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## College Graduates' Readiness and Perception Towards e-Recruitment Methods and Tools Post-COVID-19 Pandemic

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**Abstract** - One of the daunting challenges COVID-19 has created is the sudden shift in most ways of doing things, leading toward maximizing technology. Irrefutably, managing human resources is not an exception to this. As a significant HR function, recruitment refers to inviting a pool of competent applicants, selecting the best among them, hiring them, and onboarding them for a particular job or requirement. Recruitment has also walked into the online approach, so recruiters now use several tools, platforms, or sites to advertise their vacancies (Arora & Jain, 2021). This rapidly changing field is referred to as e-recruitment. As the pandemic continues to sweep the world, many job seekers are looking for ways to keep up in the face of unprecedented challenges adapting to e-recruitment methods by signing up to various platforms, strengthening their profiles, and uploading their CVs and other pertinent documents. The empirical part is based on quantitative methods with data collected from 404 college graduates from various higher educational institutions during 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023. The findings indicate that the perceptions and level of readiness towards e-recruitment may not significantly differ between graduates of private and government higher educational institutions. It implies that both types of institutions have likely adopted similar approaches or strategies for utilizing e-recruitment methods and tools, leading to comparable perceptions and levels of readiness among their respondents. Rather than the HEI, it may be assumed that the high level of readiness and perception is due to the institution of the labor market since most companies have already adopted e-recruitment, especially during the pandemic. Although the data showed that respondents have an intermediate perception and a high perceived level of readiness towards the use of e-recruitment methods and tools, it is highly recommended that HEIs initiate skill development programs that specifically focus on e-recruitment methods and tools for graduates.

**Keywords** - e-recruitment, human resources, e-recruitment methods, e-recruitment tools

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### Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic created a massive effect on workers' movement across borders, mainly due to the imposition of strict international and domestic travel restrictions. Also, the unprecedented drop-in economic activity is critically impacting all workers, placing them in financial peril and jeopardizing their health and psychosocial wellbeing. Nevertheless, countries and businesses are and will continue recruiting workers nationally and internationally (International Labour Organization, 2020).

One of the daunting challenges that the pandemic has created is the sudden shift in most of our ways of doing things, leading towards the maximization of technology. Irrefutably, managing human resources is not an exception to this. Recruitment, as a significant HR function, refers to inviting a pool of competent applicants, selecting the best among them, hiring them, and onboarding them for a particular job or requirement in the organization. Recruitment and selection of personnel to occupy vacant or ongoing roles is an essential component of human resources, irrespective of scale, organization structure, or operation (Nickson, 2007). Recruitment has also walked into the online approach, and so recruiters are now using several tools, platforms, or sites to advertise their vacancies (Arora & Jain, 2021). This rapidly changing field is referred to as e-recruitment.

As a resource for locating job placements, the internet has become increasingly adopted and utilized (Khan et al., 2013). The intention of job seekers to pursue a particular position is significantly influenced by recruitment sources and applicants' perceptions of the role, as indicated by the results of the same study. Even before the pandemic, e-recruitment was recognized as an efficient and more economical method for employers to find competent job seekers to maintain a competitive edge in the labor market (Fister, 1999; Maurer and Liu, 2007), since applicants could submit

applications for multiple positions in a shorter period of time. With this, e-recruitment has proved to be important as it has provided some remarkable benefits in terms of cost and efficiency. As passive candidates submit their resumes online in anticipation of an interview, the electronic recruitment process is seen from the employees' perspective as very proactive (Mollison, 2001). Additionally, job seekers have the convenience of accessing positions online at any time, day or night, seven days a week. It offers the convenience of reviewing jobs without having to physically endure the stress of an interview. It also enables candidates to gain a complete understanding of the company and culture prior to joining the company (Vinutha, 2005).

Implementing technological advancements in the workplace has had a profound and beneficial effect on every facet of employment, including enhancing organizational recruitment procedures (Gregory et al., 2013). This encompasses organizations that utilize emerging technologies or online resources to advertise and promote job openings and engage in recruitment (including candidate screening, assessment, interviewing, and finding). Employers and candidates may exchange information regarding the organization and available positions via email (Afolabi et al., 2018). Applicants may also gather relevant information through social networking sites like Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, and many more. The pandemic led to further adjustments among HR departments, especially in talent acquisitions, to survive this seismic shift.

