

# Modeling Job Pursuit Intention: Moderating Mechanisms of Socio-Environmental Consciousness

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**Abstract** Many scholars have suggested the relationship between corporate social performance and its ability to attract a large number of high-quality job applicants, because previous literature indicates that employees with strong social awareness help create a high-performance organization. For that reason, an important issue for successful business recruitment is how to boost the pursuit intention of job seekers. This study discusses such issue by proposing a model based on signaling theory and cognitive dissonance theory. In the proposed model of this study, the positive relationships between four dimensions of corporate social performance and job pursuit intention are hypothetically moderated by socio-environmental consciousness. The proposed hypotheses of this research were empirically tested using the data from graduating students seeking a job. The empirical findings of this study complement previous literature by discussing how corporate social performance benefits business firms from a perspective of strengthened human resources and recruitment.

Finally, managerial implications for business managers based on the findings herein are provided.

**Keywords** Corporate social performance · Ethical citizenship · Discretionary citizenship · Cognitive dissonance theory

## Introduction

Recruitment of a business firm is a key element of human resource management, because it dominates applicant pool characteristics and defines the set of potential individuals who will work for a particular organization (Turban and Cable 2003). Successful recruitment provides a business firm with superior human resources and consequently strengthens its sustained competitive advantage (Wright et al. 1995). An important step in successful recruitment of a firm is to boost job seekers' pursuit intention (i.e., the intention to apply for a job) (Williamson et al. 2003) by learning about how the job seekers see a firm and are attracted to apply for a job in the firm. Specifically, business firms with good social performance perceived by job seekers are more likely to attract superior job applicants, and thus will have a larger number of superior applicants to select from, leading to greater utilities for firm recruitment campaigns and stronger organizational competitive advantages in a long run (Williamson et al. 2003).

Corporate social performance—recognized as corporate citizenship or corporate social responsibility (CSR)—encompasses a firm's self-regulation codes, standards, ethics, and norms that are integrated into core competency of the firm and its business models (Lin 2010; Lin et al. 2012). Examples of benefits from corporate social performance include the enhanced capabilities to achieve

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corporate financial success (Johnson and Greening 1999), to boost customer trust, to lift customer purchase intention, to increase employees' organizational commitment, to strengthen employees' work engagement, to motivate organizational citizenship behavior, or to enhance job performance (e.g., Carmeli et al. 2007; Lin 2010; Lin et al. 2010, 2012; Maignan and Ferrell 2001).

According to signaling theory, corporate social performance is one of the most critical attributes that attract potential job applicants by serving as a signal of a firm's working environment, business standards, values, and norms (Turban and Greening 1996). People's job pursuit intention toward a particular firm is likely enhanced if they view the firm as having decent standards, values, and norms they deem crucial (e.g., Chatman 1989). As a firm's corporate social performance often shows ethical values and norms, it is highly probable that such citizenship improves job seekers' perceived image of the firm, consequently driving their intention to pursue a job provided by the firm. While some knowledge regarding the importance of corporate social performance (e.g., for customers and employees) has been widely developed, little is known about how such corporate social performance is actually interpreted by job seekers (e.g., Albinger and Freeman 2000; Turban and Greening 1996). In fact, little research has discussed how corporate social performance benefits a firm's recruitment by exploring key moderators that may intervene or change the relationship between corporate social performance and job pursuit intention, which becomes a research gap this study attempts to contribute to. Specifically, this study proposes socio-environmental consciousness as a key factor that moderates the relationship between corporate social performance and job pursuit intention.

According to cognitive dissonance theory (Casper et al. 2002), if individuals view inconsistencies in their awareness, value, or beliefs, they experience an uncomfortable psychological state and will consequently adjust their job selection to create consistency (i.e., alterable job pursuit intention). For that reason, it makes a theoretical sense for socio-environmental consciousness to moderate the effects of corporate social performance on job pursuit intention. For instance, previous literature suggests that cognitive dissonance represents a key mechanism in vocational decision processes (Thomas and Bruning 1984).

This research differs from previous studies in some important ways. First, previous studies linking corporate social performance to its outcome in job-seeking populations often consider corporate citizenship a single-dimension construct (e.g., Albinger and Freeman 2000). To complement the previous studies, this research evaluates four different dimensions of corporate social performance regarding their effects in the formation of job pursuit

intention. This is important because some studies have neglected to take the multi-dimensional nature of corporate social performance into account from a psychological aspect of job seekers (e.g., De los Salmones et al. 2005). Based on previous literature (e.g., Carroll 1979; Lin 2010), this study discusses in more detail about corporate social performance that consists of four dimensions in terms of employees as stakeholders: (1) economic citizenship, referring to the firm's responsibility to provide utilitarian benefits to its employees such as a quality workplace, reasonable payoff, good training, and job skill development; (2) legal citizenship, referring to the firm's responsibility to accomplish its business mission within the framework of legal and law requirements; (3) ethical citizenship, referring to the firm's practices that are requested or expected by its society to protect stakeholders' moral rights even though these practices are not codified into law (Geva 2008); and (4) philanthropic citizenship, referring to the firm's responsibility to engage in social actions that are not mandated, neither required by laws nor expected of a business firm in a moral or ethical sense (Carroll 1979; Lin 2010).

