

# THE EFFECT OF DECARBONIZATION SIGNAL ON JOB APPLICATION INTENTION: A PARALLEL MEDIATION MODEL<sup>1</sup>



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## ABSTRACT

This study examines how including decarbonization signals in job postings influences prospective job seekers' perceptions and intentions. Using an experimental approach with senior students (N=334), the research explored the effects of decarbonization signals on organizational attractiveness, person-organization fit, and intention to apply for a job vacancy. Participants viewed job postings either with or without explicit decarbonization signals from a fictitious company, "Victory Holding". Results confirmed that decarbonization signals significantly enhanced perceptions of environmental sensitivity (M=4.02 vs. M=3.51,  $p<.001$ ), validating the manipulation. Mediation analysis revealed that while decarbonization signals did not directly affect job application intentions ( $\beta=.008$ ,  $p=.831$ ), both organizational attractiveness ( $\beta=.20$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and person-organization fit ( $\beta=.16$ ,  $p=.003$ ) mediated this relationship. Theoretical implications highlight organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit as parallel mediators in the relationship between environmental signals and job application intentions. This study underscores the strategic potential of decarbonization signals in enhancing organizational attractiveness to environmentally conscious talent.

**Keywords:** Signal theory, organizational attractiveness, person-organization fit, intent to apply job vacancy

**JEL Codes:** M12, M54, O15

**Scope:** Business administration

**Type:** Research

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<sup>1</sup> Compliance with the ethical rules of the relevant study has been declared.

# DEKARBONİZASYON SİNYALİNİN İŞE BAŞVURU NİYETİNE ETKİSİ: PARALEL ARACILI BİR MODEL



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**ÖZ** | Bu çalışma, iş ilanlarına dekarbonizasyon sinyali eklemenin potansiyel iş arayanların algılarını ve niyetlerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. Son sınıf öğrencilerle (N=334) yapılan deneysel araştırmada, dekarbonizasyon sinyalinin örgütsel çekicilik, kişi-örgüt uyumu ve iş başvuru niyeti üzerindeki etkileri araştırılmıştır. Katılımcılar, "Zafer Holding" adlı hayali bir şirketin iş ilanlarını dekarbonizasyon sinyali olan veya olmayan formunu rastgele görmüşlerdir. Sonuçlar, dekarbonizasyon sinyalinin çevresel duyarlılık algılarını önemli ölçüde artırdığını (M=4.02 vs. M=3.51, p<.001) ve manipülasyonun başarıyla uygulandığını göstermiştir. Bulgular, dekarbonizasyon sinyalinin işe başvuru niyetlerini doğrudan etkilemediğini ortaya koymuştur ( $\beta=.008$ , p=.831). Ancak örgütsel çekicilik ( $\beta=.20$ , p<.001) ve kişi-örgüt uyumu ( $\beta=.16$ , p=.003) bu ilişkide aracılık yapmaktadır. Teorik çıkarımlar, örgütsel çekicilik ve kişi-örgüt uyumunun çevresel sinyaller ile iş başvuru niyetleri arasındaki ilişkide paralel aracılar olarak önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu çalışma, iş ilanında dekarbonizasyon sinyalinin yer almasının, çevre bilincine sahip kişiler için örgütsel çekiciliği artırmadaki stratejik potansiyelini ortaya koymaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sinyal teorisi, örgütsel çekicilik, kişi-örgüt uyumu, işe başvuru niyeti  
**JEL Kodları:** M12, M54, O15

**Alan:** İşletme

**Türü:** Araştırma

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, achieving the net zero emissions target set forth by the Paris Agreement and addressing the global talent shortage have emerged as two critical challenges for organizations. A recent report from McKinsey Global Institution (2022, p. 90) states the enormous labor transition during the decarbonization as “*The net-zero transition analyzed here could lead to a reallocation of labor, with about 200 million jobs gained and about 185 million lost by 2050*”. This realignment presents opportunities for organizations to attract and retain environmentally motivated and skilled employees.

In today's competitive labor market, organizations face the dual challenge of attracting new talent and retaining current employees, necessitating a deeper understanding of organizational attractiveness. The willingness of prospective applicants to pursue job postings and accept job offers from an organization can be considered a measure of organizational attractiveness (Story, Castanheira & Hartig, 2016, p. 487). The concept of the “*War for Talent*,” popularized by McKinsey consultants in 1997, continues to garner attention in both academic and practitioner circles (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001; Story et al., 2016). The expansion of the labor market and the widespread visibility of job postings, coupled with applicants' adept use of information technologies, have made job changes more accessible for talented employees. Consequently, one of the foremost concerns in contemporary human resource management is the shortage of highly skilled and engaged personnel (Story et al., 2016, p. 484), compelling HR professionals to enhance organizational attractiveness.

