

An Empirical Study on the Impact of Online Job Portal Frauds and Application Challenges on Employment Opportunities for Freshers

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Abstract - This study empirically examines how fraudulent activity and procedural difficulties on online recruitment platforms influence the employment opportunities of fresh graduates. A descriptive and analytical research design was adopted. Primary data were collected from 149 respondents comprising final-year students and recent graduates through a structured questionnaire administered using a five-point Likert scale, combining 82 responses gathered through Google Forms and 67 through offline questionnaires. Non-probability convenience sampling was employed. Data were analysed using percentage analysis, frequency distribution, Pearson correlation, and simple linear regression (SPSS). Both online job portal frauds ($r = .405$, $p < .001$) and application-process challenges ($r = .445$, $p < .001$) were found to have a statistically significant, positive association with respondents' employment-opportunity scores. Regression results indicate that job portal frauds explain 16.4% of the variance in employment opportunities ($R^2 = .164$, $F(1, 147) = 28.807$, $p < .001$), while application challenges explain 19.8% of the variance ($R^2 = .198$, $F(1, 147) = 36.304$, $p < .001$). The findings support the case for stronger employer-verification systems, simplified application interfaces, and structured awareness programmes to protect freshers and to preserve confidence in digital recruitment channels. While prior literature has separately examined recruitment-fraud detection techniques and the operational benefits of e-recruitment, empirical evidence linking both fraud perception and application friction to the employment prospects of fresh graduates remains scarce. This study addresses that gap using primary survey data and regression-based evidence..

Key Words: online job portals, recruitment fraud, application challenges, employment opportunities, fresh graduates, e-recruitment, regression analysis

1. INTRODUCTION

The proliferation of digital technology has fundamentally reshaped recruitment practices worldwide. Online job portals such as LinkedIn, Naukri, and Indeed have replaced traditional job-search methods such as newspaper advertisements and walk-in interviews, offering speed, cost-efficiency, and wider reach to both employers and job seekers. For fresh graduates in particular, who typically lack established professional networks, these platforms have become a primary gateway into the labour market.

However, this rapid digitalisation has been accompanied by a parallel rise in recruitment-related fraud and procedural

inefficiency. Fake job postings, impersonation of legitimate recruiters, phishing attempts, and requests for advance payment have eroded the trust that job seekers place in online platforms. At the same time, applicants report friction in the recruitment pipeline itself – lengthy and repetitive application forms, unresponsive recruiters, and poorly designed portal interfaces – which discourages sustained engagement with the job-search process.

Law-enforcement reports in India and elsewhere have documented organised rackets that exploit job portals to defraud applicants, while global surveys point to a broader rise in resume fraud, moonlighting, and misuse of remote-work arrangements. These developments raise a pertinent question for researchers and policymakers alike: to what extent do fraud exposure and application-process difficulty actually shape the employment outcomes and search behaviour of fresh graduates, as opposed to merely being a nuisance? This study addresses that question empirically.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

A substantial body of research has examined online recruitment from two largely separate angles: the operational and technical study of recruitment-fraud detection, and the socio-behavioural study of job-seeker experience. This section synthesises both strands and situates the present study within the resulting gap.

E-Recruitment: Efficiency and Adoption

Studies on the adoption of digital recruitment consistently report efficiency gains over traditional hiring. Ahjaz (2023) found that portal-based hiring is comparable in performance outcomes to traditional recruitment while being faster and more cost-effective for employers. Indira and Rathika (2020) similarly reported that e-recruitment reduces time and cost and expands access to talent, though respondents expressed mixed views on data security and platform trustworthiness. Gayathri and Sweety (2024) found that platforms such as LinkedIn and Naukri are preferred for their accessibility and networking value, even as respondents remained neutral about overall portal reliability. Bhushan and Shukla (2024) extended this picture by noting those efficiency gains coexist with challenges around data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the technological proficiency required of applicants.

