

A Study on the Future of Campus Placements in India Post the Pandemic: An Industrial Perspective

Dr. Ashutosh Mathur

Designation: Assistant Professor and Head Placement & Corporate Affairs

Symbiosis Center for Management Studies-Pune

Affiliated to Symbiosis International (Deemed University)

E mail id: ashutosh.mathur@scmstpune.ac.in

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Abstract- Campus placement is considered as an institutional obligation and merit. The ranking of the institutions is based on the number of students placed successfully and the average salary offered. Due to the ongoing conditions the campus recruitment and placement landscape has been altered and has gone through various changes and challenges. There are institutes who have had to regretfully informed students of revoked job offer and are still facing a tough time to get companies onboard for further placements. The paper talks about the recruitment / placement scenario in general for both graduate and post graduates in India based on the primary research work done. Data was collected from 39 companies and analyzed to understand the placement scenario for the students who will undergo the drive in 2021. The paper also tries to understand the recruitment drive pattern for various companies' whether online will now be routine or are the companies still willing to come to campus for the drive. It analyzes the campus recruitment landscape for future purposes in contrast with the current happenings.

Keywords: Campus Placement, Industry, Recruitment, Graduate, Post Graduate, COVID-19, Pandemic

1. Introduction

There was a time when the success of an educational institute was judged by the level of skills and knowledge the students hold but in the current times for most of the Undergraduate as well as postgraduate courses, success of education is measured by successful campus placements. Campus placement of all the students is considered as institutional obligation and merit. The ranking of the institutions is based on the number of students placed successfully and the average salary offered.

Campus Placements is described as a program organized by the university or educational institute in collaboration with various companies to provide job opportunities to students who are nearing the completion of studies. It is a widely used phenomena in the education industry.

As stated earlier it is one of the standards and basis of ranking for many educational institutes ranging from engineering colleges to management colleges. But unfortunately, due to the pandemic this landscape has been the worst hit. Job opportunities and employment rates have gone incredibly because of the nation-wide lockdown. With the onset of the Novel Coronavirus cases and the lockdown imposed by the government to curb the spread the economy has been severely impacted. Multinational corporations have all been forced to shift to work from home models and have faced severe restrictions on clientele and simultaneously have affected job opportunities. Looking at the economy in Sept 2020 the hiring in 2021 will be majorly hit.

The campus placements in this new normal will have new hiring patterns, different job profiles which will require altered skills sets. Again, in this pandemic the face of campus placement is changing and is based more through online. The students will have choice to choose the company, country and the method of interview too. Along with ease the students will have to make themselves abreast with business solutions, business opportunity and their contribution to the company. Many big companies are reducing manpower. There are already too many applicants for a job and the work timings are huge for the remaining employees and the students must be now aware about the online work ethics. The hiring activity is dim and grim for all students at all levels. Many companies have slowed down their business activity, others have had layoffs and many have reduced pay. Maybe the top schools / colleges in the county will not be much impacted for the placements but the others will surely face problems. Disrupted supply chains, declining sales and reduced R&D spending in this pandemic a must for all organizations across sector has really troubled the hiring trends. COVID shutdowns across countries is causing shift in timelines plus additional costs. Government policies should be more directed for institutions and support an entrepreneurial ecosystem within colleges.

2. Literature Review

The following section presents the literature related to the present study.

The Literature review is about understanding the research on this covid, corona situation in terms of placement. Also, LR tries to study the campus recruitment across various institutes across India and what methods can be adapted for better placements. Singh (2020) discussed post COVID placement scenario and emphasized the importance of being social online to imbibe a different professional culture and new normal. The new hiring trends would be e-hiring, online training, e-joining and on-boarding with major changes in salary structure, job role and responsibility. The job focus will be on cutting edge technologies and skillsets. Ali (2020) proposed the impact on placement process due to COVID. He discusses at length on how placement scenario will not affect much for the top companies but it will give opportunity for other companies to hire in this period. Also, if there will be a different approach in hiring for summer and winter batches. Aithal et al., (2016), proposed a placement model which is relevant in today's time. It also gives an online or E-recruitment model to serve promotion of a robust green environment. The model gives high benefit and advantage factor to corporates as well as autonomy to students so that they can navigate and browse corporates online making it a paperless online recruitment model. Tagra (2020) discussed the placement scenario in fashion Institutes like NIFT etc. It says that the placement happened well in the beginning of the year but after April the students are still waiting for companies to hire.