Organizational attractiveness serves as a potent tool for attracting talented candidates to an organization. Previous research (Aiman-Smith, Bauer & Cable, 2001; Backhaus, Stone & Heiner, 2002; Turban & Greening, 1997) underscores the importance of considering environmental responsibility when attracting job applicants. According to social identity theory, job seekers tend to identify with environmentally responsible organizations and view them as a better fit, thereby increasing their intention to apply for positions within these firms. Thus, signaling organizational attributes to prospective applicants not only aligns with signal theory but also supports person-organization fit theory, as evidenced by prior studies (Jones, Willness & MacNeil, 2009; Jones et al., 2014; Lievens et al., 2001; Sharma & Tanwar, 2023). While existing literature adequately explores the relationship between organizational attractiveness, person-organization fit, and job application intentions (Carless, 2005; Firfiray & Mayo, 2017; Kim & Park, 2011; Turban et al., 2001; Yu, 2014; Zhang & Gowan, 2012), there remains a need for further empirical studies to substantiate these connections (Coelho, Cesário, Sabino & Moreira, 2022; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Soeling, Ajeng Arsanti

& Indriati, 2022).

The introduction of decarbonization initiatives under the Paris Agreement has added a new dimension to organizational concerns about competition while also highlighting the recruitment of talented employees as a competitive imperative in today's labor market. Researchers aim to boost job application intentions by enhancing organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit. Although studies have explored the relationships between organizational attractiveness, person-organization fit, and job application intentions, to the best of our knowledge, no study has yet investigated the impact of decarbonization signals. Consequently, the primary research questions addressed in this study are: "*Can decarbonization signal help firms by increasing organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit?*" Other questions are; "*Does the decarbonization signal directly affect prospective applicant's intention to apply a job vacancy?*" and "*What is the role of organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit in this effect?*"

This study seeks to determine whether decarbonization signals enhance organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit, and whether these factors subsequently increase job application intentions. By addressing these research questions, the study aims to clarify the impact of decarbonization signals on organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit, and their collective effect on job application intentions. To achieve this, an experimental design is employed whereby decarbonization signals are randomly incorporated into job postings distributed to senior university students as prospective job seekers.

This study contributes to existing literature in two significant ways. Firstly, it explores the impact of decarbonization signals on prospective job candidates at a time when the 2050 net zero emission targets and carbon border adjustments are being implemented. Secondly, while prior research has examined the concepts of person-organization fit, organizational attractiveness, and job application intentions individually, this study investigates their parallel mediating effect in relation to the influence of corporate social responsibility (CSR) on job application intentions.

The remainder of this manuscript is structured as follows: Section two reviews the relevant literature, Section three details the methodology, Section four presents the findings, Section five discusses the results, and Section six outlines limitations and offers suggestions for future research.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1. Corporate Social Responsibility and Organizational Attractiveness

Despite many alternatives (Bowen, 2013; Frederick, 1960; Friedman, 1970; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001), CSR is defined by Beal (2014, p. 14) based on previously accepted facts as *"the moral and practical obligation of market participants to consider the effect of their actions on collective or system-level outcomes and to then regulate their behavior in order to contribute to bringing those outcomes into congruence with societal expectations"*. Since the beginning of the 2000's, many studies conducted on CRS. Although most of these are studies that concern management (Mason & Simmons, 2011) in general, CSR is mostly associated with outputs such as firms' performance (Ali, Danish & Asrar-ul-Haq, 2020; Maden, Arıkan, Telci & Kantur, 2012; Pehlivanlı, 2023; Saha, Shashi, Cerchione, Singh & Dahiya, 2020; Tenuta & Cambrea, 2022), reputation (Maden et al., 2012; Opoku, Adomako & Tran, 2023), and image (Ali et al., 2020). On the other hand, there are many studies on the effects of CSR practices on stakeholders (Engle, Brogi, Cucari & Lagasio, 2021; Mubushar, Rasool, Haider & Cerchione, 2021). Some of them associate CSR with customers (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006; Shin & Thai, 2015), employees (Bauman & Skitka, 2012; Collier & Esteban, 2007; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017) and investors (Eding & Scholtens, 2017; Scholtens & Kang, 2013). Most of these studies show that CSR contributes to the firm in different aspects. CSR, which was previously thought to provide strategic advantage, has become a strategic necessity in time.

Gomes and Neves (2011) examined the mediating role of organizational attractiveness to understand prospective job candidates' intentions to apply for a job. In the research conducted with a total of 124 participants, they determined that organizational attractiveness partially mediated the effect of job characteristics and organizational attributes on intention to apply a job vacancy.

