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Research Article

Factors Influencing Corporate Selection of Higher Education Institutions for Campus Placement Drives: An Empirical Study of HR Professionals Across Indian Industries

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Abstract

Campus placement drives have become one of the most vital and effective channels for talent acquisition among Indian businesses. However, the conditions that enable a company to select a particular institution rather than another one are not sufficiently studied in the academic literature. This empirical research aims to explore the critical factors that affect the decision-making process of companies while identifying the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) for campus recruitment.

73 HR professionals across 11 industries, including Information Technology, Manufacturing, BFSI, FMCG, Retail, Consulting, Healthcare, Logistics and others, were surveyed using a structured survey instrument. Respondents answered a series of questions on a five-point rating scale and identified their most important selection parameters, their preferred levels of institute, areas of focus when hiring, campus strategies they prefer, and the most challenging aspects of their operations.

It is found that consistently the most important factors are Student Quality (M = 4.64), Placement Cell Coordination (M = 4.47), Student Employability (M = 4.52) and Past Hiring Experience (M = 4.40). Most respondents (68.5%) describe campus hiring as "High" or "Very High" in its strategic importance, and 68% believe that a long-term partnership or a mix of partnership and transactional engagement is a better form of campus engagement than just transactions. Dropouts, high salary demands and deficiencies in candidate quality continue to be the biggest problems. The study also indicates that the hiring of virtual campus students is split almost evenly, indicating an emerging hybrid hiring pattern.

Implications for institutional leaders, HR practitioners and policymakers are explored, as well as directions for future longitudinal and sector-specific research.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The linkage between the Corporations and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in India has grown from being a comfortable job allocation to a strategic need. With the race for entry-level and management talent heating up, campus recruitment is one of the main sources of getting fresh talent.

India churns out more than 9 million graduates per year (AICTE, 2023) ^[2], but the employment rate is a constant worry, and various reports indicate that only a small proportion of graduates are able to achieve industry standards for employment (Aspiring Minds, 2019) ^[3]. This paradox leads to a very selective campus recruitment environment as companies spend a lot of effort to select and collaborate with the institutions that provide them with consistent quality of talent.

On the corporate side, there are multiple benefits to campus hiring compared to hiring from elsewhere. You get a candidate that's more likely to have a strong interest in your organisation, You can mold and develop them from scratch, and hiring from campus is cheaper than hiring laterally, to name a few.

The benefits, however, depend on the choice of the right institution, which is a much more complicated option than picking the best-ranked university. Various factors like historical success rate, responsiveness of the placement cell, geographical location, diversity of students, compatibility of the job role with the academic programmes, and the interface of the institute with industry all influence the final placement decision.

Although the strategic value of campus recruiting is increasing, academic research has overlooked the factors that influence a recruiter's choice of campus. The existing research is mostly focused on the employment of graduates from the student or institution's point of view (Reddy & Bhagawathi, 2021; Nair *et al.*, 2020) ^[17, 13], and criteria for the selection of HEIs by companies are still very much idiosyncratic and unstandardized. The importance of this gap is accentuated in the Indian context, where the higher education system is highly diverse – the elite national institutes on one hand and skill-oriented colleges on the other – and where informal networks and placement connections can play a key role in determining recruitment.

This study is designed to fill that gap. Based on survey answers from 73 human resource professionals in eleven industry sectors, this report explores the key considerations that influence corporate decisions about selecting a campus, the preferred methods of campus engagement, issues companies face and how new areas, like virtual hiring, are changing their methods.

The new knowledge created will be useful for institutional leaders to improve institutional attractiveness, HR professionals to tighten campus recruitment policy, and policymakers who are developing a placement linkage mechanism between industry and academia.

The aims of this study are as follows: The purpose of this study is as follows:

- To find out the factors that are important to corporate HR professionals while choosing HEIs for campus placement drives and rank them accordingly.

- To evaluate strategic weight given to campus hiring within industries and different designations.

To gain insight into preferred campus engagement practices (long-term partnerships vs. transactional hiring).

To explore the main challenges of the operation of campus hiring.

To understand the corporate perception in terms of the Tier preferences of the institutes, their readiness to go through the virtual platform and improvement areas.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The strategic approach to campus recruitment is discussed. The strategic process of campus recruitment is discussed. Campus recruitment (CR) (also known as on-campus placement) is a well-designed relationship between educational institutions and employers for the direct placement of graduates in the labour market (Rynes & Barber, 1990) ^[18].

Campus recruitment has been identified as a distinct segment of campus recruitment strategy for a long time, having the following features of high volume of recruitment, standardised selection processes and a unique role of the educational institute as an intermediary in the recruitment processes.

Before individual assessment, however, Barber (1998) ^[4] highlighted the role of institutional reputation in shaping perceptions of applicant quality in the context of campus recruitment, suggesting that campus recruitment is part of a larger recruitment value chain.

Venkatesh and Sethi (2018) ^[23] identified that more than 40% of the employees joining the IT and ITES industry are found to have joined from the campus, and there was a considerable proportion in BFSI and FMCG as well. According to the study, campus recruitment is not just a cost-effective approach to lateral hiring, but a conscious effort to create a culture and alignment of values in the organisation from the start.