HRD Ministry appealed to the companies to not withdraw any job. The article talks about the various sectors in which the placement activity happened and the % placement like Consulting, sales & marketing and finance were the most sought-after domains. Apart from traditional recruiters, several new companies from diverse sectors were also involved in the campus placements. Some companies are rescinding job and internship offers after being negatively impacted by COVID-19. Junior students are finding it harder to find internships, especially foreign research opportunities.

An article in Tribune stated that student's placements were hit due to COVID 19 even for the best / top colleges. Also, the internship provided by many top institutes for graduates and post-graduates have gone awry as most of the companies either postponed or cancelled the internship program. Many companies have also put a pause on further recruitment. But despite this, the global pandemic is accelerating the development

In another article published recently by Saini (2020), according to the author the pandemic is giving sleepless nights to students who were to soon appear for many different entrance exams. It was a matter of concern for institutions of education not only in India but globally. In US many institutions had shared with the Government, "While closing campuses or moving entirely to remote instruction have been necessary steps in slowing the spread of the virus among students and staff, these shifts have caused massive disruption to students, institutional operations and institutional finances.

The same holds true for India too. It is early to state how the digital education model would work for India. There is a need to have flexible and fixed form inbuilt in the education system. In a recent survey it was found that online teaching could never match with physical classroom teaching. The article talks about exams, admissions, placements for students in various graduate and post graduate courses in India. There are chances that the 2020 placement season may witness a dip as the World Economy will be going through a massive decline. Unless India makes internet available to all, there are chances that the gap in education quality and eventually placements may widen.

Other articles talked about the horror stories faced by students all over the globe. With companies either revoking job offers or allowing a huge cut in the salary promised previously. Some institutes have been able to honor the offers and have welcomed joiners but some have not been able to. While companies have tried to be familiar with virtual onboarding and it has been working very well for some companies. Many new techniques are being adapted to onboard talented and skilled candidates like telepresence and video conferencing under the monitoring of skilled and able leaders. Some companies are not reducing pay packages for existing staff and so not hiring anyone new. The lockdown and the impending economic grief could force many more companies to rethink their placement offers.

As per a recent discussion of a white paper with some professionals at Deloitte it was stated that tie ups of corporates with institutes for campus placements will change its face. Many companies have been forced to cut down all costs and hence were seen compromising the placement drive while others are focusing on very few recruitments this year and mostly from top institutes. Many institutes have been shut down or forced to close and the same is with few small companies that just started before the pandemic. Campus hiring hit across 82% colleges in India due to COVID-19 according to a Survey as per Firstnaukri.com. The survey was conducted across India over many institutions with over 1,300 students to understand the mindset of students in this pandemic and their outlook on placement and internship opportunities. The survey concluded that only one-third of the students had a job offer whereas the others have either delayed joining date or roll back on the offers.

In an article published in 'The Print' recently Sharma and Kaushik (2020), discussed about several students at IITs and IIMs for whom job offers were revoked by a US-based firm.

In an article published in the Deccan Herald in July, the industry experts saw that engineering colleges, Tier-2 and Tier-3 colleges will be the impacted more as the manufacturing sector was shut for nearly 3 months. But the industry will hire talent but will stay away from mass hiring.

Byrne (2020) in an article in the Forbes talks about MBA placements being hit by corona. The coronavirus-led recession has changed the face of MBA recruitments. With companies scaling back on their plans to hire talent and internship opportunities, it is a down road for many. From the 116 hiring companies, nearly 40 have reported job freeze, cancellation, or rescinding of internship or job offers. The author advises the alumni network to come forward in this situation or the students to approach alumni for help at his juncture. All the students must be patient at this hour as this too shall pass and the economy will rise and opportunities will open up soon.

In an article by the JAGRAN JOSH, traditional way of hiring through campus drives is changing across colleges and universities in India. VUCA is changing the face of schools, colleges and universities across India. In these pandemic times some top, well established universities are supporting their students through various methods but the overall situation is grim. The economy will revive soon and the students should involve themselves in other short-term skill building activity and be patient.

3. Research gap and significance of the study

Most of the research work available post covered on the recruitment / placement of the graduate and post graduates talks about the situation today and skill set required by students or impact on placements for the year 2020 across institutions and sectors. This paper talks about the recruitment / placement scenario in general for both graduate and post graduates in India based on the primary research work done. The paper also tries to understand the recruitment drive pattern for various companies and their outlook for future.