Second, although prior research has tried to investigate how a firm's image (e.g., social performance reputation) affects job pursuit intention (Turban and Cable 2003), no previous research has looked into whether such relationship between corporate social performance and job pursuit intention can be moderated by socio-environmental consciousness, which is the main focus of this research herein.

Third, while a majority of empirical studies only rely on a one-time survey for measuring job pursuit intention, this study takes primary survey data obtained at two different time points (i.e., the outcome is measured at time 2, whereas its antecedents and moderator are surveyed at time 1) to test the formation of job pursuit intention and its moderator. Based on the above critical advantages of our research study, an in-depth understanding of how the relationship between perceived social performance and job pursuit intention is established and such relationship is moderated by socio-environmental consciousness can be clearly presented.

## Development of Hypotheses

Previous literature has indicated that a firm's initial attraction to job seekers is based on their perception about the firm's reputation (Cable and Turban 2001), which is largely influenced by its corporate social performance (e.g., McWilliams et al. 2006; Rynes 1991). Many large firms, such as Apple, Dell, IBM, and Microsoft, strive to create positive images to prospective job applicants by promoting economic, environmental, and philanthropic practices, indicating that many

large firms use corporate social performance as a key recruitment tool (e.g., Poe and Courter 1995). Drawing on propositions from the signaling theory and cognitive dissonance theory, this study proposes that there exist positive associations between four dimensions of corporate social performance and job pursuit intention, and such associations are simultaneously moderated by socio-environmental consciousness. The hypotheses of this study and their rationale are provided in detail.

People's job pursuit intention toward a particular firm counts heavily on their perception of a firm's social performance which represents a positive signal to a firm's stakeholders such as customers, investors, and job seekers (Cable and Graham 2000). The signaling theory emphasizes that since job seekers are often unable to know about a particular firm in detail due to, for instance, business confidentiality, they recall their prior knowledge or experience about the image of the firm's social performance as a signal to direct their job pursuit intention (e.g., Breagh 1992; Cable and Turban 2003; Rynes 1991). A firm's social performance guides job pursuit intention, because it is difficult for job seekers to obtain overall evaluations for every aspect of a job prior to actually working at the firm (Rynes 1991). That is, job seekers have insufficient time to decide which jobs to apply for and which jobs to remove from consideration during the initial stage of recruitment. Hence, job seekers depend largely on a firm's perceived corporate social performance as a job signal that guides their job pursuit intention.

Each dimension of corporate social performance (i.e., economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic citizenship) is considered a key job-seeking clue (i.e., a signal) that positively increases individuals' job pursuit intention. Job seekers use various clues associated with the firm to draw conclusions about the firm's actions (Srivastava and Lurie 2001). Clues about certain corporate social performance draw job seekers' close attention to potential employers (Backhaus et al. 2002; Lin et al. 2012), indicating a positive relationship between corporate social performance and job pursuit intention. All in all, this study justified each of our hypotheses in more detail.

The foremost and necessary social performance of a firm is economic in nature given that a firm is a basic economic unit in society (Carroll 1979) and it is responsible for taking care of its employees or other stakeholders (Lin et al. 2012; Maxfield 2008; Turker 2009). As such, it has a responsibility to provide good working environment, training, rewards, and job advancement (i.e., elements of economic citizenship) while producing goods (or services) and selling them at a profit (Cable and Judge 1994; Lin et al. 2012; Weyzig 2009). Supportive workplace relationship between a firm and its employees (e.g., training, work quality, and compensation) signifies that the business

organization is the one worth working for (Aiman-Smith et al. 2001), thus motivating individuals' job pursuit intention.

Based on the above hypothesized positive relationship between economic citizenship and job pursuit intention, this study further hypothesizes that such relationship is moderated by socio-environmental consciousness positively. Socio-environmental consciousness is defined as a kind of cognitive awareness that reflects the individuals' recognition, value judgment, and attitude toward social and environmental issues such as social injustice, environmental protection, social and environmental policy, and so on (Chang and Chen 2012; Kirkham et al. 2009; Pedersen 2006). Given that economic citizenship helps improve social problems such as education, poverty, unemployment, and so forth (e.g., Pérez et al. 2012; Wilson 2000), people with strong socio-environmental consciousness are more likely to avoid working for a firm with poor economic citizenship. Such phenomena can be effectively explained by cognitive dissonance theory that assumes people (e.g., job seekers) cannot tolerate cognitive inconsistencies (e.g., socio-environmental issues) and will strive to reduce or eliminate it whenever it exists (Festinger 1957). In the context of the business recruitment, cognitive dissonance theory implies that job seekers will match perceptions about a firm's social performance (e.g., economic citizenship) with their own beliefs (e.g., socio-economic consciousness) (Viswesvaran and Deshpande 1996). A perceived conflict from this comparison would engender a state of dissonance which the job seekers will attempt to reduce by ignoring the potential job opportunity provided by the firm (Das et al. 2008; Koh and Boo 2001). In other words, job seekers with high levels of socio-environmental consciousness are positive and sensitive to respond to the recruitment of a firm that performs intensive economic citizenship, suggesting a positive moderating effect of socio-environmental consciousness on the relationship between economic citizenship and job pursuit intention. The hypothesis is thus derived as below.