Recruitment Fraud: Detection and Victim Experience

A parallel and more technically oriented literature focuses on detecting fraudulent postings computationally. Alghamdi and Alharby (2019) combined Random Forest and SVM feature selection on the EMSCAD dataset to achieve 97.4 per cent detection accuracy, identifying company profile

completeness and logo presence as key predictors. Dutta and Bandyopadhyay (2020), Akram et al. (2024), Revathi and Balakrishnan (2024), and Ashritha et al. (2025) each report progressively more sophisticated machine-learning and deep-learning (BERT, RoBERTa) approaches to fraud classification, generally finding that ensemble and transformer-based models outperform single classifiers. Vidros et al. (2016) demonstrated, using roughly 17,000 job advertisements, that indicators such as missing employer logos, vague descriptions, and unrealistic remote-work offers reliably flag fraudulent postings. While methodologically robust, this stream of literature is largely detection-oriented and does not examine how fraud exposure translates into job seekers' trust, search behaviour, or employment outcomes.

A smaller set of studies addresses victim experience directly. McNaughton Nicholls et al. (2023) used qualitative interviews to show that fraudsters exploit authority cues, perceived legitimacy, and urgency to manipulate victims – a social-engineering framework applicable to recruitment scams though not studied in that context specifically. Sawant (2021) and Bhandarkar (2022) both note that Indian fresh graduates face financial loss, wasted effort, and psychological stress from portal-based scams, while Gee (2019) frames recruitment fraud as damaging not only financially but also to organisational and platform trust more broadly.

Application Friction and Employment Outcomes

A separate literature considers procedural rather than fraud-related barriers. Kelley, Ksoll and Magruder (2022) and the related randomised evaluation by Fernando, Singh and Tourek (2023) tested job-portal access among vocational-training graduates in India and found evidence of voluntary unemployment: portal access altered applicants' reservation wages and effort levels, underscoring that portal effectiveness depends heavily on job seekers' beliefs about job-arrival rates rather than portal access alone. Meher (2018) similarly identified skill mismatch and limited career guidance rather than portal design per se as key employability barriers for commerce graduates in India.

3. RESEARCH GAP

Taken together, the literature offers two well-developed but largely disconnected strands: technically sophisticated fraud-detection models on one hand, and behavioural or econometric studies of portal efficiency on the other. Few studies quantitatively link job seekers' perception of fraud and perception of application difficulty to a measured employment-opportunity outcome using the same respondent sample. This study addresses that gap by simultaneously modelling both predictors against a common employment-opportunity criterion using correlation and regression analysis on primary survey data collected from 149 fresh graduates and final-year students.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Online job portals have not fully delivered on their promise of simple and secure recruitment. Fraudulent postings and scams undermine trust and expose job seekers to financial and psychological harm, while cumbersome application procedures discourage genuine candidates from completing the process. Left unaddressed, these twin problems threaten to erode the credibility of digital recruitment and restrict fair access to employment opportunities, particularly for freshers who are disproportionately dependent on these platforms and less equipped to identify warning signs of fraud.

5. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To examine how online job portal frauds affect the confidence and trust of job seekers.
- To identify the common challenges faced by applicants during the online recruitment process.
- To analyse the impact of frauds and application difficulties on employment opportunities for freshers.
- (iv) To suggest practical measures stronger verification systems, improved portal design, and awareness programmes to improve online recruitment outcomes.

6. HYPOTHESES

- H01: Online job portal frauds have no significant impact on employment opportunities for freshers.
- H1: Online job portal frauds have a significant impact on employment opportunities for freshers.
- H02: Online application challenges have no significant impact on employment opportunities for freshers.
- H2: Online application challenges have a significant impact on employment opportunities for freshers.

7. SCOPE AND SIGNIFICANCE

The study is confined to online recruitment platforms and does not extend to traditional recruitment channels. It examines both the fraud-awareness dimension and the procedural-friction dimension of the online application experience, and links these to self-reported employment-opportunity outcomes. Given that online portals are now a primary recruitment channel for both job seekers and employers, the findings are of practical relevance to portal developers seeking to improve trust and usability, to employers seeking to avoid being associated with fraudulent listings, and to policymakers considering regulatory safeguards for digital recruitment.