The net zero transition targeted by the Paris Agreement imposes another strategic necessity on countries to reduce carbon emissions. In this transition, which can be called decarbonization, sanctions such as carbon taxes and border carbon adjustments are imposed and incentives for renewable energy investments and the use of recyclable products is given. The strategic necessity of CSR and decarbonization can together be used by human resources as a tool to increase the attractiveness of the organization and perception of person organization fit and hypothesized as:

***Hypothesis 1:*** *Decarbonization signal sent participants report higher organizational attractiveness to the fictitious company, than the participants who were not send.*

***Hypothesis 2:** Decarbonization signal sent participants report higher person-organization fit to the fictitious company, than the participants who were not send.*

## **2.2. Signal Theory and Organizational Attractiveness**

Signaling theory is an effective way for communicating with the recipients by sending signals about the organization. When it comes to prospective candidates, choosing organizations based on vague and incomplete information about the employer, employers can make themselves preferable by including signals to the recruitment messages (Guillot-Soulez, Saint-Onge & Soulez, 2022; Rynes, Bretz Jr & Gerhart, 1991). Signal theory is especially useful to understanding employers' appeal in this setting because it examines how people build, send, receive, and interpret unobservable traits and proposes methods to lessen information asymmetry.

Bauer and Aiman-Smith (1996), who were among the first researchers to investigate the effect of environmental concerns on job application preferences using signaling theory, revealed the relationship of environmental stance with organizational attractiveness, intention to pursue a job, and intention to apply for a job, in a study conducted with 303 participants. The study shows that a positive environmental stance expressed in the recruitment brochure can positively affect potential recruits. In one of the later studies, Behrend, Baker and Thompson (2009) examined the effect of the pro-environmental message added to the website of a fictional company on the job application attitude of prospective applicants in order to determine the effect of the corporate pro-environmental message on the job application attitude. The research, conducted with 183 participants within the framework of signaling theory, determined that the environmental message positively affected the job application attitude, and that the company's reputation mediated this effect. They also suggest investigating the interaction of person organization fit with environmental message and intention to job application.

In another influential study in the field, Gully, Phillips, Castellano, Han & Kim (2013), while examining the relationship of social and environmental messages in job postings with organizational attractiveness, person-organization fit, and job application intention, expanded the literature by including the moderating role of desire for significant impact through work. They also used a sequential mediation model with path analysis to understand the influence of social environmental message to job pursuit intention.

Recent studies have also been conducted on how the inclusion of environmental elements in recruitment advertisements affects the intention to apply for a job. Examining the parallel mediation of person-organization fit and organizational prestige in the effect of green employer certification on

organizational attractiveness, Guillot-Soulez et al. (2022) examined the moderating effect of organizational ownership with 158 participants. They revealed that the green employer certification signal has an indirect effect on organizational attraction. The person organization fit and organizational prestige positively mediates the effect of green employee certification on organizational attractiveness.

Waples and Brachle (2020) examined the impact of CSR involvement and pay level signaling on organizational attractiveness. In the study where the hypothetical company's job posting was applied to 194 participants, it was concluded that CSR involvement had a positive correlation with organizational attractiveness, job pursue intention and prestige. In another study, Younis and Hammand (2020) investigated the social identity consciousness, corporate image, employer image and organizational attractiveness concepts within the social identity and signaling theory. Partial moderation of social identity consciousness has been revealed in the effect of corporate image and employer image on organizational attractiveness.

Examining the mediation of organizational reputation in the effect of internal CSR and external CSR signals on organizational attractiveness, Story et al. (2016) revealed that external CSR increases organizational attractiveness only through mediation with corporate reputation, whereas internal CSR increases organizational attractiveness both directly and with mediation of organizational reputation. Liao and Cheng (2020) tested the effect of environmental innovation on organizational attractiveness and the mediating role of pride in this relationship with another experimental design. Although the researchers based the study on social identity theory, the research design can be explained within the framework of signaling theory. The findings obtained from their study show that environmental innovation has a positive effect on organizational attractiveness and pride mediates it. The literature revealed by the above studies led to the development of the following hypotheses between the decarbonization signal and intention to apply a job vacancy as:

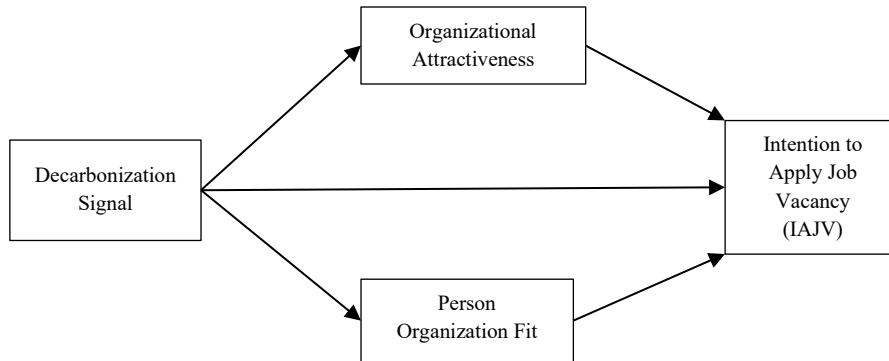
**Hypothesis 3:** *Decarbonization signal sent participants, report greater intention to apply job vacancy to the fictitious job posting, than who did not send.*

