

Corporate Social Responsibility and Organizational Attraction: A Systematic Literature Review

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Attracting a quality workforce is a critical component of Human Resources and overall organizational success. Companies are increasingly implementing corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities to improve their attractiveness to high-performing applicants who are more concerned with environmental issues and work-life balance than ever before. In this study, I carried out a systematic literature review to give an overview of the state of research by defining relevant dimensions of CSR and clusters of moderators as well as mediators and analyzing their impact on organizational attraction. Results showed that environmental, social, and ethical activities positively influence attraction outcomes. Perceived organizational support, company image, and a person organization-fit mediated the CSR-attraction relationship with moderating effects of individual character traits, demographic data, and personal CSR stance.

Keywords: corporate social responsibility, organizational attraction, literature review, sustainability, human resources

INTRODUCTION

Companies see an increase in competition for highly skilled employees in the last decades. This “war for talent” shifts the importance of recruitment to a core component of an organization. The demographic change and scarcity of young, skilled job seekers force businesses to increase their level of attraction on the market (Michaels & Handfield-Jones, 2001; Ulrich, 2015). However, as the new generations X and Y enter the job market financial incentives may not be enough to attract this new workforce who is more concerned with their work-life balance and more environmentally friendly than ever before (Holt, Marques, & Way, 2012; Ohlrich, 2015). Hence, the integration of environmental, social, and ethical values into the business model, strategy, and brand could increase the attraction of the company.

In research, much literature addresses the recruitment and job search process (Acikgoz, 2019; Breaugh, 2008; Collins, 2007) and the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a way for an organization to focus on environmental, social and ethical issues (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Bansal & Song, 2017; Carroll, 1999). Chapman et al. (2005) meta-analyzed predictors of applicant attraction but only acknowledged CSR with one item in their factor “job–organization characteristics”. In their integrative review, Carlini et al. (2019) concentrate on a CSR Employer Branding Process with a focus on communication and signaling mechanisms. My review addresses every dimension of CSR individually as well as specific CSR activities and their impact on organizational attraction. Therefore adding to the literature by identifying detailed relationships between specific CSR variables and organizational

attraction and comparing their relative importance in the job decision process. Researchers in this field will gain a quick overview of the state of the literature and input for future research avenues.

The second section of this paper focuses on the definition of CSR and organizational attraction. The third section gives an overview of my review method and introduces the conceptual model. In the fourth section, I present the research findings in each CSR dimension and the dominant theories used in the literature. Also, the limitations of this review and a future research agenda are discussed. The final section concludes this paper and summarizes all major contributions.

DEFINITIONS

Corporate Social Responsibility

A broad and growing literature describes the multidisciplinary nature of sustainability. After decades of research, there is still confusion in the management literature regarding the use of similar terms from different theoretical approaches about sustainability (Alhaddi, 2015; Bansal & Song, 2017; Matten & Crane, 2005). Even within concepts, there is no consensus about their definition (Meuer, Koelbel, & Hoffmann, 2019; Sheehy, 2015). One prominent concept integrating sustainability issues into management decisions is CSR (Matten & Moon, 2008; Schwartz & Carroll, 2003). Creating a holistic definition of CSR describing all aspects associated with sustainability (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012) is difficult, not possible, or even not wanted because of its situational nature (van Marrewijk, 2003). To gain a better understanding of CSR and its influence on organizational attractiveness, it is necessary to provide a working definition of CSR and its aspects (Costa & Menichini, 2013; Garriga & Melé, 2004).

Environmental Dimension

The main goal is the protection of the environment and the efficient use of natural resources (Boronat-Navarro & Pérez-Aranda, 2019) by including environmental aspects in managerial decisions and implementing systems to control the company's effect on nature (Amor-Esteban, Galindo-Villardón, & García-Sánchez, 2019). This includes for example investments in green products and technologies (e. g. renewable energy), waste management as well as decreasing air and water pollution (Buysse & Verbeke, 2003; Lončar, Paunković, Jovanović, & Krstić, 2019; Menguc & Ozanne, 2005).