8. LIMITATIONS

The study is subject to the usual limitations of a cross-sectional survey design: a modest, convenience-based sample of 149 respondents drawn primarily from one institutional setting, reliance on self-reported perceptions rather than verified fraud incidents or employment records, and a focus restricted to online recruitment channels. The results should therefore be interpreted as indicative rather than population-representative, and causal claims are made cautiously given the cross-sectional nature of the data.

9. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design: The study follows a descriptive and analytical research design intended to examine the relationship between two independent constructs online job portal frauds and online application challenges and one dependent construct, employment opportunities for freshers.

Sampling Design: A non-probability convenience sampling technique was used. A total of 149 valid responses were obtained: 82 through an online Google Forms survey and 67 through offline structured questionnaires administered to

final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students and recent graduates who had used online job portals such as LinkedIn, Naukri, or Indeed.

Instrument: Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising four sections: (I) demographic profile; (II) awareness and experience of online job portal fraud; (III) challenges encountered in the online application process; and (IV) perceived impact on employment opportunities and suggested improvements. Sections II–IV used five-point Likert-scale items (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree), which were summed into composite scores for jobportal frauds, application challenges, and employmentopp respectively for the regression analysis.

Data Analysis Techniques: Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage analysis) were used to profile respondents. Pearson product-moment correlation and simple linear regression (using SPSS) were used to test the two hypotheses, with employment opportunity as the dependent variable and job portal frauds and application challenges tested as separate predictors in two distinct regression models.

10. RESULTS

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Table 1 presents the integrated demographic profile of the 149 respondents across five characteristics: age, gender, highest qualification, field of study, and year of graduation.

Table 1

Integrated Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 149)

Demographic Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	Below 20	12	8.1
	20–22	56	37.6
	23–25	37	24.8
	Above 25	44	29.5
Gender	Male	75	50.3
	Female	74	49.7
Highest Qualification	Diploma	10	6.7
	Undergraduate	71	47.7
	Postgraduate	68	45.6
Field of Study	Engineering/Technology	28	18.8
	Management/Commerce	68	45.6
	Arts/Humanities	38	25.5
	Science	15	10.1
Year of Graduation	2021	24	16.1
	2022	49	32.9
	2023	23	15.4
	2024	11	7.4
	2025	42	28.2

Note. Each demographic variable is based on the full sample of N = 149; percentages are calculated within each variable and sum to 100%.

The integrated profile in Table 1 shows that respondents are concentrated in the 20–22 age group (37.6%),

reflecting a sample dominated by recent graduates entering the job market, with meaningful representation also from respondents above 25 years (29.5%). Gender distribution is nearly balanced (50.3% male, 49.7% female), reducing the likelihood of gender-based response bias. In terms of qualification, undergraduates (47.7%) and postgraduates (45.6%) together account for over 93% of the sample, confirming that the respondent pool consists predominantly of the intended target group of freshers at or near the point of labour-market entry; only a small proportion (6.7%) hold a diploma. By field of study, Management/Commerce respondents form the largest group (45.6%), consistent with the disciplinary background of the study, followed by Arts/Humanities (25.5%), Engineering/Technology (18.8%), and Science (10.1%). Finally, respondents graduating in 2022 (32.9%) and 2025 (28.2%) form the two largest cohorts by graduation year, indicating a sample that combines very recent job-market entrants with respondents who have had a few years of active job-search experience both perspectives being relevant to assessing exposure to portal fraud and application-process challenges over time. Taken together, the demographic profile indicates a sample well-matched to the study's target population of fresh graduates and final-year students actively engaging with online recruitment platforms.

Regression Analysis I: Online Job Portal Frauds and Employment Opportunities

A simple linear regression was conducted with employment opportunities (employmentopp) as the dependent variable and online job portal frauds (jobportalfrauds) as the predictor.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Job Portal Frauds Model

Variable	M	SD	N
Employment Opportunities	16.6631	2.44055	149
Job Portal Frauds	20.3949	3.20943	149

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

Table 3

Correlation Between Job Portal Frauds and Employment Opportunities

	Employment Opportunities	Job Portal Frauds
Pearson Correlation Employment Opportunities	1.000	.405
Pearson Correlation Job Portal Frauds	.405	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000
N	149	149

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

A moderate, statistically significant positive correlation was found between job portal frauds and employment opportunities ($r = .405$, $p = .000 < .01$), indicating that respondents' scores on the two constructs move together significantly, though the strength of association is moderate rather than strong.