From previous research, organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit may mediate the effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply a job vacancy, so the sub-hypotheses could be designed as:

**Hypothesis 3.1:** *The effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply job vacancy is positively mediated by organizational attractiveness.*

**Hypothesis 3.2:** *The effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply job vacancy is positively mediated by person-organization fit.*

The conceptual model for the developed hypotheses is visualized in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Conceptual model

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Ethical Permissions of the Study

In this study, all rules specified within the scope of the *"Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive"* were followed. None of the actions specified under the title of *"Actions Contrary to Scientific Research and Publication Ethics"*, which is the second part of the directive, have been carried out. Ethics committee permission information;

Name of the committee that made the ethical evaluation = Aksaray University - Human Research Ethics Committee

Date of ethical evaluation decision = 23.10.2023

Ethical evaluation document issue number = 2023/06-28

#### 3.2. Procedure and Experimental Design

To test whether decarbonization signal make difference to the prospective job seekers, two recruitment advertisements for fictious company (Victory Holding) developed. In order for the participants to feel that the fictional job posting is suitable for them, general criteria preferred instead of specifics. The first job advertisement starts with *"We are looking for Office Manager Colleagues"* and continues with general job descriptions as *"suitable for teamwork"*, *"having systematic and orderly working principles"*, *"will coordinate office activities to increase efficiency"*. In the second one, in addition to those in the first job advertisement, a widespread image of decarbonization and the text *"we support recycling and the use of renewable energy to reduce our carbon*



*footprint*" as decarbonization strategy about the fictitious company added at the bottom. Each participant received only one of these two scenarios. The job postings used in this experimental study are presented in the appendices. Both the original Turkish versions (Appendix-1 and Appendix-2) and the English translation versions (Appendix-3 and Appendix-4) are included.

The questionnaire designed as follows, in the first part, job advertisement (one of two random scenarios) at the top, scale items regarding organizational attractiveness, person-organization fit and intention to apply job vacancy at the bottom, and in the second part, manipulation check questions and demographic items placed. Manipulation check questions aim to check whether the decarbonization signal is received by participants. Two manipulation check questions ("Is the Victory Holding sensitive to environment?" and "Are the Victory Holding's employees expected to be environmentally sensitive?") are located after the dependent variables as in many studies (Coelho et al., 2022; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Guillot-Soulez et al., 2022). Moreover, in order to measure the attention of the participants, two control questions ("This item has been added to measure your attention, please mark strongly disagree" and "In this item mark the sum of one and three") were placed among the scale items.

For the regression model and the mediation analysis R package from Rosseel (2012) used. For the conceptual model visualization Soetaert and Herman (2009) procedure applied by Jamovi software (Love & Dropmann, 2023).

### **3.3. Sample and Data Collection**

Participants were selected from senior students in business management, office management and management information systems departments who thought that the job advertisement used in the experiment would be suitable for them. The questionnaires are randomly mixed and applied online to the participants who agreed to participate to the research. Since the t-test deployed to the dependent variables between student department groups is not significant, all three groups combined. If the dependent variables had differed between student groups, another experimental design could have been implemented.

To define the minimum required sample size G-Power software was used (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang & Buchner, 2007). With the input parameters as; effect size  $f^2=.15$ ,  $\alpha$  error probability=.05, power=.95, 3 predictors. The software generated minimum sample size 109 for each group. To increase the accuracy 212 of 348 participants were exposed to job advertisements with decarbonization signal, while 136 to job advertisements without decarbonization signal. 14 forms eliminated because the attention questions marked incorrectly. Signaled 206 and 128 not-signaled total 334 form collected. The gender distribution of the

participants consists of 60.5% women with the average age 23.5, in parallel with the distribution of enrolled students.

### 3.4. Measurements

Measurements are collected from the previous studies, the original items were in English, standard translation back-translation process conducted for Turkish participants. Since a fictitious company named "*Victory Holding*" was included in the experimental design, the relevant scale items were associated with it. Responses recorded with 5-point Likert scale ranging from "*1-Strongly Disagree*" to "*5-Strongly Agree*".

The organizational attractiveness measured by Gomes and Neves's (2011) three item scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient is .857, standard deviation is .898, and mean is 3.71 calculated for this study. Sample item as "*Victory Holding would be a good company to work for*".