3.1 Research Objectives:

The paper attempts to discuss the following research objectives:

1. To study the recruitment / placement scenario in general for both graduate and post graduates in India.
2. To understand the recruitment / placement drive pattern for various companies,
3. To analyze the outlook of recruitment / placement drive for upcoming graduates and post graduates

4. Research Methodology

The researcher has conducted primary and secondary research. A strong theoretical background was derived by studying papers published in journals of repute such as Scopus, Jstor, Taylor and Francis, etc. The paper talks about the recruitment / placement scenario in general for both graduate and post graduates in India based on the primary research work done. 50 companies were selected at random and the questionnaires were emailed to them. Data was collected from 39 companies and analyzed to understand the placement scenario for the students who will undergo the drive in 2021. The paper also tries to understand the recruitment drive pattern for various companies' whether the online will now be routine or are the companies willing to come to campus for the drive. Also, the paper looks to analyze company outlook for the future.

The data was collected through questionnaire from 39 companies in various sectors (IT, Accounting, F&B etc.) from their offices in Pune & PCMC area. But it shows the overall trend in the company and it is based on their spread in India and Abroad. So, the data collected can be said to be true for across the globe. It was shared with industry to get their feedback or collect on the recruitment scenario. (Questionnaire is attached as Annexure 1). The companies were selected through random sampling method. The data collected was analyzed using MS excel.

5. Discussions

Q1. Has the pandemic affected the campus recruitment process of your organization?

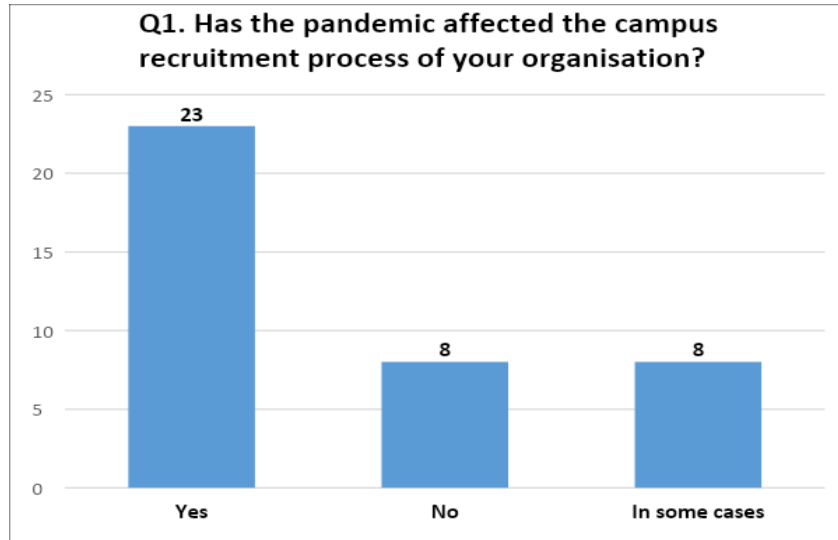


Fig 1: Affect of Pandemic on recruitment process

Discussion: From the above figure 1 we can state that the pandemic has affected recruitment process for most of the companies (greater than 50%). Out of the 39 companies analyzed, 23 of them stated that definitely the pandemic has affected their campus recruitment whereas 8 stated that it has not. The fact that the analysis did have some companies for which campus recruitment has not been affected was reassuring and implied the fact that the recruitment landscape has not had a major landslide. Some sectors have been deeply affected but some have made out alive. For some companies the pandemic has not much affected the recruitment process as they are MNCs while in few companies it has affected in some cases (in some specific role or in some states / countries).

Q.2 Has the pandemic affected the hiring quantity of your organization?