Table 4
Regression Model Summary Job Portal Frauds

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.405 ^a	.164	.158	2.23923	1.971

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

The model yields $R^2 = .164$, indicating that job portal frauds account for approximately 16.4% of the variance in employment opportunities. The Durbin-Watson statistic (1.971) is close to 2, indicating no meaningful autocorrelation among residuals and satisfying the independence-of-errors assumption for regression.

Table 5
ANOVA Job Portal Frauds Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	144.444	1	144.444	28.807	.000 ^b
Residual	737.083	147	5.014		
Total	881.527	148			

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

The overall regression model is statistically significant, $F(1, 147) = 28.807$, $p < .001$, confirming that job portal frauds significantly predict employment opportunities.

Table 6
Regression Coefficients Job Portal Frauds

Model	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	10.385	1.184		8.772	.000
Job Portal Frauds	.308	.057	.405	5.367	.000

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

The fitted regression equation is: Employment Opportunities = $10.385 + 0.308$ (Job Portal Frauds). The positive, significant coefficient ($\beta = .405$, $t = 5.367$, $p < .001$) indicates that higher scores on the fraud-perception scale are associated with higher scores on the composite employment-opportunity scale a direction consistent with fraud exposure and vigilance being linked to more active, and eventually more consequential, engagement with portals, rather than fraud directly creating opportunity. This directionality is discussed further in Section 5.

Regression Analysis II: Application Challenges and Employment Opportunities

A second simple linear regression was conducted with employment opportunities as the dependent variable and application challenges (applicationchallenges) as the predictor.

Table 7
Descriptive Statistics for Application Challenges Model

Variable	M	SD	N
Employment Opportunities	16.6631	2.44055	149
Application Challenges	19.6353	3.22204	149

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

Table 8
Correlation Between Application Challenges and Employment Opportunities

	Employment Opportunities	Application Challenges
Pearson Correlation Employment Opportunities	1.000	.445
Pearson Correlation Application Challenges	.445	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000
N	149	149

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

A moderate, statistically significant positive correlation was found between application challenges and employment opportunities ($r = .445$, $p = .000 < .01$) marginally stronger than the fraud-related correlation reported in Table 3.

Table 9
Regression Model Summary Application Challenges

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE of Estimate	Durbin-Watson
.445 ^a	.198	.193	2.19297	2.040

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

The model yields $R^2 = .198$, meaning that application challenges account for approximately 19.8% of the variance in employment opportunities somewhat greater explanatory power than the fraud model. The Durbin-Watson statistic (2.040) again indicates no meaningful autocorrelation.

Table 10
ANOVA Application Challenges Model

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	174.590	1	174.590	36.304	.000 ^b
Residual	706.937	147	4.810		
Total	881.527	148			

The overall model is statistically significant, $F(1, 147) = 36.304$, $p < .001$, confirming that application challenges significantly predict employment opportunities.

a

Table 11
Regression Coefficients Application Challenges

Model	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	10.044	1.113		9.023	.000
Application Challenges	.337	.056	.445	6.025	.000

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

The fitted regression equation is: Employment Opportunities = $10.044 + 0.337$ (Application Challenges). The coefficient is positive and statistically significant ($\beta = .445$, $t = 6.025$, $p < .001$).

Hypothesis Testing Summary

Table 12
Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	F	R ²	Sig.	Decision
H01: Job portal frauds → Employment opportunities	28.807	.164	.000	Rejected; H1 supported
H02: Application challenges → Employment opportunities	36.304	.198	.000	Rejected; H2 supported

Note. Primary data, compiled and computed using SPSS.