Social Dimension

Overall, this dimension is concerned with a company's responsible treatment of its stakeholders (Hopkins, 2012; Khoury, Rostami, & Turnbull, 1999). For this paper, I only address a company's responsibility to satisfy the needs of its potential employees by signaling a safe, healthy, and generally comfortable work environment (Murmura, Bravi, & Palazzi, 2017). The international voluntary standard Social Accountability 8000 (2014) lists living wages, humane working hours, and fair disciplinary practices as key aspects of a social company. Furthermore, companies engage in activities to attract, retain and motivate a quality workforce, for example, by investing in employee training, offering social services (insurance, kindergarten), or flexible working hours (A. P. Duarte, Mouro, & Gonçalves das Neves, 2010).

Ethical Dimension

Carroll (1999) described the evolution of CSR from the 1950s to the 1990s, stating that a company should bring value to society and increase the welfare of their community by engaging in corporate philanthropy, having corporate citizenship, and behave in an ethical matter. A company's ethical values consist of a voluntarily implemented set of rules beyond their legal obligations (Fischer, 2004; Keller-Krawczyk, 2010). One example would be strong corporate governance to ensure transparency and involvement in the decision-making process as well as an unbiased, principled and uncorrupt leadership (Baldini, Bronzetti, & Sicoli, 2018; Hussain, Rigoni, & Orij, 2018). The Global Reporting Initiative (2016) lists diversity and non-discrimination as key aspects of an ethical standard.

Economic Dimension

This dimension encompasses a company's financial performance (profits, return on investment, etc.), product market performance (sales, market share, etc.), and shareholder return (economic value added, dividends) (Richard, Devinney, Yip, & Johnson, 2009). The focus is on the shareholder perspective and corporate economic interactions (Jennifer Ho & Taylor, 2007; T. M. Jones & Felps, 2013).

These dimensions can overlap but they are connected in their interpretation and function (Carroll & Shabana, 2010). For this paper, I exclude the economic dimension because this review intends to analyze the impact of environmental, social, and ethical corporate activities on organizational attractiveness. Therefore, I define CSR as the combination of environmental, social, and ethical business practices supporting a corporate sustainable development beyond obligatory government regulations (Dahlsrud, 2008; European Commission, 2011; Torugsa, O'Donohue, & Hecker, 2013).

Organizational Attraction

In recognition of the "war for talent" managing a company's level of attraction to potential employees is getting more important for recruiting a quality workforce (Knox & Freeman, 2006). By examining item content, I identified three recruiting outcome variables.

Organizational Attractiveness

This involves job seekers overall attractiveness to a company. The measures used to assess attraction reflect two variations that I combined into one category. First, some items asked about the personal attraction to an organization (e. g. "this company is attractive to me as a place for employment") (Belinda, Westerman, & Bergman, 2018; D. A. Jones, Willness, & Madey, 2014; Lin, Tsai, Joe, & Chiu, 2012). The second type of item focused on organizational attractiveness in general without an applicant's personal stance. (e. g. "how attractive is this company as a place for employment") (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Backhaus, Stone, & Heiner, 2002; Kim & Park, 2011).

Pursuit Intentions

Job seeker's intention to pursue a job or remain in the applicant pool is measured early in the recruitment process (Chapman et al., 2005). This involves applying or the likelihood to apply for a job, attend a job interview or in any way make an effort to work for a company without a final commitment (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001; Osburg, Yoganathan, Bartikowski, Liu, & Strack, 2018; Wang, 2013).

Job Choice

In the end, it is important to know if a job seeker would accept an actual job offer. So for this paper job choice is defined as the decision, between different offers, to accept a job (Barrena-Martínez, López-Fernández, Márquez-Moreno, & Romero-Fernández, 2015; Magbool, Amran, Nejati, & Jayaraman, 2016; Presley, Presley, & Blum, 2018).