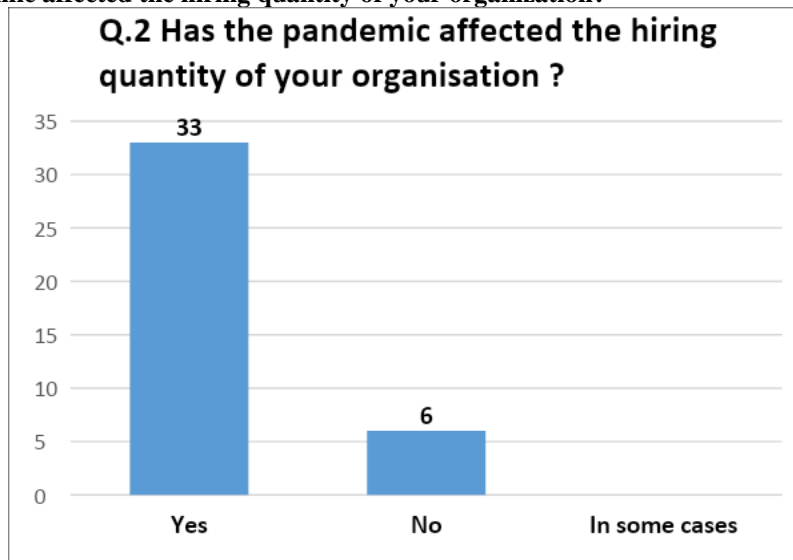


Fig 2: Affect of pandemic on hiring quantity of your organization

Discussion: From the figure 2 above we can state that the pandemic has really highly affected recruitment quantity of the graduates and post-graduates for almost 33 companies out of 39. By the analysis of the above data, it is henceforth inferred that for more than 75% of the companies the hiring numbers have been changed due to the pandemic and this results in the interpretation of its affect on job opportunities and openings. A decrease in hiring numbers links to decrease in the number of job openings and decrease in clientele and also a decrease in revenue generation.

Q.3 Has the pandemic affected the salary or CTC given to freshers by your organization?

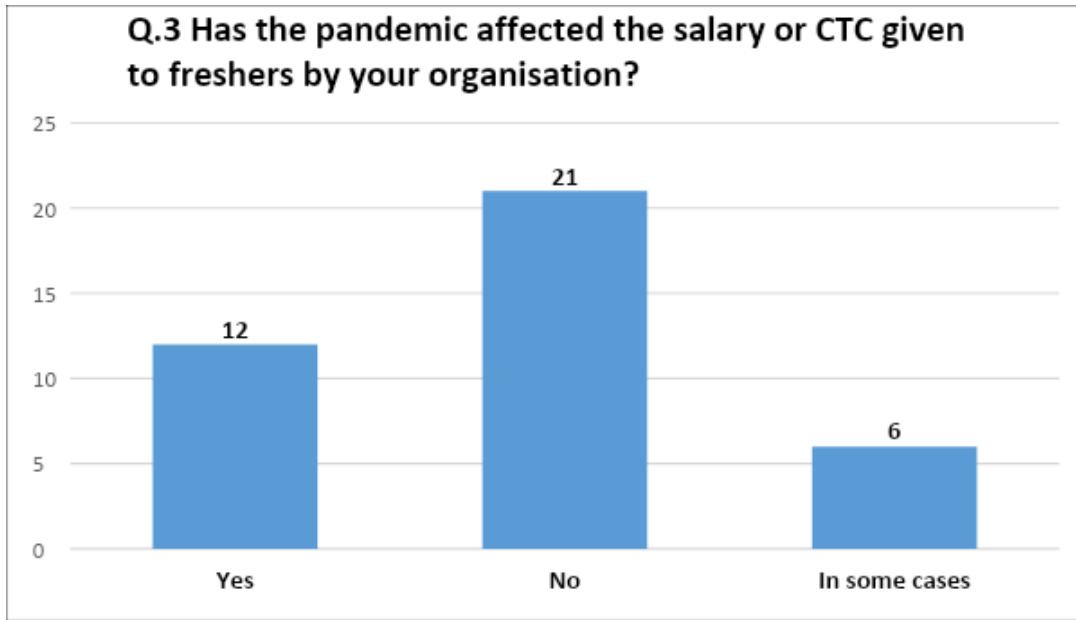


Fig 3: Fig 2: Affect of pandemic on CTC given to fresher’s by your organization

Discussion: Figure 3 above shows the impact on salary due to this pandemic. The salary has not much been impacted for fresh recruits; it has changed for few companies and case wise in other companies. Mostly the affect can be seen in manufacturing, F&B and travel industry. MNCs have not had much effect and IT companies are also hiring on the same package. This was a reaffirming analysis, that lead to infer the fact that even though hiring numbers have been decreased but the market rates of various job offers and job roles still remain intact and have not been majorly hit by the ongoing pandemic.

Q.4 What was the timeline followed by your organization before the pandemic for campus recruitment?