**H1** There exists a positive relationship between perceived economic citizenship and job pursuit intention among job seekers, and such relationship is positively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness of the job seekers.

People of society expect a firm to fulfill its mission within the framework of legal and law requirements (Carroll 1979; Lin et al. 2012). When job seekers perceive, for instance, serious illegal conducts by a firm (e.g., pollution emissions and workplace discriminations against the law), they will doubt if they could fall victim to such organizational unethical transgressions, thus discouraging their intention to seek a job of the firm. Previous evidence

supports the theoretical rationales described above based on the signaling theory, such that job seekers show higher levels of intention to seek a job from the firm that better obeys legal systems (Belt and Paolillo 1982; Gatewood et al. 1993; Lefkowitz 2006), supporting a positive association between perceived legal citizenship and job pursuit intention.

Given the above-mentioned positive relationship between legal citizenship and job pursuit intention, this study hypothesizes that such relationship is positively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness. As job seekers with strong socio-environmental consciousness reveal high levels of recognition and value judgment about the injustice related to the society (e.g., business speculators) and its environment (e.g., deforestation), they are sensitive to legal citizenship performed by business organizations. This is understandable because, based on cognitive dissonance theory, the state of cognitive dissonance is an unpleasant one, individuals with strong socio-environmental consciousness are highly motivated to reduce the dissonance by excluding the potential job opportunity provided by the firm with bad legal citizenship, and consequently achieve greater “consonance” (consistency) (Rashid and Mohammad 2012). In other words, people looking for a job will be less likely to consider the job offered by a firm that violates the legal regulations to prevent discrimination in workplaces, fulfill its obligations of contracts, or reduce pollutions. Given that legal citizenship helps improve the order of society, facilitate environmental sustainability (e.g., Liyin et al. 2006), or refine environmental policies (e.g., Zhang and Wen 2008), job seekers with high levels of socio-environmental consciousness are more susceptible to the recruitment of a firm that practices good legal citizenship, leading to a positive moderating effect of socio-environmental consciousness on the relationship between economic citizenship and job pursuit intention. The hypothesis is thus developed as below.

**H2** There exists a positive relationship between perceived legal citizenship and job pursuit intention among job seekers, and such relationship is positively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness of the job seekers.

An important way for linking a firm’s ethical citizenship and job pursuit intention is through inferences drawn from how the firm ethically treats people (e.g., Lin et al. 2012). People’s perception about a firm’s ethics is largely affected by how fair they consider the firm’s actions to be ethical (Cropanzano et al. 2001). People looking for a job count on ethical fairness to justify whether a firm is reputable, non-biased, and will fairly treat them as legitimate members of the firm (Rupp et al. 2006). When a firm treats various stakeholders (including its employees and job applicants) ethically, job seekers are likely to have stronger intention to seek a long-term employment relationship with the firm

(Schwepker 2001), indicating a positive association between perceived ethical citizenship and job pursuit intention. Previous literature indicates that people prefer applying for a job from a company with positive ethical policies (Ramasamy et al. 2008). The empirical findings in previous literature show that the demand for legal responsibilities and ethical responsibilities dominate the CSR demand structure among job seekers across Asian countries (Ramasamy et al. 2008; Wang 2012).

Based on the positive relationship between economic citizenship and job pursuit intention, this study hypothesizes that such relationship is moderated by socio-environmental consciousness. According to cognitive dissonance theory, a state of “dissonance” will be aroused whenever people simultaneously have two cognitions that are psychologically inconsistent (e.g., personal high levels of ethical beliefs vs. low levels of ethical citizenship performed by a firm) (Rashid and Mohammad 2012). As people with strong socio-environmental consciousness show high levels of awareness regarding whether a firm is able to practice comprehensive codes of conduct in ethics or correct business unethical wrongdoing in a timely manner, they are more impressionable to ethical citizenship of a firm (Albinger and Freeman 2000; Sims and Kroeck 1994). On contrary, when seeking a job offered by a firm, job seekers with weak socio-environmental consciousness are likely unsusceptible to take ethical citizenship into account, suggesting a positive moderating effect of socio-environmental consciousness on the relationship between ethical citizenship and job pursuit intention. The hypothesis is thus derived as below.

**H3** There exists a positive relationship between perceived ethical citizenship and job pursuit intention among job seekers, and such relationship is positively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness of the job seekers.