As the pandemic continues to sweep the world, many job seekers continue to look for ways to keep up in the face of unprecedented challenges by adapting to e-recruitment methods by signing up to various platforms, strengthening their profiles, and uploading their CVs and other pertinent documents. And even after the pandemic, companies may still consider virtual recruitment processes. As highlighted by Ryan Healy, president and co-founder of Brazen, a virtual hiring event platform, in an interview: Virtual recruitment has become an integral component of talent acquisition strategies in almost every industry nationwide. Employers are expected to maintain its use in conjunction with conventional in-person recruiting and interviewing methods once it is safe to conduct face-to-face interactions with candidates (Maurer, 2021). These realities may have put the graduating students in a tight spot since they must acquire work experience while embracing e-recruitment methods—something that not everyone may be familiar with, as awareness of it may vary among various individuals. This is where the critical role of higher education institutions sets in, as they have a pivotal role in preparing graduates for the digital age of job searching. The study employs institutional theory as a theoretical lens to understand if higher education institutions play a role in graduates' perception and readiness towards using e-recruitment methods and tools.

The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably triggered a significant shift in digital usage, impacting various aspects of society, including the job market and recruitment processes. What happens next is primarily determined by how people react to and shape emerging trends. Despite the widespread use of various e-recruitment methods and tools, there has been a dearth of research on college graduates' perceptions and readiness in the Philippines. Because of the knowledge gap, educational institutions and career development programs may have difficulty tailoring their curriculum and training initiatives required for successful e-recruitment engagement.

This paper then aims to reflect on the perception and readiness of college graduates during the COVID-19 global health emergency towards e-recruitment methods and tools. This majorly concentrated on the perception and readiness of the research respondents regarding the usage of online job boards, the conduct of online interviews, and the usage of online tools such as company websites for recruitment. Specifically, this paper focused on the following research objectives: (1) Identify Profile based on Type of Higher Education Institution attended (Private or Government), Year Graduated from college, and Work Experience; (2) To determine the perception of the respondents towards e-recruitment methods and tools; (3) To determine the respondents' perceived level of readiness towards e-recruitment methods and tools; (4) To determine if there is a difference in the respondents' perception in terms of type of higher education institution attended; (5) to determine if there is a difference in the respondents' perceived level of readiness towards e-recruitment methods and tools in terms of the type of higher education institution attended; and (6) provide recommendations based on the results of the findings.

The researchers acknowledged the significance of conducting this study because they recognize that the job market is rapidly changing, and that e-recruitment methods and tools are becoming more prevalent. Understanding college graduates' perceptions and levels of readiness provides insights into their readiness to navigate the digital recruitment landscape, leading to more effective candidate attraction, engagement, and selection outcomes.

## Materials and Methods

### Subjects of the study

The respondents were identified using the following inclusion criteria: (1) should be of legal age, (2) college graduates regardless of degree program and school from years 2020, 2021, 2020, or 2023 and (3) willing to participate in the study. Due to the study's unidentified and limitless population, the subsequent particulars were established: the proportion of the population is 50%, with a five percent

$$n = \frac{z^2 \times p(1-p)}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5(1-0.5)}{0.05^2} = 384.16$$

It was ascertained that a minimum of 384 participants was necessary. The researchers collected a successful total of 404 responses. Table 1 shows that there are more recent (2023) graduates (45%) among the respondents. Most of the respondents graduated from public schools or state universities (75.2%) and 24.8% graduated from private institutions. Among the respondents, 35.4% have prior work experience before graduating college while 64.6% have no work experience at all.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Year Graduated</b>		
2020	31	7.7
2021	26	6.4
2022	165	40.8
2023	182	45.0
<b>Total</b>	404	100.0
<b>Type of HEI</b>		
SUC	304	75.2
Private	100	24.8
<b>Total</b>	404	100.0
<b>Work Experience</b>		
With prior work experience before graduating college	143	35.4
Without prior work experience before graduating college	261	64.6
<b>Total</b>	404	100.0

### Data Collection and Procedure

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational design using a researcher-made questionnaire. The survey was made available online through Google Forms to ensure ease of gathering data and to reach more respondents. Clear and simple instructions were given on how to complete the form.

The researchers ensured that the respondents' data privacy was protected by including informed consent in the introduction of the online form. The form also specified the objectives of the survey, the potential time required to complete it based on the respondents' level of comprehension, and the contact information of the principal investigator, should further inquiries emerge. By continuing with the survey, the participants granted their informed consent.

**Instrumentation**

The first section of the questionnaire is for the profile of the participants that covers the year they graduated college, type of higher education institution where they graduated, and prior work experience. Respondents with prior work experience were asked to indicate their length of service. In addition, a list of job boards was provided in the latter part of this section in which respondents were asked to indicate whether they have accounts in any of the indicated job boards or not.