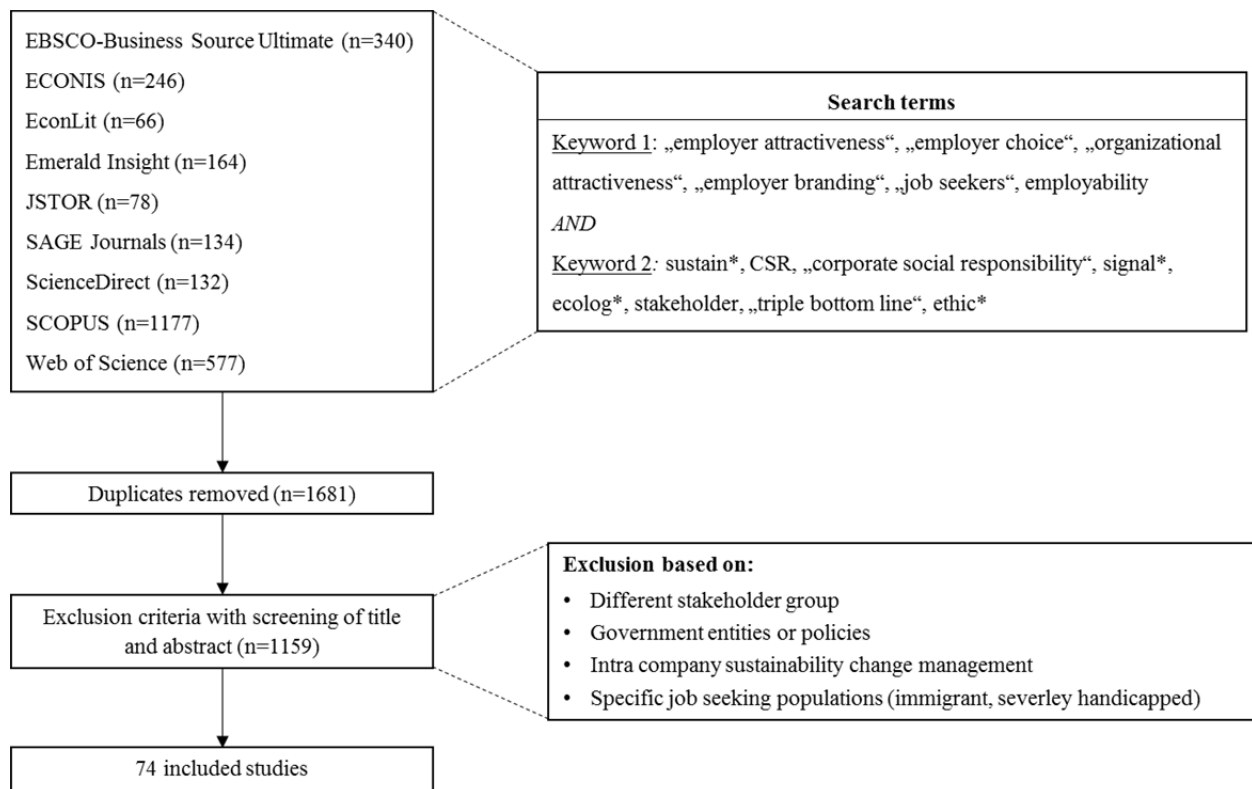
REVIEW METHOD

Systematic Literature Review

To answer the research question I conducted a systematic literature review. I followed Cooper and Hedges (2009) and Tranfield et al. (2003) who structured a review process in four main steps: (1) Problem Formulation; (2) Locating the Literature; (3) Selection and evaluation of studies; (4) Analyses and synthesis. In the first step, I started the database search with the keywords "employer attractiveness", "employer choice", "organizational attractiveness", "employer branding" in combination with sustain* and "corporate social responsibility" in all abstracts and titles. The search included articles, books, book chapters, and conference papers written in English with no determined time frame. Through an iterative process, I expanded the search terms and databases to determine 1233 studies with duplicates removed. To address my research problem I excluded studies focused on other stakeholder groups (e.g. employees

or customers) or the change management necessary to implement sustainability aspects. I also excluded studies concerning policy issues or government entities and studies solely focused on specific groups in the job-seeking population (e.g. minorities). I did not exclude any paper on basis of their quality (using a proxy such as journal rankings) because a broad variety of sources can compensate for researcher value judgment and uncontrolled validity threats (Denyer & Tranfield, 2011). Also the more heterogeneous the distribution of uncontrolled validity threats in a set of similar findings, the greater the validity of the findings from the set (Denyer & Tranfield, 2011; Salipante, Notz, & Bigelow, 1982). Furthermore, the citations and references of the so far identified papers were searched for further literature not identified through the keyword search. In the end, the literature review process identified 74 relevant papers (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1
SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW PROCESS



