research methodology used to test the hypothesis.

Sample and Data collection procedure

A list of graduating seniors seeking jobs was obtained from the campus placement office of a large Eastern University. The first questionnaire was distributed to students four weeks prior to graduation in the summer of 1988 with a request to complete and return the questionnaire only if they had accepted a job. Data was collected on initial expectations, employing organization, demographics (age, educational level, educational major, gender, and race), intensity of job search, and previous work experience. As an incentive the participants were offered free movie coupons. Three hundred and thirty six students completed and returned the first questionnaire.

The second questionnaire was mailed to participants after 6 weeks of commencement of employment. Data were collected on post-entry experiences, organizational commitment, stress, job satisfaction, tenure intentions, and coping behaviors in both questionnaires. 157 participants returned the second questionnaire (response rate of 46.7%). However, only 76 cases (22.62%) could be included in the complete model due to missing data on the measures of initial expectation, met expectation, and socialization.

Sample attrition

To address the issue of sample attrition, participants who dropped out of the study after the first questionnaire were compared with the participants who returned the 6 week postentry questionnaire on age, sex, GPA, salary, tenure intent, prior work experience and preentry expectation measure. Mean age of the participant group (n=149) was slightly lower (22.82 years) than the mean age of the drop outs (n=173, age=23.45 years) at $p<0.05$ (t=2.09). Mean salary ($26,589) of the participant group (n=157) was slightly lower than the mean salary ($31,635) of the drop outs (n=179). The standard error for dropouts on both age (0.22 years) and salary ($1,648) was higher than for participants. The two groups were not significantly different on any of the other variables. Since the participants who dropped out after the first questionnaire were not different on the variables of interest to us, namely, prior work experience and preentry expectation measures the above differences may not pose a bias in our study and results.

Measures

Established and validated scales were used wherever possible. New scales had to be constructed for some constructs like initial expectations, post entry experiences, and socialization. Item means were used as a measure of the construct, with a higher mean representing a greater degree on that construct.

Previous Work Experience

Work experience was seen as a surrogate of extent of networking of the participant. A person who has worked full time is more likely to have personal contacts. Such a person is more likely to depend on informal sources to gain employment. People who have little or no work experience is unlikely to have the kinds of networks which will help him gain employment and thus they are more likely to use formal sources for job search. We used seven measures to try to capture the work experience of the participant. We measured years of part time and summer work experience, years of full time work experience, years of full time work experience related to major, semester of internship or cooperative work experience, amount of previous work experience related to the job accepted (measured on a four point scale of no experience, little, moderate and extensive experience), type of experience in the latest job (whether professional or non professional), and relatedness of the last experience to the major (whether related or unrelated).

The correlation matrix for the experience variables showed considerable intercorrelations. We conducted a factor analysis to try to group the experience measures on common underlying dimensions using principal component analysis with varimax rotation. The measure was included in the factor if its loading was more than 0.50. The factor analysis resulted in two factors with eigen values greater than one. The first factor comprised of years of part time and summer work experience (negatively loaded), years of full time work experience, years of full time work experience related to major (ZEXP1). The second factor comprised of semester of internship or cooperative work experience, amount of previous work experience related to the job accepted (measured on a four point scale of no experience, little, moderate and extensive experience), type of experience in the latest job (whether professional or non professional), and relatedness of the last experience to the major (whether related or unrelated) (ZEXP2). It would seem that experience measured in dimensions of time (years) grouped together (ZEXP1) whereas experience measured on dimensions of relatedness of experience grouped together (ZEXP2). Due to the differences in scales of the seven measures, we standardized the variables and then took means to obtain the final two measures of experience.

Job Sources

Participants were asked to indicate the method through which they first made contact with their current employer. They were given 11 choices and these were grouped under the 6 categories of referral, rehire, walkin, employment agencies, newspapers, and campus sources. Categorical variables were used to represent the 6 categories of job sources. Table 1 presents the breakdown of the items included in each category and the frequencies on each item.