A firm’s philanthropic programs and its focus on social welfare issues serve as a positive signal that substantially convinces individuals to seek a job provided by the firm (e.g., Greening and Turban 2000; Lin et al. 2012). An investigation reveals that more than half of UK working professionals care highly about the philanthropic citizenship of their firm (Dawkins 2004; Lin et al. 2012). People are more likely to seek a job provided by a firm when it has a more favorable corporate image of dedicating itself to social welfare and public benefits (Lin et al. 2012). Firms with stronger corporate social performance in philanthropic scopes are perceived as being better reputable employers than other firms with weaker corporate social performance (Bauer and Aiman-Smith 1996; Lin et al. 2012; Turban and Greening 1997). Large companies, such as GM, Oracle, Starbucks, Toyota, and Mary Kay Inc., promote their philanthropic and environmental programs during their recruitment campaigns, revealing that these firms use

positive philanthropic citizenship as a recruitment strategy (e.g., Highhouse et al. 2003; Lin et al. 2012) to attract superior job applicants. Previous research finds that information about corporate philanthropy and/or employee community service is critical for business employment website to attract job seekers (Cober et al. 2003, 2004). In recent years, it has become a popular practice for large firms to relay information associated with their philanthropic social performance (Aiman-Smith et al. 2001; Cober et al. 2004; Poe and Courter 1995). Large organizations such as Google, IBM, General Motors, Toyota, and Microsoft present information in their recruitment materials that emphasizes their philanthropic and environmental initiatives (Behrend et al. 2009).

Following the above rationale about the positive relationship between philanthropic citizenship and job pursuit intention, this study hypothesizes that such relationship is positively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness. Cognitive dissonance theory posits that incompatible conditions, message, or information create cognitive dissonance of individuals (Das et al. 2008). Social psychologists suggest that individuals seek consistency and stable balance between their beliefs and intention (or action) so as to reduce cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957; Heider 1983). Whenever job seekers encounter inconsistent cognitive structures between their own socio-environmental consciousness and the low philanthropic citizenship of a firm (e.g., self-concern business style), a psychological state of dissonance is likely to occur (Das et al. 2008; Matz and Wood 2005), consequently moderating the relationship between philanthropic citizenship and job pursuit intention. When confronted with conflicting choices, people's intention to seek a job from a particular firm substantially drops to achieve consistency between belief and subsequent behavior (Das et al. 2008; Koh and Boo 2001).

Since people with strong socio-environmental consciousness pay close attention to the well-being of the society and its environment, they are more reactive to philanthropic citizenship when looking for a job (e.g., Albinger and Freeman 2000). That is, job seekers will be more boosted to seek the job provided by a firm with good philanthropic citizenship such as protecting natural resources, making donations to charities, or participating in volunteer activities (e.g., Evans and Davis 2011). As a result, the intention to pursuit a job is stronger among people with higher socio-environmental consciousness than people with lower socio-environmental consciousness, indicating a positive moderating effect of socio-environmental consciousness on the relationship between philanthropic citizenship and job pursuit intention. Hence, the hypothesis is derived as below.

**H4** There exists a positive relationship between philanthropic citizenship and job pursuit intention among job seekers, and such relationship is positively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness of the job seekers.

## Methods

### Subjects and Procedures

The hypotheses proposed in this study were empirically examined using a survey of graduating students from two large universities in Taiwan during the last semester before their graduation. These students include both undergraduates and MBA students from management colleges of the two universities. In the cover page of the survey questionnaire, thirty names of well-known business firms across high-tech, servicing, transportation, and banking and insurance industries were provided for reference. The subjects were first asked to select one of the business firms they are familiar with as a target company in the survey and then started to fill out the questionnaire. The same subjects were invited to participate in the anonymous surveys twice (with one month apart), linked by a four-digit identifier (the last four digits of their cell phone number) in both surveys. Specifically, the independent variables (i.e., corporate social performance and socio-environmental consciousness) were measured in the first survey, while the outcome (i.e., job pursuit intention) was measured in the second survey a month later. It is important to note that investigating the same subjects in two different time points substantially helps reduce the threat of common method biases, because common method biases are often caused by one-time survey (Lin and Bhattacharjee 2008, 2009).

Of the 600 questionnaires provided to the subjects, 402 usable matched pairs were returned in both time periods, for a response rate of 67.00 %. The sample characteristics are presented in Table 1. Note that these graduating university students are appropriate research subjects for our studying job pursuit intention because many firms in Taiwan do their best to attract such highly educated students from universities as critical human resources. Meanwhile, job pursuit is the first key issue these graduating students have to face right before their graduation and thus they have been very concerned about the job market and employers during such time periods of our survey (i.e., graduating time periods). By contrary, it would be improper if the current working employees from industries were surveyed, because such employees may have gotten used to their job and life, reluctantly taken a risk of pursuing a new job, and have no job pursuit intention whatsoever (Wang 2012). Table 1 lists sample characteristics.