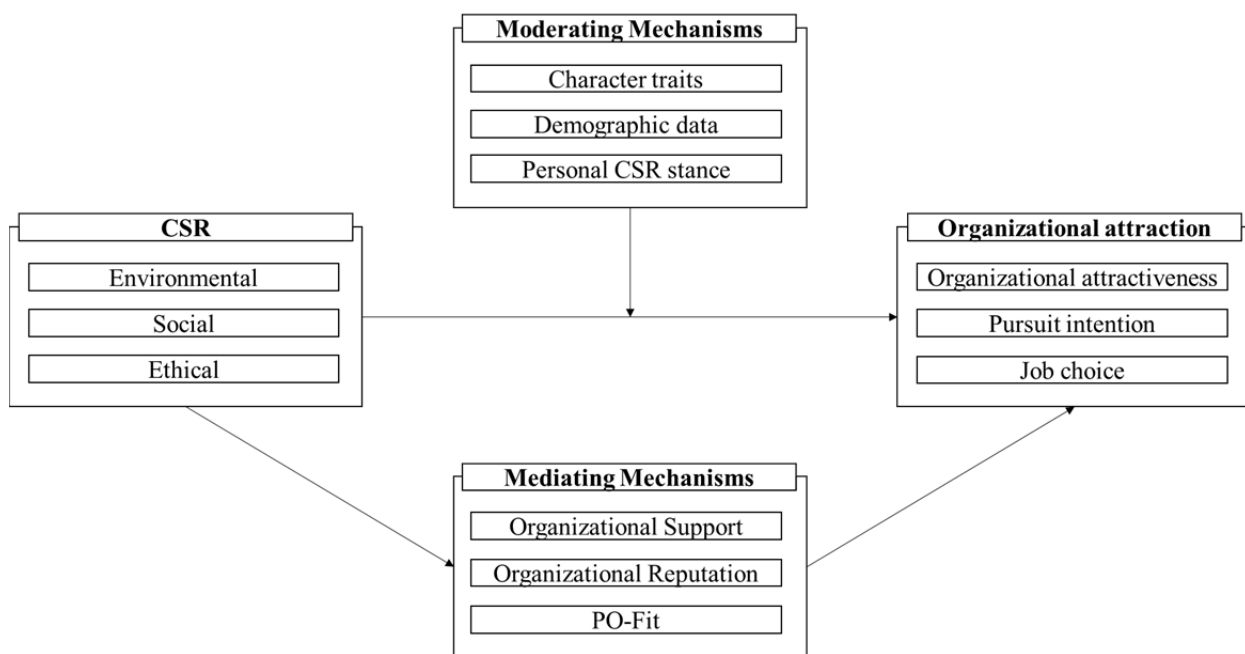
Conceptual Model

To go beyond a mere descriptive reporting of evidence, I followed Denyer & Tranfields (2011) recommendation of an interpretative and explanatory synthesis. I screened my collected data from the sample and their findings to inductively develop different clusters of variables, moderators, and mediators to which I assigned each study. Because of the heterogeneous nature of CSR, I developed my definition of the different dimensions derived from the relevant literature (see 2.1) and categorized each study accordingly. I grouped several moderators into three clusters: character traits, demographic data, and personal CSR stance. The first category reflects different predispositions of job seekers (e.g. risk aversion). Next, I grouped general information (e.g. gender, age, expected income) into one cluster and lastly, the third category consists of different variations of job seeker's attitudes or experiences with CSR. In the same way, I identified three major categories of mediators: organizational support, organizational reputation, and person-organization fit (P-O Fit). The first cluster contains job seeker's perception of how

they will be treated, valued, and cared for as an employee. Organizational reputation is defined as the overall impression of an organization and P-O Fit is the perceived similarity (e. g. in values) between the job seeker and the desired employer (Behrend, Baker, & Thompson, 2009; Gully, Phillips, Castellano, Han, & Kim, 2013). As a result of my literature review and the development of clusters, Figure 2 depicts a conceptual model as an overview of the current state of research. Based on this framework, I will illustrate differences and connections between the reviewed studies as well as generalizations and conclusions in the subsequent sections.

To reduce complexity from the conceptual model I did not show some moderators and mediators because they address different facets of the CSR-organizational attraction relationship that I could not integrate into one of the main clusters. Therefore, I focused on the predominantly relevant factors identified in the literature.

