



**MASTER THESIS**

**Through the eyes of the referrer:**  
A qualitative study into how employees  
experience employee referral hiring

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## Abstract

**Introduction:** Organizations are increasingly developing strategies that facilitate the recruitment and retainment of employees as it is of great importance for their success and survival. One of these strategic methods is employee referral hiring which has been a topic of interest in many different disciplines showing promising results. However, there are numerous theoretical explanations trying to explain the workings of an employee referral, whereas, in principle, it remains an intuitive phenomenon executed by the referrer.

**Objectives:** Although employee referral hiring has an intuitive character that implicitly suggests an important role for referrers, research has paid little attention to this group. Therefore, the aim of this study is to provide insights into how each different phase of an employee referral is experienced by the referrer.

**Methods:** 18 semi-structured interviews with employees of a physiotherapy were conducted in order to study how employee referrals are experienced by referrers. Prior to these interviews, an experimental condition was added in order to let the participants (re-)experience how it is to be part of an employee referral hiring process ensuring that the topic was on top of their mind. 13 participants were physiotherapists, two were sport physiotherapists and three were manual therapists. 11 participants were male and nine were female. A vast majority of the participants had previously engaged in or was already familiar with referral activities.

**Conclusion:** This study identified seven novel factors that motivate and six unique factors that demotivate referrers to engage in an employee referral which have not been identified in literature before. Furthermore, it found that, when identifying a potential referral, the most important aspect referrers pay attention to is someone's personality. In addition, having a strong tie with the potential referral helps the referrer to estimate whether or not this person is appropriate to refer to the organization. Next to that, this study found that referrers try to praise, help and comfort their referred worker before the application which, consequently, questions the autonomy and sincerity of the referred worker's application. Moreover, four post-hire referrer outcomes under hiring conditions and two post-hire referrer outcomes under rejection conditions were found. Lastly, this study found that the extent to which referrers feel committed to and responsible for the employee referral differs per phase and outcome.

**Keywords:** Employee Referrals, Employee Referral Hiring, Referrer

# Table of content

1. Introduction	5
2. Theoretical Framework	8
2.1 Employer branding	8
2.2 Brand ambassadors	8
2.3 Employee referral hiring	8
2.4 Pre-hire motivation and action	9
2.4.1. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	10
2.4.2 Prescreening and fit assessment	10
2.4.3 Referring behavior	11
2.5 Application and hiring	11
2.6 Post-hire outcomes	12
2.6.1 Referred worker outcomes under hiring conditions	13
2.6.2 Referred worker outcomes under rejection conditions	14
2.6.3 Referrer outcomes under hiring conditions	14
2.6.4 Referrer outcomes under rejection conditions	14
2.7 Contextual factors	14
3. Methods	16
3.1 Research design	16
3.2 Research context	16
3.3 Participants	16
3.4 Procedure and instrument	17
3.5 Data processing and analysis	18
4. Results	19
4.1 Pre-hire motivation and action phase	19
4.1.1 Motivation	19
4.1.2 Identification of a potential referral	22
4.1.3 Referral actions in response to the job opening	24
4.2 Application and hiring phase	26
4.2.1 Sympathizing	26
4.2.2 Referred worker refrains from applying	27
4.2.3 Influence and power	28
4.3 Post-hire outcomes	29
4.3.1 Hiring outcomes of the job opening	29
4.3.2 Under hiring conditions	29
4.3.3 Under rejection conditions	30

5. Discussion	32
5.1 Theoretical implications	32
5.1.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation	32
5.1.2 Identification of a potential referral	33
5.1.3 Influence and power during the application	34
5.1.4 Post-hire outcomes	34
5.1.5 Varying commitment and responsibility	35
5.2 Practical implications	35
5.3 Limitations and future research	36
5.4 Conclusion	38
6. References	39
7. Appendices	42
Appendix A: Job opening Pro-F sport physiotherapist	42
Appendix B: Topic list for experienced employees	43
Appendix C: Topic list for less experienced employees	45
Appendix D: Informed consent form	47

# 1. Introduction

70% of the organizations in the U.S. have programs encouraging employee referrals  
(Burks, Cowgill, Hoffman & Housman, 2015)

Referral hiring accounts for 30% to 50% of an organization's job opening fillings  
(Bewley, 1999; Fernandez, Castilla, Moore, 2000)

Referred workers yield profits 21% to 39% higher than non-referred workers  
(Bewley, 1999; Fernandez et al., 2000)

Organizations are increasingly seeking to develop strategies that facilitate the recruitment and retainment of skilled employees as it is of great importance for organizational success and survival (van Hoyer, Bas, Cromheecke & Lievens, 2012; Chhabra & Sharma, 2011; Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010; Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Important in this process is employer branding which “represents a firm's efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 501). These branding efforts help organizations to effectively compete for talent and positively affects employee engagement, recruitment, and retention so that it is perceived by existing, potential, and former employees as a good place to work (Jiang & Iles, 2011). However, despite its organizational importance, relatively little research has explored the role of branding in retaining and attracting organizations' human capital (Wilden, et al., 2010). Therefore, this research will focus on employee referral hiring, which is an employer branding strategy that is being used by organizations in order to respond to recruitment challenges.

Employee referral hiring is a “popular method of recruitment that relies on organizational employees – referrers – to communicate job opening information to individuals in their social network – referred workers –” (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019, p. 1325). These referrals are an attractive recruitment source for organizations because of three reasons. First of all, employees are cost- and time-effective recruiters often equipped to screen the labor market independent from already existing organizational recruitment sources (Pallais & Sands, 2016). Next to that, referred workers have a higher performance, retention and job attitude compared to non-referred workers (Pieper, 2015; Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). Lastly, employee referral hiring is particularly useful for organizations in order to reach people who are not actively searching for a job (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

Because of its organizational attractiveness, employee referral hiring has been a topic of interest in many different disciplines that shows promising results. However, due to the development in multiple disciplines such as management, sociology, economics, and psychology, there are deviations in approaches and results from studies are often disconnected. Consequently, there are numerous theoretical explanations trying to declare the workings of employee referral hiring. However, employee referral hiring remains, in principle, an intuitive phenomenon executed by the referrer (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

Although the intuitive character of employee referral hiring implicitly suggests an important role for referrers, little attention in research has been given to them (Pieper, 2015). Most studies that were conducted within the field of employee referral hiring were dedicated

to examining the pre-hire motivation and action phase and its post-hire outcomes (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). However, literature has remained silent about what referrers think about employee referrals and how they actually experience to be part of this process. Since employee referral hiring is a popular organizational practice, a better understanding of how referrers experience it can be useful for organizations in a practical manner. By taking into account the referral experiences of referrers when designing an employee referral program, the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs could further increase. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to provide insights, from the perspective of the referrer, how each different phase of an employee referral is experienced. Hence, the following research question has been formulated:

*How is employee referral hiring experienced by referrers?*

By answering the research question, this study offers four contributions. First of all, this study goes beyond prior research that has specifically focused on the pre-hire motivation and action phase. Many scholars dedicated their research to referrers' motivations to engage in employee referrals, the prescreen and fit assessment, realistic information sharing as well as the referrers' demographics. However, despite these valuable insights, it remains unknown how employees actually experience this phase. Therefore, this research extends the understanding of the pre-hire motivation and action phase.

Secondly, the application and hiring phase is significantly underresearched compared to the other two phases of employee referral hiring (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). Especially the perspective of the referrer remains unexplored as the studies into this phase primarily focused on the referred worker and the employer. Therefore, this research addresses a literature gap by examining how referrers experience the application and hiring phase.

Furthermore, because of the lean amount of research conducted on referrer outcomes, this research addresses another gap in literature. Only a few articles offer insights in referrer outcomes when the referred worker was hired. Next to that, "research to date has also been largely void on referrer reactions to their referred candidate being rejected for employment" (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019, p. 1338). So, by studying referrers' experiences regarding the post-hire outcomes of an employee referral, this research provides insights in and advances the understanding of how referring affects the employees of an organization when their referral is hired as well as rejected.

Lastly, currently only 12 qualitative studies, compared to 92 quantitative studies, into employee referral hiring exist (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). Therefore, due to the qualitative nature of this study, it contributes to the relatively scarce amount of qualitative insights into this topic.

In the upcoming sections a theoretical framework is presented in which the concepts of employer branding, brand ambassadors and each different phase of employee referral hiring as well as its contextual factors are explained. Furthermore, a method section discusses the study's research design, the specific research context of Pro-F physiotherapy, the participants of the study, its procedure and the use of semi-structured in-depth interviews. Next to that, it explains how the data is processed and analyzed. Thereafter, the results of the study are discussed, and the most striking findings are presented. Lastly, a discussion and conclusion are written in in

order to draw conclusions from the data and to answer the research question. Moreover, the limitations and the relevance of the study will be addressed, and suggestions are made for further research.



## **2. Theoretical Framework**

The following sections of this report discuss relevant literature related to employer branding and employee referral hiring eventually leading to a theoretical framework in which these concepts will be explored.

### **2.1 Employer branding**

Employer branding is defined as “a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm” (Sullivan, 2004, as cited in Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 501) and focusses on the differentiation potential of an organization’s characteristics as an employer from their competitors (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). It can be seen as a further extension of branding theory and research which involves communication efforts to current as well as potential employees that the organization is a desirable place to work (Jiang & Iles, 2011). Promoting the brand outside the organization makes the firm attractive to potential employees, whereas brand promotion within the organization increases employee loyalty (Chhabra & Sharma, 2011).

Organizations are increasingly using employer branding to attract potential employees and to maintain current employees by engaging them in the culture and strategy of the organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The importance of employer branding is based on the assumption that human capital brings value to the organization, and through investing in this capital, a sustainable competitive advantage can be achieved which improves organizational performance (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barney, 1991).

### **2.2 Brand ambassadors**

Employees are a major asset of an organization who build the employer brand (De Chernatony, Keynes & Harris, 2001) as they are perceived to be representations of the brand to customers, potential customers, the public at large and prospective employees (Gelb & Rangarajan, 2014). Especially in the era of social media, employees play an important role in positively influencing the perception of the organization among key target audiences via their social media activities (Dreher, 2014). Therefore, it is important for the organization to internally market the brand to their employees so that they could consistently project the brand image of the organization to its external stakeholders (Al-Shuaibi, Shamsudin & Aziz, 2016).

Organizations expect that employees live the brand and become brand ambassadors by projecting the correct image of the employer brand. Olins (2000) states that an organization’s employer brand is built by brand ambassadors who steadily and consistently interact with the stakeholders of the organization and create a corporate image in the mind of these stakeholders (as cited in Gilani & Jamshed, 2015). “The message that ‘our brand is special’ is one that employees spread not only to customers and potential customers, but also convey as brand ambassadors to potential employees” (Gelb & Rangarajan, 2014, p. 105). Therefore, brand ambassadors can be used as a recruitment source which will be explained in the next section.

### **2.3 Employee referral hiring**

One way an organization can use its employees as brand ambassadors in order to attract and recruit prospective employees is via employee referral hiring. “Employee referrals are a

recruitment source that uses current employees' social networks to fill job openings with new hires" (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019, p. 1326). Within this process, the individual making the referral and who is part of the organization as well as independent of the organization's formal recruitment is called the referrer (Burks et al., 2015). The referred worker is the person who receives the job opening information from the referrer (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). Employee referral hiring can be seen as a form of word-of-mouth (WOM) communication, which is defined as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived non-commercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, product, organization, or a service" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). It is an attractive recruitment source for organizations since employees are able to identify suitable prospective employees, provide trustworthy organizational information and recommend potential employees to apply, all at a low cost to the organization (Cable & Turban, 2001; Pallais & Sands, 2016). Also, employee referral hiring can help organizations to reach passive job seekers (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

Schlachter and Pieper (2019) have developed a model that explains employee referral hiring as a process consisting of three phases: (1) pre-hire motivation and action, (2) application and hiring, and (3) post-hire outcomes. Next to these three phases, they argue that there are also contextual factors influencing the referring process. Their model is visualized in Figure 1 and has frequently been used as a basis throughout this thesis. Each of the three phases of this model and the contextual factors will be separately discussed in the upcoming sections.