The person organization fit measured by Cable and Judge's (1996) two item scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient is .815, standard deviation is .908, and mean is 3.78 calculated for this study. The items as "*Do you think the values of the Victory Holding reflects your own values?*" and "*Do you think that the values of the Victory Holding employees' match your values?*".

The intention to apply job vacancy measured by Gomes and Neves's (2011) two items scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient is .840, standard deviation is .902, and mean is 3.90 calculated for this study. Sample item as "*If I were searching for a job, I would apply to Victory Holding*". Three scales' coefficient alpha values are higher than .800 and indicates the internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2019; Hair Jnr et al., 2010).

To test whether the constructs of the original scales are valid in translated form, confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The average variance extracted (AVE), is a summary measure of convergence among a set of questions represent the latent variable, calculated for the construct validity (Hair 2009:659). In general, AVE value needs to be met .50 for construct validity. As seen in Table 1 the percentage variance explained by the scales are between %67 to %72.

To define the internal consistency reliability Cronbach's  $\alpha$  calculated, but contemporary approach for reliability, composite reliability (McDonalds'  $\omega$ ) is more suitable and should be above .60 but not above .95 (Hair, 2009, pp. 760-761). McDonalds'  $\omega$  results are between .815 to .857 and meet the composite reliability criteria. Both the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and McDonalds'  $\omega$  are given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Factor	Indicator	Estimate	SE	Z	p	Std. Est.	AVE	$\omega$	$\alpha$
<b>IAJV</b>	IAJV1	0.822	0.045	18.1	<.001	0.852	%72	0.840	0.840
	IAJV2	0.829	0.046	18.1	<.001	0.850			
<b>O Attract</b>	OAttract1	0.786	0.049	16.1	<.001	0.776	%67	0.859	0.857
	OAttract2	0.870	0.048	18.3	<.001	0.846			
	OAttract3	0.844	0.047	18.0	<.001	0.836			
<b>P O Fit</b>	PO_Fit1	0.847	0.052	16.1	<.001	0.846	%69	0.816	0.815
	PO_Fit2	0.792	0.051	15.5	<.001	0.814			
<b>Signal</b>	Signal	0.486	0.019	25.8	<.001	1.000			

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted;  $\omega$ , McDonald's  $\omega$ ;  $\alpha$ , Cronbach's  $\alpha$ ; SE, standard error; Std. Est., Standard Estimate

To test the proposed model fit with the collected data, model fit indices are derived from confirmatory factor analysis and given in Table 2. The results show good fit for the model with CFI=.977, TLI=.958, RMSEA=.077 and  $\chi^2/df=3.01$ . The common method bias also another issue for the studies collecting data from single survey including dependent and independent variables at the same time. So longitudinal studies preferred instead of cross-sectionals. To test the common method bias Harman's single factor test was conducted. The results showed that the total factor extracted from single factor is %42.05 and lower than the critical %50 value (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee & Podsakoff, 2003). For the collinearity problem variance inflation factor (VIF) was tested and the result show the value is 2.07 and it is lower than the critical value 3.3 (Kock, 2017). The findings show that common method bias is not a concern for this study.

**Table 2:** Model fit indices

CFI	TLI	RMSEA	$\chi^2$	df	p ( $\chi^2/df$ )
0.977	0.958	0.077	45.2	15	<.001

#### 4. RESULTS

To check whether the decarbonization signal received by the participants, independent sample t-test conducted. Results show that manipulation check items mean for the signaled group ( $N=206$ ,  $M=4.02$ ) is higher than the non-signaled

group ( $N=128$ ,  $M=3.51$ ) and difference between groups is statistically significant ( $F(332)=4.89$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $CI$ : from .308 to .724). The results show that the participants were successfully manipulated with the decarbonization signal. Table 3 provides the means, standard deviations, and the partial correlations for the variables. Descriptive statistics of the control variables age and sex are also provided for further meta-analytic efforts.

**Table 3:** The Descriptive Statistics and Partial Correlation Matrix

Variables	Signal Condition	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Age	Non-Signaled	23.1	2.60				
	Signaled	23.7	3.46				
Sex	Non-Signaled	1.41	0.494				
	Signaled	1.38	0.487				
1. MC	Non-Signaled	3.51	0.894	(0.79)			
	Signaled	4.02	0.964				
2. IAJV	Non-Signaled	3.71	0.936	0.458***	(0.84)		
	Signaled	4.01	0.862				
3. O Attract	Non-Signaled	3.48	0.926	0.495***	0.725***	(0.85)	
	Signaled	3.85	0.852				
4. P O Fit	Non-Signaled	3.59	0.967	0.455***	0.527***	0.546***	(0.81)
	Signaled	3.89	0.852				

Abbreviations: MC, manipulation check; IAJV, intention to apply job vacancy; O Attract, organizational attractiveness; P O Fit, person-organization fit. N: non-signaled, 128; signaled, 206. Sex: 1, female; 2, male.

