AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON RECRUITMENT FUNNEL EFFICIENCYFROM APPLICATION SCREENING TO FINAL INTERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the efficiency of the recruitment funnel from application screening to the final interview stage. Recruitment funnel efficiency is essential for improving hiring quality and organizational performance. Organizations receive a large number of applications, but only a few candidates successfully progress through each recruitment stage. The objective of this study is to analyze the effectiveness of application screening and its impact on final interview performance. A descriptive research design was adopted, and data were collected from 100 HR professionals using a structured questionnaire. Statistical tools such as Percentage Analysis, Correlation, Regression, and ANOVA were used for data analysis. The findings reveal that structured screening significantly improves recruitment efficiency and hiring outcomes. A strong positive relationship was observed between screening effectiveness and final interview success. Moderate candidate drop-offs were identified, indicating the need for process improvements. The study concludes that structured screening and recruitment technologies enhance recruitment funnel efficiency and support better hiring decisions.

Keywords: Recruitment Funnel Efficiency, Application Screening, Hiring Quality, Candidate Drop-off, Final Interview Performance, Talent Acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

Recruitment is a strategic and critical function of Human Resource Management that directly influences organizational performance and long-term sustainability. In today's competitive job market, organizations receive a large volume of applications for every job opening. However, only a limited number of candidates successfully progress through each stage and ultimately reach the final interview stage. This structured movement of candidates from one stage to another is commonly referred to as the **recruitment funnel**.

The recruitment funnel represents the systematic stages through which candidates advance, typically including application screening, shortlisting, preliminary interviews, technical or HR interviews, and finally, the final interview. Each stage acts as a filtering mechanism designed to identify the most suitable candidates based on qualifications, skills, experience, and organizational fit.

An efficient recruitment funnel plays a vital role in ensuring:

- Reduced time-to-hire

- Improved quality of shortlisted candidates

- Lower recruitment and operational costs

- Better and data-driven hiring decisions

- Enhanced employer branding and candidate experience

When recruitment processes are structured and monitored effectively, organizations can optimize resource utilization and improve overall hiring outcomes. On the other hand, an inefficient screening process can create several challenges such as:

- High candidate drop-out rates

- Delays in the hiring process

- Poor candidate experience

- Increased hiring errors or mismatched selections

Evaluating the efficiency of each stage in the recruitment funnel is essential to ensure effective candidate screening and progression. This study analyzes conversion rates and identifies bottlenecks from application screening to the final interview to improve recruitment strategies and hiring effectiveness.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In today's competitive recruitment environment, organizations receive a large number of applications for each job vacancy. However, only a limited percentage of candidates successfully move from the application screening stage to the final interview stage. Many organizations face high candidate drop-off rates during this process, which affects overall recruitment efficiency. These drop-offs may occur due to unclear screening criteria, lack of structured evaluation methods, inconsistent shortlisting practices, and inadequate communication with applicants.

An ineffective screening process can result in the rejection of potentially qualified candidates or the selection of unsuitable applicants for further stages. This not only increases time-to-hire and recruitment costs but also impacts candidate experience and the quality of final hiring decisions. Inconsistent assessment standards among recruiters may further reduce the reliability and fairness of the recruitment process.

Therefore, there is a need to empirically examine whether structured and standardized screening processes significantly influence candidate progression to the final interview stage and improve overall hiring efficiency. This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the recruitment funnel from application screening to the final interview stage in order to identify gaps and suggest improvements.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- The primary objective of this study is to analyse the effectiveness of application screening and examine its relationship with final interview success in order to evaluate overall recruitment funnel efficiency.
- The study also aims to measure candidate drop-off rates at various recruitment stages, assess HR professionals' perceptions of the process, and suggest practical improvements to optimize recruitment funnel performance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- Breaugh (2017) emphasized the importance of structured recruitment strategies in improving hiring outcomes.
- Chapman & Webster (2003) discussed the impact of technology and Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) on screening efficiency.
- Ployhart (2006) highlighted the strategic role of staffing systems in improving organizational performance.
- Nikolaou (2021) analysed how digital recruitment tools enhance screening accuracy and reduce bias.
- Highhouse (2008) identified the overreliance on intuition in selection decisions and recommended structured evaluation techniques.
- The literature indicates that structured recruitment processes positively influence hiring quality, but empirical studies focusing specifically on funnel efficiency remain limited.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- This study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze the efficiency of the recruitment funnel from application screening to the final interview stage. The research is based on primary data collected directly from respondents using a structured questionnaire designed to capture relevant information regarding screening practices, candidate progression, and recruitment outcomes.