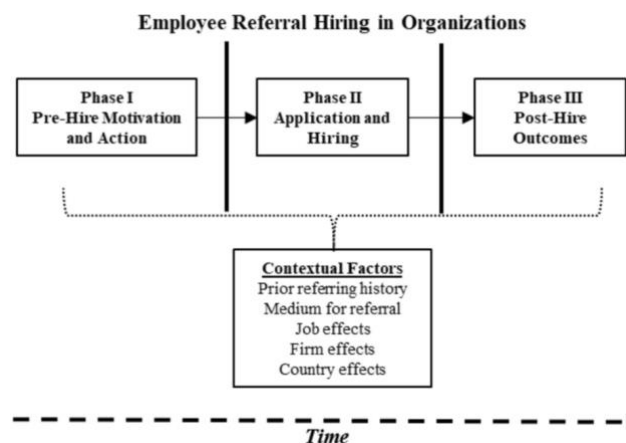


Figure 1. Employee referral hiring in organizations (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

## 2.4 Pre-hire motivation and action

The pre-hire motivation and action phase is "the time in which the referrers are motivated to seek and refer candidates" (Pieper & Schlachter, 2019, p. 1130). As visualized in Figure 2, this phase can be divided in three steps: (1) motivation, (2) prescreening and fit assessment, and (3) referring behavior. Each of these steps will be explained in the following sections.

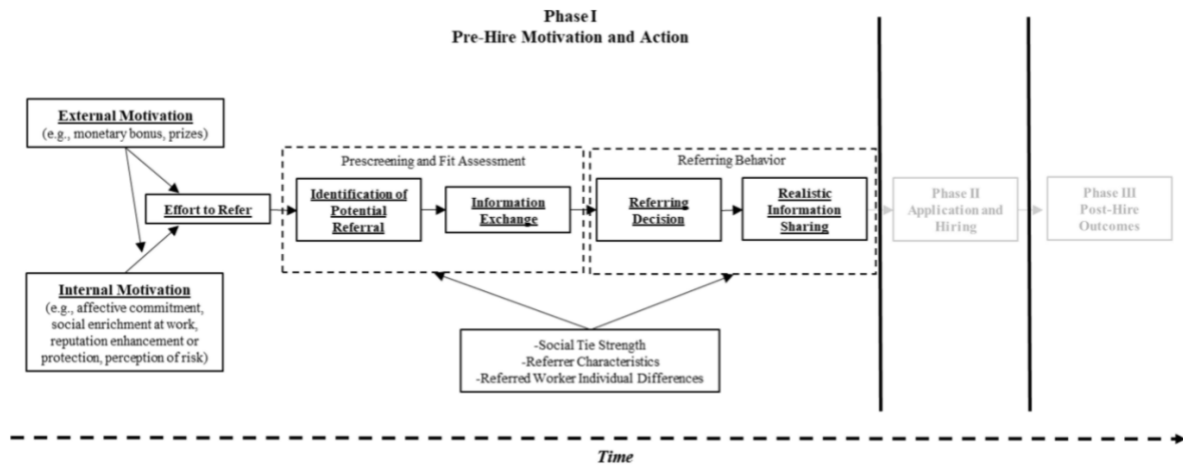


Figure 2. Pre-hire motivation and action phase (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

#### 2.4.1. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation

According to Shinnar et al. (2004), employees may be intrinsically motivated to engage in employee referrals when they feel positive about their employer. They explain that this can be either based on (1) self-involvement; to relive the joy of joining the organization, (2) self-confirmation; to reinforce their perception that they made the right choice of working for the organization, or (3) other involvement; the desire to share the benefits of joining an organization with others. Van Hoyer (2013) adds that employees are also intrinsically driven by job satisfaction, the desire to help job seekers find good-fitting jobs, and the desire to help the organization find good-fitting employees.

Next to relying on the internal motivation of the employees, organizations may also offer an incentive for referrals in order to stimulate referring behavior by extrinsically motivating employees (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). Some research supports the motivating power of incentives in order to influence desired referring behavior (Pieper, Greenwald & Schlachter, 2018; van Hoyer, 2013). However, other studies are less confirmatory. For instance, Fafchamps and Moradi (2015) provide evidence that referral bonuses lead to opportunistic referring behavior where employees act in their own self-interest unless there is a disincentive. Moreover, referred workers' awareness that their referrer receives a referral bonus decreases the credibility of the referrer consequently negatively impacting the attractiveness of the organization (Stockman, van Hoyer & Carpentier, 2017).

Despite of being aware of job opening information, referrers may also decide not to share it. According to Marin (2012), referrers can be demotivated to engage in an employee referral because of the awkwardness of sharing unsolicited information. Next to that, Pieper et al. (2018) argue that referrers may also decide not to engage in an employee referral when they perceive a certain risk in referring. Smith (2005) supports this claim and stated that, for instance, the referrer's concerns about their organizational reputation can be such a risk.

#### 2.4.2 Prescreening and fit assessment

During the prescreening and fit assessment, the referrer identifies a potential referral and exchanges information with that person. This step is about selecting individuals who possess characteristics that match with the job requirements. Selection is defined as "the process of

picking individuals who have relevant qualifications to fill jobs in an organization” (Kumari, 2012, p. 35). Selecting potential referrals is an important process because of three reasons: (1) performance; the performance of the referrer depends, partly, on the performance of the referral, (2) cost; referring the wrong person would be a waste of time and money, and (3) legal obligations; the equal employment law requires nondiscriminatory selection procedures (Kumari, 2012).

After having selected a potential referral, the referrer makes a fit assessment and gathers relevant information about the potential referral which could help in the decision whether to refer this person to the organization or not (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

### **2.4.3 Referring behavior**

Referrers are highly selective in deciding whom to refer since they perceive the performance of their referral hire as a reflection of themselves to the employer and their colleagues. These concerns mean that referrers only recommend and engage in realistic information sharing with those believed to be well suited to the organization’s task and social environment in order to protect their reputation (Pieper et al., 2018; Smith, 2005). To reduce this risk, referrers tend to refer people like themselves which is called homophily in social networks (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). However, referrers may also be concerned about their own future and promotion chances within the organization. Therefore, contradictory to protecting their reputation at work, employees may also offer referred workers below their own ability in order to reduce the threat of others being better (Yakubovich & Lup, 2006).

Another popular theory about sharing job information by referrers is the strength of tie developed by Granovetter. He defined social ties as the “combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie” (as cited in Schlachter & Pieper, 2019, p. 1331) and argues that, instead of strong ties such as close friends or family members, weak ties are most important in employee referrals since it moves across many social circles.

## **2.5 Application and hiring**

When a referred worker decides to apply, this person enters the application and hiring phase. In this phase, the referred worker proceeds through selection and will receive a hiring decision which includes a starting wage. “Although this phase is significantly underresearched compared to the other phases, there is significant evidence that using social networks increases the likelihood of getting an interview and a job offer and, also, the person accepting it” (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019, p. 1334).

In the application and hiring phase, referred candidates benefit from multiple advantages compared to non-referred candidates. Bartus (2001) describes this phenomenon as particularism and explains that referred workers receive a special treatment during the selection phase. Reynolds (as cited in Schlachter & Pieper, 2019, p. 1334), for instance, explains that when candidates are tipped off about a job opening, they have the possibility to apply immediately and prepare “credentials organized with this vacancy in mind” which increases the likelihood that they are perceived as well-fitting to the job. Next to that, according to Yakubovich and Lup (2006), referred workers who are recommended by high performers tend

to be hired more often. These researchers theorize that high-performing employees have a good understanding of how a particular job should be performed and, therefore, should be able to coach the referred worker before and after hiring. Schlachter (2018) adds to this that the higher the power of the referrer, in terms of his/her job level, the greater the hiring likelihood becomes. People who found their jobs through social contacts also earn higher salaries (Brown, Setren & Topa, 2012). Pinkston (2012) specified this claim and provided evidence that there was a wage advantage when referred workers were recommended from the employer's family or friends, whereas referred workers recommended by current employees show no wage difference. However, this monetary advantage is temporary and diminishes over time (Brown et al., 2012; Dustmann, Glitz, Schönberg & Brücker, 2016).

In general, referred workers are more likely to be hired and to accept job offers, even though they have similar skills and characteristics compared to other applicants (Brown et al., 2012; Burks et al., 2015). This superior performance of hiring through personal contacts, compared to other hiring methods, can be explained through the realistic information hypothesis. Due to the social tie between referrer and referred worker, the referred worker possesses more complete and accurate information about a job position and/or employer which is not available to other job applicants. Similarly, the employer is provided with extra information about the candidate which would otherwise not have been obtained via their resume or through a job interview. Therefore, it enables both the referred worker as well as the employer to access difficult-to-obtain information which allows both parties to have more appropriate expectations and make better decisions. This, eventually, increases the likelihood of person-job fit (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Williams, Labig & Stone, 1993). However, "prescreening may also play a part because applicants from referrers may already be of high quality before selection procedures begin" (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019, p. 1334).

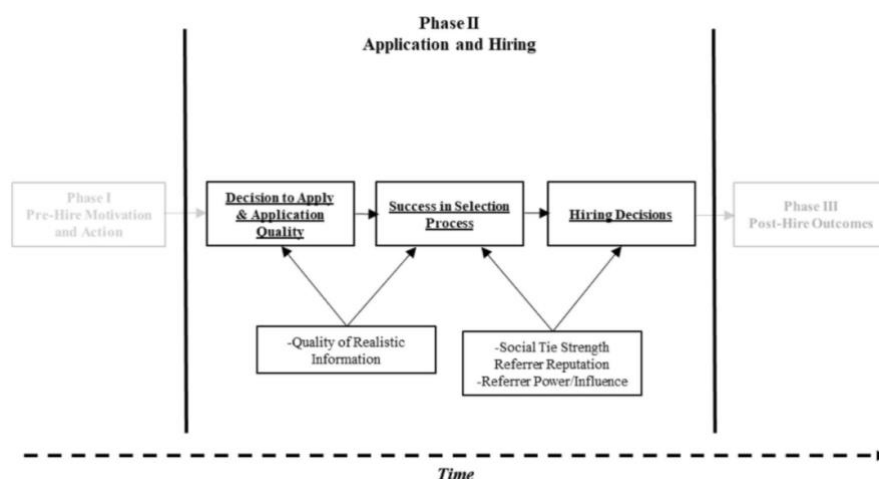


Figure 3. Application and hiring phase (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

## 2.6 Post-hire outcomes

After going through the application and hiring phase, the referred candidate is either hired or rejected by the employer. As visualized in Figure 4, both situations influence the post-hire outcomes for the referred worker as well as the referrer which creates four different possible

scenarios: (1) referred worker outcomes under hiring conditions, (2) referred worker outcomes under rejection conditions, (3) referrer outcomes under hiring conditions, and (4) referrer outcomes under rejection conditions. Each of these four scenarios will be explained in the upcoming sections.