Likewise, Joshi & Mehta (2020) ^[12] reported that in manufacturing companies, the retention rates for campus recruits were found to be higher than lateral hires and explained it as the impact of institutional culture on professional expectations.

2.2 Factors affecting the choice of campus decision

The issue of the attractiveness of one institution to recruiters versus another has been addressed in a diffuse way in the literature.

Employer attractiveness is mediated by institutional prestige, which turned out to be linked to a signalling effect proposed by Turban and Cable (2003) ^[22]: The higher the rank of the institutions, the more credible a signal they can provide to candidates about the quality of the candidate, thus lowering information asymmetry on the part of the employer.

Cable and Turban (2003) ^[7] extended this argument and then applied it to emerging markets contexts by Parameswari and Yugandhar (2015) ^[16], who reported that two of the most influential factors to lead corporate employers to the campus were academic reputation and placement cell coordination, in South India.

The ability of students, as measured by their aptitude scores, communication skills, and domain knowledge, has been one of the most direct factors influencing the decision to visit a campus, consistently showing up in all the reports by Aspiring Minds (2019) [3] and NASSCOM (2022) [14]. Researchers do warn, though, about cross-mixing and equating student quality with the tier of the institution: For example, Srinivasan and Thenmozhi (2020) [21] have shown that students with strong industry interface programmes may be more ready for practice than students from higher-ranked institutions that focus on theory. The geographic location and accessibility have been examined largely in terms of logistics expenses and feasibility for operations. Logistics is also a key factor affecting campus visits by manufacturing and logistics companies, as they tend to favour institutions located in industrial clusters or tier-two cities, which are close to their businesses, Agarwal (2019) [1] concluded. By contrast, IT companies that work in a more virtual world are less and less sensitive to the location of their campus.

Placement cell, as a mediating institution, is being increasingly recognised. Placement officers act as a liaison, relationship manager or coordinator between academic institutions and industry.

Nair *et al.* (2020) [13] and Goyal and Sengupta (2019) [10] highlight the role of responsiveness, professionalism and industry network of placement cells in influencing return visits of the corporate. The major reasons

Given for withdrawing an institution from the recruitment circuit were cited to be a lack of coordination, last-minute change in schedule and a lack of adequate pre-placement communication.

2.3 Campus Engagement Strategies and Industry Partnerships

Two general categories of engagement on campus have been identified in the literature.

Transactional hiring is an approach where the firm seeks to fill the immediate need for a position on campus at least once a time, whereas strategic partnership models include a continuous relationship between the company and the institution through internships, industry mentoring, curriculum co-development, guest lectures, and real-world project work (Bhatnagar, 2014) [6]. The latter model is correlated with greater predictability of the talent pipeline, a lower drop-out rate on offers, and a greater employer brand resonance with students.

Internship-to-hire pipelines have proven to be especially popular as a campus engagement approach. According to SHRM India (Based on its research in 2021) [19], organisations with structured internship programmes had a 34% higher conversion rate from campus offer to joining as compared to those that had only placement interviews.

Since the workplace culture and environment are already known to the pre-joiners, it is thought that this will minimise attrition during the first few months of the employee's induction and help to align expectations of their salary.

2.4 Challenges in Campus Hiring

A series of commonly encountered operational and strategic issues defines the campus hiring ecosystem. One of the most problematic and expensive difficulties for corporate recruiters is the occurrence of offer dropouts – candidates who accept offers, then change their minds nearer to the day of joining.

According to studies by Economic Times (2022) [10] and Deloitte India (2022) [8], the dropout rate for offers in campus recruitment is between 20% and 45%, with the main reasons being the multiple offers received by candidates, salary expectations, and the location of the offer.

Another major problem is high salary expectations, especially from the top-tier institutes and in the IT industry.

The gap between academic track and industry expected positions leads to either rejection of offers by the students or over-pay by companies, which is sub-optimal (Reddy & Bhagawathi, 2021) [17].

Poor quality of candidates at the bottom of the institutional spectrum, inadequate coordination among the placement cells and competitive recruiters at the same campus round up the typical challenges (Goyal & Sengupta, 2019; NASSCOM, 2022) [10, 14].

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on three different complementary theoretical frameworks.

First, Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973) [20] offers a lens through which institutional reputation and academic credentials serve as credible signals to reduce an employer's uncertainty about the quality of graduates.

Second, Relational Exchange Theory (Dwyer *et al.*, 1987) [9] can provide a rationale for the evolution from transactional to long-term campus engagement (transactional to partnership) as a transition from discrete exchanges to relational contracts that lead to mutual value creation.

Third, because of the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) [5] of the campus hiring process, a regular and stable flow of quality talent from targeted institutions is a limited and non-substitutable resource that gives a company a competitive edge. These three frameworks put campus selection more in the context of an investment decision driven by information economics, relationship capital and resource optimisation considerations, rather than mere logistical HR activity.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study was conducted in a descriptive-exploratory research design in the quantitative-dominant mixed approach. The main tool used to collect the data is the structured questionnaire, consisting of rating questions and categorical questions that have multiple answers.