The coefficient alpha in parentheses on the diagonal presents the reliabilities.

Controlling for "Age" and "Sex"; \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$

To test the Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, independent sample t-test conducted. As the results given in Table 4, organizational attractiveness mean for the signaled group ( $N=206$ ,  $M=3.85$ ) is higher than the non-signaled group ( $N=128$ ,  $M=3.48$ ) and the mean difference is statistically significant ( $F(332)=3.76$ ,  $p<.001$ ,  $CI$ : from  $-.inf$  to  $-.209$ ). Person-organization fit mean for

the signaled group ( $N=206$ ,  $M=3.89$ ) is also higher than the non-signaled group ( $N=128$ ,  $M=3.59$ ) and the mean difference is statistically significant ( $F(332)=2.96$ ,  $p 0.002$ ,  $CI$ : from  $-\text{inf}$  to  $-.133$ ). Then both the H1 and H2 hypotheses supported.

**Table 4:** Independent Sample T-Test Results

Variable	Statistics	df	p	Mean Difference	SE Difference	95 % C.I. Lower	95 % C.I. Upper
IAJV	3.03	332	0.001	0.303	3.643	-Inf	-0.138
O Attract	3.76	332	< .001	0.373	2.435	-Inf	-0.209
P O Fit	2.96	332	0.002	0.299	3.770	-Inf	-0.133
MC	4.89	332	< .001	0.516	0.105	-Inf	-0.209

Note.  $H_a \mu_{\text{Non-signaled}} < \mu_{\text{Signaled}}$

Regression analysis was conducted to test the third hypothesis and sub-hypotheses, which argue that the decarbonization signal can directly and indirectly increase job application intention, respectively. The third main hypothesis, which argues that the decarbonization signal will directly affect the intention to apply a job vacancy, was not supported ( $\beta = .008$ ,  $p = .831$ ) even though the correlation and difference between groups were significant as seen in the previous tables.

The mediating role of organizational attractiveness on the effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply job vacancy is argued with the first sub-hypothesis of the third. The mediator role of organizational attractiveness on the effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply a job vacancy is statistically significant ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ ), so it has supported.

Although the decarbonization signal does not directly affect the intention to apply for a job vacancy, the model becomes significant when the organizational attractiveness included in the model. So, the decarbonization signal positively affects organizational attractiveness ( $\beta = .20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and organizational attractiveness positively affects the intention to apply for a job vacancy ( $\beta = .62$ ,  $p < .001$ ), respectively. The hypothesis that organizational attractiveness entirely mediates for the effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply job vacancy was supported.

The mediating role of person organization fit on the effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply job vacancy is argued with the second sub-hypothesis of the third. The mediator role of person organization fit on the effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply a job vacancy is statistically significant ( $\beta = .03$ ,  $p = .015$ ), so it has also supported.

Similarly, it can be inferred from the results that, decarbonization signal

predicts the person organization fit ( $\beta = .16, p = .003$ ), then the person organization fit predicts the intention to apply job vacancy ( $\beta = .19, p < .001$ ). Since again the direct effect is not significant but the model with the mediator it is significant, the hypothesis arguing that person organization fit entirely accounts for the effect of decarbonization signal on intention to apply job vacancy was supported.

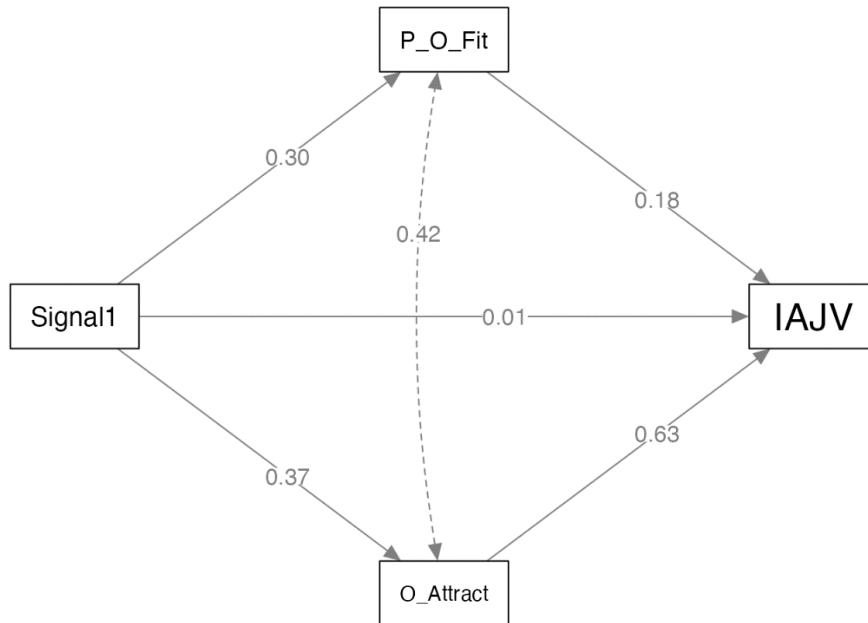
**Table 5:** Results for Regression Analysis