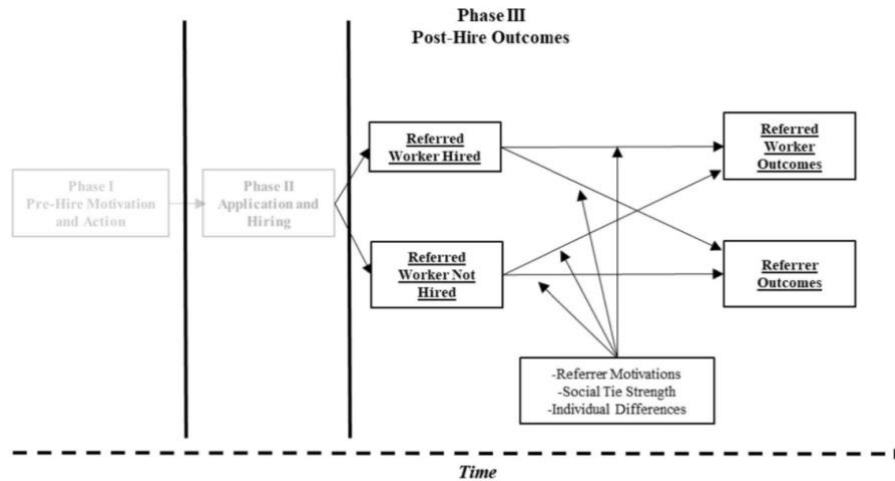


Figure 4. Post-hire outcomes (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

### 2.6.1 Referred worker outcomes under hiring conditions

Most research that has been conducted on the post-hire outcomes of employee referral hiring has aimed at the referred worker outcomes (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). These studies have found results regarding the referred worker's turnover, which is the rate at which employees leave the organization, and their performance. Especially predicting the turnover rate of referred workers has received considerable attention from scholars. Amongst others, Brown et al. (2012) and Pieper (2015) argue that referred workers have a longer tenure in organizations. There are three theories that are primarily being used in order to support this claim. First, the realistic information hypothesis, which explains that referred workers often apply to better fitting positions and, therefore, stay longer at the organization. Secondly, the individual differences hypothesis suggests that the similarity between referrer and referred worker, due to their shared characteristics, increases the likelihood of the referred worker being more attractive to the organization. The third theory, the prescreening hypothesis, argues that referred workers are encouraged to apply for a job because the referrer already prescreens and assesses their fit with the job (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019). Although multiple studies and theories, such as the ones just described, have supported and declared why referred workers have longer tenures, some scholars have not found this positive relationship (Werbel & Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993).

Next to the longer tenure of referred workers, there are also post-hire outcomes regarding their performance. According to Pieper (2015), referred workers from high-performing and long-tenured employees perform better. However, their performance was less effective when their referrer remained employed. She also explained that when referrer and referred worker have a congruent job, there was a decrease in referred worker performance too. These findings are contradictory with the social enrichment perspective which explains that

referred workers benefit from the fact that their referrer can act as a mentor when they enter the organization (Fernandez et al., 2000; Pieper, 2015).

### **2.6.2 Referred worker outcomes under rejection conditions**

Despite the extensive research on referred worker outcomes, Schlachter and Pieper (2019) “note that no research has investigated how referred individuals react after being rejected for employment” (p. 1337). After the referrer has ‘put in a good word’, the referred worker may be disappointed in the referrer which could affect their relationship, how referred workers respond to future job referrals, and how they perceive the organization as well as the job opening (Schlachter & Pieper, 2019).

### **2.6.3 Referrer outcomes under hiring conditions**

Although plenty of research focusing on employee referrals has been conducted on its post-hire outcomes, only four publications have specified on the referrer outcomes (Pieper et al., 2017; Schlachter 2018; Shinnar et al., 2004; Smith, 2005). Two out of these four publications aimed at the post-hire outcomes for the referrer under hiring conditions.

Results from the study of Pieper et al. (2017) showed that employees were 27% less likely to leave the organization with the presence of a referral hire and that the referrer performance increased with 5.1%. However, referrer and referred worker having the same job was associated with a decrease in referrer performance. Next to that, Shinnar et al. (2004) showed that engaging in employee referrals increases the normative commitment of the referrer immediately after the referral.

### **2.6.4 Referrer outcomes under rejection conditions**

The only results belonging to this specific post-hire scenario are from Schlachter (2018). He demonstrated that referrers have a higher turnover intent as well as a lower affective commitment if their referral got rejected. These feelings can be tempered when the referrer perceives a high level of procedural justice.

## **2.7 Contextual factors**

Throughout the years, the contextual factors that influence employee referral hiring have received little attention from scholars. However, Schlachter and Pieper (2019) identified two contextual factors that influence employee referral hiring. These factors are prior referring history and job effects.

Only a few scholars have focused on the prior referring history of a referrer. Fernandez and Castilla (as cited in Schlachter & Pieper, 2019), for instance, demonstrated that employees who were hired after being referred are more likely to also refer. This is interesting for organizations as employee referral hiring can create a cycle of employees that are willing to refer which is a very cost-efficient way of recruiting (Rubineau & Fernandez, 2015). Additionally, Smith (2005) argues that employees are less likely to refer when having a history of poor referrals.

When discussing the influence of job effects on employee referral hiring, already one relationship is explained. The higher the referrer’s job level, the greater the likelihood of a job

offer for the referred worker becomes (Schlachter, 2018). Marsden (1994) adds that certain positions within an organization are more or less suitable to referrals than other recruitment sources.

Next to prior referring history and job effects, Schlachter and Pieper (2019) proposed three other contextual factors that may have an influence on employee referral hiring but need additional research. These factors are the medium which is used for referral, firm effects and country effects.



### **3. Methods**

In this chapter, the methods of this research will be discussed including an explanation of the research design, research context, participants, research procedure and instrument, data processing, and data analysis.

#### **3.1 Research design**

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative research design was designed since this type of research is specifically useful for open-ended discovery (Levitt, Bamberg, Creswell, Frost, Josselson, & Suárez-Orozco, 2018). Moreover, “a particular strength of qualitative research is their value in explaining what is going on in organizations (Avison, Lau, Myers & Nielsen, 1999, p. 94). This matched with the aims of this research as this study entered uncharted waters and focused on how referrers, within an organization, experience employee referral hiring which has remained undiscovered in previous studies on employee referrals.

#### **3.2 Research context**

This research was conducted at Pro-F, a professional physiotherapy founded in 2007. At first, this organization started as a small clinic at home only having a few patients. However, the organization grew fast and within approximately 10 years Pro-F nowadays consists of 29 employees of which 18 therapists. Apart from physiotherapy, Pro-F also has specialists in manual therapy, podiatry and osteopathy. Next to treating regular patients, Pro-F is specialized in helping professional athletes with their rehabilitation towards their maximum performance. They have several partnerships with top-class sport organizations such as, amongst others, FC Twente and TalentNED. In order to maintain their high-quality treatments, Pro-F built their own Performance Center a few years ago.

Because of their growth, Pro-F aims to design, as part of a larger employer branding strategy, an employee referral program in order to target prospective employees who could enlarge their team. Therefore, they are curious to know how their employees would experience such a program so that they can take this into account while implementing it.

#### **3.3 Participants**

The population that was central in this research were referrers and the participants who were part of this study were the employees of Pro-F. All of their therapists participated in the study which means that this research counted 18 participants. This group of participants consisted of 13 physiotherapists, two sport physiotherapists and three manual therapists of which 11 were male and nine were female. 17 participants already had experiences with employee referral hiring before the start of the study. From this group, a majority of 12 participants stated that they have referred a candidate to an organization before. Five of these 12 participants indicated to have other experiences with employee referrals too. They either were also instructed by an organization to look for potential referrals, referred as a candidate or involved in hiring decisions. In total, four participants stated that, prior to this research, they have received instructions from their organization to check their network for potential referrals. Next to that, a total of four participants also explained that they were referred as a candidate to an

organization and another four participants explained that they have been involved in hiring decisions before. One participant had no experiences with employee referral hiring before the start of this study.

### **3.4 Procedure and instrument**

Because every employee of Pro-F had different experiences with employee referral hiring, this research started with the addition of an experimental condition. A job opening for a sport physiotherapist was made available by Pro-F with the purpose to be filled through an employee referral (Appendix A). By doing so, every employee became a referrer and experienced – again – how it is to be part of an employee referral hiring process which ensured that the topic of employee referral hiring was on top of their mind. Via Pro-F's weekly newsletter, which was sent by e-mail, the employees were instructed to actively search in their network for a new sport physiotherapist during a period of three weeks. The newsletter included a link to the vacancy and clearly stated that when the employees had questions about the job opening, the procedure in general or when they wanted to refer someone, they had to approach the person responsible for Pro-F's human resources.

After this period of three weeks, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with Pro-F's employees in order to reflect on how they have experienced their active engagement in employee referral hiring. This research method was used because of its discovery-oriented character. As the interviews were semi-structured, the most important topics and questions were made beforehand which resulted in two topic lists that are presented in Appendix B and Appendix C. The reason of using two topic lists is because Pro-F's employees had different levels of experience with employee referral hiring. Whereas some employees of Pro-F did barely take part in an employee referral before, others did previously engage in employee referrals and already experienced the whole process from the pre-hire motivation and action phase until the post-hire outcomes. In order to get the most valuable data out of the interviews, one topic list was made for the employees who had previously referred a candidate before, and another was made for the less experienced employees who did not yet experience every different phase of an employee referral. This enabled the researcher to ask the participants questions which were relevant to their personal situation. For instance, the more experienced employees were specifically asked to share their previous experiences with employee referrals outside of the three-week experimental condition by asking: 'can you tell something about your previous experiences with employee referral hiring?' The less experienced employees were asked to imagine scenarios sketched by the researcher they did not yet experience. One of the questions belonging to such a sketched scenario was: 'Imagine that your referral got hired, how would you feel?'

Despite the different questions, both topic lists are based on the model of Schlachter and Pieper (2019), as already visualized in Figure 1. This model explains employee referral hiring as a process consisting of three phases to which different activities belong. By using this model, the researcher was able to go through every different step of an employee referral during the interviews. Therefore, this framework functioned as a basis for the topic lists. In order to ensure the conversational nature of the interviews, there was still the possibility for the researcher to deviate from these lists and ask other questions.

The interviews were conducted personally through a video call. Before every interview started, the participant had to agree with the informed consent form the researcher had sent via e-mail beforehand (Appendix D). They had to agree with, for instance, being subject of research and with the interview being recorded. Moreover, this form clearly explained that the data will be treated confidentially and anonymously. Despite there was no time limit set for the duration of the interviews, they all lasted around 30 minutes each.

### **3.5 Data processing and analysis**

After the interviews were conducted, the recordings of the interviews were replayed and verbatim transcribed resulting in 157 pages of single-spaced text. The transcripts do not contain personal information of the participants such as names or birth dates in order to ensure their anonymity. Once the interviews were transcribed, the transcripts were saved on the personal computer of the researcher.

The transcripts were coded with the use of ATLAS.ti. Through theoretically sensitive coding, based on the model of Schlachter & Pieper (2019), the core categories of the coding scheme were identified. Examples of these core categories include, for instance, “motivation” and “post-hire outcomes”. While analyzing these core categories, subthemes started to emerge. At this point, the axial coding started which involved the grouping of corresponding codes into a specific core category. For example, the subcodes “motivating factors” and “demotivating factors” were grouped together under the core category of “motivation”. Next to that, “outcomes under hiring conditions” and “outcomes under rejection conditions” were categorized at “post-hire outcomes”. Once all the subthemes were identified through grouping similar codes under a core category, the coding scheme was finalized. As a last step in the coding process, the transcripts were analyzed again in order to discover relationships between different core categories and subthemes, and to try to understand the underlying logic of the data. Through this selective coding, a certain pattern in the data was identified which will be discussed in the results section of this thesis.