**FIGURE 2
CONCEPTUAL MODEL**



REVIEW FINDINGS

Dominant Theories

The reviewed papers used several theoretical frameworks to explain the impact of CSR on organizational attraction. Overall, there were three main theories with signaling theory being the most frequently applied. The key assumption of signaling theory is based on the existence of information asymmetries in the market (Stiglitz, 2002). Signalers as insiders have specific information about their product, organization, culture, etc. and can communicate the desired level and content of information through signals to the intended receiver (Connelly, Certo, Ireland, & Reutzel, 2011). In this context, job seekers can only access job information publicly or privately available without having the opportunity to gain more insight into a potential employer. To overcome this gap, companies have the chance to communicate positive information to outsiders in an effort to convey positive organizational attributes (Connelly et al., 2011). Many of the reviewed papers use different CSR activities to signal to their environment different efforts to create environmentally friendly business practices, ethical decision-

making, and multiple employee benefits to attract quality applicants (Kumari & Saini, 2018; Lis, 2012; Turban & Greening, 1997).

The second leading theory in my sample is social identity theory. Individuals classify themselves and others into social categories such as religion, gender, age cohort, or organizational membership and partially define their identity by affiliating themselves with that group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Companies engaging in sustainable business practices are therefore more likely to attract job seekers with similar values because they identify with their potential employer (Ersoy, 2015; Evans & Davis, 2011). This is closely connected to signaling theory because companies need to establish their identity in the mindset of applicants through activities signaling wanted values.

Stakeholder theory is also among the most used theory in my sample. Companies have a responsibility to those who have ownership, rights, or interest in a corporation and who are directly affected by their actions (Backhaus et al., 2002). Studies consider job seekers as stakeholders with a certain power over management and that CSR may be an important tool in attracting potential employees (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019; Greening & Turban, 2000). Society and the natural environment are also stakeholders, which companies can positively or negatively affect through their involvement in CSR (Alniacik, Alniacik, & Genc, 2011).

Furthermore, other papers included attraction-selection-attrition theory (Guillot-Soulez, Saint-Onge, & Soulez, 2019), boundary theory (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010; RAU & HYLAND, 2002), deontic justice theory (Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Skarlicki, 2013), relational models theory (SORENSEN, MATTINGLY, & LEE, 2010), role theory (Belinda et al., 2018) and theory of moral development (Coldwell, Billsberry, van Meurs, & Marsh, 2008).

Environmental Dimension and Organizational Attraction

Some companies may want to increase their appeal for job seekers by specifically investing in environmental activities. Bauer & Aiman-Smith (1996) found that having a proactive company stance on the environment is positively related to an increase in all three organizational attraction dimensions. Furthermore, as the goal could be to achieve an overall ecological corporate stance, the literature also found evidence of a positive relationship between environmentally sustainable practices and organizational attractiveness as well as job pursuit intention (Hanson-Rasmussen & Lauver, 2017; Hanson-Rasmussen, Lauver, & Lester, 2014; D. A. Jones et al., 2014; D. A. Jones, Willness, & Heller, 2016). Based on signaling theory, a company needs to communicate its actions to the job-seeking population. Jatmiko (2004) showed a positive relationship between a firm's ecological recruitment messaging and organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intention. Equally, Behrend et al. (2009) found that applicants' pursuit intention increases with the presence of environmental corporate messages. To reduce the perception of corporate bias, a company could be evaluated by independent organizations and in return receive an ecological rating and/or a label. Both increase the job pursuit intention of applicants and an ecological rating also positively affects organizational attractiveness (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Guillot-Soulez et al., 2019). The evidence suggests only a positive impact of the environmental dimension on organizational attraction.

In contrast, the moderating mechanisms show mixed results. Only Bauer & Aiman-Smith (1996) found an applicant's personal environmental stance as a moderator between a company's ecological stance and pursuit intention. Later research suggests no moderating effect of a person's environmental stance (Behrend et al., 2009; Jatmiko, 2004). In support, Hanson-Rasmussen et al. (2014) used an applicant's experience with environmental sustainability as a control variable and found a higher perceived attractiveness and job pursuit intention to environmentally friendly companies.

P-O Fit and organizational reputation mediated the relationship between the environmental dimension and organizational attractiveness and pursuit intention (Behrend et al., 2009; Guillot-Soulez et al., 2019).