Type	Effect	Est.	SE	Low	Up	$\beta$	z	p
<b>Indirect</b>	Signal1 $\Rightarrow$ O_Attract $\Rightarrow$ IAJV	0.23	0.06	0.11	0.37	0.13	3.64	<.001
	Signal1 $\Rightarrow$ P_O_Fit $\Rightarrow$ IAJV	0.06	0.02	0.02	0.13	0.03	2.44	0.015
<b>Component</b>	Signal1 $\Rightarrow$ O_Attract	0.37	0.10	0.17	0.56	0.20	3.77	<.001
	O_Attract $\Rightarrow$ IAJV	0.63	0.04	0.52	0.72	0.62	14.1	<.001
	Signal1 $\Rightarrow$ P_O_Fit	0.30	0.10	0.11	0.52	0.16	2.97	0.003
	P_O_Fit $\Rightarrow$ IAJV	0.18	0.04	0.08	0.29	0.19	4.24	<.001
<b>Direct</b>	Signal1 $\Rightarrow$ IAJV	0.01	0.07	-0.13	0.16	0.008	0.21	0.831
<b>Total</b>	Signal1 $\Rightarrow$ IAJV	0.30	0.10	0.09	0.50	0.16	3.03	0.002

Confidence intervals (C.I.) computed with bias corrected bootstrap method. Low is Confidence Interval Lower level and Up is Confidence Interval Upper level.

Betas are completely standardized effect sizes.

The path model of the conceptual diagram with beta coefficients is given at Figure 2. Since the independent variable, signal is categorical, it has contrasted with the difference between signaled and non-signaled groups as in Soetaert and Herman's (2009) procedure. Presenting visual pathways with beta coefficients provides a clearer understanding of the relationships between variables determined in the conceptual model.



Categorical independent variables (factors) are represented by contrast indicators. For the categorical dependent variable (signal) the contrast is Signal1 and  $\text{Signal1} = \text{Signaled} - \text{Non-signaled}$ .

**Figure 2:** Path Diagram for The Conceptual Model

## 5. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore how the inclusion of decarbonization signals in job postings influences prospective job seekers' perceptions of organizational attractiveness, person-organization fit, and intention to apply for a job vacancy. The findings provide insights into the nuanced effects of environmental signals on job seekers' decision-making processes within the framework of signaling theory and social identity theory.

### 5.1. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the literature in several significant ways. Firstly, examined organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit as parallel mediators in the relationship between decarbonization signals and job application intentions. While prior research has explored the impact of environmental signals on organizational attractiveness (Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996; Behrend et al., 2009; Guillot-Soulez et al., 2022; Gully et al., 2013; Klimkiewicz & Oltra, 2017; Liao & Cheng, 2020; Waples & Brachle, 2020) and person-organization fit (Guillot-Soulez et al., 2022; Gully et al., 2013; Jones et al., 2009), this study

uniquely integrates both mediators simultaneously.

Secondly, unlike previous studies that focused on CSR activities, green certifications, or environmental innovations as signals (Liao & Cheng, 2020; Guillot-Soulez et al., 2022; Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996; Behrend et al., 2009; Gully et al., 2013; Waples & Brachle, 2020), this study specifically investigated the impact of a decarbonization signal within job postings. This distinction is crucial as organizations increasingly align with global decarbonization targets, such as the 2050 net zero goal, influencing job seekers' perceptions.

Thirdly, findings both align and diverge from prior research. For instance, Gully et al. (2013) found no direct significant effect of social and environmental messages on job pursuit intentions, similar to our study's results. However, our study contrasts by suggesting parallel mediation rather than sequential mediation, thereby advancing understanding in this area.

While Bauer and Aiman-Smith (1996) highlighted higher organizational attractiveness and job application intentions when job postings included environmental stances, our study's mediation analysis revealed that the direct influence of the decarbonization signal on job application intentions was non-significant. Instead, organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit fully mediated this relationship, underscoring their critical role in shaping job seekers' intentions.