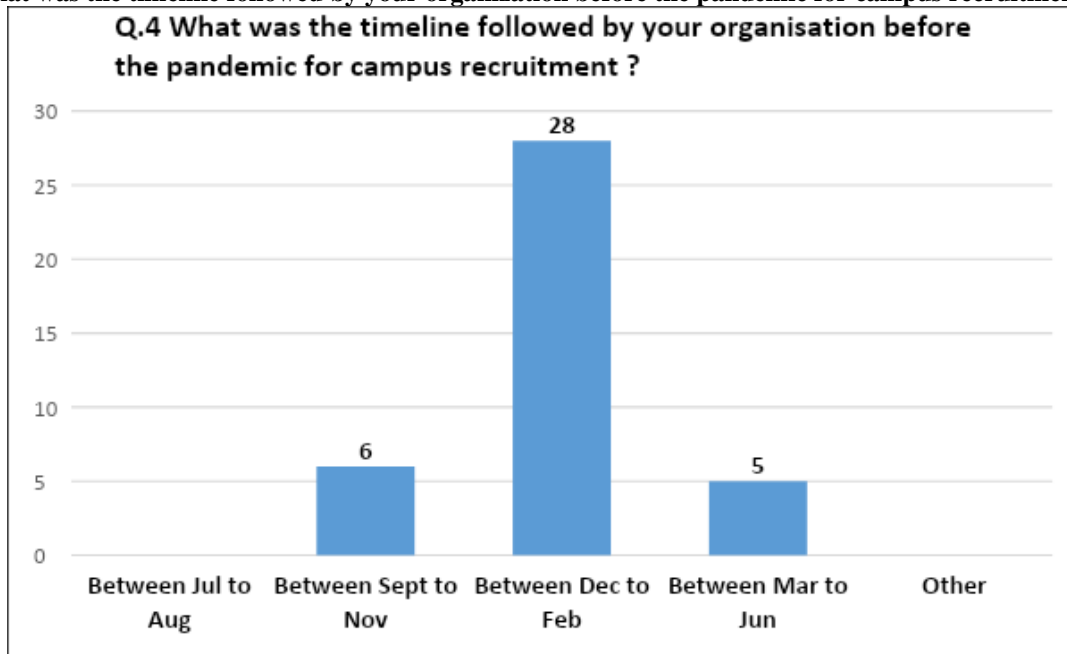


Fig 4: Timeline followed by organizations before the pandemic for campus recruitment

Discussion: Figure 4 above shows the recruitment month when companies set up their recruitment drive in the normal period. But this year due to pandemic most of the companies faced issues due to lockdown etc. This question was formed to calculate a difference if any in the campus recruitment timelines for the organizations. Here are institutes as well organization who have initiated their campus placements and have sort to Online recruitment drives However, since students are based out of various cities in the globe sometimes it was a problem for many students from various small towns where there is electricity and network issue. With the help of this question the researchers wanted to form a basic knowledge about the pre COVID patterns to formulate a comparative analysis with the post COVID patterns.

Q.5 Has the timeline followed by your organization for campus recruitment changed due to the pandemic?

Q.6 If yes, what is the timeline now?