In order to assess the reliability of the coding scheme, 10% of the transcripts were coded by a second coder. To ensure an adequate inter-coder reliability, the Cohen’s Kappa was calculated and turned out to be .83 indicating a substantial agreement. The information gathered from each participant was compared and the results will be discussed in the next section of this report.

## 4. Results

When analyzing the results, it caught the eye that, throughout the process of an employee referral, the participants felt responsible for and committed to this process to a variable extent. Their involvement changed during different phases and outcomes of the referral. Therefore, the findings of this study will be explained according to the three-phase model, as earlier introduced, by Schlachter and Pieper (2019). This enables to describe the differences in behavior, motives and thoughts caused by their changing feelings of involvement and responsibility during different phases of the referral. In order to present a clear picture of how the participants experience employee referral hiring, quotes from the interviews will be used to support the interpretations of the results. Next to that, after each section a table summarizes and presents a clear overview of the results including additional sample comments.

### 4.1 Pre-hire motivation and action phase

#### 4.1.1 Motivation

During the interviews, the participants identified 10 factors that motivate them to engage in an employee referral. Four participants stated that they were motivated to engage in an employee referral because they look forward to work together with their referred worker. *“We are good friends and it is nice to work together with someone you are friends with at the same organization. So, this motivates”*, according to participant 7. Next to that, four participants said that they were motivated to engage in an employee referral because they see the urge of the job opening. Participant 8, for instance, said: *“I am maybe the person who suffers the most from the fact that we do not have a sport physiotherapist because I am the one who is busy now ... So, because I see the urge of the job opening, I really did put effort in finding someone”*. Furthermore, seven participants indicated that when their work is appreciated by the organization it motivates them to engage in other referrals. As participant 16 explains: *“Yes, it is always pleasant that you are appreciated for your work. A compliment or having dinner together is always pleasant and is something which motivates me, I think”*. Seven participants were motivated because they want to improve the organization. *“As a team you want to improve Pro-F’s quality and having a couple of good sport physiotherapists helps”*, according to participant 2. Also, seven participants explained that the success of a previous referral motivates to engage in a new one. Furthermore, a referral bonus was indicated by five participants as a motivation and six participants want to help job seekers find good-fitting jobs. Participant 18 stated: *“We have such a cool organization with good facilities, nice opportunities for development and a nice team. You just want to give people a chance to work at such a nice organization”*. Additionally, five participants want to help the organization find good-fitting employees. This is exemplified by the statement of participant 5 who said: *“We all know who will fit in here, so I am happy that the organization invites us to help”*. Three participants stated that they are motivated because they feel responsible for the organization. Participant 3 indicated: *“It is an organization where I feel responsible for. I have seen what they did, from the start until now. I think that it is so cool, and it motivates to contribute to it”*. Lastly, three participants were motivated because they like the organizational involvement that is related to engaging in an employee referral. *“I think it is good that we get signals like ‘we are still looking for someone’. I like it, because together we form a team. If they just unlimitedly hire people*

*without our involvement, which happened in the past, it is a bit strange. It is pleasant to know what is going on. Therefore, I like to be involved and it is good that the organization asks us if we know someone”, according to participant 5.*

**Table 1**

Factors motivating referrers to engage in employee referrals

Motivation	Definition	Sample comments
Working with the referred worker <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because he/she likes to work with his/her referred worker	“My personal motivation was that I would have really liked it if she started to work at our organization”
Urge of the job opening <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because he/she recognizes the urge of the job opening	“At my previous employer I experienced pressure of work. Almost all of my colleagues had a burn out which was a really good motivator to look for a new one”
Appreciation <i>7 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated when previous referral actions were appreciated by the organization	“Appreciation is always being appreciated”
Improving the organization <i>7 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because of the desire to improve the organization	““If I know my colleagues at Pro-F by now, then it is extra motivating to grow as an organization. .... Then we can offer more quality and we will have better facilities and that is an intrinsic motivator for us”
Success of a previous referral <i>7 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because of a successful previous employee referral	“I think that if you finally succeed it will be more likely that you will refer someone again. The first time is always exiting, but after that I think that it will be more likely that I would refer someone”
Referral bonus <i>5 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated when being rewarded with a bonus after a successful employee referral	“Leisure and money motivate me”
Helping job seekers find good-fitting jobs <i>6 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because he/she wants to help job seekers to find good-fitting jobs	“Everyone deserves to have a nice workplace where they can learn and develop themselves”
Helping the organization find good-fitting employees <i>5 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because he/she wants to help the organization to find good-fitting employees	“I know what the organization wants, and I just want to help with that”
Responsibility <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because of a responsible feeling for the organization	“I do not think that these things should a management-only job. I think we must do this together”
Organizational involvement <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer is motivated because of the involvement in organizational processes	“It is pleasant to know what is going on. Therefore, I like to be involved and it is good that the organization asks us if we know someone”

Next to motivating factors, 10 different factors were mentioned by the participants that demotivate them to engage in an employee referral. Whereas, for instance, the success of a previous employee referral motivates, the failure of a previous referral was indicated by four participants as demotivating. *“Imagine that someone would be rejected for a stupid reason, then it is not likely anymore that I would refer another”* as participant 14 said. Furthermore, despite its motivating effect, a referral bonus was also indicated as a demotivating factor by four participants mainly because they were skeptical about the creation of a competitive environment. Participant 7 explains: *“The downside of it is that it would quickly create a competitive sphere within the organization, and I think that that would be something we do not want here”*. Next to that, in line with the motivating effect of seeing the urge of the job opening, three participants stated that they are not motivated to engage in employee referrals when they do not see the necessity of hiring a new colleague. *“Colleagues must also see the urge of hiring a new employee. I think that most of us do not have the feeling that we need someone, so the active search process will also be less”*, according to participant 1. Three participants explained that they are demotivated to engage in an employee referral when they feel a lack of appreciation. As participant 8 stated: *“Well, if you have referred three persons and you do not get a thank you then it does not feel right. You are doing it to create goodwill and it would be pleasant if that is appreciated”*. Furthermore, when the referred worker is already employed, five participants stated that this demotivates them to engage in a referral and six participants explained that they are demotivated when their referred worker will become a competitor for them at work. Participant 8 explains that having few competitors at work puts him in a favorable position: *“Let’s be honest, I am one of the three sport physiotherapists. I see a lot of patients because I am specialized. The more sport physiotherapists join the organization, the more I will be put to the background. So, for me, on the one hand, it is favorable that I am one of the few who is specialized”*. Next to that, three participants were demotivated to engage in an employee referral because they were not completely convinced about their potential referral. As participant 16 said: *“I think I must have 100 percent trust in someone when I want to refer that person. If I have doubts about someone, I would not refer that person because he or she also represents yourself”*. A lack of work satisfaction was also identified as a demotivation by two participants, and, besides that, two participants explained that a lack of experience in employee referrals was also demotivating. As participant 12 said: *“I think that some just do not know where to start and how to talk about it with people. That they are not experienced in how I am going to approach someone when there is a job opening”*. Participant 6 explained that this is also closely related to being at the start of your professional career: *“I do not know if I am the right person to decide about who is going to work here or not at this point in my career”*. Lastly, three participants indicated that working at another location than where the job opening was made available also demotivates to engage in an employee referral. Participant 15 said: *“I would have been more active when we searched someone for the department in Oldenzaal”*.

**Table 2**

Factors demotivating referrers to engage in employee referrals

Demotivation	Definition	Sample comments
Failure of previous referral <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated because of the failure of a previous referral	"Imagine that this happens a couple of times and I do not agree with it, then I will be like figure it out yourself"
Feeling of superfluity <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated because he/she thinks it is not necessary to hire a new colleague	"If you want to work 40 hours but your agenda is not full, then it is unnecessary to hire another manual therapist"
Lack of appreciation <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated when he/she feels a lack of appreciation	"If I have the feeling that I am not being appreciated then the first time I will discuss it. The second time too. But the third time I will just let it be"
Potential referral already employed <i>5 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated when the potential referral is already employed	"I find it hard, for example, when someone is already employed"
Referral bonus <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated because of the negative consequences of a referral bonus	"I would not work with money or something else because then a situation is created which I think is horrible. I am really scared that people who are sensitive for that would create some kind of competition which negatively affects the sphere"
Competition <i>6 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated when the potential referral will become a competitor at work	"If I am in doubt about my own position here at Pro-F, then I would not recommend someone else because this person can take over my patients and would put me in a weaker position within the organization"
Complete conviction <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated when he/she is not completely convinced about the potential referral	"Because of the fact that I am aiming high, which is no problem because I prefer that, I am a bit withholding in referring someone"
Work satisfaction <i>2 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated when he/she is not satisfied at work	"I think if a colleague would be unsatisfied about working at Pro-F, then this person would be looking around for a new job him- or herself instead of referring someone else"
Lack of experience <i>2 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated because of a lack of experience in employee referrals	-
Other location <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer is demotivated because of working at a different location	"If there was a job opening for someone who would become a direct colleague of mine, because I work at ClubFit, then I would have invested a lot more time in it"

#### 4.1.2 Identification of a potential referral

During the interviews, the participants mentioned five criteria where they pay attention to when identifying a potential referral. A vast majority of 14 participants indicated that they take into account the personality of their referred worker. "Yes, I think that that is really important. You can have a lot of knowledge but if you do not have a good personality, it would be a no go for

*me. I think personality is really important*”, according to participant 8. In addition, participant 12 said: *“I am really looking for a good personality. As a therapist you can improve your knowledge and learn skills, but the type of person who wants to learn is the one who fits with us”*. Next to personality, six participants indicated that they pay attention to whether their potential referral possesses sufficient knowledge for the job. As participant ... said: *“They are searching a sport physiotherapist and the fact that someone graduated for that discipline is the most important”*. Three participants stated the work experience of the potential referral as an important criterium: *“I am only looking for someone who I think would fit here and has some experience”*. Furthermore, seven participants identified drive as a characteristic their potential referral must possess. As participant 16 explains: *“I look for ambition, drive, enthusiasm and how that person approaches his or her job. Someone who wants to go for it”*. The last criterium, mentioned by seven participants, is potential referral-team fit. These participants explained that, when identifying a potential referral, they pay attention to whether or not that person fits with other colleagues. *“You look at whether that person can get along with colleagues because it is a waste when someone fits the job opening but cannot work together with the team”*, according to participant 4.

