

## e Recruitment and merit employee selection. An HR paradox

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### Abstract

The technological advancement makes it imperative for organisations to run human resources processes online. This paper examines the effectiveness of e recruitment most especially on its appropriateness in selecting the best candidates since the method does not provide the room for personal touch. The study employed cross sectional research design with the target population of 420 HR Officers from the Tanzanian Roads Authority (TANROAD), Tanzania mainland. The researcher used systematic sampling technique to obtain pre-determined 40 sample size. The findings indicate that, many organisations in Tanzania do not use e recruitment due to poor ICT infrastructures, unreliable electricity power, wrong perception of recruiters on e recruitment and some weaknesses associated with e recruitment method. The findings indicated further that, e recruitment compromises objectivity since there are some attributes like emotional intelligence, confidence, body language that cannot be captured when conducting e recruitment. The study recommends the use of e recruitment by the employing organisations since its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. This can be achieved by changing the mindsets of recruiters and investing more in ICT facilities.

**Keywords:** Quick responses, Posting jobs online, Online -Recruitment.

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**How to cite this article:** Gideon Yona Sikawa, (2023). e Recruitment and Merit Employee Selection. An HR Paradox, 13(2) 54-58. Retrieved from <https://jmseleyon.com/index.php/jms/article/view/667>

**Received:** 1 April 2023 **Revised:** 3 May 2023 **Accepted:** 23 June 2023

### 1. INTRODUCTION

With work organisations becoming digital, the practices of recruitment have changed drastically. With the rising use of digital tools, HR professionals transitioned from their traditional methods of printing job vacancies in publications to using E-Recruitment methods for tracking and hiring applicants. E-Recruitment, also known as "Online -Recruitment", is a method used by HR professionals to assist the recruitment process by using technology or web-based tools. It is an automated process of tracking, attracting, interviewing, and hiring candidates by utilising online stages and HR software.<sup>[1]</sup>

#### 1.2 Opportunities of E- Recruitment

E- Recruitment is a new approach to recruitment in Tanzanian context and very few organisations practice this technique. E recruitment could offer an organisation the following benefits;

- Wider geographic search
- Quick responses
- Time saving
- Cost saving Benefits to employer

- Advertising benefits Easy to apply .
- Large number of opportunities Benefits to jobs seekers.
- Wider geographic .
- Posting jobs online is cheaper than advertising in the newspapers.
- It does not involve intermediaries.
- There is reduction in the time for recruitment (over 65% of the hiring time).
- It facilitates the recruitment of right type of people with the required skills.
- It enhances improved efficiency of recruitment process.
- It gives a 24 hours access to an online collection of resumes.<sup>[2]</sup>

An online recruitment has great potential for any organization as it's up to date recruiting method provides current information; open up geographical borders searching for talents and is time and cost saving (Pin et al 2001). e-HRM practices such as e-recruiting, e-learning, e-performance appraisal can be seen as activities that help the firm meet its objectives

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through leveraging on the relational aspect of e-HRM. e-HRM can also be distinguished as the utilization of IT for supporting and networking at least two (individual and/or collective) actors in their shared performance of HR tasks. e-HRM therefore, is viewed as a way of implementing HR strategies, policies and practices in organizations through a conscious and directed support of and/or the full use of web technology-based channels. e-Human resource management forms an integral part of workforce management which has a bearing related on organizational outcomes, behaviour of employees in an organization.<sup>[3]</sup>

### 1.3 Challenges of E- Recruitment

E- Recruitment since its inception has turned out to be successful but it has faced quite a number of challenges hurdles in the path of success. Some fail to provide correct information online as they are not computer savvy. They tend to commit mistakes like filling their name wrongly, their native place wrongly, their qualifications etc. online resumes easily get duplicated and hence chances of neglecting the real candidates instead of duplicate increases. As resumes are uploaded online so there is no surety of authenticity and correctness of information provided by persons. Some challenges are the quality and the quantity of candidates through the web tools. Many organizations have reported getting large number of applicants from unqualified people. In case of absence of internet connection candidates cannot check any portal or site. Some of the challenges associated with e recruitment are; fake profile, high fees for access casual attitude of job seekers and lack of personal touch and privacy issues.<sup>[4]</sup>

Some companies make their website quite multifaceted due to over engineering which makes it difficult for job seekers to find relevant opportunities and apply for the same as not everyone is computer savvy. Also, employers cannot judge the personality of candidates online as there is lack of face-to-face interaction. In case of candidates coming out to be a total change than what was expected at the time of interview, it leads to complete waste of time for employers as they have to restart the process again. Sometimes it's difficult to find a candidate within budget and stipulated time frame, in that case it's quite challenging for employers to find a talent as per their desire. The job-portals have the challenge of filtering the information they showcase and removing the fake job offers as well as the job seekers.<sup>[5]</sup>