Social Dimension and Organizational Attraction

The literature displays a variety of activities companies can utilize to increase the well-being of their employees signaling a good work environment to job seekers. Work-life balance is a commonly used

construct to describe various programs. One of the major benefits a company can offer is child- and/or eldercare to increase the pursuit intention and job choice of job seekers (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009; Wayne & Casper, 2012). The opportunity to work in different places also positively affects organizational attractiveness (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010; RAU & HYLAND, 2002; Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009). Altmann & Suess (2015) looked at temporary time off programs and found that their flexibility has no influence on organizational attractiveness but paid time off programs do have a positive impact. Mixed evidence was found on work schedule flexibility. Rau & Hyland (2002) found that flextime is not statistically significant in influencing organizational attractiveness and pursuit intention. While later studies showed the opposite result (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010; Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009). Another aspect of the social dimension involves corporate support in employee's careers. Offering mentoring programs and job-related training opportunities sends signals to job seekers about the efforts of companies to invest in their workforce (Allen & O'Brien, 2006; Renaud, Morin, & Fray, 2016). Ramasamy et al. (2016) found that the existence of a good work climate is positively related to the job choice decision of applicants which also includes a company's lay-off policy (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001). The evidence suggests only a positive impact of the social dimension on organizational attraction.

Risk aversion moderates the relationship between paid time off programs and organizational attractiveness so that strong signals are sent to individuals with a high-risk aversion (Altmann & Suess, 2015). In the cluster of demographic data, women are more likely to pursue and accept a job from a company offering childcare benefits and a good work environment (Ramasamy et al., 2016; Thompson & Aspinwall, 2009). Another aspect is the interrole conflict arising from work interfering with family life. Individuals have a desire either to integrate or separate both worlds. Rau & Hyland (2002) found that applicants with a high level of conflict are more attracted to companies offering flextime. In contrast, Bourhis & Mekkaoui (2010), as well as Casper & Buffardi (2004) showed no moderating effect of the desire for segmentation between flextime and pursuit intention and job choice.

All three mediators depicted in the conceptual model mediate the relationship between work-life balance benefits and organizational attractiveness and pursuit intention. (Casper & Buffardi, 2004; Firfiray & Mayo, 2017; Guillot-Soulez et al., 2019; Wayne & Casper, 2012).

Ethical Dimension and Organizational Attraction

Going beyond a company's obligation to abide by the framework of legal requirements, a corporate ethical policy can increase organizational attraction (Belinda et al., 2018; Evans & Davis, 2011; Lin et al., 2012; Ramasamy et al., 2016; Renaud et al., 2016). This relationship gets even stronger the more an applicant's ethical orientation is congruent with the corporate ethical orientation (Coldwell et al., 2008; May, Chang, & Shao, 2015). A major influence on a company's ethical policy is the top management and supervisors because they largely determine the ethical orientation of the company. Strobel et al. (2010) found that the ethical behavior of corporate leadership positively influences organizational attractiveness and pursuit intention. An ever-increasing area of interest is the company's ability to manage diversity. Creating an inclusive workplace for a diverse workforce with management promoting awareness of individual differences can increase organizational attraction (Ng & Burke, 2005; Wayne & Casper, 2012; Williams & Bauer, 1994). In behaving according to moral standards and in line with their values, organizations could brand themselves as ethical employers to attract job seekers (Jonsen, Point, Kelan, & Griebel, 2019). Based on signaling theory, ethically branded companies send out market signals through ethical certifications or word of mouth to increase organizational attractiveness (Osburg et al., 2018).

The two main moderators in the ethical dimension are gender and ethnic origin. Williams & Bauer (1994) found that women and minority groups generally evaluate a company more favorable regardless of their stance on diversity. Later, Ng & Burke (2005) showed the moderating effect of gender and minority status between diversity management and organizational attractiveness and job choice with women and minority groups being more attracted to inclusive employers. More recently, Ramasamy et al. (2016) found gender to only have a moderating effect in one out of four analyzed countries.

The relationship between a company's community involvement and organizational attractiveness is mediated by organizational pride and P-O Fit (D. A. Jones et al., 2014) whereas P-O Fit and organizational support mediate pursuit intention (D. A. Jones et al., 2016). Moral identification with an organization through ethical P-O Fit mediates between an individual's moral identity and job pursuit intention (May et al., 2015). Organizational reputation mediates the relationship between ethical market signals, ethical behavior of corporate leaders as well as diversity management and pursuit intention, and organizational attractiveness (Osburg et al., 2018; Wayne & Casper, 2012).