**Table 3**

Criteria referrers take into account when identifying potential referrals

Criterion	Definition	Sample comments
Personality <i>14 comments</i>	Referrer pays attention to someone's personality when identifying a potential referral	“Personally, I think that it is important that someone is communicatively strong and has appearance. That is not something you can teach; you must have it”
Knowledge <i>6 comments</i>	Referrer pays attention to someone's knowledge when identifying a potential referral	“I will ask questions in order to test their basic knowledge”
Work experience <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer pays attention to someone's work experience when identifying a potential referral	“That person just fitted. She is a good communicator and she had experience”
Drive <i>7 comments</i>	Referrer pays attention to someone's drive when identifying a potential referral	“You do not need to know all the skills. I know that you can learn a lot in a short amount of time and that you will be able to apply it. I think it is important that you are motivated”
Potential referral-team fit <i>7 comments</i>	Referrer pays attention to whether or not someone fits with other colleagues when identifying a potential referral	“I think the most important thing is whether someone would fit within the culture or not”

After mentioning several criteria potential referrals must comply with, the participants also indicated five supporting factors that help them with identifying a potential referral. For instance, three participants stated that following courses is a great way to meet new people related to your discipline and helps in building a relevant network. According to participant 12 it also helps in getting to know the potential referral: *“If you are at a course having a conversation and a cup of coffee then you immediately get a better image of how someone really is”*. Internships and open days were also mentioned as a supporting factor as it also



enables the referrer in getting to know the potential referral. Participant 10, for instance, said about internships and open days that *“through this, you will get a completer image of a person”*. In line with these statements, one participant specifically stated that having a strong tie with someone helps in identifying whether or not this person is appropriate as potential referral. *“Personally, it really helps if I know someone on a personal level. Then I have a better picture of whether this person would fit the organization or not”*. Furthermore, according to four participants, having a job description also helps in identifying a potential referral. *“Having a concrete job description, I have noticed that with the vacancy of manual therapist, makes sure that you know for how many hours and it basically ensures that you know what the organization expects”*, stated participant 2. In addition, participant 1 indicated that having a job description is also helpful for the referred worker as *“in a job description the requirements for the candidate become clear as well. If the candidate reads the job description, then this person knows whether or not he or she would fit”*. Five participants stated that the opinion of their colleagues helps in identifying a potential referral because it can give the referrer a confirmation. As participant 8 said: *“It would be pleasant if other people at Pro-F also know that person and that they agree with me. This gives a certain foundation”*. Participant 9 explained that it is related to the colleagues’ professional discipline: *“I think that it is really important that people who are sport physiotherapist at Pro-F also have an opinion about the new sport physiotherapist because they are of the same discipline”*.

**Table 4**

Factors that support the referrer with identifying potential referrals

Supporting factor	Definition	Sample comments
Courses 3 comments	Following courses helps the referrer with identifying a potential referral	“If you are following courses and did specializations then you will meet new people”
Internships and open days 6 comments	Supervising interns and organizing open days helps the referrer with identifying a potential referral	“A colleague worked alongside me for half a day and within a couple of hours you will get an impression of this person”
Job description 4 comments	Having a job description helps the referrer with identifying a potential referral	“It is always easier when there is a job opening”
Opinion of colleagues 5 comments	The opinion of the referrer’s colleagues about a candidate helps the referrer with identifying a potential referral	“Imagine that I would refer someone then I think that person should walk along another colleague to check if we come to the same conclusion whether or not this person fits with the organization and the rest of our colleagues”
Strength of tie 1 comment	Having a strong tie with a candidate helps the referrer with identifying a potential referral	-

#### 4.1.3 Referral actions in response to the job opening

During a period of three weeks, the participants were instructed to actively search in their network for a potential referral concerning the job opening of sport physiotherapist. 11 participants have mentioned several referral actions they undertook in response to this job opening. Multiple participants have, for instance, used social media as a recruiting strategy.

Four participants indicated that they have searched on social media for a potential referral and three participants have shared the job opening on social media. The medium that was mainly used for these actions was LinkedIn. Next to that, five participants stated that they always keep their eyes and ears open for potential referrals. Participant 2, for instance, indicated that *“since I started to work here, I always keep my eyes and ears open to see whether I can approach someone who wants to work here”*. One participant actually informed a potential referral about the job opening of physiotherapist. Besides that, instead of reaching out for a potential referral in response to the job opening, participant 14 was contacted by one and said: *“I have been called by a guy, who has now applied for the job, who said that he saw the job opening. He is not a sport physiotherapist but he will be a good one for our organization so I encouraged him to apply and told him that maybe he will be invited”*. Lastly, one participant has referred a candidate in response to the job opening. As participant 17 said: *“I told him that I have a potential who is willing to move to Enschede”*.

Contrary to the several referral actions, seven participants did not undertake any referral actions. Two participants indicated that they already referred a candidate for this job opening in the past. *“I have contacted him in the past and I do not think that it is appropriate to ask him again after half a year. Then it seems like I am forcing him to apply which will have negative effects for Pro-F, I think”*, according to participant 4. Next to that, four participants stated that they did not undertake referral actions because the job opening did not fit with their network. As participant 13 explains: *“I am not active within the branch of sport physiotherapy and I do not have my contacts there. Therefore, I did not undertake action”*. Five participants who did undertake referral actions in response to the job opening, indicated that a lack in job opening-network fit also complicated their search for a potential referral and made it more difficult to find an appropriate candidate. Lastly, one participant said that, back then, searching a potential referral was not a priority and that, therefore, no referral actions were undertaken.

**Table 5**

Referral actions in response to the job opening

Referral action	Definition	Sample comments
Searching on social media <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer searched on social media for potential referrals in response to the job opening	“Next to that I have searched on LinkedIn to see where everyone works at the moment”
Sharing on social media <i>3 comments</i>	Referrer shared information about the job opening on social media	“I have shared it on LinkedIn too”
Informing a potential referral <i>1 comment</i>	Referrer personally informed a potential referral about the job opening	“I have sent the job opening to my coach because I knew he was searching to something like that”
Contacted by a potential referral <i>1 comment</i>	Referrer been contacted, in response of the job opening, by a potential referral who is interested in the vacancy	-
Referred a candidate <i>1 comment</i>	Referrer referred a potential referral to the organization in response to the job opening	-

Always keeping eyes and ears open <i>5 comments</i>	Referrer always keeps eyes and ears open regarding potential referrals	“Actually, I am constantly paying attention to developments of my fellow students and people I have met at courses”
Job opening - network fit <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer did not undertake action in response to the job opening because his/her network did not fit with the job opening	“I did not approach someone because I do not know who is educated as a sport physiotherapist. I just know very few sport physiotherapists”
Previous referrals <i>2 comments</i>	Referrer did not undertake action in response to the job opening because this person already referred someone for this job opening in the past	“I have asked the sport physiotherapist there if he liked it. He has clearly some reasons why he does not want to leave. I am still in contact with him and told him that he is always welcome. But, therefore, I did not specifically do something the previous three weeks”
No priority <i>1 comment</i>	Referrer did not undertake action in response to the job opening because this person had other priorities	“Well, it is also the situation you are in yourself. Nowadays, everything is going different than it normally goes and if you then get an extra task...”

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## 4.2 Application and hiring phase

### 4.2.1 Sympathizing

After referring a candidate, the participants indicated that they still feel involved with and responsible for the employee referral when their referred worker proceeds to the application and hiring phase. However, instead of approaching the process from the perspective of the organization, the participants explained that during this phase they sympathize with their referred worker. Nine participants, for instance, stated that they follow the application process. *“Yes, if I would personally know that person than I would sympathize in a way that you are following the application process”* as participant 2 said. Four participants even try to comfort their referred worker when he or she enters the organization. Participant 5 indicated: *“If I referred that person than I would have played an active role in trying to comfort that person when that person enters the organization. I think it is the duty of the referrer to welcome and comfort that person”*. Furthermore, five participants stated that they are willing to help the referred worker with preparing for his or her application. *“I would help that person by writing the application letter”*, as participant 13 said. On the question if you would help your referred worker with preparing for the application, participant 4 answered: *“Yes of course, otherwise I would not have referred that person. I feel responsible for the one I refer, so I want to give him the best possible chances so that, in the end, it is not my fault if someone did not prepare well enough”*. Additionally, four participants stated that the stronger the tie between referrer and referred worker, the more they sympathize with their referred worker. This is exemplified by the statement of participant 15: *“Maybe not completely fair, but I would do something extra for that person”*. Only four participants indicate that they do not sympathize with their referred worker during the application. Participant 11 explains that *“I will not interfere, because it is something between the referred worker and Pro-F to see if that person fits within the team. I think that is very important”*.

So, contrary to the pre-hire motivation and action phase where the participants felt responsible for the organization, wanted to improve the organization and liked to be involved in organizational processes, a vast majority of them was not involved in the employee referral for the sake of the organization anymore. They were less concerned about the organizational interests and approached the process from the perspective of their referred worker. This is expressed by the participants stating that they follow the application process, comfort their referred worker or help them with their application.

**Table 6**

How referrers sympathize with the referred worker during the application

Way of sympathizing	Definition	Sample comments
Following <i>9 comments</i>	Referrer follows the application process of the referred worker	"I am just interested in how everything went from both sides. How did they experience it and how was it?"
Comforting <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer comforts the referred worker during the application process	"I think in conversations that you are trying to comfort that person when he or she enters the organization"
Preparing <i>5 comments</i>	Referrer helps the referred worker preparing for the application	"Well I think that, to a certain point, I will guide and prepare my referred worker for the application. Yeah, I think I would help with that."
Strength of tie <i>4 comments</i>	The stronger the tie between referrer and referred worker, the more the referrer sympathizes with this person	"If I would be really close with someone, I would help with writing the letter and for example show what I wrote"
No sympathizing <i>4 comments</i>	Referrer does not sympathize with the referred worker	"I do not want her to act differently ... I think she must do it on her own. I can refer her, but she needs to do it herself. I would not give her any tips ... I referred her and then I also want that she does it on her own."

#### 4.2.2 Referred worker refrains from applying

Despite of the fact that a majority of the participants commiserates with their referred worker during the application and hiring phase, only one participant feels rejected when the referred refrains from applying after being invited by the organization. "*I do experience it as a rejection. I would think: 'why?'. Why would you say that when you have never seen our organization? You do not even know our team*", according to participant 3. Next to that, only two participants are curious to know the reason why the referred worker does not apply. As participant 2 said: "*Yes, what are the reasons why not? That could be so many things*". However, nine participants indicate that they understand the referred worker in refraining from an application because they explain that it is the referred worker's choice. "*I do not mind. He makes his own choices*", as participant 8 said. Moreover, participant 6 stated: "*That is someone else's own choice. If he clearly reasons why not, then I am okay with that*".

**Table 7**

Referrers' reactions when their referred worker refrains from applying

Reaction	Definition	Sample comments
Understanding 9 comments	Referrer understands the referred worker when this person refrains from applying	"It is unfortunate, but everyone has the right to make his or her own choices"
Feeling of rejection 1 comment	Referrer feels rejected by the referred worker when this person refrains from applying	-
Curious 2 comments	Referrer is curious to know why the referred worker refrains from applying	"I would be curious to know the reasons behind this choice because that is interesting. Then you know that we can maybe approach that person next year or another time. Or is it Pro-F that this person does not like? Or maybe something private?"

#### 4.2.3 Influence and power

When the referred worker applied for the job and succeeded through the selection process, contract negotiations start which leads to the eventual hiring decision. Six participants explained that they try to influence this decision by praising the referred worker at the organization. As participant 2 said: *"If you refer someone, you want that this person will be hired otherwise you will not refer him or her. Therefore, I do anything possible and try to say as much positive things about that person in order to ensure that this person will be hired"*. On the other hand, participant 14 explained that praising the referred worker is also inherently part of providing the organization information about this person: *"I referred her, so I support her. Of course, I will mention her strong points and I think that it is a bit influencing. On the other side, it is good to have information how it is to work with this person"*. One participant adds that the stronger the tie with the referred worker, the more willing that person is to influence the hiring decision.