**Table 1** Sample characteristics

| Characteristic  | <i>N</i> = 402 (%) |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| Gender          |                    |
| Male            | 222 (55.22)        |
| Female          | 180 (44.78)        |
| Age             |                    |
| 20–29 years old | 324 (80.60)        |
| 30–39 years old | 58 (14.43)         |
| NA              | 20 (4.97)          |
| Marriage status |                    |
| Single          | 323 (80.35)        |
| Married         | 79 (19.65)         |
| Education       |                    |
| Undergraduate   | 237 (58.96)        |
| MBA             | 165 (41.04)        |

NA not available

## Measures

The research constructs herein were measured using 5-point Likert scales directly drawn or modified from prior literature (see [Appendix](#)). Three steps were employed to compile our measurement items. First, the original items were modified by a focus group of four researchers familiar with business ethics and organizational behavior research, including two graduate students and two professors. Second, this study conducted a pilot test before the actual survey in order to improve our questionnaire's readability and to assess the quality of our measurement items. Inappropriate items were removed from our survey questionnaire due to their poor loadings in the exploratory factor analysis of our pilot test.

In the two surveys of this study, common method variances (CMV) are unlikely a threat herein because of three major reasons. First, this study used anonymous questionnaires to avoid our subjects' suspicion or hesitation to fill out our survey questionnaires. Second, our data collection from the same subjects, twice at two different time points, effectively reduces the threat of common method bias. This survey strategy (i.e., two surveys on the same subjects) is the most critical than any post hoc statistical methods for detecting or reducing CMV (Chen and Lin [forthcoming](#)). Last but not the least, a threat of common method bias can be substantially reduced in this study due in part to the main focus of moderating effects herein. As interactions are less subject to common sources from a statistical point of view, this study is less likely to suffer from CMV. Indeed, testing moderating effects in a study has the added benefit of mitigating the CMV problem. The rationale is that more complex relationships (e.g., moderating effects) are less susceptible to CMV, because such

relationships are less likely to be a part of respondents' cognitive maps (Chang et al. [2010](#)). Based on the above three measures, CMV is unlikely a threat in our data sample.

## Data Analysis

The actual survey data of this study were examined via two stages including first, confirmatory factory analysis (CFA) and second, hierarchical regression analysis. In the first stage, CFA was conducted to assess scale reliability and validity. In the second stage, the hierarchical regressions models with two-way interactions were tested for the purpose of empirically detecting the moderating effects. Test results from the two stages are stated next.

CFA analysis was done on all items corresponding to the six research constructs of this study. The goodness-of-fit of the hypothesized CFA model was assessed with fit metrics as shown in [Table 2](#). The metrics such as NFI, CFI, NNFI, AGFI, and GFI were all larger than or equal to 0.9. The figures of RMR and RMSEA were both smaller than 0.05. These figures together support that the CFA model hypothesized in this study fits the empirical data well.

Convergent validity was confirmed according to three conditions (Fornell and Larcker [1981](#)). To begin with, all factor loadings in [Table 2](#) were significant at  $p < 0.001$ . Second, Cronbach's alpha of each research construct was larger than 0.70 (see [Table 2](#)). Third, the average variance extracted (AVE) of each construct exceeded 0.50, supporting that the measurement items capture sufficient variance in the underlying construct than that attributable to measurement error (Fornell and Larcker [1981](#)). Collectively, the empirical data of this study satisfied all the three conditions (Fornell and Larcker [1981](#)) required to assure convergent validity.

Regarding discriminant validity, this study applied Chi square difference tests for verifying such validity. By our controlling the experiment-wise error rate at the overall significance level of 0.01, the Bonferroni method showed that the critical value of the Chi square difference for discriminant analysis should be 12.21. In this study, as Chi square difference statistics for all pairs of constructs in [Table 3](#) exceeded this critical value of 12.21, discriminant validity for the data sample of this study is confirmed to be statistically acceptable.

In the second stage of data analysis, this study performed hierarchical regression analysis based on the above CFA model. Gender, age, education (undergraduate degree vs. master degree), and marriage are included as control variables. [Table 4](#) presents the test results of this analysis.

The test results for the hypotheses of this study are explained as follows. In Model 1, four control variables are included and its test results show that three out of the four

**Table 2** Confirmatory factor analysis

| Construct                         | Indicators | Standardized loading | AVE  | Cronbach's $\alpha$ |
|-----------------------------------|------------|----------------------|------|---------------------|
| Job pursuit intention             | JP1        | 0.82 ( $t = 19.85$ ) | 0.73 | 0.89                |
|                                   | JP2        | 0.91 ( $t = 22.46$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | JP3        | 0.84 ( $t = 20.10$ ) |      |                     |
| Economic citizenship              | EC1        | 0.72 ( $t = 15.93$ ) | 0.51 | 0.84                |
|                                   | EC2        | 0.85 ( $t = 19.90$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | EC3        | 0.72 ( $t = 15.65$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | EC4        | 0.65 ( $t = 13.93$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | EC5        | 0.64 ( $t = 13.69$ ) |      |                     |
| Legal citizenship                 | LE1        | 0.69 ( $t = 14.80$ ) | 0.58 | 0.85                |
|                                   | LE2        | 0.74 ( $t = 16.26$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | LE3        | 0.82 ( $t = 18.92$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | LE4        | 0.81 ( $t = 18.50$ ) |      |                     |
| Ethical citizenship               | ET1        | 0.76 ( $t = 16.98$ ) | 0.61 | 0.87                |
|                                   | ET2        | 0.83 ( $t = 19.49$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | ET3        | 0.83 ( $t = 19.80$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | ET4        | 0.72 ( $t = 15.93$ ) |      |                     |
| Philanthropic citizenship         | PH1        | 0.70 ( $t = 15.08$ ) | 0.57 | 0.85                |
|                                   | PH2        | 0.81 ( $t = 18.62$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | PH3        | 0.79 ( $t = 17.49$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | PH4        | 0.73 ( $t = 15.84$ ) |      |                     |
| Socio-environmental consciousness | SO5        | 0.61 ( $t = 13.11$ ) | 0.58 | 0.85                |
|                                   | SO2        | 0.90 ( $t = 21.60$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | SO3        | 0.82 ( $t = 18.72$ ) |      |                     |
|                                   | SO4        | 0.69 ( $t = 15.00$ ) |      |                     |