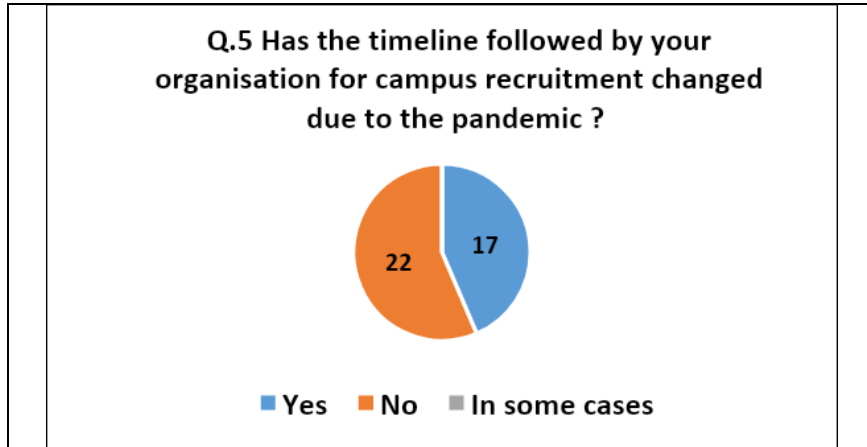


Fig 5: Change in timeline due to pandemic

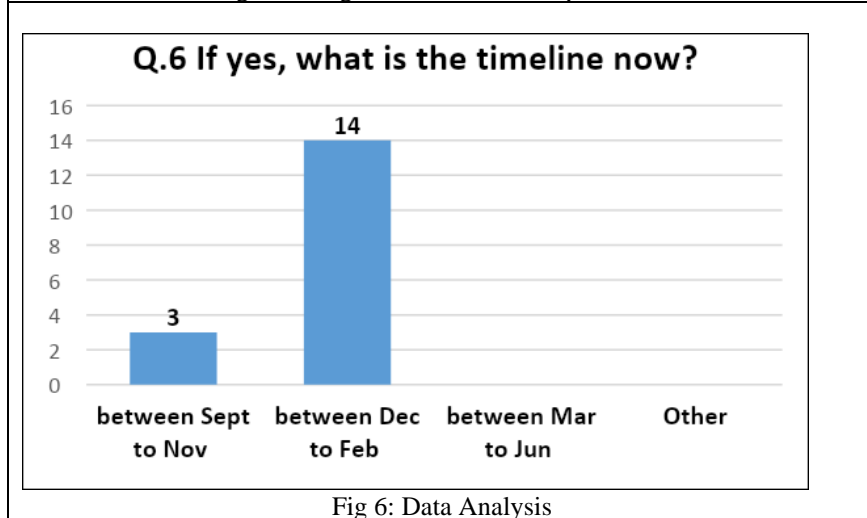


Fig 6: Data Analysis

Table 1: Novel Timeline of organization

Discussion: Table 1 above includes analysis for 2 questions 5 and 6 respectively. The companies were asked if they had to review their timeline for conducting recruitment drive this year and 17 of the 39 companies said yes whereas for the 22 other companies, they completed the drive by March. Nearly 14 of the 17 companies have changed their timeline to Dec to Feb and other 3 would like to do it much earlier from sept to Nov. This question was in continuation with the afore mentioned question. It was formulated for a comparative analysis between pre and post pandemic times and there has been change in the timeline of campus placements. It can hereby be concluded that the organization who have gone through a change in timeline have shifted their schedules to September and November whereas most of them have stayed in the same timeline of December and February. This could be because according reports November might see the peak of Coronavirus cases and situation is likely to improve those times even if it is going to improve companies and people will be better equipped to deal with the situations.

Q.7. Has your organization witnessed an increase in number of applications received for a particular job after the pandemic?

Discussion: The above question was formulated to analyze the applicant rate and rate of competition for a particular job role. The increase in number of applicant’s comments on the dearth of job opportunities in the economy and also the desperation of applicants to be financially secure and have job security again. All the companies unanimously have agreed to the same. It means that after the pandemic the number of students applying individually has increased as the campus has not helped them much for recruitment. Therefore, the institutions have to try to approach top or better performing companies. The increase in applicants would account for experienced professionals who might have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, freshers whose job offers have been revoked by the companies and also freshers who never got placed by their campus placement drives.

Q.8 On a scale of 1 to 5, Have the online recruitment drives proven more efficient or less efficient than offline recruitment drives for your organization? (1 is less efficient and 5 most efficient)