However, a vast majority of the participants withdraws from the referral process as soon as the application starts. Nine participants indicated that they are not willing to influence the hiring decision of their referred worker. As participant 2 stated: *"If I refer someone then it is up to that person to come to an agreement and to secure his wishes during the negotiations. If they cannot come to an agreement, then it is up to the organization. I think that this is something between the organization and the new colleague and I will not interfere"*. Next to that, seven participants indicated that they are not able to influence hiring decisions. *"I have no influence on how that person presents itself that day"*, according to participant 6. This distancing attitude of most of the participants indicates that the employee referral becomes a process between the organization and the referred worker. Therefore, the participants are less involved and feel less responsibility during this phase of their referral compared to its previous stages.

**Table 8**

How referrers wield power during the application

Way of expressing power	Definition	Sample comments
Praising referred worker <i>6 comments</i>	Referrer tries to influence the hiring decision of the referred worker by praising the referred worker at the organization	"You always try to use certain arguments that will accentuate the qualities of that person"
Strength of tie <i>1 comment</i>	The stronger the tie between referrer and referred worker, the more willing the referred worker is to influence the hiring decisions of the referred worker	"You have a certain history with someone which makes it hard to indicate if someone does not fit the organization because you are giving advice out of favoritism"
Not willing to influence hiring decisions <i>9 comments</i>	Referrer is not willing to influence the hiring decision of the referred worker	"Eventually, I am not making that decision and I am also not responsible for that decision. Therefore, I deliberately want to stay out of it and focus on my own job"
Not able to influence hiring decisions <i>7 comments</i>	Referrer is not able to influence the hiring decision of the referred worker	"I can refer someone, but that is it. If you are applying for a job, then you are the one who must present yourself"

### 4.3 Post-hire outcomes

#### 4.3.1 Hiring outcomes of the job opening

As earlier discussed, participant 17 referred a candidate in response to the job opening and participant 14 was contacted by one after the job opening was created. However, due to sudden rise of the coronavirus, the candidate of participant 17 never came in contact with Pro-F and participant 14 never heard of his referral again after that person sent him a text with a confirmation that he applied for the job. So, both candidates did not proceed to the application and hiring phase and were not hired.

#### 4.3.2 Under hiring conditions

Contrary to withdrawing attitude from the participants during the contract negotiations between the organization and the referred worker in the application and hiring phase, this distancing behavior completely disappears when their referred worker is hired. Five participants, for instance, mentioned that they appropriate the employment of their referred worker as a personal success. *"If everything goes well, then it is a moment of success because you are the one who referred that person"*, according to participant 16 Furthermore, five participants share the joy of the employment of their referred worker with the organization and perceive it as an organizational improvement. Participant 2 said: *"I would be happy because you know the organization will have a reinforcement"*. Next to that, eight participants indicated that they empathize with the referred worker and share their happiness of employment. As participant 7 indicated: *"It was really nice, especially for her because she was searching something else. Then you still have to wait how everything turns out to be, but I was happy. She was also very enthusiastic so that was really nice"*. Lastly, five participants also indicated that, now their referred worker is hired, they feel responsible for this person. This is clearly exemplified by participant 16 saying: *"Yes, I feel responsible when I refer someone. Responsible towards my*

*colleagues whether or not that person fits the team, but also responsible towards my referred worker in a way that I need to support and mentor that person”.*

**Table 9**

Post-hire outcomes under hiring conditions

Outcome	Definition	Sample comments
Personal success 5 comments	Referrer experiences the employment of the referred worker as a personal success	“A while ago I thought of everyone who works here at the moment and I realized that quite a few got their job because I referred them from my network. That is satisfying to see”
Organizational improvement 5 comment	Referrer experiences the employment of the referred worker as an organizational improvement	“I am happy for Pro-F because I know it helps Pro-F”
Positive empathizing with referred worker 8 comments	Referrer positively empathizes with the referred worker when this person is hired	“I was happy for him because I knew that it would give him a lot of new energy, so that is why I was happy”
Responsibility 5 comments	Referrer feels responsible for his/her referred worker when this person is hired	“You feel responsible for the one you refer”

#### 4.3.3 Under rejection conditions

Unlike to when the referred worker is hired, the distancing role of the referrer is extended when their referred worker was rejected by the organization. This is exemplified by nine participants indicating that it is the choice of the organization to reject the referred worker and that they have no ultimate responsibility for this. *“It is unfortunate. Yes unfortunate, that is all. It is their decision; they are the employer and it is their organization. So, if they think that that person does not fit then it is unfortunate, but I cannot do something about that”*, according to participant 11. However, 11 participants expect feedback from the organization why their referred worker was rejected. As participant 9 said: *“Yes, I think that if you put time and effort in something and it goes differently than expected, which can happen, then I think it is important to explain why you made a different decision”*. Next to that, five participants stated that they felt guilty towards their referred worker when this person was rejected by the organization. *“I would feel kind of guilty. I was very enthusiastic like ‘oh you to apply and you would really fit the team’ but maybe I have given her false hope and that is unpleasant”*, as participant 8 said. Lastly, two participants indicated that the stronger the tie with their referred worker, the harder it becomes to accept the rejection of this person. Participant 14, for instance, said: *“I think it really depends on whom you refer. Imagine I would have referred someone that I knew from my study then I think I would have found it less unfortunate than someone I have a really good feeling about. It depends on the person you refer”*.

**Table 10**

Post-hire outcomes under rejection conditions

Outcome	Definition	Sample comments
Guilt <i>5 comment</i>	Referrer feels guilty towards the referred worker when this person is rejected by the organization	“I would feel bad when I know someone and said that this person can apply here but eventually will not be hired. I would feel really bad”
Feedback <i>11 comments</i>	Referrer expects feedback of the organization when the referred worker is rejected	“I think that it is nice if someone refers someone else that, regardless of the outcomes, the organization provides feedback to that person”
No ultimate responsibility <i>9 comments</i>	Referrer feels no ultimate responsibility for the rejection of the referred worker	“It is Pro-F’s choice. It is their choice and I trust it. They just search someone who fits the team and meets the requirements and if that is not the case than I trust that decision”
Strength of tie <i>2 comments</i>	The stronger the tie between referrer and referred worker, the harder it is for the referrer to accept the rejection of the referred worker	“It would have been different if it was family. Then it would be more difficult because you put in more effort for your family as you want the best for them”



## **5. Discussion**

This section is written to evaluate the results of this study and how the research was conducted. First of all, the relevance of this study will be discussed by addressing its theoretical and practical contribution and by interpreting the results in light of previous research. Afterwards, the limitations of this study will be addressed including recommendations how to improve the study and possibilities for future research that has emerged as a result of this study.

### **5.1 Theoretical implications**

This research answered the call to give more scholarly attention to the referrers (Pieper, 2015) and, therefore, has several theoretical implications. The novelty of this study will be explained by highlighting the contributions of this study to literature concerning the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation of referrers, how they identify potential referral, how they wield power during the application process, and their post-hire outcomes. Next to that, this study adds a new layer to the model of Schlachter and Pieper (2019) by explaining the underlying pattern of referrers' varying commitment and responsibility during different phases of the referral.

#### **5.1.1 Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation**

As discussed in section 2.4.1, referrers must either be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to search for potential referrals in order for employee referrals to occur. This study advances the understanding of why referrers are motivated to engage in employee referrals as it identified seven novel intrinsic motivating factors that have not been identified before. Referrers may be motivated to engage in an employee referral because of (1) their desire to work with the referred worker, (2) their desire to improve the organization, and (3) their responsible feeling for the organization. Moreover, (4) being aware of the urge of the job opening, (5) being appreciated by the organization, (6) the pleasure of being involved in organizational processes, and (7) the success of a previous referral also motivates referrers. Next to that, two other intrinsic motivating factors were identified by this study that substantiate the findings of previous research which found that referrers are motivated to share job information because they want to help job seekers find good-fitting jobs and want to help the organization find good-fitting employees (van Hoya, 2013).

Furthermore, this study also identified six unique demotivating factors that have not been identified in literature before. Referrers are demotivated to engage in an employee referral when they (1) are not satisfied at work, (2) are not completely convinced about their referral or (3) do not see the necessity of hiring a new colleague. Additionally, (4) a lack of experience in referring, (5) a lack of appreciation from the organization and (6) working at another department or location than the referred worker will start to work are also reasons for the referrer not to engage in an employee referral. Next to that, three other demotivating factors, identified by this study, substantiate previous research. First of all, Yakubovich and Lup (2006) explained that referrers are concerned about their own future within the organization and, therefore, refer candidates below their own ability in order to ensure their place at the organization. In line with these competitive concerns, this study found that referrers are demotivated to engage in an employee referral when the referred worker will become a competitor of them at work. Secondly, Marin (2012) stated that referrers are demotivated

because of the awkwardness of sharing unsolicited information with the candidate. This study substantiates this finding by identifying a specific example of this phenomenon. Referrers are demotivated to share job information with potential referrals who are already employed. The fact that they already have a job makes the job information even more unsolicited which functions as a threshold for the referrer. Thirdly, in line with the research of Smith (2005), referrers are less likely to refer when having a history of unsuccessful referrals.

Lastly, the results of this study also specify the double-sided influence of a referral bonus on the motivation of referrers. This study found that referrers may be extrinsically motivated by a referral bonus offered in the form of money or leisure and, therefore, the findings of Pieper et al. (2018) and van Hoyer (2013) are substantiated. However, as Fafchamps and Moradi (2015) explained in their research the pitfall of rewarding the referrer for a successful referral is that it can cause opportune as they act in their own self-interest. This study has also recognized these negative consequences but take this claim one step further. The results of this study show that the referrers themselves are very much aware of this pitfall. They realize that offering a reward for a successful referral creates a competitive environment and, therefore, having such a reward system demotivates them to engage in employee referrals as they do not like the striving culture.

### **5.1.2 Identification of a potential referral**

The findings of this study further promote the understanding of the pre-hire motivation and action phase by explaining where referrers pay attention to when identifying a potential referral and what can help them with this identification process. First of all, this study found that referrers pay a lot of attention to the personality of the potential referral when identifying one. They take into consideration whether the potential referral is motivated, driven and whether the personality of the referral fits with other colleagues. For some jobs it may be necessary that the potential referral meets a certain educational level. However, in general, referrers perceive skills and know-how subservient to someone's personality because it can also be learned after their employment.

Furthermore, contrary to the findings of Granovetter (1973) who argues that weak ties are most important in employee referrals as it moves across many social circles, this study explains how strong ties are very important for referrers when identifying someone as a potential referral. For referrers, having a strong tie with the potential referral helps in estimating whether or not this person is appropriate to refer to the organization. Because of the strong tie, referrers have a complete image about that person and, therefore, are more capable to judge whether this person would fit the job requirements and the organization. Next to having a strong tie with the potential referral, the opinion of the referrer's colleagues about the potential referral also help referrers in identifying them. It functions as a double check or second opinion and consequently decreases the risk of a failing referral. Lastly, having a job description also supports the referrer in identifying a potential referral as it enables to compare this person with the content of the job description and, in turn, it also enables the referred worker to see for him- or herself if the job and the organization are appealing.

### **5.1.3 Influence and power during the application**

This study offers the first insights into how referrers behave during the application and hiring phase. Previous studies into this phase of employee referral hiring has neglected the role of referrers and primarily focused on the referred worker and the employer. Therefore, this study has addressed a significant gap in literature by explaining when and how a referrer wields power during the application and hiring phase of an employee referral.