Initial Expectations and Met Perceptions

Initial expectations were collected after the respondent got the job but before they joined the job, whereas the met expectation measure is the 6 week measure of expectations. Initial expectations were collected in the first questionnaire on a 49 items expectation scale developed specifically for this purpose. The scale included different dimensions of expectations like work-non-work life conflicts, pay autonomy, coworkers, job responsibility, supervision, career opportunities, working conditions, organizational support, and power entailed by the position. Data was collected on the same 49 items in the second questionnaire to assess the changes in the degree to which the initial expectations of the respondents were met. An additional item involving the amount of job related travel was added. Additionally, the tense of the questions was changed between the first and the second questionnaires from a future tense to a present tense respectively. For example, for measuring initial expectations participants responded to items like "I expect to work alone in my job". For measuring met expectations the tense was changed to "I get the chance to work alone in my job". Both measures were collected on a 5 point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5) as anchors. We found no precedent of measurement of expectation in terms of various dimensions and hence the overall measure of expectation was used. Mean of the raw scores of the items was used as a measure of this dimension. The scale reliabilities for initial expectations and met expectations were 0.84 (n=336) and 0.84 (n=148) respectively.

Socialization

We were interested in measuring socialization as it is experienced by the individual in the context to his immediate environment, in terms of how his supervisor and coworkers treat him, in the extent to which his job is structured, in the degree of clarity of his job, and in the degree of supportiveness, honesty, and fairness of his supervisor and coworkers. Data was collected on a twenty one item scale measuring the above dimensions of socialization. Four items were measured on a 4 point likert scale and seventeen items were measured on a 7 point likert scale. The item scores were standardized due to differences in scale and mean of the standardized scores of the items was used as a measure of socialization. The reliability coefficient for the scale was 0.89.

Methodological issues in the analysis of met expectations

Porter and Steers (1973) conceptualized met expectations as the difference between preentry expectations and postentry experiences. The difference scores have been found to have lower reliability than raw scores (Johns, 1981). It has also been shown that the difference

scores do not explain any additional variance and hide the effects of component measures (Edwards, 1994). The preentry expectation scores are always correlated with the postentry expectation scores (Willet, 1989). Due to the above criticism of difference scores in the measurement of met expectations in the literature (Johns, 1981; Edwards, 1991, 1994), we used raw scores to test our model.

Data analysis methodology

We wanted to identify the relationships between the variables and to determine the unique variance accounted for by each variable. Hierarchical regression analysis was used to test the model. Each relationship in the model was individually tested after controlling for the previous step in the model.

To test the first hypothesis, the experience variables were regressed on job sources. To test the second hypothesis, the job source variables were regressed on the initial expectation measure after controlling for the experience variables. Thus, with initial expectations as the dependent variable, we first entered the experience variable and then entered the job source variables to isolate the relationship between the job sources and initial expectations and to determine the unique variance explained by job sources. Next, we tested the two models proposed by Irving and Meyer (1994) to determine the effects of initial expectations and socialization on met expectations. Again, we controlled for the experience and job source variables so that we could isolate the relationship and the variance explained by initial expectations and socialization variables. To test hypothesis 3, we regressed the main effects for initial expectations and socialization on met expectations. To test hypothesis 4, using met expectation as the dependent variable, we first entered the main effects for initial expectations and socialization and then entered the interaction term (product of initial expectations and socialization.)

