



A STUDY ON THE FACTORS INFLUENCING CANDIDATE DROPOUT IN RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Anandavathini K¹, Dr. Raja. S²

MBA Student, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology¹

Associate Professor, Vel Tech Rangarajan Dr. Sagunthala R&D Institute of Science and Technology²

Abstract: Candidate drop-out is a continuing problem for organizations wishing to attract and retain top talent within the recruitment process. The purpose of this study was to identify the variety of factors contributing to candidates withdrawing or disengaging from the hiring cycle process prior to the end. The key prescriptive factors identified within this study can be categorized into the following categories: lengthy and complex recruitment processes; poor or lack of effective/efficient communication; candidacy/job expectation misalignment; and poor candidate experiences.

This study also identified external elements (e.g. competing job offers, personal circumstances, and perception of the employer brand) as contributors to candidates' dropout behaviour. The results of this research highlight inefficiencies in recruiting strategies, to include ambiguous job descriptions, protracted timeframes between stages of the recruitment process, and non-transparent selection criteria, as contributors to a candidate's commitment to accepting an employment offer.

The research illustrates the importance of establishing efficient and effective recruitment and selection procedures, open lines of communication, and positive applicant candidate experience as viable means to reduce candidate dropout rates.

Keywords: Candidate Drop-out, Recruitment Process, Talent Acquisition, Candidate Experience Hiring Delays.

INTRODUCTION

Today, recruiters develop functional processes to attract great candidates to add to their organization's success. Organizations are always working to hire candidates who are skilled and competent to assist with their company's continued growth and competitiveness. However, a significant challenge in this process is candidate dropout. Candidate dropout can occur at any recruitment stage, including when companies screen applications, interview candidates, test candidates, or once an offer has been extended.

The importance of this issue has begun to grow due to the fact candidate dropout makes planning for recruitment problematic and results in wasted time, effort and money by the companies. Candidate dropout can occur anywhere in the recruitment cycle, including during application screening, during interviews, during assessments, or even after candidates receive an offer.

One of the main causes for candidates quitting the recruiting process is how long the recruitment process takes and how many steps are in that process. If candidates have to wait too long for an answer to their application or need to go through multiple steps in the process without a clear timeline, they might lose interest in that position and take a position with somebody else.

Additionally, if candidates do not receive timely communication from recruiters during the process, or if there is no feedback from recruiters, or if there are unclear instructions during the recruitment process, this may result in frustration, confusion and candidates disengaging from the process.

Another primary factor that causes candidates to drop out of the recruitment process is there is typically a mismatch between the reality of what a position offers and how it was portrayed to candidates through a job description. When job descriptions have vague descriptions or describe responsibilities inaccurately or do not accurately indicate what will be expected of the candidate once they are hired, the candidate will have developed, before even getting an offer, a perception that does not meet their expectations of what the job was originally portrayed.



BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The last few years have seen a considerably growing importance of the recruitment and selection processes as part of HR Management. In this current paradigm, where many employers depend on their workforce having the right skills and credentials as an essential component to achieving competitive advantage, the overall recruitment process will not just be focused on attracting talent, but also on ensuring that all candidates who enter their recruitment stream remain until after they are selected.

Existing research highlights that recruitment is a complex and dynamic process influenced by multiple organizational and procedural factors. Studies have shown that elements such as interview structure, feedback mechanisms, process duration, and perceived bias can significantly impact candidate decisions during selection. (Rozario, Venkatraman & Abbas (2019)

Significance of the Research

Organizations are concerned with losing candidates when they try to hire someone (i.e., during the recruitment process); candidate dropout has a direct impact on both hiring effectiveness and organizational performance (James A. Breugh, 2008). Recruitment also involves ensuring applicants remain in the selection process, which makes retention during recruiting just as important as attracting them to the organization (Stephen D. Rozario et al., 2019).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

A recruitment function is critical in organizations and for all employees to hire qualified employees into positions within the organization (James A. Breugh, 2008). Organizations have invested substantially in recruiting and have faced the challenge of candidate dropout from the recruiting process (R. D. Arvey et al., 1975). The withdrawal of an applicant at any point in the selection process has been costly to organizations regarding the disruption of workforce planning and productivity.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Several researchers have investigated the reasons leading to candidate dropout during the recruitment process.