The results of this study show that referrers are willing to help their referred worker with preparing for the application and are trying to comfort them during the application process. Furthermore, referrers try to praise the referred worker before and during their application. When, for instance, providing the organization with information about the referred worker, the referrer influences the organization by accentuating the referred worker's strong points. This, consequently, questions the realistic information hypothesis discussed in section 2.5. This hypothesis states that because of the social tie between referrer and referred worker, the employer is provided by the referrer with extra information about the referred worker which, otherwise, would not have been obtained via their resume or through the job interview. Therefore, it should enable the employer to access difficult-to-obtain information before and during the application. As a consequence, the organization has more appropriate expectations and makes better decisions when the referred worker applies for a job. This, eventually, should increase the likelihood of person-job fit (Fernandez & Weinberg, 1997; Williams et al., 1993). However, one can doubt about the reliability of the difficult-to-obtain information provided by the referrer as he or she tries to glorify their referred worker in order to enlarge the chance of employment. The willingness to help the referred working with preparing for the application and their comforting attitude further supports the doubts about the sincerity and autonomy of the referred worker's application.

### **5.1.4 Post-hire outcomes**

By identifying the post-hire experiences of the referrer, this study adds new insights to the scarce amount of research on referrer outcomes and, therefore, fills another literature gap. Through studying how referrers actually experience the employment of their referred worker, four post-hire outcomes under hiring conditions were found that have not been identified before. This study found that referrers can perceive the hiring of the referred worker as a personal success. Furthermore, referrers may approach the employment from the perspective of the organization and see it as an organizational improvement or they can positively empathize with the referred worker and share the joy of their employment with them. Lastly, referrers feel responsible for the referred worker after this person is hired.

Next to the post-hire outcomes under hiring conditions, two novel outcomes under rejection conditions were found. First of all, referrers highly expect feedback from their organization as a result of the rejection of the referred worker as they are searching for procedural justice. Next to that, they may feel guilty towards the referred worker as they have given them false hope for employment which eventually turns out in disappointment.

### **5.1.5 Varying commitment and responsibility**

This study has identified a varying commitment of referrers and changing feelings of responsibility during different stages of an employee referral. Therefore, it adds an important layer to the three-phase-model of Schlachter and Pieper (2019). Referrers are, for the greater part, intrinsically motivated to engage in employee referrals for the sake of the organization. This study demonstrated that referrers, for instance, feel responsible for the organization, like to be involved in organizational processes, aim to improve the organization and want to find good-fitting employees which motivates them to search for potential referrals. However, when a potential referral is identified, referred to the organization, and proceeds to the application and hiring phase, the referrer's commitment to the employee referral changes. Then, their feeling of organizational responsibility fades away and the referrer starts to sympathize with their referred worker. This is expressed by praising the referred worker at the organization, preparing the referred worker for their application or comforting them during the application process. However, as soon as the application starts, the referrer distances him- or herself from this situation as they then perceive the employee referral as something which is completely up to the organization and the referred worker. Additionally, their commitment to the employee referral is also very low when the referred worker does not pursue the invitation of the organization and they do not take any responsibility for this outcome.

In contrast to this distancing attitude, referrers are highly committed to the referral again when their referred worker is hired. They positively empathize with the referred worker, feel responsible for them at work, experience it as an organizational improvement or even perceive the employment of their referred worker as a personal success. However, in line with the findings of Schlachter (2018), when the referred worker was rejected, their distancing attitude remains, and their commitment remains very low. Then the referrers perceive the rejection of their referred worker as the organization's choice and that they are not ultimately responsible for it.

### **5.2 Practical implications**

From this research, several practical suggestions can be made that will be relevant for organizations in order to improve or implement an employee referral program. First of all, by the identification of multiple motivating as well as demotivating factors, organizations should be able to manipulate referrers' motivation. By knowing why employees are motivated or demotivated to engage in an employee referral, organizations can respond to and anticipate upon this when designing an employee referral program.

Another key takeaway from this study relevant to organizations is that they can facilitate the referrers in their identification of potential referrals and, consequently, can increase the chance of the referrer finding an appropriate candidate. By studying where the referrers pay attention to when identifying a potential referral, this research shows that having a strong tie with the referred worker helps them during this process. This study found that organizations can support the formation of stronger ties in four ways. First of all, by sending the referrer to courses the referrer gets to know people relevant to his or her professional discipline on a personal level. This creates stronger ties and helps in identifying whether or not they would be a potential referral. Next to that, it also enables the referrer to extend his network

which enlarges the chance of finding a potential referral. Secondly, by facilitating open days and internships potential referrals are invited to walk along with referrers. This strengthens their relationship as the referrers spend more time with the potential referral which helps them in estimating whether or not this person would be suitable to refer. Moreover, the identification of potential referrals can be further stimulated by organizations when they present a clear job description for the function that should be filled through the employee referral as it ensures that the referrers have a better image of what the organization wants. Lastly, by facilitating the opportunity for other colleagues to give their opinion about the potential referral too, the organization ensures that the quality of the potential referral is double-checked and, therefore, eliminates referrals from a lower quality.

This study is also practically relevant to organizations because it explored how and when referrers wield power before and during the application of the referred worker. As the results of this study stress that referrers try to praise their referred worker, the organization can doubt about the honesty of the information that is provided by the referrer about his or her referred worker. Moreover, this study found that referrers may be willing to help the referred worker with applying and may try to comfort them when entering the organization. Consequently, the referred worker can present him- or herself differently than he or she originally is which can lead to inappropriate expectations. Because of this, organizations are encouraged to, independently of the referrer, critically evaluate the quality of the referred worker as the application process may be influenced.

Lastly, this study found that referrers highly value feedback from the organization after taking a hiring decision. Especially when the referred worker is rejected by the organization, the referrers want to know the reason of rejection as they search for procedural justice. Therefore, organizations are advised to communicate openly and transparently about the underlying reasons of rejection as it can demotivate referrers to engage in another referral and it can help the referrer to do better in future times.

### **5.3 Limitations and future research**

Because not every employee of Pro-F had lately engaged in employee referral hiring before the start of this study, an experimental condition was added to the research. The goal of this experimental condition was to let the participants (re-)experience how it is to be part of an employee referral hiring process ensuring that the topic was on top of their mind. Pro-F, therefore, created a job opening for a sport physiotherapist with the purpose to be filled through an employee referral. Consequently, every employee became a referrer and should experience being part of an employee referral. The experimental condition succeeded in bringing the topic to the attention of the participants. However, by including the experimental condition they only (re-)experienced the pre-hire motivation and action phase as there were no potential referrals identified that proceeded to other referral phases. Consequently, this led to hypothetical questions during the interviews with participants less experienced in employee referral hiring. When a participant, for instance, never experienced the post-hire outcomes of a referral because their referred worker never went through the application and hiring phase, sketching possible situations during the interviews could not be avoided. Therefore, two different topic lists were made in order to get the most out of the interviews with the participants who did not fully

experience the process of an employee referral. However, the data would have been much richer if the participants could talk about and explain their feelings out of their own experience and, therefore, the added value of the experimental condition is limited. The foremost suggestion for future research, focusing on the perspective of the referrer, is to ensure that every participant has experiences with employee referral hiring in each different phase as a referrer before the start of the study as it would lead to richer data.

In order to overcome this limitation for future studies, there are several measures that can be taken. First of all, the length of the experimental condition can be extended. There was a limited time of three weeks set for the experimental condition which could have played a role why the participants only experienced the pre-hire motivation and action phase. It could have been the case that there was simply not enough time to identify a potential referral within three weeks with whom the participants could have proceeded to the application and hiring phase as well as the phase of the post-hire outcomes. By lengthening the experimental condition, the chance of the participants finding a potential referral for the job opening increases which gives the organization as well as the referred worker sufficient time for the application. Moreover, extending the length of the experimental condition also enables to analyze how referrers experience the post-hire outcomes and, thus, ensures that the whole process of an employee referral is on top of the participants' minds instead of the pre-hire motivation and action phase only. Another way to overcome this limitation is by using a less specific job opening with lower educational requirements. Sport physiotherapy is a very specific discipline and requires a master's degree. Therefore, the group from which the employees of Pro-F searched for a potential referral was very small which can be a reason why only two employees have identified a potential referral. Using a less specific job opening with lower educational requirements increases the chance of finding an appropriate candidate as the group of people who are eligible for this job opening enlarges. Lastly, the experimental condition can also be completely removed from the research design when it can be assured that, before the start of the study, all the participants have – lately – engaged in every different phase of an employee referral.

Regarding the directions for future research, other studies could dive into the influence of technology on the referrer's ability to identify a potential referral. One of the technological developments that studies can focus on is the rise of social media as these platforms facilitate people in building an online network with others sharing, for instance, similar interests or careers. It is, therefore, interesting to study how this affects referrers in identifying a potential referral. Especially researching the influence of LinkedIn is advised as this medium is particularly useful for building and maintaining a relevant business network and could possibly play an important role in identifying potential referrals. Furthermore, this study has stressed the importance for the referrer of having a strong tie with the referred worker because it helps them in identifying potential referrals. Therefore, future research could aim to explore if the efficiency and effectiveness of an employee referral program also increases when it is specifically designed to help the referrer in getting a stronger tie with the potential referral. Next to that, future research can also study if the experiences of the referrer during the employee referral, either positive or negative, are intensified when having a stronger tie with the referred worker and should investigate its consequences for the organization. Next to that, this study found that referrers have a varying commitment and responsible feeling during different stages of an employee referral. Especially when proceeding from the pre-hire

motivation and action phase towards the application and hiring phase, the perspective from which the referrers approach the referral changes to a great extent. Future studies can investigate if it is possible to prevent referrers from commiserating too much with their referred worker and, consequently, losing out of sight the organizational interests. This would be practically relevant for organizations as it decreases the chance of the referrer trying to praise, comfort or help the referred worker which increases the sincerity and animosity of the referral. Moreover, future studies can dive deeper into the relationship between referrer and referred worker by studying the influence of the hiring decision of the organization. It would be interesting to research how and to what extent the employment or rejection of the referred worker affects his or her relationship with the referrer. Lastly, this study addressed the lack of insights into how referrers experience employee referral hiring within the context of a physiotherapy. Therefore, in order to eliminate the possibility that conducting the research in such a specific context influenced its outcomes, future studies could construct the same research in a new context or at another location.

#### **5.4 Conclusion**

To conclude, this thesis has provided insights into how referrers experience each different phase of an employee referral. By seeing the referring phenomenon through the eyes of the referrer, this study advances the understanding of the pre-hire motivation and action phase by identifying seven novel intrinsic motivating factors and six unique demotivating factors. Moreover, it specifies the double-sided impact of a referral bonus on referrers' motivation, explained where referrers pay attention to when identifying a potential referral and how the identification process can be stimulated. Next to that, this study clarifies the role of the referrer in the application and hiring phase by explaining how they wield power before and during the application. Through the identification of referrer outcomes under hiring as well as rejection conditions the understanding of the post-hire outcomes employee referral is promoted too. Lastly, this study identified an underlying pattern of varying commitment and responsibility throughout different phases and outcomes of the referral. These findings are all very much practically useful for organizations as employee referral hiring is, nowadays a popular method of recruitment. By taking into account how referrers experience referring, the effectiveness and efficiency of employee referral programs can further increase.

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## 7. Appendices

### Appendix A: Job opening Pro-F sport physiotherapist

#### VACATURE (ERVAREN) SPORTFYSIOTHERAPEUT ENSCHDEDE

Ben jij een zelfstandig werkend, ambitieuze en ervaren sportfysiotherapeut met een open attitude en pro-actieve houding? Dan is deze vacature op jouw lijf geschreven.