Results

Job sources data was available for 149 people. A total of 45 people in our sample used informal job sources (referrals, rehire and walk-ins), and a total of 104 people used formal job sources (employment agencies, newspapers, and campus sources) (refer to Table 1). Out of this a total of 83 people used campus sources alone. This is not surprising considering that our primary source of sample was from a listing of students who had registered for placement at the campus placement office. The participants did not have a substantial amount of work experience. 60% of the sample had no work experience and 70% of the sample had no work experience related to the major. In spite of this we found prior work experience (ZEXP1 – represents the measure of work experience in dimensions of time) to be positively related to the use of referrals (informal job source). The relationship was significant at $p<0.05$ with a unstandardized regression coefficient of 0.134 and explained 5.8% of the variance in the use of referral job source. People who had longer experience, in terms of the years of experience, tended to use referrals. Relatedness of the work experience (ZEXP2) was found to have a negative relationship with the use of employment agency (a formal source) and positively related to rehiring (an informal sources). The negative relationship between ZEXP2 and employment agency was significant at $p<0.10$ with a unstandardized regression coefficient of 0.062 (negative) and explained 4.18% of the variance in the use of employment agencies. The positive relationship between ZEXP2 and rehiring of the participant was significant at $p<0.01$ with a unstandardized regression coefficient of 0.1063 and explained almost 8.09% of the variance in rehiring. Inspite of the problems with our measurement of the job sources used by the participants there is some evidence to support the first hypothesis.

For the second hypothesis, we expected to find the relationship between informal sources (referral, rehire, and walk-ins) and initial expectations to be significant and positive with low beta coefficients, and the relationship between formal sources (employment agencies, newspaper, and campus sources) and initial expectations to be significant and positive with beta coefficients higher than those for informal sources. Contrary to our expectations, we did not find any relationships between the use of job sources (either formal or informal) and the preentry expectation of the participants. The second hypothesis was not confirmed. The could be due to measurement problem and will be further addressed in the discussion section.

For the test of hypothesis 3, the main effects for initial expectations (unstandardized regression coefficient 0.2203 at $p<0.05$) and socialization (unstandardized

regression coefficient 0.3344 at p<0.05) were found to be positively related to met expectations. Again employment agencies (unstandardized regression coefficient -0.2619) and referrals (unstandardized regression coefficient -0.2152) had a negative relationship with post entry expectations and were significant at p<0.10. This model explained 50.816% of the variance in post entry expectations. This supports hypothesis 3, which is the main effects model proposed by Irving and Meyer (1994).

For the test of hypothesis 4, the interaction term was significant and negative (unstandardized regression coefficient -0.3494 significant at p<0.05). There was a change in the regression coefficients for initial expectations (unstandardized regression coefficient to 0.2702 at p<0.01) and the socialization variable (unstandardized regression coefficient 1.754 at p<0.01). Contrary to expectations, employment agencies (unstandardized regression coefficient -0.2806 at p<0.05) and referrals (unstandardized regression coefficient -0.209 at p<0.10) had a negative and significant relationship with met expectations. This model explained 53.986% of the variance in met expectations. We used the partial derivative approach suggested by Southwood (1978), to see the effects of interaction at high and low level of expectations. As per this approach, derivatives were computed as the sum of the unstandardized regression weights of the classification variable (socialization) and the interaction term at low and high value of initial expectations respectively. They are as follows:

At low level of expectations
1.753796 - 0.349492 (1) = 1.404304

At high level of expectations
1.753796 - 0.349492 (5) = 0.006336

The above illustrates that socialization had a greater impact at low levels of expectations than it does at higher level of expectations. Thus hypothesis 4, which is the negative moderation model proposed by Irving and Meyer (1994), was confirmed.

The final model with the unstandardized regression coefficients is presented in Figure 2. We tested the significance of this model using the procedure recommended by Pedhauzer (1982, p. 617). The calculated chi-square goodness of fit for the model was 8.886 with 45 degrees of freedom whereas the tabulated chi-square was 44.335. This confirmed the null hypothesis that this model fits the data.

Discussion

In this study we proposed a model of factors that affect met expectations and tested it using a longitudinal design. The proposed factors were prior work experience, job sources, initial expectations, and socialization. We also tested the two models proposed by Irving and Meyer (1994) regarding the influence of expectations and socialization on met expectations.