It is a cross-sectional design, taking a snapshot in time of corporate perceptions of campus selection factors.

3.2 Survey Instrument

The questionnaire was organised into five thematic blocks:

1. Respondent profile and organisational context;

2. Campus selection criteria rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not Important, 5 = Extremely Important), including 11 parameters;
3. Campus strategy preference and institute tier preferences;
4. Key challenges and desired improvements;
5. Virtual hiring readiness and additional qualitative criteria.

This instrument was pre-tested with 8 HR professionals before full deployment and clarified.

3.3 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The target group was the HR professionals who are actively working in campus hiring in Indian organisations.

The method used for sampling was purposive, with HR professionals working in various roles, like HR Head, Talent Acquisition Lead, Campus Hiring Manager, HR Business Partner, etc., being considered.

A total of 73 respondents from eleven industry sectors – Information Technology (n=15), Manufacturing (n=8), FMCG (n=8), BFSI (n=7), FMCD (n=6), Healthcare (n=6), Consulting (n=5), ITES (n=5), Retail (n=5), Logistics (n=4), NBFC (n=4) – were used in the final usable sample.

The sample is a representative of a cross-section of corporate sectors in India that hire students on campus.

3.4 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis involved descriptive statistical techniques such as computing the frequency distributions, percentage analysis and mean scores.

As is standard practice in survey-based HR research (Norman, 2010) [15], Likert-scale ratings were analysed as interval data in the calculation of their mean scores.

Multiple response questions were broken down into individual responses for frequency analysis. The Python library matplotlib was used to create all visualisations.

Open-ended questions were analysed using thematic analysis of the qualitative responses.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

All participants in the study were anonymous. The participation was voluntary, and no personal information was gathered.

The data was only used for academic analysis purposes.

No individual respondents or their organisations are identifiable in all findings.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data are then analysed and reported by theme, starting with the respondent profile and the demographics, and ending with strategic and operational information on campus hiring.

Every finding is accompanied by suitable pictures, and the interpretation of it is put into the context of the existing literature.

4.1 Industry Distribution of Respondents

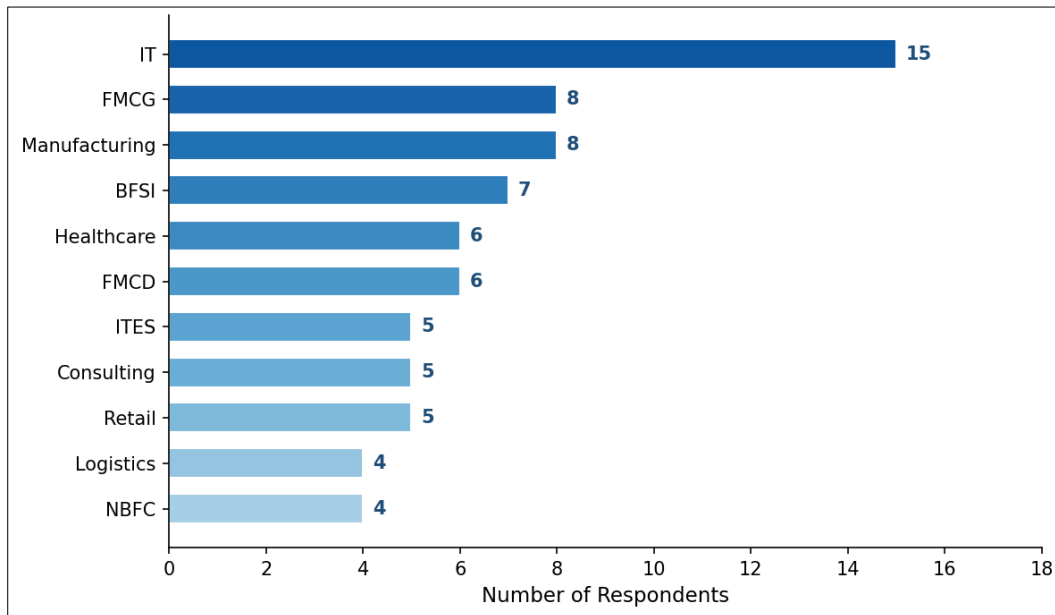


Fig 1: Industry Distribution of Survey Respondents (N = 73)

The survey included representatives from 11 different industries to limit the possibility of skewing results by a single industry's campus hiring trend. The Information Technology sector had the highest number of hires (n=15, 20.5%), as is typical in campus hiring in India. The next significant contributors were

manufacturing (n=8, 11%) and FMCG (n=8, 11%), whereas BFSI (n=7, 9.6%) followed. The findings are enriched by the sectoral diversity of the industries included: Healthcare (n=6), NBFC (n=4), Logistics (n=4), and Consulting (n=5), all of which have different campus hiring needs, timelines and

institutional preferences. The wide coverage of the sample increases the generalisability of the results to the corporate world in India.