Goodness-of-fit indices  
 ( $N = 402$ ):  $\chi^2_{237} = 409.09$   
 ( $p$  value  $< 0.001$ ); NNFI = 0.96;  
 NFI = 0.92; CFI = 0.97;  
 GFI = 0.92; AGFI = 0.90;  
 RMR = 0.03; RMSEA = 0.04

**Table 3**  $\chi^2$  difference tests for examining discriminate validity

| Construct pair | $\chi^2_{237} = 409.09$ (unconstrained model) |                     |
|----------------|---|---------------------|
|                | $\chi^2_{238}$ (constrained model)            | $\chi^2$ difference |
| (F1, F2)       | 838.76***                                     | 429.67              |
| (F1, F3)       | 835.16***                                     | 426.07              |
| (F1, F4)       | 886.99***                                     | 477.90              |
| (F1, F5)       | 856.96***                                     | 447.87              |
| (F1, F6)       | 1028.15***                                    | 619.06              |
| (F2, F3)       | 700.87***                                     | 291.78              |
| (F2, F4)       | 846.65***                                     | 437.56              |
| (F2, F5)       | 929.11***                                     | 520.02              |
| (F2, F6)       | 1021.02***                                    | 611.93              |
| (F3, F4)       | 693.25***                                     | 284.16              |
| (F3, F5)       | 970.47***                                     | 561.38              |
| (F3, F6)       | 1012.35***                                    | 603.26              |
| (F4, F5)       | 909.20***                                     | 500.11              |
| (F4, F6)       | 1053.37***                                    | 644.28              |
| (F5, F6)       | 951.46***                                     | 542.37              |

F1 job pursuit intention, F2 economic citizenship, F3 legal citizenship, F4 ethical citizenship, F5 philanthropic citizenship, F6 socio-environmental consciousness

\*\*\* Significant at the 0.001 overall significance level by using the Bonferroni method

control variables are not significantly related to job pursuit intention. In Model 2, four social performance dimensions and socio-environmental consciousness are included as independent variables to test the main effects of the corporate social performance on job pursuit intention. The test result shows that all the four dimensions are significantly related to job pursuit intention with coefficients of 0.24 ( $p < 0.01$ ), 0.14 ( $p < 0.05$ ), 0.18 ( $p < 0.01$ ), and 0.17 ( $p < 0.01$ ), respectively. Meanwhile, the socio-environmental consciousness is not significantly related to job pursuit intention. In Model 3, we included four interaction terms of corporate social performance and socio-environmental consciousness to detect the moderating effects of socio-environmental consciousness in our research model. The test results show that (1) the relationship between economic citizenship and job pursuit intention is negatively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness (i.e., thus H1 is only partially supported); (2) socio-environmental consciousness has no moderating effect on the relationship between legal citizenship and job pursuit intention (i.e., H2 is partially supported); (3) the relationship between ethical citizenship and job pursuit intention is positively moderated by socio-environmental consciousness (i.e., H3 is fully supported); and (4) the relationship between philanthropic citizenship and job pursuit intention is positively

**Table 4** Hierarchical regression analysis

|  | Model 1<br>Job pursuit<br>intention | Model 2<br>Job pursuit<br>intention | Model 3<br>Job pursuit<br>intention |
|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Control variables                          |                                     |                                     |                                     |
| Education                                  | 0.55**                              | 0.28**                              | 0.25**                              |
| Gender                                     | -0.12                               | -0.11*                              | -0.10                               |
| Age  | -0.01                               | -0.01                               | -0.01                               |
| Marriage                                   | 0.13                                | 0.07                                | 0.05                                |
| Antecedents                                |                                     |                                     |                                     |
| Economic citizenship                       |                                     | 0.24**                              | -1.10**                             |
| Legal citizenship                          |                                     | 0.14*                               | 0.26                                |
| Ethical citizenship                        |                                     | 0.18**                              | -0.36*                              |
| Philanthropic citizenship                  |                                     | 0.17**                              | -0.17                               |
| Socio-environmental<br>consciousness (SEC) |                                     | -0.06                               | 0.16                                |
| Interaction terms                          |                                     |                                     |                                     |
| SEC × economic<br>citizenship              |                                     |                                     | -0.31**                             |
| SEC × legal citizenship                    |                                     |                                     | 0.01                                |
| SEC × ethical citizenship                  |                                     |                                     | 0.20**                              |
| SEC × philanthropic<br>citizenship         |                                     |                                     | 0.12**                              |
| Adj R <sup>2</sup>                         | 0.16                                | 0.42                                | 0.47                                |

*N* = 402

\* *p* < 0.05

\*\* *p* < 0.01

moderated by socio-environmental consciousness (i.e., H4 is fully supported).