We found some support for our first hypothesis regarding prior work experience and the use of job sources. Participants in our sample with work experience were more likely to use informal job sources than formal job sources. We found that prior work experience (in terms of the number of years) was positively related to the use of referrals and prior work experience (in terms of relatedness of the work experience) was negatively related to the use of employment agency and positively related to rehiring of the applicant. This is consistent with Granovetter's (1973, 1974) notion of people developing networks of relationships which they then draw upon for support. The finding is significant considering that almost 60% of our sample had very little work experience.

Contrary to our second hypothesis, we did not find any relationship between the job sources used and initial expectations of the participants. This is not surprising given the way we collected data regarding job sources. We asked the respondents to pick the source used to first make contact with the employer. This does not give any indication of the different job sources the participant may have used to find out about the job opening, or the amount, relevance, and realism of the information received from each source, or the source shaped the expectations of the respondent. Our method of collecting data severely limits our ability to test the second proposition. Williams et al., (1993) found evidence for the use of multiple job sources by applicants and the errors in results if the job sources were restricted or reclassified. They also found that job

sources not only reached different applicants but also that recruitment sources produced different levels of preentry knowledge. Granovetter (1974) found that job sources did make a difference in the amount of knowledge applicants had about the job with the informal sources providing more information than the formal sources.

Future research needs to address the issue of different job sources that applicants use and the amount, relevance and realism of the information they receive from them. Further, the process that the newcomers use to collect information and form expectations about their jobs is not clear. It is clear that the newcomers use multiple sources and they get different kinds of information from these different sources, but it is unclear as to how they form initial expectations about how they will be treated. Future research also needs to examine this process for people who change jobs at later stages in their lives, the kinds of job sources they use, the expectations they have about the nature of the job, how the kind of socialization process affects their met expectations. It could be that given their greater work experience, people who change jobs at later stages in their lives may have more realistic expectations and may take a shorter period of time to adjust their expectations to realistic levels.

We found support for both the main effects model (hypothesis 3) and the negative moderation model (hypothesis 4) proposed by Irving and Meyer (1994). The main effects for both expectation and socialization (which they defined as post entry experience) were positive and significant on the met expectations after 6 weeks after controlling for prior work experience and job sources. In support of the negative moderation model, the product term for the interaction between initial expectation and socialization had a negative and significant beta coefficient. This is an indication that the newcomers coming in with low initial expectations were affected to a greater extent by socialization than newcomers coming in with high initial expectations. Socialization disconfirms their initial low expectations and good experiences ameliorate their initial low expectations. Irving and Meyer (1994) found a significant main effect only for experience and not for expectations.

Following Meglino & DeNisi (1987), we chose to examine only the initial 6 week period of post entry and what effects it had on the expectations after this 6 week period. Future research needs to address the effects of high and low initial expectations and positive (supportive) and negative (non-supportive) experiences and the interplay between these, keeping in mind Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, & William's (1988) suggestion that expectations might need to be enhanced or reduced depending on the expectation and the situation within the organization. There is an issue of how socialization affects newcomers who come in with high and low initial expectations. For newcomers with high initial expectations, better experience might just be an affirmation of their expectations and thus may not affect their work attitudes, satisfaction and turnover. However, high initial expectations with unpleasant socialization might serve to cause dissatisfaction and turnover (Wanous & Collela, 1989; Wanous et al., 1992). We found that the difference in the regression coefficient between initial expectations (0.270212) and socialization (1.753796) was even greater when the interaction term of the product between initial expectations and socialization was added to the model. Future research needs to address the interplay between initial expectations and socialization over longer periods of time. Instead of a main effect and a moderation model, the reality may be that both these models are relevant. Initially expectations might be used as a template to judge experience. Over time it may be a combination of expectations and socialization that might be important, and with longer tenure, socialization rather than expectations might become important. The real model might really be a mixture of moderation model proposed by Irving and Meyer (1994) and the fadeout model proposed by Miceli (1986).