4.2 Experience Profile of Respondents

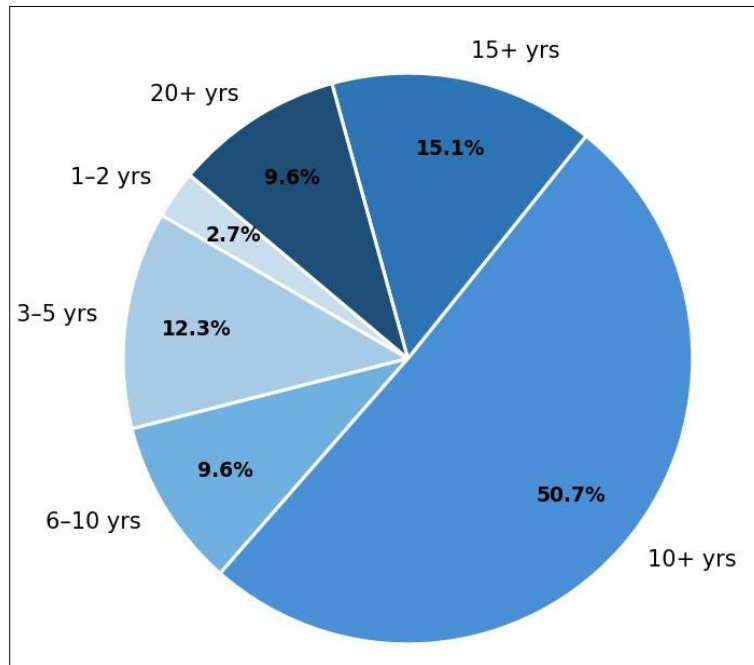


Fig 2: Years of Experience in HR Among Survey Respondents

The respondents are highly skewed with respect to experience. Nearly half of respondents (47.9%) had 10 years or more of experience in HR, 15.1% had 15 years or more of experience in HR, and 9.6% had 20 years or more of experience in HR. That means that about 72.6% of respondents are seasoned professionals with either a decade or more of HR practice, providing valuable credibility and experiential authority in their replies. Of all respondents, only 12.3% had less than five years

of experience. This distribution helps to ensure that the data reflects more subtle and strategic views on campus hiring than entry-level views. Data is based on the consensus judgment of decision makers who have had a direct impact or influence on campus recruitment results in various recruitment cycles.

4.3 Level of Involvement in Campus Hiring

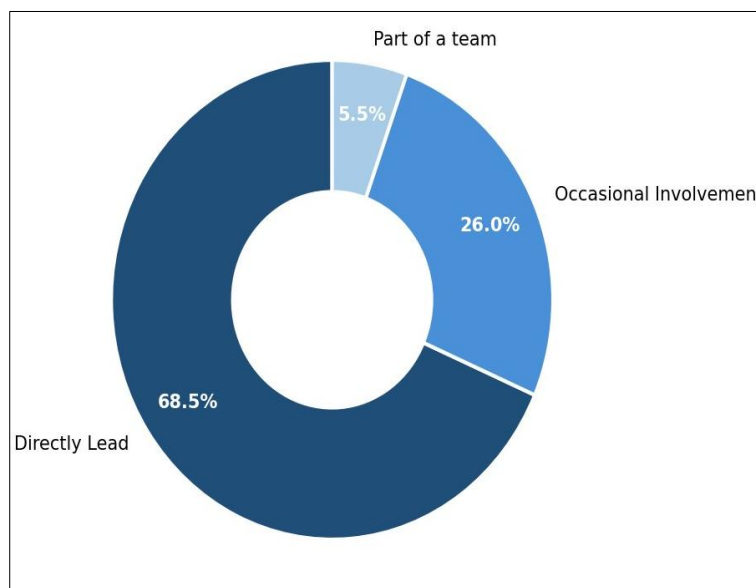
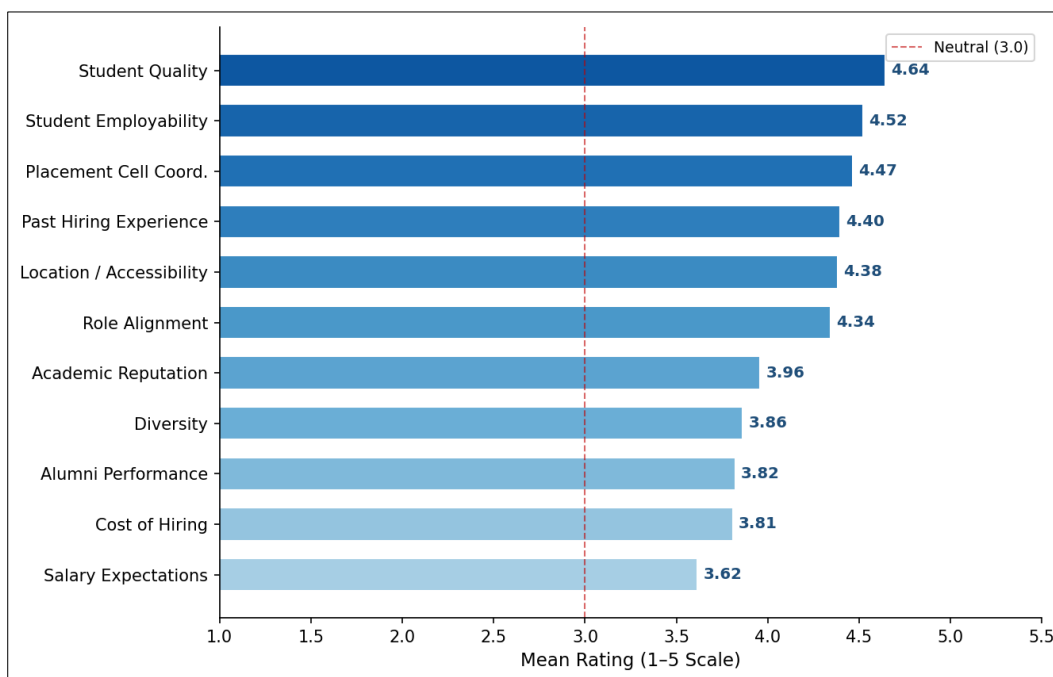