According to **Breugh (2008)**, the occurrence of candidates withdrawing from the recruitment process is negatively impacted by the duration of an individual's recruitment process and level of complexity, meaning the longer a recruitment process is, the more likely it is for a candidate to withdraw.

Chapman et al. (2005) found that candidates' perceptions regarding the level of feedback and communication received during the recruitment process are directly related to their feelings of engagement and satisfaction, both of which are related to candidates withdrawing from the recruitment process.

Gusdorf (2008) also suggests that candidates' experiences during the recruitment process, including the manner in which they are interacted with by recruiters, the clarity with which job information is provided, and the level of professionalism exhibited, are all critical in getting candidates to remain throughout all phases of the recruitment process.

Cappelli (2019) pointed out that candidates dropping out of the recruitment process due to candidates' expectations being misaligned with the actual job description.

Highhouse et al. (2021) have also suggested that providing timely updates to candidates, providing clear criteria by which to evaluate candidates, and a well-established recruitment process is essential for decreasing the number of candidates who withdraw from the recruitment process and improving the overall success of a talent acquisition effort.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Primary Objective

- To examine the Factors influencing candidate dropout in the recruitment process.

Secondary Objectives

- To understand the concept and importance of candidate dropout in the recruitment process.
- To analyze the factors influencing candidates to withdraw from recruitment, such as communication, process length, and candidate experience.
- To study the relationship between recruitment practices and candidate engagement or withdrawal decisions.

CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND / THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK



When candidates drop out during the recruitment process, it is considered to be their self-imposed withdrawal from an employment opportunity before it is completed. Organizations need to know why candidates drop out in order to improve their talent acquisition and reduce the cost and time associated with recruiting.

Organizations use recruitment practices to attract, engage, and select potential candidates. Recruitment practices include posting jobs, conducting interviews and assessments, providing feedback to candidates, and building brand loyalty for the organization.

Use of effective recruitment practices will be critical for matching candidates with the right positions; also, they will facilitate candidate engagement through continual interest while the candidate is in the recruitment process.

In addition to candidate engagement levels, other outside influences also impact a candidate's decision regarding continuing with a recruitment process (i.e., competing job offers, personal situations, and organizational reputation).

There are several theoretical frameworks that can be used to provide insight into the reasons that candidates drop out of the recruitment process. One of those theoretical frameworks is Expectancy Theory, which states that candidates are more likely to continue with a recruitment process if they believe that the expected outcome of their participation is valued by them and that they can achieve such an outcome.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL / FRAMEWORK

Independent Variables

Recruitment process efficiency
Communication and Feedback



Dependent Variable

Candidate dropout in the Recruitment process

HYPOTHESES

H1: Efficient recruitment processes will have an impactful process of reducing the dropouts of candidates in the recruitment process.

H2: Positive candidate experience and timely communication significantly reduce candidate dropout during recruitment.

H3: Strong employer branding and clear role expectations jointly influence candidate engagement, thereby decreasing dropout rates.

DISCUSSION

Key organizational factors such as branding, reputation and compensation have a huge impact on candidates' tendency to stay with an organisation. A key finding from this research is that stronger engagement is found in candidates who view their potential employer as being reputable and having the features of organisation attractiveness as defined in the Organizational Attractiveness Theory so that the perceived attractiveness of the organisation has an affect on the applicants' behaviours (Stephen D Rozario et al 2019).

IMPLICATIONS

Theoretical Implications of this Study

By offering an overarching view of the different factors impacting candidate withdrawal, this study builds on the existing body of work regarding recruitment and selection. Many prior studies have either focused on individual issues relating to recruitment processes, such as process effectiveness, attractiveness of organization, or candidate perceptions; or have developed methodology to investigate those issues in an isolated manner (James A. Breugh, 2008; Stephen D. Rozario et al., 2019).