Limitations

The generalizability of the findings are limited by the use of students, namely, university graduates and MBA's. 60% of our sample had very little work experience. The job sources used, the nature of expectations and socialization of people at later stages of life when they have substantial work experience may be different may be different and is an important area of investigation.

This was a longitudinal design and there is an issue of sample attribution, especially since we had complete data on only 76 participants in our study. Since the participants

did not differ from the dropouts in any of the variables of interest in the study, namely prior work experience and initial expectations, our study may not be biased.

Common method variance might have influenced our results, especially in the measurement of initial and met expectations. Moreover we could not control for prescores (preentry expectations) while examining post entry expectations since the former was used to predict the latter. So common method variance might be a problem in our study.

All our measures were self report measures and were not validated with external sources (supervisor, co-workers or friends). The respondents filled out questionnaires reporting their prior work experience, the source they used to make first contact with the employer, their initial expectations, their expectations after 6 weeks, and the kind of socialization experiences they had. Caroll and Schneider (1982) suggest that individuals provide fairly objective information when the data is obtained for research purposes but this might be a limitation. Future researchers may want to cross validate the perceptions of the newcomers regarding their expectations and socialization with external sources.

Our measure of job sources was not very accurate and did not ask the respondents to give any information about the amount, relevance, and realism of the information provided by the job sources, and how this influenced their expectations. More importantly, we did not collect data on the number of job sources used. An ideal measure of job sources would have given the job sources that the participants used and the amount of information they received from each job source, and how this influenced their expectations. However, we were limited by the form the data had already been collected. The issue of how respondents collect information about a prospective employer and how they form expectations needs to be addressed in future research.

We did not have a scale for measuring socialization and had to create a socialization scale from the items available. Even though the scale reliability of the resulting socialization scale was 0.89 this might pose a problem in the results. The ideal measure would have been a measure on the leader member exchange (LMX) (Scandura and Graen, 1984) and team member exchange (TMX) (Seers, 1989). In our data collection instrument we did not have specific scales which measured these constructs. Therefore, we had to improvise by picking items which closely approximated the LMX and TMX measures.

Summary and Conclusions

This paper addresses the important issue of the antecedents of met expectations. Previous research had not considered met expectations as a dependent variable effected by other variables. Even though there had been research in the area of prior work experience effecting job sources, job sources effecting initial expectations, and initial expectations and socialization effecting met expectations, these variables had not been considered as a single model. Our findings provide initial support for some antecedents of met expectation. We address some new issues which have not been covered by the RJP research. Prior work experience was found to affect the job sources selected by the respondents. We did not find any relationship between job sources and initial expectations, but that could be due to measurement problems. Prior research has clearly demonstrated this relationship (Bray, et al, 1974; Dunnette, et al, 1973). We found strong main effects for both initial expectations and socialization as well as some support for the negative moderation model propose by Irving and Meyer (1994). Our results suggest that organizations should focus on the environment in which newcomers work. By creating an environment which is supportive of the newcomer and facilitates the acculturation of newcomers into their new surroundings, the organizations may be able to alleviate the impact of initial expectations.

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Table 1
Categories of job sources with breakdown of mode of first contact

No.	Job Source Categories	Specific Sources	Number of respondents
1.	Referral	Friends / acquaintances	14
		Relatives	2
		Total	16
2.	Rehire	Prior employment with the firm	13
		Internship	3
		Total	16
3.	Walkin	Unsolicited direct application to the employer (letter or phone call)	13
		Total	13
4.	Employment agencies	Private employment agency	6
		Public employment agency	0
		Total	6
5.	Newspapers	Newspaper ads	15
		Total	15
6.	Campus sources	School placement office interview (Career Development Center)	60
		Student / professional organization (Honoraria's, student associations)	7
		Career job fair	16
		Total	83