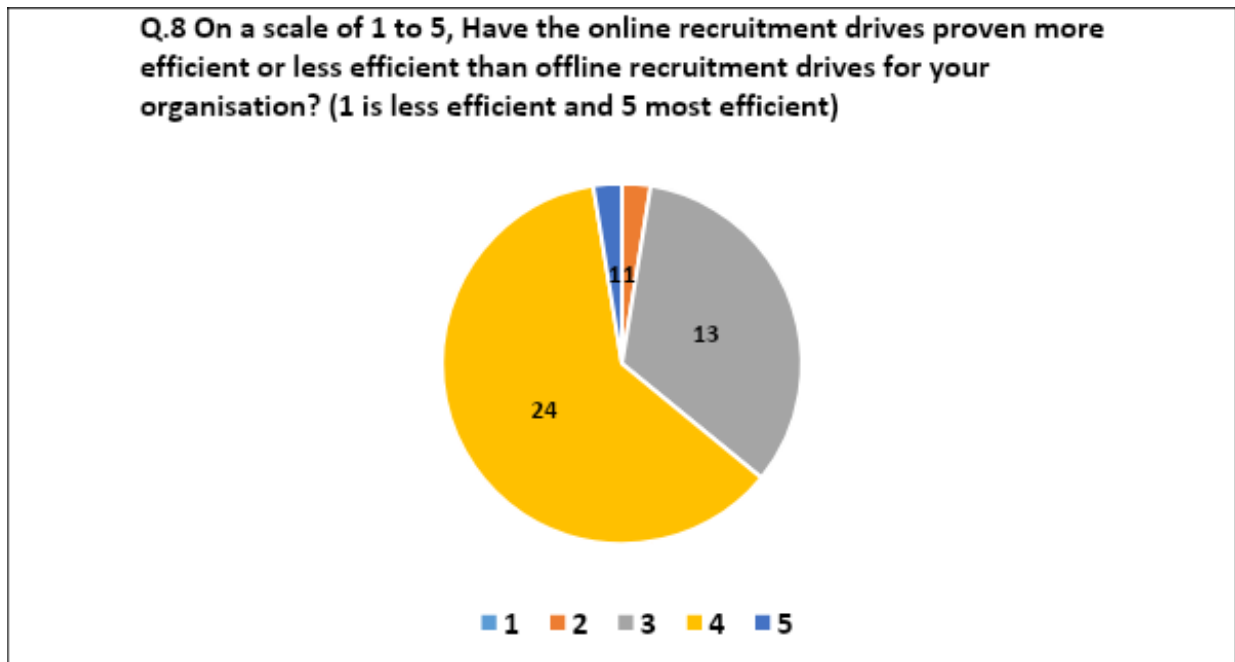


Fig 7: Efficiency of online recruitment drives

Discussion: Figure 7 above shows that in this pandemic era, online mode of recruitment process or drive is much more welcome and liked. The costs are much reduced and the flexibility option is available. The process had a few issues and problems as it was the first time for students but for the companies it’s a better option. Only the feeling of going to campus and being with students is missed by a few recruiters. It means that most of the companies would like to go for online recruitment methods in future whereas many still like to interact person to person and would like to come to campus for recruitment as soon as this situation sis over. So, institutions have to be ready for both and make students abreast with everything for next drive.

Q.9 Has your organization reduced the number of campus associations for campus recruitment due to the pandemic?

Discussion: This question was formulated with the intent to understand if the pandemic has some where or the other effected the associations of the organizations with educational institutes. It was made to understand the value of such associations for the industry and organization. All the Organizations collectively stated that no their associations have not been reduced due to the pandemic. It is a positive sign for both parties and for students too as the companies will keep holding campus placements in future too. Such responses prove the value of campus associations for the industry and the fact that fresher’s will have job opportunities may be not like pre COVID levels but they will be required and welcomed at all times.

Q.10 According to your judgments how many years will it take for the recruitment landscape to normalize?