CSR Dimension and Organizational Attraction

So far, most of the evidence focusing on single factors and dimensions of CSR showed a positive relationship with organizational attraction. So as suspected when combined into one CSR dimension this does not change. The papers analyzing CSR as one system find a positive influence on organizational attraction (App, Merk, & Buettgen, 2012; Catano & Morrow Hines, 2016; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Leveson & Joiner, 2014; Pingle & Sharma, 2013; Verčič & Čorić, 2018). Others looked at CSR as a combination of the three dimensions and analyzed each individually. Most of the papers found activities of the social dimension to be rated the most favorably by applicants (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Iacovou, Shirland, & Thompson, 2011; Presley et al., 2018). I found mixed results on the preference of job seekers concerning the second most important dimension. However, the ethical dimension seems to have a higher impact on organizational attraction (Bir, Suher, & Altinbasak, 2009; Ersoy, 2015; Iacovou et al., 2011; Montgomery & Ramus, 2007; Murray & Ayoun, 2010) then the environmental dimension (Backhaus et al., 2002; Sohn, Sohn, Klaas-Wissing, & Hirsch, 2015).

An individual's ethical predisposition and self-experienced distributive justice moderates the relationship between CSR and organizational attraction (Rupp et al., 2013; Zhang & Gowan, 2012). Moderating effects are also discovered for one's desire for significant impact through work (Gully et al., 2013). Gender has a moderating effect between CSR and organizational attraction (Ferreira-Cotón & Carballo-Penela, 2016; Greening & Turban, 2000; Lis, 2018). In the personal CSR stance cluster, an applicant's pro-environmental attitudes and socio-environmental consciousness moderates the relationship between CSR and organizational attractiveness and pursuit intention (Bohlmann, Krumbholz, & Zacher, 2018; Tsai, Joe, Lin, & Wang, 2014). In contrast, Greening & Turban (2000) found no moderating effect of a job seeker's value for the environment. One reason could be the increase in public awareness over the last two decades regarding environmental issues.

Organizational Reputation and P-O Fit mediates the relationship between CSR and organizational attraction (A. P. Duarte, Gomes, & das Neves, 2014; Gully et al., 2013; Kim & Park, 2011; Story, Castanheira, & Hartig, 2016; Wang, 2013).

Limitations and Future Research Agenda

The first major limitation of this review is that the literature search has been comprehensive but not exhaustive because of the exclusion of some bodies of research. However, reading every existing piece of literature in a broad field like CSR is almost impossible. Another limitation is the selection of keywords that might have limited the analyzed topic and therefore omitted potentially relevant papers. Third, this review does not separate its findings between different countries and cultures. Different governmental regulations and cultural values can have an impact on how CSR is defined and perceived by job seekers (Hanson-Rasmussen & Lauver, 2017). Only a few studies (Alonso-Almeida & Llach, 2019; Ramasamy et al., 2016) conducted a cross-country comparison but future research could analyze more in-depth how differences in culture affect CSR and organizational attraction. Fourth, there is a clear lack of including company size as a major factor in this field of empirical research (Szamosi, 2006). As there are significant differences in dealing with CSR between small and medium-sized enterprises and corporations. For example, the higher public visibility of large corporations associated with stronger external pressure influences their CSR activities (Faller & Knyphausen-Aufseß, 2018). Future research should distinguish more between those company types in their surveys and consequently draw other practical implications from the findings. Lastly, the sole focus on CSR as an indicator of an applicant's attraction is not

sufficient. Some studies already include CSR or specific activities of CSR as one factor among many other more “traditional” factors (Baum & Kabst, 2013; Bustamante & Brenninger, 2014; Chapman et al., 2005; Lis, 2018). A promising research path would be to further this comparison between CSR and “traditional” factors as it more reflects reality.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this review was to address the impact of corporate CSR activities on applicant’s attraction. Overall, the literature suggests a positive relationship between environmental, social, and ethical programs and organizational attraction. Activities in the social dimension seem to be rated highest among job seekers. Different character traits influence attraction especially in the social and CSR dimension but to a varying degree while demographic data mainly has influence in specific areas like diversity or child- and eldercare. The applicant’s personal CSR stance enhances attraction in particular within the environmental dimension. All dimensions influence attraction through perceived organizational support, a good reputation, and a perceived person organization-fit. Companies should be aware of their corporate culture and determine which kind of applicant fits the most with their requirements. In which CSR activities companies should invest to attract the most qualified workforce is largely up to the individual circumstances like industry sector, job position, etc. but the higher the fit between applicant and organization the higher the attraction. To summarize, CSR activities can help companies in the “war for talent” by enhancing their attraction for potential employees.

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