According to Armstrong, the positives associated with internet recruitment come with a number of challenges. In getting broader exposure, employers also may get more unqualified applicants. Internet recruitment creates additional work for HR staff members who now need to review more resumes, more e-mail and the need to install expensive software to track the numerous applications. A related concern is that many of the individuals who access job sites are just browsers who are not actively looking for jobs.<sup>[6]</sup>

Another major concern is that some applicants may have limited internet access, especially the individuals from lower socio-economic groups and from certain regions of the world. Also, privacy is another potential disadvantage of this new process: sharing information gleaned from people who apply to job boards or even company websites has become common, but information sharing is being done in ways that raise ethical issues and violate discrimination.<sup>[6]</sup>

The challenges identified by other scholars include:

- Screening and checking the skill mapping and authenticity of million of resumes is a problem and time-consuming exercise for organizations.
- There is low internet penetration and no access and lack of awareness of internet in many locations across the world.
- Organizations cannot be dependent solely and totally on the online recruitment methods. In countries like India and Nigeria, the employers and the employees still prefer a face-to-face interaction rather than sending emails. Other major challenges with e-Recruitment centre on the quantity and quality of candidates using web-based tools, the lack of knowledge of e- Recruitment within the HR community, and limited commitment to e recruitment by senior managers. For example, many applications from unqualified candidates have been received by organizations using e- Recruitment systems, at the same time, the lack of knowledge of e-recruitment among HR professionals and the limited commitment of senior managers have hindered the effective implementation of e-Recruitment in some organizations.

Furthermore, recruiting through the internet has raised concerns among potential applicants about keeping their personal information secure and confidential, many organizations' recruitment sites display privacy statements that detail how the information applicants provide will be stored and used. However, data security remains a major concern, particularly when it comes to online testing and making hiring decisions. Shrivastava and Shaw noted that the accuracy, verifiability, and accountability of applicants' data are also major issues for managers whose organizations use e- Recruitment system.<sup>[7]</sup>

In addition, Robertson also noted that the lack of personal interactions during the process of applying for employment online limits the flow of communication between potential employees and the employer, leading to frustration on the part of the job candidates and missed opportunities to share or gather additional information by employers. Storey (2007) also noted that online testing raises issues related to applicants' reactions to the testing, the equivalence of online and pencil-and-paper tests, adverse impact, and protecting candidates identities. Therefore, before adopting any kind of online selection methods, organizations should carefully study the impact of these methods and the

strengths and weakness of the methods. [8]

According to Lepak and Snell (1998) the HR Function must confront four seemingly contradictory pressures. HR departments are required to be simultaneously strategic, flexible, efficient, and customer-oriented. Certain authors have suggested that the use of technology may enable them to achieve these goals. Recruitment plays a critical role in enhancing organizational survival and success. The recruitment process has been profoundly affected by major changes: the retirement of the aged group, an increasing need for flexibility and responsiveness, and complex modes of communication. The development of new "social and sociable" media technology called "Web 2.0" offers companies and their recruiters new perspectives. Despite the growing importance of e-recruitment, research in this area remains very limited and applicant-oriented. [9]

According to African Development Indicators 2006, as cited by the International Records Management Trust (2007) the key component of Tanzania Public Service Reform Program was to promote and improve the e-governance and service delivery through aggrandizing the underlying framework of ICT so as to deliver the required services in new technology. The national ICT policy was approved by the cabinet in 2003 and developed by the ministry of communications and transport. The general mission of ICT policy is to facilitate the economic growth, encouraging investments, social development and knowledge partake within and outside the country through ICT.

With the ease in the process of applying for a job online, it also means that underqualified and fraud candidates might apply for the job role. With hundreds of applicants, many of them will not be suitable for or serious about the role, thus diluting the quality of talent pool. There is also a problem of lack of personal touch which limits the recruiter to scrutiny the applicant's emotions, confidence and the ability to keep eye contact. Absence of all these variables create recruitment and selection paradox. [10]

During online interviews on the free video platforms like Skype or Zoom video calls, it is possible to encounter technical faults. It can be quite embarrassing for a recruiter to be suddenly switched out of a conversation or call due to an electrical outage, while having an unstable internet connection can be awkward. This also means if the company isn't good at technology, they might encounter such glitches more often, thus, making e-recruitment an yet saluted recruitment approach in the Tanzanian context.

The study intended to examine the extent of usage of e recruitment in Tanzanian work organisations and the cost effectiveness of using e recruitment. It further ascertained the objectivity of e-recruitment and establish the remedial action that could have been taken by the recruiting organizations in an event of the disadvantageous e recruitment. It finally assesses the technological infrastructures possessed by Tanzanian

work organisations that are necessary in handling e-recruitment.