The unsupported moderating effects in H1 and H2 may reveal the phenomenon that people with strong socio-environmental consciousness do not sensitively respond to economic and legal citizenship because these two kinds of citizenship are basic tasks all the business firms in a modern society should always perform. Therefore, the positive moderating effects herein do not exist regardless of the levels of socio-environmental consciousness. Nevertheless, the unexpected test result for the unsupported moderating effects warrant further study so that the true reasons behind the partially hypothesis are not misinterpreted.

## Discussion

The national culture of Taiwan is a modern blend of various cultures including Confucian Chinese, Japanese, American, and Taiwanese aboriginal cultures. Through decades of hard work and sound economic planning, Taiwan has transformed itself from an underdeveloped, agricultural country to a leading producer of high-technology products. Although politics continue playing an important

role in Taiwan, the concept of Taiwanese multiculturalism has become a new social and political view in recent years, allowing for the inclusion of different minority groups into the continuing re-definition of Taiwanese culture. After Taiwan joined the WTO in 2002, the economic environment has been substantially liberalized, making Taiwan a part of the global industrialized economy. To date, Taiwan faces some economic and social issues similar to other developed countries (e.g., pollution). As labor-intensive industries have relocated to China due to its low-cost labor, Taiwan's future economic development will count on further transformation to a high-tech and service-oriented economy and carving out its niche across global markets. It is important for Taiwanese firms to learn how to effectively recruit quality workers through practicing corporate social performance.

This research is a pioneer to evaluate positive relationships between four social performance dimensions and job pursuit intention by simultaneously assessing socio-environmental consciousness as a key moderator on such relationships. While the results of this study must be interpreted carefully based on the student sample surveyed herein, this study still have some noticeable advantages (Wehner et al. 2012). For example, previous literature has suggested that the topic of job pursuit is particularly important for university students close to graduation, because the sample of university students has a higher involvement than other different samples (Wehner et al. 2012). Indeed, a lot of previous studies about job pursuit have emphasized on university student samples (e.g., Allen et al. 2007; Collins 2007; Collins and Stevens 2002; Powell and Goulet 1996; Turban 2001).

The positive and significant effects of four social performance dimensions on job pursuit intention suggest a four-track approach to attract potential job seekers by signaling a firm's endeavor to achieve economic, legal, ethical, or philanthropic citizenship. Management should increase corporate social performance from various aspects by, for instance, building quality working environment (i.e., improved economic citizenship), practicing lawful discipline, obeying the law (i.e., improved legal citizenship), and so on. People's job pursuit intention is unlikely boosted if they perceive low incentives (i.e., poor economic citizenship), high risks (i.e., due to poor legal citizenship) of a firm (e.g., King and Bu 2005), low ethical culture, or low benevolent action (i.e., low philanthropic citizenship).

Management must promote business codes based on law or beyond it to clarify any confusion during recruitment activities in order to avoid job seekers' misunderstanding of actual corporate social performance of the firm. Besides, it is necessary for a firm to eliminate illegal opportunistic behavior that hazards business legitimacy (Lin 2010), because such behavior actually results in the firm's



disreputableness, low job prospects, and weakening job pursuit. Future action plans that could continuously improve the overall corporate social performance should be always embedded into the firm's business strategies (e.g., optimal pension plans for employees).

Job seekers' intention cannot be arbitrarily strengthened or constrained by immediate recruitment campaigns, but rather it can be improved as long as job seekers can easily sense their target firm's social performance. The viewpoint of multiple social performance influencers (i.e., four dimensions of corporate citizenship) is quite different from that of the traditional literature solely focusing on firm structures or rewards (e.g., payrolls, rewards, and bonuses) in attracting job applicants. The given definitions of the four dimensions of social performance are closely intertwined with the cognitions and values of potential job seekers (e.g., socio-environmental consciousness) that may be hired by the firm in the future (Turker 2009). By understanding the dimensions in depth, management can learn to tailor a variety of firm policies and strategies to increase job seekers' interests in order to boost their job pursuit intention.

Strong ethical and social awareness has become an important personal job requirement for job applicants because such awareness can help increase job performance (Mortenson et al. 1989). Business organizations do their best to improve their reputation by practicing corporate social responsibility to increase their ability to attract a large number of high-quality job applicants. Researchers have proposed that a firm's better reputation can affect its success in attracting more capable job applicants (Turban and Cable 2003), eventually enhancing its firm development and value creation. People's job pursuit intention toward organizations is highly based on their overall perceptions of organizational reputation (Highhouse et al. 1999). Expectancy theory suggests a matching process based on quality, such that more superior applicants should be more likely than less superior applicants to invest their time and efforts pursuing jobs from reputable firms (Turban and Cable 2003). This matching process is consistent with person-organization fit research (Kristof 1996) finding that more qualified job seekers are more selective in their job search process (Cable and Judge 1994). As a result, firm reputation is strongly linked to its firm development and value creation.