The last section of the questionnaire focuses on the perception and perceived level of readiness of respondents towards the use of e-recruitment methods and tools. A 5-point Likert-type question was used to measure the degree to which the respondents agree to the given statements, where 5 means strongly agree, 4 is agree, 3 for neutral, 2 for disagree, and 1 for strongly disagree.

Three expert professors in Business and Tourism Management from different local universities validated the questionnaire. A pilot testing was also conducted on 35 participants to test the reliability of the instrument that resulted in a Cronbach alpha value of 0.938, which indicated that the tool is highly reliable and acceptable for administration.

**Ethical Considerations**

Included in the online survey questionnaire was a consent form indicating the intention for the conduct of the survey including the researchers’ contact details and affiliation. Respondents were requested to click on “I agree” button to acknowledge receiving the consent. To ensure anonymity of the respondents, names were not asked during the survey and responses were given number codes. Furthermore, there was no researcher-respondent interaction during the completion of the survey to avoid any unnecessary influences and partialities. Lastly, the researchers declare no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study.

**Results and Discussions**

The data obtained was extracted, cleaned, and transferred onto Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 for the analysis. Table 2 shows that both data sets are not normally distributed, which means that the assumption of normality is not met. Therefore, nonparametric statistics will be used for the calculations. The interpretation of mean scores for perception and readiness is displayed in Table 3 as cited from Kamaruzaman et al. (2010).

**Table 2. Test of Normality**

	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Perception Ave	.103	402	.000	.943	402	.000
Readiness Ave	.086	402	.000	.964	402	.000

**a.Lilliefors Significance Correction**

**Table 3. Mean Score Interpretation**

<i>Mean Score</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
<b>1.00 – 2.33</b>	<b>Low</b>
<b>2.24 – 3.67</b>	<b>Intermediate</b>
<b>3.68 – 5.00</b>	<b>High</b>

Table 4 shows an insignificant difference in the mean score interpretation for perception (intermediate) and perceived level of readiness (high) towards e-recruitment methods and tools. This suggests a nuanced distinction in how respondents perceive and evaluate these aspects. An intermediate mean score indicates that respondents have a moderate level of perception, suggesting that they reasonably understand e-recruitment practices. Still, there may be room for improvement or further familiarization with specific tools or methods. A high mean score indicates that the

respondents feel confident and well-equipped to utilize different e-recruitment methods and tools. It suggests that they perceive themselves as highly capable and ready to leverage e-recruitment practices to meet hiring needs.

**Table 4. Perception and readiness towards e-recruitment methods and tools**

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Perception Ave	3.7772	.64978	404
Readiness Ave	3.6332	.62502	402

There is no statistically significant difference in the perception towards e-recruitment methods and tools of Private and Government HEI. ( $p=.176$ ). There is also no statistically significant difference in the level of readiness towards e-recruitment methods and tools of Private and Government HEI. ( $p=.735$ ). This finding suggests that the perceptions and level of readiness towards e-recruitment may not significantly differ between graduates of Private and Government Higher Educational Institutions. It implies that both types of institutions have likely adopted similar approaches or strategies in utilizing e-recruitment methods and tools, leading to comparable perceptions and levels of readiness among their respondents.

**Table 5. Difference in the respondents' perception and level of readiness in terms of type of higher education institution attended.**

Null Hypothesis	Test	Sig.	Decision
The distribution of Perception Ave is the same across categories of Type of Higher Education Institution	3.7772	.176	Retain the null hypothesis
The distribution of Readiness Ave is the same across categories of Type of Higher Education Institution	3.6332	.735	Retain the null hypothesis

*Asymptotic significances are displayed. The significance level is .05.*

## Conclusion

Although the data showed that respondents have intermediate perceptions and a high perceived level of readiness towards the use of e-recruitment methods and tools, it is highly recommended that HEIs initiate skill development programs that specifically focus on e-recruitment methods and tools for graduates. This can include training on creating compelling online profiles, optimizing resumes for electronic submission, and utilizing job search platforms and online networking tools. Enhancing graduates' skills in navigating e-recruitment processes will increase their competitiveness in the job market. Subsequently, graduates can be adequately prepared for the contemporary job market by incorporating e-recruitment modules into established curriculum frameworks.

Continual professional development initiatives customized to e-recruitment practices should also be given prime importance. These programs may furnish graduates with the most current competencies, methodologies, and understandings essential for effectively navigating the dynamic realm of digital recruitment. Electronic recruitment allows students to explore employment opportunities on a global scale, overcoming the constraints that geographical boundaries impose. Facilitating e-recruitment guidance provides students with a broader perspective on career options that extend beyond their immediate surroundings, cultivating a global outlook and broadening their career perspective.

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