Fig 3: Level of Direct Involvement in Campus Hiring Decisions

A significant proportion of respondents said that they are directly responsible for recruiting staff for the campus at their organisations (68.5%, n=50). Another 26.0% (n=19) sometimes participate in a function, and only 5.5% (n=4) participate in a function, but not as a leader. The sheer abundance of direct leadership in this sample is of methodological importance as it would be suggestive of the fact that the overwhelming majority of the responses actually represent first-hand decision-making

authority and not second-hand or advisory. These are the people who truly decide which campuses to visit, which ones to extend, and which institutional relationships to develop and end. Their insights are, thus, not based on guesswork but on the logic of the decision-making process within the organisation.

4.4 Mean Ratings of Campus Selection Factors

**Fig 4:** Mean Importance Ratings of Eleven Campus Selection Criteria (1–5 Scale, N = 73)

This discovery is perhaps the most analytical part of the study. The respondents were asked to rate the importance of 11 selection parameters of a campus on a 5-point rating scale. The mean scores indicate a definite rank of importance:

Table 1: Mean Importance Ratings of Campus Selection Factors (Sorted by Mean Score)

Rank	Selection Factor	Mean (M)	Std. Dev.
1	Quality of Students (Skills, Aptitude)	4.64	0.48
2	Student Employability	4.52	0.63
3	Placement Cell Coordination	4.47	0.53
4	Past Hiring Experience	4.40	0.70
5	Location / Accessibility	4.38	0.64
6	Role Alignment	4.34	0.65
7	Alumni Performance	3.82	0.87
8	Diversity	3.86	0.99
9	Academic Reputation of the Institute	3.96	0.98
10	Cost of Hiring	3.81	0.97
11	Salary Expectations (of Students)	3.62	0.86

The most positive rating is for Student Quality (M = 4.64, SD = 0.48), which has a much lower standard deviation than other

factors, suggesting that the ratings on this metric were virtually uniform: regardless of industry or level of seniority, most HR professionals feel that the quality of students is the most important factor. This confirms the finding of Aspiring Minds (2019) [3] and is in keeping with signalling theory, which states that the quality of students is the most important signal of institutions' output. The second-ranked factor is Student Employability (M = 4.52), which is conceptually related to student quality but differentiates from it by focusing on students' readiness to perform in real-world jobs, not only on their academic aptitude. The dimensions of employability identified by respondents in multiple open-ended responses were "practical exposure" and "industry readiness", which are not being provided by many campuses. Placement Cell Coordination (M = 4.47) was ranked third, which has important implications for HEIs. The quality of engagement, with timely communication, professional handling of visit logistics, effectiveness of pre-placement orientation, etc., of the placement cell, directly determines the recruiter's decision to return to the campus. A poorly functioning placement cell can hinder the institution's academic quality, as a respondent pointed out. Past Hiring Experience (M = 4.40) came in fourth,

suggesting a self-reinforcing cycle of institutional preference due to campus involvement in positive past experiences. Location and Accessibility ($M = 4.38$) came in 5th, where both the physical and functional costs of moving workers to a location, and the convenience of doing so from a cluster of relevant geographic areas for business operations, factor in. Role Alignment ($M = 4.34$) ranked 6th, meaning that the consistency of the academic programmes in a campus with the hiring function requirement of the recruiter is also one of the

important criteria. Academic Reputation ($M = 3.96$), the Cost of Hiring ($M = 3.81$) and Salary Expectations of Students ($M = 3.62$) are also still taken into account, but to a lesser extent. The relatively lower mean for Academic Reputation (compared to Student Quality) illustrates a more nuanced finding – that recruiters are more interested in what students can do than the prestige of the school they attended.