Figure 1: Proposed Model of Factors Affecting Met Expectations
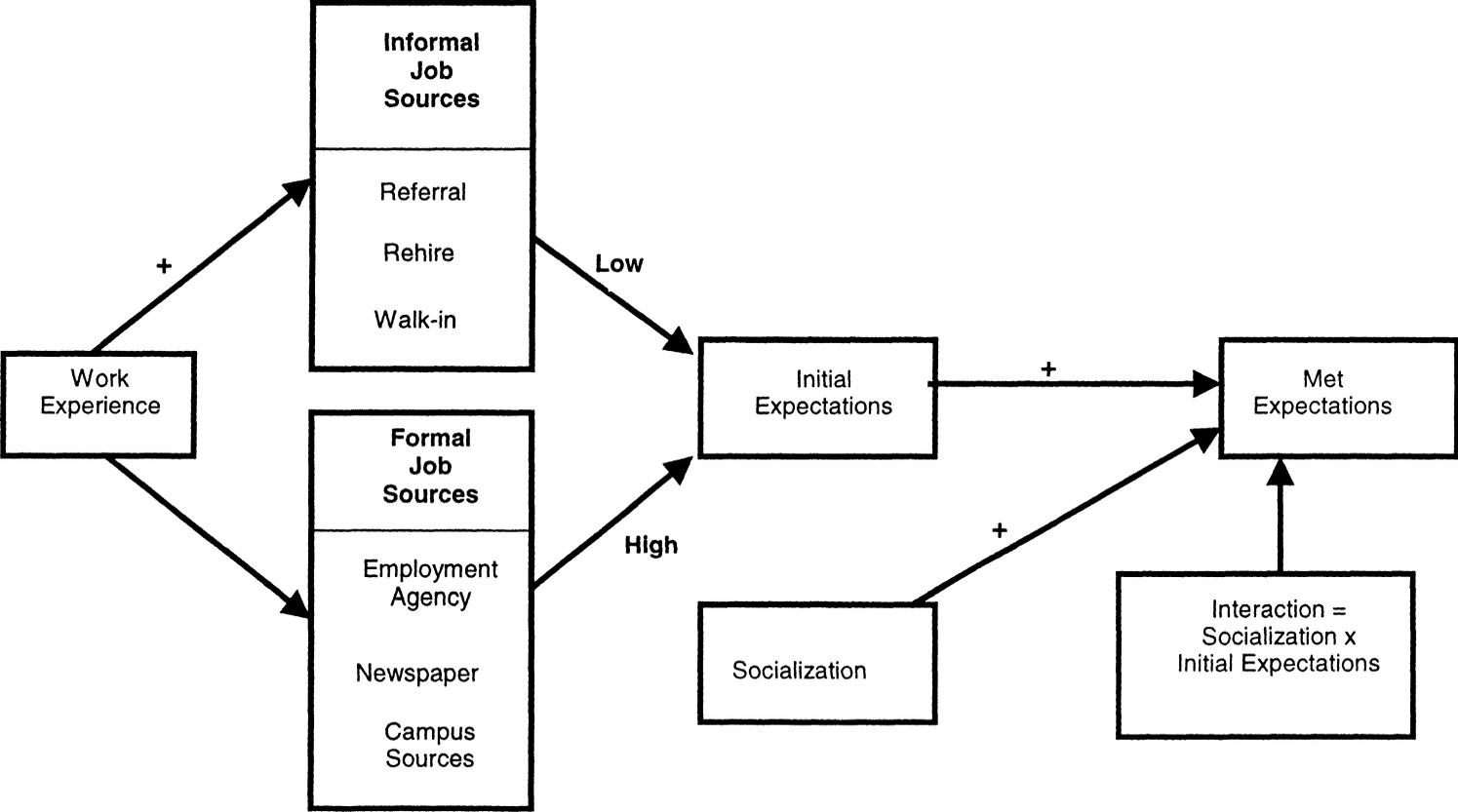
Figure 2: Final Model of Factors Affecting Met Expectations