## 2. Methodology

The study employed cross sectional research design. The researcher chose cross sectional survey design to help measure prevailing attitudes and practices of HR managers in relation to e recruitment. The large number of respondents was interviewed using a pre-designed questionnaire, thus allowing collection of a significant amount of data in an economical and efficient manner. The target population for this study was 420 HR Officers from the Tanzanian Roads Authority (TANROAD), Tanzania mainland.

The researcher used systematic sampling technique to obtain pre-determined 40 sample size. To get this sample, the researcher had to get the list of names of these HRs via telephone communication and the names were arranged in alphabetical order. Then, the list was divided by the predetermined sample size to obtain kth interval. Therefore, from the list, the sample size was obtained by picking every 7th individual and thus, making a sample size of 60 respondents. Respondents were coded (HR01.....HR0n) to aid in the analysis of the collected data.

Data were collected through telephone survey where every respondent was requested to juxtaposition a convenient time for the interview with the researcher and this was made possible by the assistance of the chairperson of the Tanzania Human Resources Association (unregistered). The response rate was impressive (98%) since the researcher is senior person in the field of human resources management and contributes a lot in the solutions for Hrs management at TANROAD.

## 3. Findings

The findings indicate that, TANROAD does not employ e-recruitment method to recruit employees. "We don't use e-recruitment at TANROAD because we have no infrastructures to support e recruitment. Infrastructural aspects like reliable internet, computers, teleconferencing rooms, internet of things (IoT) are some of the barriers to the usage of e recruitment plus, of course, lack readiness by the management. There is also the problem of electricity power cut off which does not encourage online recruitment approach since it could negatively affect the smooth running of the recruitment process" (HR08). These views were also strongly held by (HR09-18).

Although e-recruitment is not in use at TANROAD, respondents had the opinion that the objectivity of e-recruitment is highly questionable. They revealed that, using e recruitment does not provide room for personal touch. In their opinion, HR015 and 28 said "e recruitment is not effective since the panelists can't

assess candidate's body language, level of confidence and emotional intelligence". They also reported that, "e-recruitment attracts a lot of applicants some of whom are underqualified and thus making it difficult to scrutinize all the applicants at the initial stage". This indicates that, e-recruitment system is not capable in filtering candidates who do not meet the selection criteria. This an important information to the system developers because, including such a component in the system will make it easier for the HR department to handle online recruitment.

From the table below, all the respondents agreed that e recruitment approach is not capable of assessing important attributes in a candidate. Thus, this could be ascertained as the major weakness of the e recruitment system that, if employed, human resource officers should be conversant with.

ICT Infrastructure was another concern in relation to the application e recruitment. Respondents (HRO24-34) revealed that, most of the connections are in small dimensions. These findings commensurate the findings by Sife (2013) who asserted that Tanzania is suffering from ICT poor infrastructures, illiteracy

in computer usage and unreliable electricity power supply. Computers and its hardware are imported from abroad. This situation caused the high price in both computers and internet services and reduced the number of internet users.

Cost effectiveness in the application of E recruitment was also a concern of this paper and the researcher attempted to find out whether or not e recruitment has cost advantage over physical/traditional recruitment approach. Though TANROAD does not use e recruitment approach to recruit prospective employees, the participants (HRO22-31) revealed that physical/traditional recruitment is not expensive when compared with e recruitment. They submitted that the costs that could be used to recruit online are same for physical recruitment since recruiting companies do not pay for transport, meal and accommodation. These cost variables are incurred by the applicants. These findings are important since they may encourage firms to maintain flexibility whenever necessary. Using e recruitment is very advantageous to applicants as it reduces travel and accommodation expenses.

**Table 1: Objectivity of e Recruitment**

S/N	Assessed attributes	Rated-e-recruitment objectivity	Rated-un-objective-erecruitment	Total
1	Personal touch	0	40	40
2	Confidence	0	40	40
3	Emotional intelligence	0	40	40
4	Body language	0	40	40

### Conclusion and Recommendations

E recruitment is advantageous to applicants and recruiting organisations. Study findings indicate that e recruitment saves recruitment cost, reach many applicants and it is a convenient recruiting method when compared to physical recruitment. Notwithstanding the benefits associated with e recruitment, many organisations in Tanzania do not use this method. Limited access to ICT services, unreliable electricity and the high cost of ICT facilities are some of the barriers that were reported hindering application of e recruitment. On the other hand, e recruitment claimed of lacking personal touch thus making it difficult assess candidate's level of confidence, emotional intelligence and body language during the interview session.

The study recommends the use of e recruitment by the employing organisations since its advantages outweigh the disadvantages. This can be achieved by changing the mindsets of recruiters and investing more in the ICT facilities. It's also recommended that the organisations fix powerful and automatic generators that could curb the problem of power cut off during the interviews.

### Acknowledgement

Nil

### Funding

No funding was received to carry out this study.

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