4.5 Most Frequently Cited Top Selection Factors

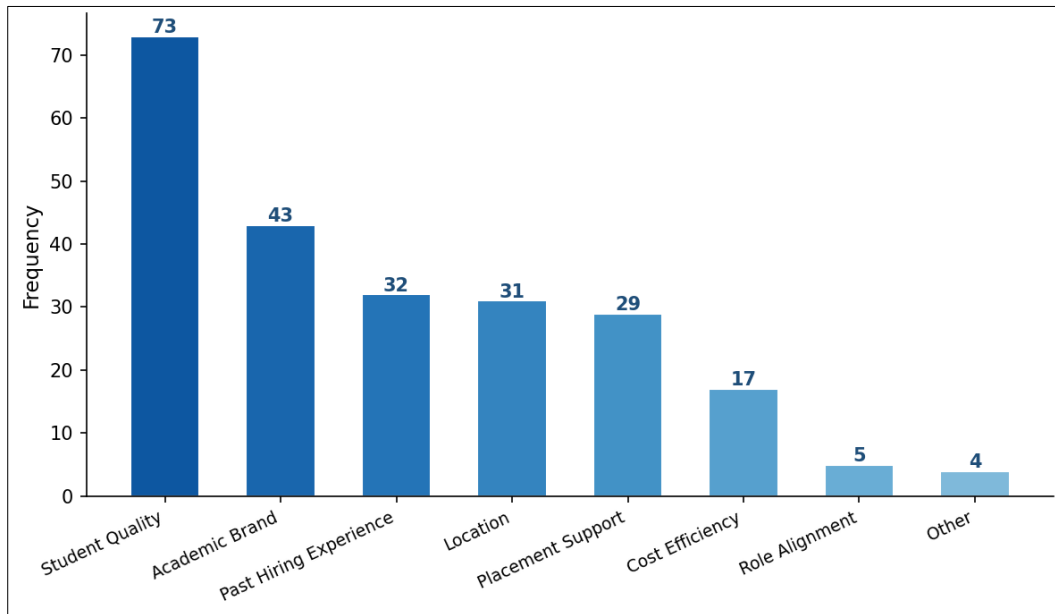


Fig 5: Frequency of Factors Mentioned Among Top Campus Selection Drivers

The respondents were requested to choose their top three factors from a list of factors. Student Quality was the most frequently mentioned factor for every possible combination pattern, suggesting that it is an important factor in the campus selection process. It was found that Academic Brand (institutional prestige) was often co-cited with Student Quality, which is consistent with the signalling theory, as many recruiters see institutional reputation as a proxy signal for the quality of their students. Next most commonly mentioned were Past Hiring Experience and Placement Cell Support (Placement

Coordination), which corroborated results from Likert ratings. Also, prominently mentioned were Location and Cost Efficiency, especially by manufacturing and logistics sector respondents. The absence of a single predominant winning combination indicates a truly multi-criteria decision-making process related to campus selection, meaning that each organisation values the factors based on their talent requirements in the relevant sector and geographical locations.

4.6 Campus Engagement Strategy Preferences

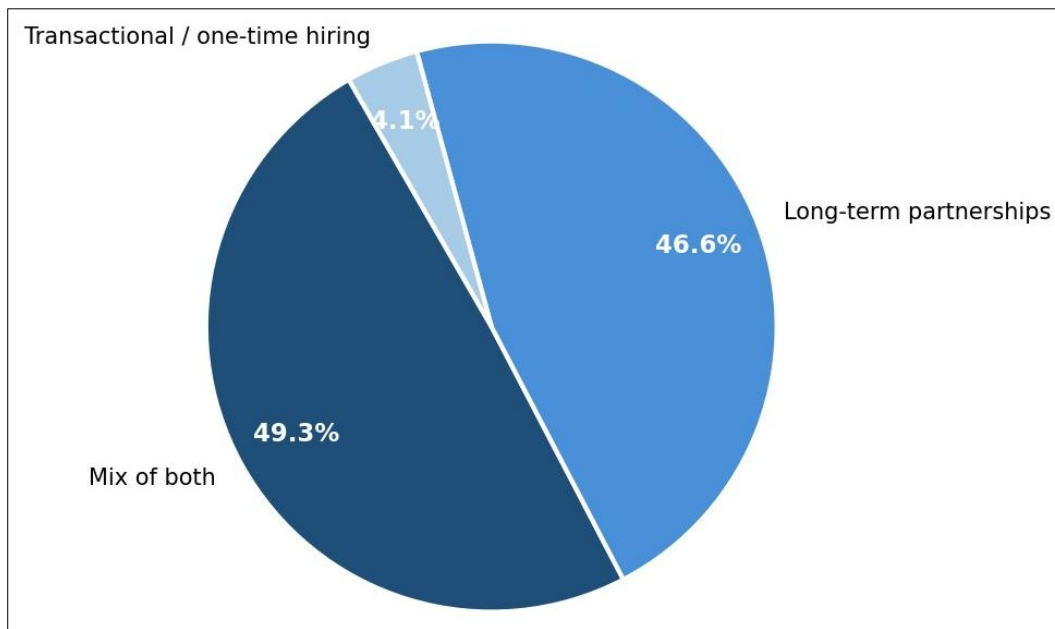


Fig 6: Corporate Campus Hiring Strategy Preferences (N = 73)