### **5.2. Practical Implications**

Practically, these findings offer actionable insights for organizations navigating the competitive landscape for environmentally conscious talent. The inclusion of decarbonization signals in job postings can strategically enhance organizational attractiveness and person-organization fit perceptions among prospective job seekers. This strategic alignment with global environmental goals, such as carbon neutrality targets, positions organizations as attractive employers for individuals who prioritize environmental responsibility.

Moreover, while the decarbonization signal itself may not directly boost job application intentions, organizations can leverage it effectively by emphasizing supportive organizational cultures, career development opportunities, and competitive compensation packages. These factors complement environmental signals, reinforcing job seekers' motivation to apply.

### **5.3. Limitations and Orientations for Future Research**

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. Firstly, the sample primarily comprised senior students, limiting generalizability to broader job seeker populations with varying levels of professional experience. Future research could explore diverse demographic groups and professional backgrounds to enhance external validity.



Secondly, the use of a fictitious company name "Victory Holding" might have influenced participants' perceptions differently based on personal preferences or biases. While efforts were made to standardize the company name across groups, future studies could consider using real-world organizations with varying environmental profiles to capture more nuanced responses.

Thirdly, this study adopted a cross-sectional design, which limits causal inference. Longitudinal studies could offer deeper insights into how perceptions evolve over time and provide stronger evidence of causal relationships between environmental signals and job application intentions.

Lastly, while this mediation models yielded statistically significant results, the effect sizes (beta coefficients) were relatively modest. Future research could explore additional mediators or moderators, such as corporate environmental certifications or leadership endorsements of sustainability initiatives, to enrich our understanding of these relationships.

#### **6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT**

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

#### **7. FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency.

#### **8. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS**

The authors' contributions to the study are equal.

#### **9. ETHICS COMMITTEE STATEMENT AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY COPYRIGHTS**

In this study, all rules specified within the scope of the "*Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive*" were followed. Necessary permissions were obtained for the study from Aksaray University - Human Research Ethics Committee (23.10.2023; 2023/06-28).

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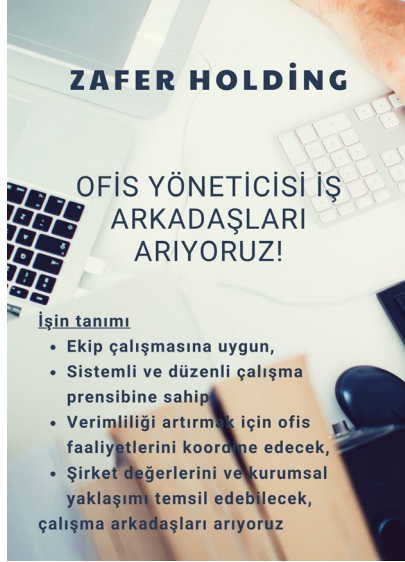
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## 11. APPENDICES

**Appendix-1: Non-Signaled Job Posting Original Turkish**



**ZAFER HOLDİNG**

**OFİS YÖNETİCİSİ İŞ ARKADAŞLARI ARIYORUZ!**

İşin tanımı

- Ekip çalışmasına uygun,
- Sistemli ve düzenli çalışma prensibine sahip
- Verimliliği artırmak için ofis faaliyetlerini koordine edecek,
- Şirket değerlerini ve kurumsal yaklaşımı temsil edebilecek, çalışma arkadaşları arıyoruz

**Appendix-2: Signaled Job Posting Original Turkish**



**ZAFER HOLDİNG**

**OFİS YÖNETİCİSİ İŞ ARKADAŞLARI ARIYORUZ!**

İşin tanımı

- Ekip çalışmasına uygun,
- Sistemli ve düzenli çalışma prensibine sahip,
- Verimliliği artırmak için ofis faaliyetlerini koordine edecek,
- Şirket değerlerini ve kurumsal yaklaşımı temsil edebilecek, çalışma arkadaşları arıyoruz

Karbon ayak izimizi azaltmak için geri dönüşümü ve yenilenebilir enerji kullanımını destekliyoruz.

**Appendix-3: Non-Signaled Job Posting Translated to English**



**VICTORY HOLDING**

**WE ARE HIRING OFFICE MANAGER COLLEAGUES!**

Job description

- Suitable for teamwork,
- Having a systematic and orderly working principle
- Coordinate office activities to increase efficiency
- Able to represent company values and corporate approach,

We are looking for colleagues

**Appendix-4: Signaled Job Posting Translated to English**



**VICTORY HOLDING**

**WE ARE HIRING OFFICE MANAGER COLLEAGUES!**

Job description

- Suitable for teamwork,
- Having a systematic and orderly working principle,
- Coordinate office activities to increase efficiency,
- Able to represent company values and corporate approach,

We are looking for colleagues

We support recycling and the use of renewable energy to reduce our carbon footprint.