- The sample size consists of 100 HR professionals selected through convenience sampling technique. For data analysis, various statistical tools such as Percentage Analysis, Mean and Standard Deviation, Correlation, Regression, and ANOVA are applied to examine relationships and measure recruitment efficiency. The collected data is analyzed using SPSS software to ensure accuracy, reliability, and systematic interpretation of results.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Screening Effectiveness	4.12	0.68	100
Shortlisting Accuracy	4.05	0.72	100
Final Interview Performance	4.18	0.65	100
Candidate Drop-off Rate	3.10	0.88	100

INTERPRETATION :

The mean values for Screening Effectiveness (4.12), Shortlisting Accuracy (4.05), and Final Interview Performance (4.18) indicate strong agreement among respondents that the recruitment process is structured and effective. The relatively low standard deviations show consistency in responses. However, the lower mean for Candidate Drop-off Rate (3.10) suggests moderate concerns regarding candidate attrition between stages. Overall, the results reflect a positively perceived recruitment funnel with minor areas for improvement.

GENDER OF THE RESPONDENTS

Table 2: Gender Distribution

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	48	48%
Female	52	52%
Total	100	100%

INTERPRETATION

The table shows that out of 100 respondents, 52% are female and 48% are male, indicating a nearly balanced gender distribution. Female respondents constitute a slightly higher proportion compared to male respondents. This balanced representation ensures that the study reflects diverse perspectives of HR professionals.

BAR CHART
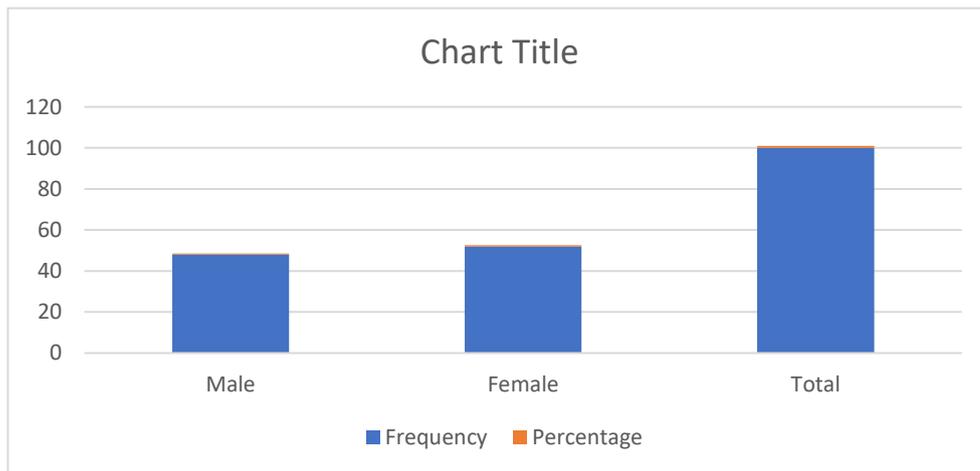
INTERPRETATION:

The bar chart clearly shows the gender distribution of respondents, with females slightly higher than males. This indicates balanced participation from both genders in the study. The close distribution supports the credibility and inclusiveness of the data collected.

TABLE – 3

Perception on Structured Screening Improving Hiring Quality

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	45	45%
Agree	38	38%
Neutral	10	10%
Disagree	5	5%
Strongly Disagree	2	2%

INTERPRETATION

The table shows that most respondents have a positive perception of structured screening improving hiring quality, with 45% strongly agreeing and 38% agreeing. Only a small percentage are neutral or disagree, indicating that HR professionals believe structured screening enhances hiring decisions.