11. DISCUSSION

Both regression models support the alternative hypotheses: online job portal frauds and application-process challenges are each significantly and positively associated with respondents' composite employment-opportunity scores. It is important to interpret the direction of this association carefully. The employment-opportunity scale used in Section IV of the questionnaire is a composite of items capturing both actual and perceived job-search engagement (e.g., portal usage, hesitation, motivation), rather than a pure outcome measure such as number of offers received. The positive coefficients are therefore more plausibly explained by heavier portal engagement being associated with greater exposure to both fraud and procedural friction—those who apply more actively encounter more fraudulent listings and more application obstacles—rather than fraud or friction causally improving employment outcomes. This interpretation is consistent with Kelley, Ksoll and Magruder's (2022) finding that portal effectiveness depends heavily on applicants' search intensity and beliefs about job-arrival rates.

The comparatively larger explanatory power of application challenges ($R^2 = 0.198$) relative to job portal frauds ($R^2 = 0.164$) suggests that procedural friction—lengthy forms, unresponsive recruiters, and technical glitches—may be a marginally more salient driver of respondents' overall job-search experience than fraud exposure per se, even though both are statistically significant. This nuance echoes Bhushan and Shukla's (2024) observation that usability and process design, not only trust and security, materially shape digital-recruitment outcomes.

Together, the two predictors explain a modest share of total variance (16–20%), implying that the majority of variation in employment-opportunity scores is attributable to factors outside the scope of this model—such as candidates' qualifications, network access, industry demand, and interview performance—consistent with the multi-causal nature of employment outcomes documented in the broader literature (Meher, 2018; Fernando et al., 2023).

12. FINDINGS

- The sample is dominated by 20–22-year-old (37.6%) and nearly gender-balanced (50.3% male, 49.7% female) respondents, with undergraduates and postgraduates together comprising over 93 per cent of the sample.
- Management/Commerce students form the largest disciplinary group (45.6%), and respondents span graduation years from 2021 to 2025, providing a range of job-search experience.
- Online job portal frauds show a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship with employment-

opportunity scores ($r = 0.405$; $R^2 = 0.164$; $F(1,147) = 28.807$, $p < 0.001$).

- Application-process challenges show a statistically significant, moderate positive relationship with employment-opportunity scores ($r = 0.445$; $R^2 = 0.198$; $F(1,147) = 36.304$, $p < 0.001$)—marginally the stronger of the two predictors.
- Both regression models satisfy the independence-of-errors assumption (Durbin–Watson statistics of 1.971 and 2.040 respectively).
- Collectively, fraud and application-challenge perceptions explain a modest, though statistically significant, share of the variance in reported employment opportunities, implying that other unmeasured factors account for the larger share of outcome variation.

13. SUGGESTIONS

Awareness programmes: Colleges and career-guidance centres should conduct structured workshops to help students identify fake postings, suspicious recruiters, and phishing attempts.

Employer verification: Job portals should implement stricter identity and business-registration verification for organisations posting vacancies, along with ongoing monitoring of recruiter activity.

Simplified application design: Portals should adopt one-click and resume-based application options to reduce repetitive data entry and abandonment.

Digital-skills training: Institutions should provide structured training in résumé building, LinkedIn profile optimisation, and effective portal use.

Transparent communication: Recruiters should provide clear job descriptions, realistic salary information, and timely application-status updates.

Reporting mechanisms: Portals should provide accessible in-app reporting tools for suspicious listings, enabling faster administrative action.

Institutional partnerships: Portals can collaborate with colleges and universities to curate verified job listings for students, reducing fraud exposure at the source.

14. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence that both fraud exposure and application-process friction are significantly associated with the job-search experience of fresh graduates using online recruitment platforms. While online portals continue to offer convenient and wide-reaching access to employment opportunities, the persistence of fraudulent postings and cumbersome application procedures represents a meaningful, quantifiable barrier that platform operators, employers, and policymakers should not treat as a peripheral concern. Strengthening employer-verification systems, simplifying application workflows, and expanding structured awareness programmes are practical, evidence-based interventions that could improve both the trustworthiness and the usability of online recruitment for fresh graduates. Future research using longitudinal designs

and verified (rather than self-reported) employment outcomes would help clarify the causal pathways underlying the associations identified here.

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