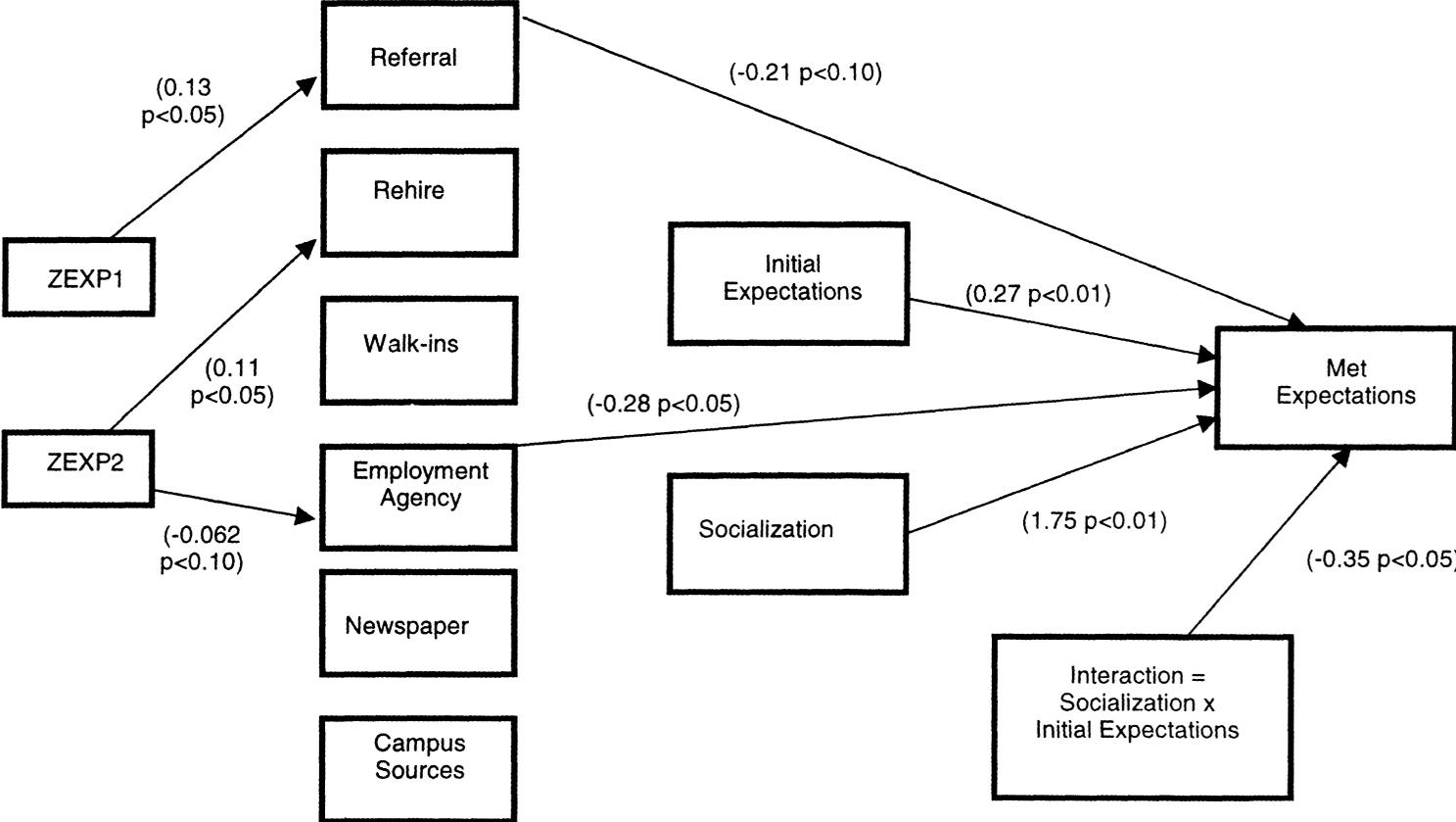
(Numbers in parenthesis represent unstandardized B coefficients with the respective significance values)