BAR CHART
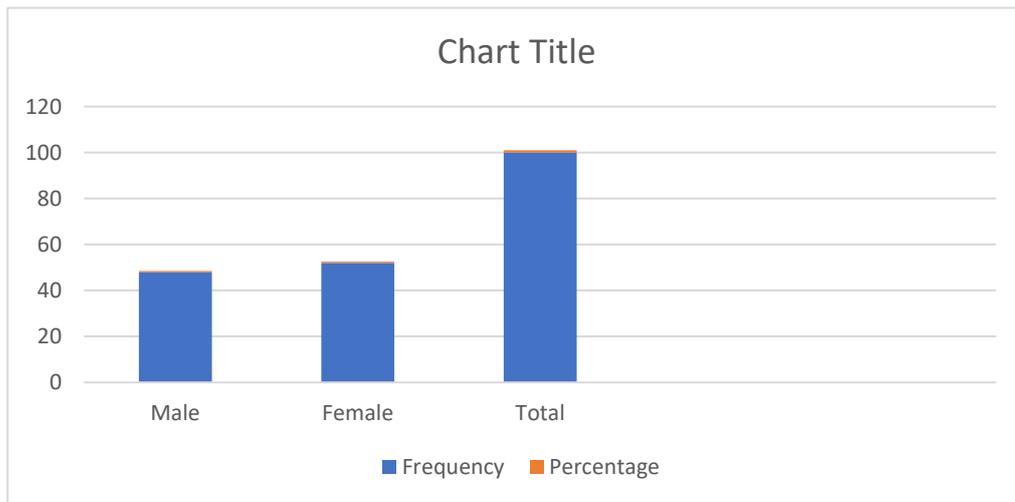
INTERPRETATION:

The bar chart clearly shows that the majority of respondents fall under the "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" categories, indicating a positive perception. This suggests that the structured recruitment funnel processes are effective and well-accepted. The low number of neutral and negative responses further confirms overall satisfaction with the recruitment process.

CORRELATION ANALYSIS

Table 4: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Screening Effectiveness	Final Interview Performance
Screening Effectiveness	1	0.742**
Final Interview Performance	0.742**	1

INTERPRETATION

The correlation matrix shows a strong positive correlation (r = 0.742) between screening effectiveness and final interview performance. The double asterisks (**) indicate that the correlation is statistically significant. This implies that improved screening effectiveness is strongly associated with better performance in the final interview stage, thereby enhancing overall recruitment efficiency.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 5: Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error
0.742	0.551	0.545	0.42

INTERPRETATION

The model summary indicates that the correlation coefficient (R = 0.742) shows a strong relationship between screening effectiveness and final interview performance. The R Square value of 0.551 implies that 55.1% of the variation in final interview performance is explained by screening effectiveness. The Adjusted R Square (0.545) confirms the model's reliability, while the standard error (0.42) indicates a relatively low level of prediction error, suggesting a good model fit.

Table 6: Co-efficients

Variable	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Screening Effectiveness	0.742	11.65	0.000

INTERPRETATION

The coefficient table shows that screening effectiveness has a beta value of 0.742, indicating a strong positive impact on final interview performance. The t-value of 11.65 is high, demonstrating that the variable is statistically significant. Since the significance value (Sig. = 0.000) is less than 0.05, the relationship is highly significant, confirming that screening effectiveness significantly influences final interview performance

ANOVA

Table 7: ANOVA Results

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	24.85	1	24.85	135.78	0.000
Residual	20.10	98	0.205		
Total	44.95	99			

INTERPRETATION

The ANOVA table shows that the regression model is statistically significant, as the F-value is 135.78 with a significance level of 0.000, which is less than 0.05. This indicates that screening effectiveness significantly predicts final interview performance. Therefore, the overall regression model is a good fit and the independent variable meaningfully explains the variation in the dependent variable.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

* Structured screening improves hiring quality significantly.

* There is a strong positive relationship between screening effectiveness and final interview performance

* Over 80% of respondents support systematic recruitment methods.

* Regression analysis confirms screening as a key predictor of interview success.

* Moderate candidate drop-offs exist between screening and interview stages.

* Organizations using ATS systems report higher funnel efficiency.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that recruitment funnel efficiency is a vital factor in ensuring effective hiring and overall organizational success. Structured application screening plays a significant role in identifying qualified candidates and enabling only the most suitable applicants to progress to the final interview stage. The statistical findings, including correlation, regression, and ANOVA analysis, confirm a strong and significant relationship between screening effectiveness and final interview performance. This demonstrates that organizations with well-structured and systematic screening processes are more likely to achieve better hiring outcomes. Efficient recruitment funnel management also helps reduce candidate drop-offs, minimize hiring delays, and improve the overall candidate experience.

Furthermore, the study highlights the importance of adopting standardized screening criteria and utilizing recruitment technologies such as Applicant Tracking Systems (ATS) to improve accuracy and consistency in candidate selection. Regular monitoring and evaluation of recruitment funnel metrics enable HR professionals to identify bottlenecks, make data-driven decisions, and optimize recruitment strategies. Improving recruitment funnel efficiency not only enhances the quality of hires but also reduces recruitment costs and strengthens organizational productivity. Therefore, organizations should focus on continuously improving their recruitment processes to ensure effective talent acquisition, long-term workforce quality, and sustainable organizational growth.

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