In a global economy where obtaining highly-quality employees continues to become critical to a firm's competitive advantages, the implication of these findings is important. In terms of business recruitment, most job seekers are influenced by not only a firm's images over various kinds of citizenship, but also their own socio-environmental consciousness which is not discussed in any previous research. Given that social and environmental

issues become so important that business firms cannot ignore, management who are interested in attracting more workers with good socio-environmental consciousness can learn critical implications from the findings of this study. Specifically, to attract potential job applicants with high socio-environmental consciousness, management can integrate more information related to ethical and philanthropic citizenship to persuade the job seekers more easily. Consequently, firms will be more likely to find the capable employees they want. For example, some firms encourage and pay employees for certain hours a month to take part in charitable activities. If such information can be provided in the business recruitment campaigns, quality applicants with strong socio-environmental consciousness (e.g., energy-saving consciousness) will have stronger intention to seek a job in the firms.

In summary, whereas previous studies directly link corporate social performance to its outcomes such as profits or financial performance (e.g., Becker-Olsen et al. 2006) without exploring its potential moderator, this study complements previous studies by establishing a critical linkage between corporate social performance and job pursuit intention and learning how such linkage differs in different levels of socio-environmental consciousness. There has been traditionally a lack of attention in the recruitment literature to practical solutions that can be used to boost people's job pursuit intention (e.g., Highhouse et al. 1999). We believe that understanding the moderating mechanisms of socio-environmental consciousness based on the findings of this study would be just as important as identifying the various dimensions of social corporate performance that attract job seekers.

#### Limitations of the Study and Future Research

This study has two limitations associated with the interpretations of the empirical results. The first limitation is its generalizability, due to the highly delimited nature of the subject sample from universities in a single country setting. The inferences drawn from such sample in Taiwan may not be fully generalizable to job seekers with different educational or national cultural backgrounds. Nevertheless, this study provides a relatively homogeneous sample of job seekers, minimizing the need to control (Werbel 2000). It is a key advantage that this study is not conducted based on scenario-based questionnaires. During our survey period, all the respondents were actively seeking full-time employment and their job pursuit intention was indeed affected by their perceived employer image (e.g., Cable and Turban 2001). Given that university students comprise a significant part of the entry level work force in developed countries (e.g., Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea), there is a necessity to examine job pursuit intention among these graduating

students. Second, owing to the main focus of this study on the moderating role of socio-environmental consciousness across job seekers, this study did not address institutional variables, such as firm ownership, firm structure, firm profitability, stock prices, etc. Future scholars may try to improve these limitations by including more control variables (e.g., self-esteem), surveying more samples across various countries, and observing research subjects over time so that the genuine moderating influences of socio-environmental consciousness on the formation of job pursuit intention can be verified in depth. In addition to job pursuit intention, some other outcomes such as future job attachment, organizational citizenship behavior, and identification may be assessed in future studies (e.g., Lin 2010).

### Appendix: Measurement Items

Job Pursuit Intention (Source: Wang 2012)

JP1: The likelihood that I would apply for the firm's job is high.

JP2: My willingness to apply for the firm's job is very high.

JP3: I consider this firm as one of my best choices to apply for a job.

Socio-Environmental Consciousness (Source: Kriwy and Mecking 2012)

SEC1: I deeply care for current issues of our society (e.g., poverty).

SEC2: I am concerned a lot about environmental problems (e.g., deforestation).

SEC3: I prefer to buy products produced in an environmentally sound manner.

SEC4: I become incensed when I think about the harm being done to plant and animal life by pollution.

Perceived Economic Citizenship (Source: Lin 2010)

EC1: This firm encourages the employees to develop their skills continually.

EC2: This firm provides a good work environment and life quality for employees.

EC3: This firm provides important job training for employees.

EC4: This firm provides a quality and safe working environment for employees.

EC5: This firm provides liberal wages and benefits for employees.

Perceived Legal Citizenship (Source: Lin 2010)

LE1: The managers of this firm comply with the law.

LE2: This firm follows the law to prevent discrimination in workplaces.

LE3: This firm always fulfills its obligations of contracts.

LE4: This firm always seeks to respect all laws regulating its activities.

Perceived Ethical Citizenship (Source: Lin 2010)

ET1: This firm has a comprehensive code of conduct in ethics.

ET2: Fairness toward co-workers and business partners is an integral part of the employee evaluation process in this firm.

ET3: This firm is recognized as a company with good business ethics.

ET4: A confidential procedure is in place in the firm for employees to report any misconduct at work.

Perceived Philanthropic Citizenship (Source: Lin 2010)

PH1: This firm gives adequate contributions to charities.

PH2: This firm is concerned about respecting and protecting the natural environment.

PH3: This firm is concerned about the improvement of the public well-being of society.

PH4: This firm encourages its employees to participate in volunteer activities.

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