Binnen ons Pro-F Performance Center zijn wij op zoek naar een fulltime sportfysiotherapeut voor onze (top)sporters die weer voor topprestaties willen gaan. Het is aan jou en je collega therapeuten om deze gemotiveerde sporters na een blessure of ingreep weer terug te brengen op hun oude niveau of zelfs hoger. Binnen het Pro-F Performance Center werk je samen met een team van specialisten vanuit diverse disciplines.

Pro-F heeft samenwerkingen met verschillende topsportorganisaties en topsporters die we in binnen en buitenland begeleiden op het gebied van performance. Hier is een rol voor jou weggelegd.

##### PROFIELEISEN:

- Spreekt en schrijft goed Nederlands
- Spreekt goed Engels
- Actieve werkhouding
- Zelfstandig, pro-actief, ambitieus en zelfkennis
- Bereid om te reizen en flexibel qua werktijden
- Min 3 jaar werkzaam als sportfysiotherapeut
- Ervaring in sport
- Je hebt minimaal een afgeronde HBO opleiding Fysiotherapie en master sportfysiotherapie
- Je bent BIG geregistreerd

##### WERKEN BIJ PRO-F

Therapeuten van Pro-F zorgen ervoor dat iedereen een op- het-lijf geschreven behandeling van professionele topkwaliteit kan krijgen om vervolgens zijn of haar eigen topprestatie neer te kunnen zetten. Of dat nu lekker boodschappen doen, fietsen of de marathon lopen is. De mensen die bij ons in de praktijk komen zijn actieve, doelgerichte individuen die bewuste keuzes maken en gaan voor kwaliteit. Ongeacht hun leeftijd zijn ze gemotiveerd om het beste uit zichzelf en het leven te halen. Deze kwaliteit behalen we door nauw met elkaar samen te werken en van elkaar te leren. Daarnaast worden alle therapeuten ondersteund door het Support Team op het gebied van kwaliteit, processen en klantbeleving.

Daarnaast bieden wij:

- Een relatief jong en ambitieus team
- Een cultuur waarbij talent de kans krijgt
- (Interne) opleiding en cursussen
- Doorgroeimogelijkheden
- Kans om met topsporters te werken
- Duidelijke visie en structuur
- Biomechanische onderbouwing van onze visie op bewegen

##### PRO-F PERFORMANCE CENTER, ENSCHDEDE

Je komt te werken op de hoofdlocatie van Pro-F Professionele Fysiotherapie waar je wordt omgeven door specialisten van verschillende disciplines. Naast fysiotherapeuten zijn er ook podotherapeuten, diëtisten en sportartsen aanwezig. Het Pro-F Performance Center is een fantastische werkomgeving en biedt alle faciliteiten die je je als sportfysiotherapeut kan wensen (en meer). Zo zijn de behandelkamers ruim en goed ingericht. De oefenzaal heeft een tartanbaan, kunstgrasveld en krachtruimte. En voor revalidatie doeleinden is er een zwembad van 1,40 meter diep.

Zat je op het puntje van je stoel bij het lezen van deze vacature..... maak dan je cv up-to-date en schrijf een begeleidende brief. Stuur deze beide naar [info@pro-f.nl](mailto:info@pro-f.nl) ter attentie van Richelle Gaakink.

## Appendix B: Topic list for experienced employees

Phase	Topic	Questions
Pre-hire motivation & action phase	General introduction	Can you tell something about yourself? What is your age, job and education? How long have you been working at Pro-F? Have you previously engaged in employee referral hiring?
	Description of previous experiences with employee referral hiring	Can you tell something about your previous experiences with employee referral hiring? Did you like it? Were you able to identify potential referrals? Did you refer persons to an organization? Were they hired?
	Pre-screening & fit assessment	Can you describe how you tried to identify a potential referral? Was it easy or hard? From previous experiences, can you tell if there is something that would help or enable you to identify a potential referral?
Pre-hire motivation & action phase	Referring behavior	After identifying a potential referral, how did you proceed? Did you exchange information with him/her? If yes, what kind of information? What information did you need from the potential referral to make the decision whether to refer him/her to the organization? Were you able to obtain all this information from the potential referral? If not, what did you do to obtain this information?
Application & hiring phase	Decision to apply	Did your referral apply for the job? How did you feel if that person did not?
Application & hiring phase	Selecting process	How did you experience when your referral went through the selection phase of the organization? Did you sympathize with your referral? How did you express this? How did/would you feel when the referral of a colleague was invited for a job interview whereas your referral was not?
Application & hiring phase	Influence & power	Were you able to influence the hiring decision? Did you experience any feelings of power? If not, how did you experience this situation in which your influence and power is

		less than in the previous phase of employee referral hiring?
Post-hire outcomes	Under hiring conditions	How did you feel when your referral got hired? Does this encourage you to actively engage in another employee referral?
Post-hire outcomes	Under rejecting conditions	How did you feel when, instead of your referral, someone else got hired? Is the choice for another referral discouraging when it comes to actively engaging in another employee referral? Does it affect your reputation and self-esteem?
	Description of latest experiences with employee referral hiring	Can you describe how you have experienced the previous three weeks in which you have actively engaged in employee referral hiring? Have you seen the vacancy of sport physiotherapist? If yes, can you describe your next steps after seeing the vacancy? If not, why did you not take a look at the vacancy? Why were you not motivated to do so? Did you identify a potential referral? Did you eventually refer someone?
Pre-hire motivation & action phase	Motivation	What motivated you to search for a referral? Can you think of other factors that would possibly motivate you to engage in an employee referral? Would a referral bonus maybe affect your motivation? If yes, what kind of bonus would motivate you? What detained/could possibly detain you from engaging in employee referrals? Can you think of factors that would motivate your colleagues to engage in employee referral hiring? What detained/could possibly detain your colleagues from engaging in employee referrals?
Pre-hire motivation & action phase	Pre-screening & fit assessment	Did you have enough information/support from the organization to identify a potential referral? (e.g. information about the job opening and candidate personae)

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## Appendix C: Topic list for less experienced employees

Phase	Topic	Questions
Pre-hire motivation & action phase	General introduction	<p>Can you tell something about yourself? What is your age, job and education? How long have you been working at Pro-F?</p> <p>Have you previously engaged in employee referral hiring?</p>
	Description of experiences with employee referral hiring	<p>Can you describe how you have experienced the previous three weeks in which you have actively engaged in employee referral hiring for the first time?</p> <p>Have you seen the vacancy of sport physiotherapist? If yes, can you describe your next steps after seeing the vacancy? If not, why did you not take a look at the vacancy? Why were you not motivated to do so? Did you identify a potential referral? Did you eventually refer someone?</p>
	Motivation	<p>What motivated you to search for a referral? Can you think of other factors that would possibly motivate you to engage in an employee referral? Would a referral bonus maybe affect your motivation? If yes, what kind of bonus would motivate you? What detained/could possibly detain you from engaging in employee referrals? Can you think of factors that would motivate your colleagues to engage in employee referral hiring? What detained/could possibly detain your colleagues from engaging in employee referrals?</p>
Pre-hire motivation & action phase	Pre-screening & fit assessment	<p>Can you describe how you tried to identify a potential referral? Was it easy or hard? Is there something that would help or enable you to identify a potential referral?</p> <p>Did you have enough information/support from the organization to identify a potential referral? (e.g. information about the job opening and candidate personae)</p>

Pre-hire motivation & action phase	Referring behavior	<p>Imagine that you identified a potential referral, how would you proceed? Would you exchange information with him/her? If yes, what kind of information?</p> <p>What information would you need from the potential referral to make the decision whether to refer him/her to the organization?</p> <p>Could you able to obtain all this information from the potential referral? If not, what do you need to obtain this information?</p>
Application & hiring phase	Decision to apply	<p>Imagine your referral going through the selection phase of the organization, would you sympathize with your referral? How would you express this?</p> <p>How would you feel if your referral decides not to apply?</p>
	Selecting process	<p>How would you feel when the referral of a colleague was invited for a job interview whereas your referral was not?</p>
Application & hiring phase	Influence & power	<p>Would you think you will be able to influence the hiring decisions? If not, how did you experience this situation in which your influence and power is less than in the previous phase of employee referral hiring?</p>
Post-hire outcomes	Under hiring conditions	<p>Imagine that your referral got hired, how would you feel?</p> <p>Would this encourage you to actively engage in another employee referral?</p>
Post-hire outcomes	Under rejecting conditions	<p>Imagine that, instead of your referral, someone else got hired, how would you feel?</p> <p>Would the choice of another referral be discouraging when it comes to actively engaging in another employee referral?</p>

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## **Appendix D: Informed consent form**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**

#### **Project Title**

Through the eyes of a referrer: A qualitative study into how referrers experience employee referral hiring

#### **Purpose of the Study**

This research is being conducted by Jaap Grondman. I am inviting you to participate in this research project about employee referral hiring. The purpose of this research project is to understand how referrers experience the referral hiring process.

#### **Procedures**

You will participate in an interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. Following on the three-week period in which you have actively searched for a sport physiotherapist, you will be asked questions about your own experiences with employee referral hiring. Sample questions include: “Can you describe how you have experienced the previous three weeks in which you have actively engaged in employee referral hiring?”

#### **Potential Risks and Discomforts**

There are no obvious physical, legal or economic risks associated participating in this study. You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer. Your participation is voluntary, and you are free to discontinue your participation at any time.

#### **Potential Benefits**

Participation in this study does not guarantee any beneficial results to you. The broader goal of this research is to understand how referrers experience referral hiring.

#### **Confidentiality**

Your privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowable by law. No personally identifiable information will be reported in any research product. Moreover, only trained research staff will have access to your responses. Within these restrictions, results of this study will be made available to you upon request. As indicated above, this research project involves making audio recordings of interviews with you. The transcripts will be anonymized in order to ensure your privacy. The audio recordings, forms, and other documents created or collected as part of this study will be stored on the researcher’s password-protected computers and will be destroyed when the research is completed.

#### **Compensation**

There is no compensation when participating in this study.

#### **Right to Withdraw and Questions**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part



at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. The data you provided before you stopped participating however will be processed in this research; no new data will be collected or used.

If you decide to stop taking part in the study, if you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or if you need to report an injury related to the research, please contact the primary investigator:

Jaap Grondman (1795104)

### **Statement of Consent**

Your verbal agreement indicates that you are at least 16 years of age; you have read this consent form or have had it read to you; your questions have been answered to your satisfaction and you voluntarily agree that you will participate in this research study.

I agree to participate in a research project led by Jaap Grondman. The purpose of this document is to specify the terms of my participation in the project through being interviewed.

1. I have been given sufficient information about this research project. The purpose of my participation as an interviewee in this project has been explained to me and is clear.
2. My participation as an interviewee in this project is voluntary. There is no explicit or implicit coercion whatsoever to participate.
3. Participation involves being interviewed by one researcher from Communication Science, BMS Faculty, University of Twente. The interview will last approximately 25-45 minutes. I allow the researcher to take written notes during the interview. I also may allow the audio recording of the interview. It is clear to me that in case I do not want the interview to be taped I am at any point of time fully entitled to withdraw from participation.
4. I have the right not to answer any of the questions. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to withdraw from the interview.
5. I have been given the explicit guarantees that, if I wish so, the researcher will not identify me by name or function in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
6. I have been given the guarantee that this research project has been reviewed and approved by the BMS Ethics Committee. For research problems or any other question regarding the research project, the Secretary of the Ethics Commission of the faculty Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at University Twente may be contacted through [ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl](mailto:ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl).

7. I have read and understood the points and statements of this form. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.