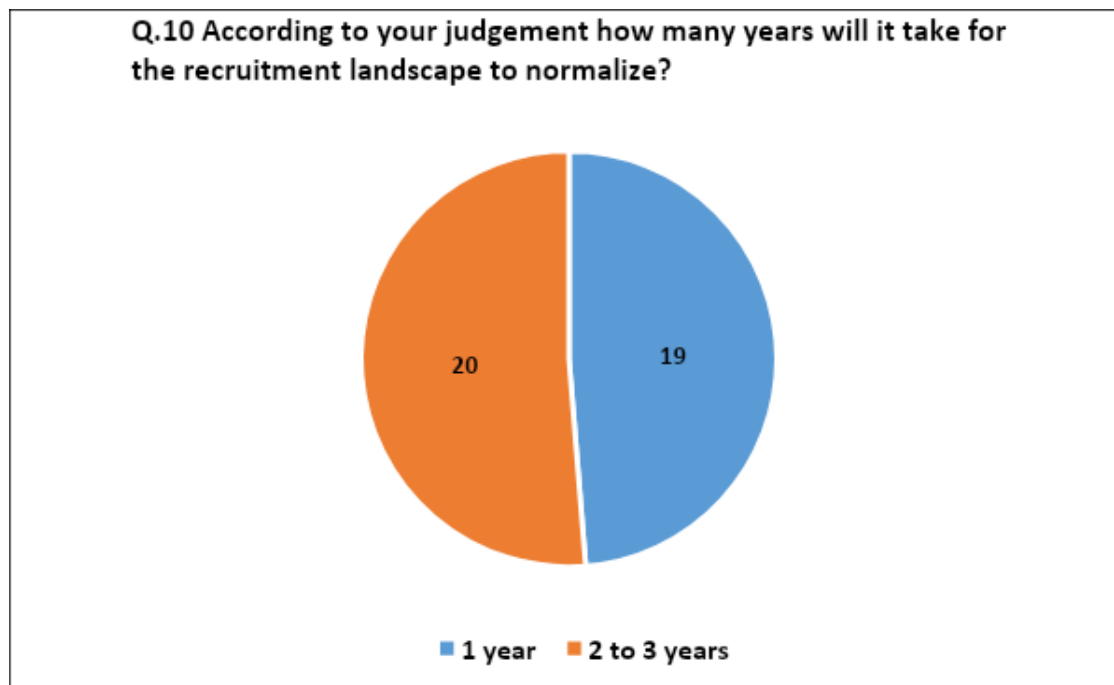


Fig 8: Perception related to the years to normalize recruitment landscape

Discussion: From Figure 8 above it can be concluded that the normalization of the recruitment process will take another 1 year to 2 years. The recruitment drive for 2021 pass outs may be online for most of the recruiters but it will be on campus by most of the companies in 2022. It means that the regularity of placements happening at institute level will be in next 2/3 years. It is a positive sign for institutions and students both as the admission will not be impacted and students will be placed. It definitely refers to the recovery rate of the economy. Faster the economy recovers to the pre COVID rate of economic activity the faster will the hiring and recruitment and campus placement will recover. It is definitely concluded that things will normalize within the next 2 years at maximum but certainty is not assured since the pandemic has posed the economy and country with its own level of challenges and uncertainty.

Findings

1. The recruitment / placement scenario in general for both graduate and post graduates is fine and will be improving by looking at responses of companies from question number 1 to 4. The recruitment happened this year even in pandemic time and the salary was not much impacted.
2. The recruitment / placement drive pattern has changed into online and according to most of the companies they liked it as it saves on cost and time. It also offers flexibility to both recruiters and students. Also, many companies would like to do in campus as soon as the situation is normalized after 1 to 3 years. As per question 5 to 8 the companies are also changing their recruitment months / dates to make it easier for 2021 students.
3. The outlook of recruitment / placement drive for upcoming graduates and post graduates looks fine as per question 9 and 10. Also Q.3 says that the salary will not be much impacted which is true to big companies, MNCs etc.
4. Overall, the placement scenario looks fine to all Top schools / institutions across India. The salary is not much issue but the number of intakes may be impacted.

The hiring activity is looks fine for students at all levels from good schools / institutions in India for big giants, MNCs etc. For others the normal placements will be after 1 to 3 years. Many companies have slowed down their business activity and therefore the intake will be less in the next 1 to 3 years. COVID shutdowns across countries has caused emergence of online platforms for recruitment / placement activity. It helps to reduce cost and save time along with flexibility. The recruitment / placement scenario in general for both graduate and post graduates is Okie and will be improving by looking at responses of companies at a slow pace. The number of intakes will be reduced and hence the impact on salary will not be much.

7. Limitations of the study

The above paper is based on questionnaire collected from various sectors in Pune city with a database of 39 companies. The researcher could not collect data from all companies in Pune to make it more justified and analysis done is also basic in nature.

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Annexure 1
Questionnaire: Campus Recruitment After Pandemic

Q.1 Has the pandemic affected the campus recruitment process of your organization?

- Yes
- No
- In some cases

Q.2 Has the pandemic affected the hiring quantity of your organization?

- Yes
- No
- In some cases

Q.3 Has the pandemic affected the salary or CTC given to freshers by your organization?

- Yes
- No
- In some cases

Q.4 What was the timeline followed by your organization before the pandemic for campus recruitment? *

- Between Jul to Aug
- Between Sept to Nov
- Between Dec to Feb
- Between Mar to Jun
- Other

Q.5 Has the timeline followed by your organization for campus recruitment changed due to the pandemic?

- Yes
- No
- In some cases

Q.6 If yes, what is the timeline now?

- Between Sept to Nov
- Between Dec to Feb
- Between Mar to Jun
- Other

Q.7 Has your organization witnessed an increase in number of applications received for a particular job after the pandemic?

- Yes
- No
- In some cases

Q.8 On a scale of 1 to 5, Have the online recruitment drives proven more efficient or less efficient than offline recruitment drives for your organization? (1 Less efficient and 5 More efficient)

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

Q.9 Has your organization reduced the number of campus associations for campus recruitment due to the pandemic?

- Yes
- No
- In some cases

Q.10 According to your judgement how many years will it take for the recruitment landscape to normalize?

- less than a year
- 1 year
- 2 - 3 years
- 4 - 5 years
- 6 - 7 years
- More than 7 years
- Other