Respondents were allowed to describe their preferred method for hiring on campus. 46.6% preferred long-term partnerships, 49.3% preferred a "mix of both" (long-term partnerships with selected institutions and transactional with others), and just 4.1% said their approach was purely transactional. There are significant strategic implications to this distribution: about 96% of respondents favour some type of ongoing institutional relationship in their campus hiring process. This finding has confirmed the path suggested in literature (Bhatnagar, 2014; SHRM India, 2021) [6, 19] of moving towards relational campus

engagement and also challenged the popular notion of a 'transactional' approach to corporate campus hiring. It is a crucial indicator for HEIs that those that invest in the development of long-term Partnerships with corporate partners are likely to find repeat visits, dedicated hiring quotas and co-development opportunities.

4.7 Key Challenges in Campus Hiring

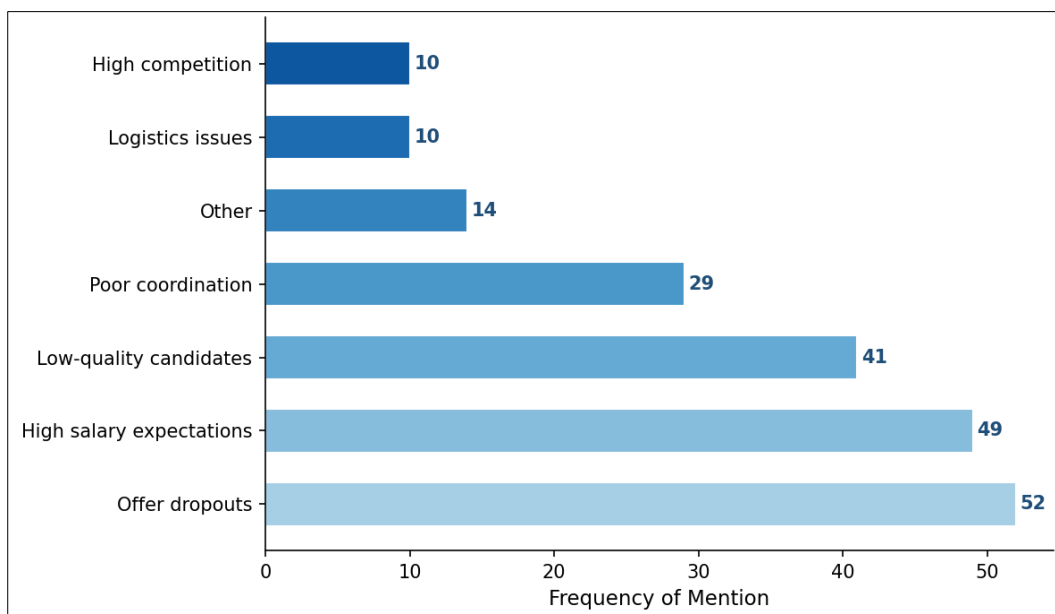


Fig 7: Frequency of Key Challenges Cited in Campus Hiring (Multiple Responses)

Respondents who were asked to select the most important challenges faced in campus recruitment from a multiple-response list had a common list of pain points. Dropouts were the issue that was raised in almost every overlap of challenges. Poor coordination with placement cells and inferior candidates were in second place, and high salary expectations were third. The high competition by recruiters at the same campus was also a concern, especially for companies that visited the Tier 1 and Tier 2 institutions. Logistics was more specific to manufacturing and logistics companies visiting geographically dispersed campuses. The offer dropout phenomenon is of special concern. The campus hiring process is different from

lateral hiring because students are usually inundated with multiple job offers at the same time, and they finalise the selection decision closer to the joining date as compared to lateral hiring. There is an 8-10 month difference between the offer date (usually either September or October of the final year) and the date a student starts (usually June or July after graduating). The relational engagement model is supported by companies reporting a much lower attrition rate when they engage students before enrollment, via a buddy scheme and regular communication.