Managerial Implications of this Study

Employers must enhance the brand of their organization and how appealing they are as a place to work. This includes creating an attractive image of the company through a positive reputation, well-designed benefits, and a pleasant work environment. When an organization has high levels of organizational appeal; however, even small failings in recruitment procedures may still lead to candidates who want to proceed with the recruitment process (Rozario et al., 2019).

Practical Implications of this Study



Having a good experience at work is important. An Organization that provides good Communication, Conducts Interviews in an Organized manner, and Offers Constructive Feedback will receive positive Responses from Candidates Their experience with the Organization. The Candidate's Perception of an Organization and their Engagement with an organization can be improved by Training Recruiters and Interviewers on Interpersonal Skills, dealing with candidates And Fairness Practices (Hülshager & Anderson, 2009).

FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

Future research should investigate the effects that digital recruiting tools have on the demographic profiles of the candidates and how these factors relate to withdrawals in the recruitment process.

CONCLUSION

In summary, Candidate drop out through the recruitment process poses a challenge to an organization's capability to effectively perform as well as attract quality new employees. Efficiency in a recruitment process has a large impact on candidate engagement throughout the recruitment process, a candidate's receipt of an enjoyable recruitment experience, and an organization developing a positive employer brand. Understanding all three of these factors is critical to decreasing candidate further dropout and achieving improved overall hiring results.

Therefore, Timely communication and professional interaction with candidates will create a higher level of both candidate engagement and candidate trust. These insights can offer human resource departments and researchers assistance in developing an updated recruitment strategy, by providing data to assist them with making an informed decision when creating a recruitment strategy.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Arvey, R. D., Gordon, H. J., & Massengill, R. T. (1975). Differential dropout rates of minority and majority candidates due to time lags between selection procedures.
- [2]. Chapman, D. S., Uggerslev, K. L., & Webster, J. (1995). Recruitment communication and applicant perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*.
- [3]. Hülshager, U. R., & Anderson, D. (2009). Fairness and candidate perceptions in selection environments. *Journal of Management & Organization*.
- [4]. "New Research Reveals Why Candidates Are Abandoning Your Recruiting Process." (2022). ERE.
- [5]. "Recruitment: how lengthy application processes affect dropout rate." (2023). Hubert.ai.
- [6]. Navarra, K. (2024). Why Your Candidates Are Dropping Out. SHRM. HR research emphasizing recruitment process design and candidate experience to reduce dropout.
- [7]. Effective Human Resources Recruiting and Hiring Practices. Wardlaw (2019). Walden University Dissertation.
- [8]. Schinkel, S., et al. (2016). Losing and Regaining Organizational Attractiveness During Recruitment. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*.
- [9]. Rozario, S. D., Venkatraman, S., & Abbas, A. (2019). Challenges in recruitment and selection process: An empirical study
- [10]. Modern Hire Research (2018). Applicant dropout and assessment completion rates in recruitment processes.
- [11]. Hirein5 (2025). Reasons for candidate drop-offs and how to overcome it
- [12]. Hubert.ai (2023). Recruitment: How lengthy application processes affect dropout rate. Focuses on practical factors like application complexity and feedback delays impacting candidate behaviour.
- [13]. Rozario, S. D., Venkatraman, S., & Abbas, A. (2019). Challenges in recruitment and selection process: An empirical study.
- [14]. Candidates' reactions to job application rejections at different phases of the recruitment process: The impact of employability and communication delays." (2025). *Journal of Management & Organization* — examines fairness perceptions and communication timing in recruitment
- [15]. Hülshager, U. R., & Anderson, N. (2025). Candidates reactions to job application rejections at different phases of the recruitment process: The impact of employability and communication delays on perceived fairness and recruitment selection outcomes. *Journal of Management & Organization*.
- [16]. Rozario, S. D., Venkatraman, S., & Abbas, A. (2019). Challenges in Recruitment and Selection Process: An Empirical Study. Challenges (MDPI). This empirical research identifies critical recruitment process factors that can influence candidate decisions and withdrawal behavior.