4.8 Interest in Virtual Campus Hiring

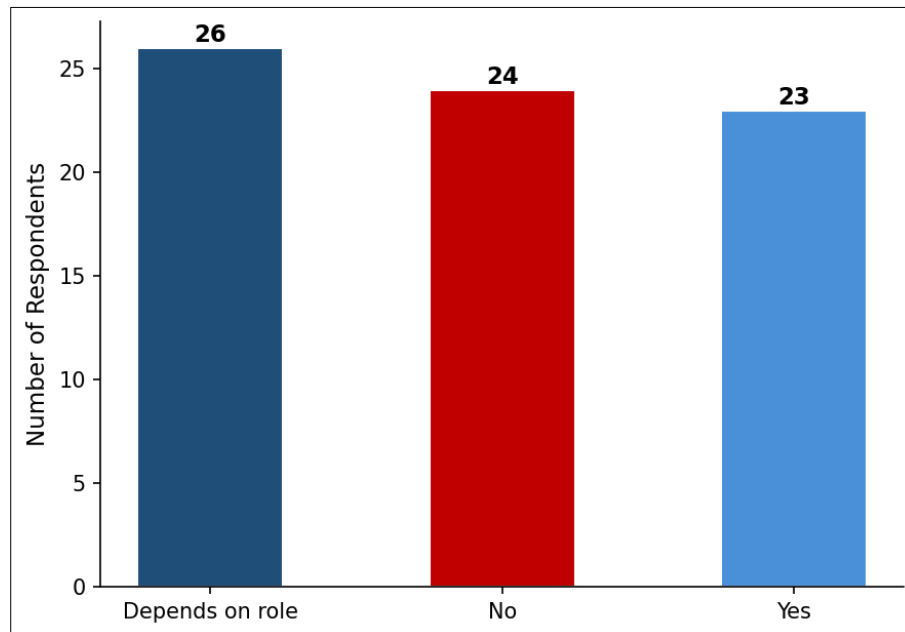


Fig 8: Corporate Interest in Virtual Campus Hiring (N = 73)

The answers to virtual campus hiring tasks show a 3-way split that illustrates the transitional nature of the industry. About one-third (31.5%) of respondents were very open to virtual hiring, 32.9% were very opposed, and 35.6% were in some ways open to virtual and some in-person. The almost equal percentages in these three positions indicate the re-normalisation of in-campus hiring practices in the wake of COVID-19: as the pandemic forced many organisations to accept virtual recruitment, some are returning to in-person visits for jobs that require the assessment of physical presence, cultural fit judgement and domain demonstration. IT, finance, and business analytics are

considered more likely to be filled virtually, while positions in sales, operations, and manufacturing, which need to be done in person and demonstrate interpersonal skills, are less likely. IF the conventional hiring process is still in place for most corporate partners, this finding implies that HEIs that invest in building their virtual engagement infrastructure, including a strong video interview platform, digital pre-placement events and virtual internship features, will have an edge for a specific group of corporate partners.

4.9 Perceived Strategic Importance of Campus Hiring

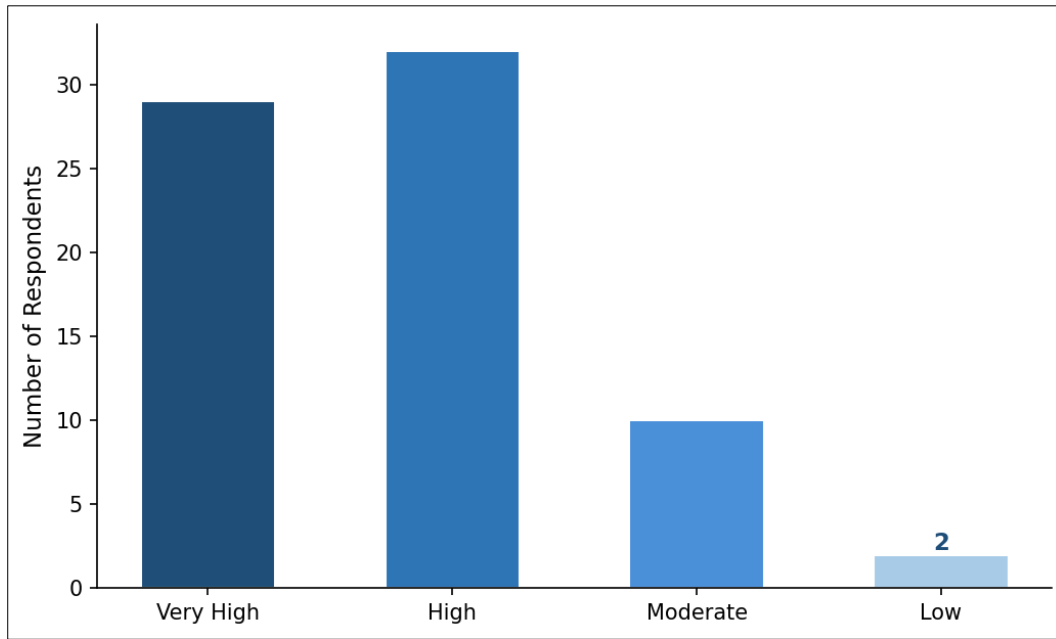


Fig 9: Perceived Importance of Campus Hiring in Corporate Talent Strategy (N = 73)

The overall importance of campus hiring was rated by the respondents on a four-point scale. The results are clear: 43.8% ranked it "High" or "Very High" importance, totaling 83.5% of all. The percentage rating it received for the "Moderate" and "Low" categories were 13.7% and 2.8%, respectively. This discovery is a strong indicator of how campus hiring becomes a main strategic focus for most Indian corporates, rather than just a handy recruitment tool. From IT, healthcare, manufacturing and NBFC, campus hiring is a pivotal part of the talent

acquisition calendar across all industries. This discovery should encourage HEIs to invest in their industry interface and placement infrastructure, to the extent that the corporate world is not only involved in campus placements but is keen to continue doing so as an integral part of their future talent sourcing initiatives.

4.10 Institute Tier and Type Preferences

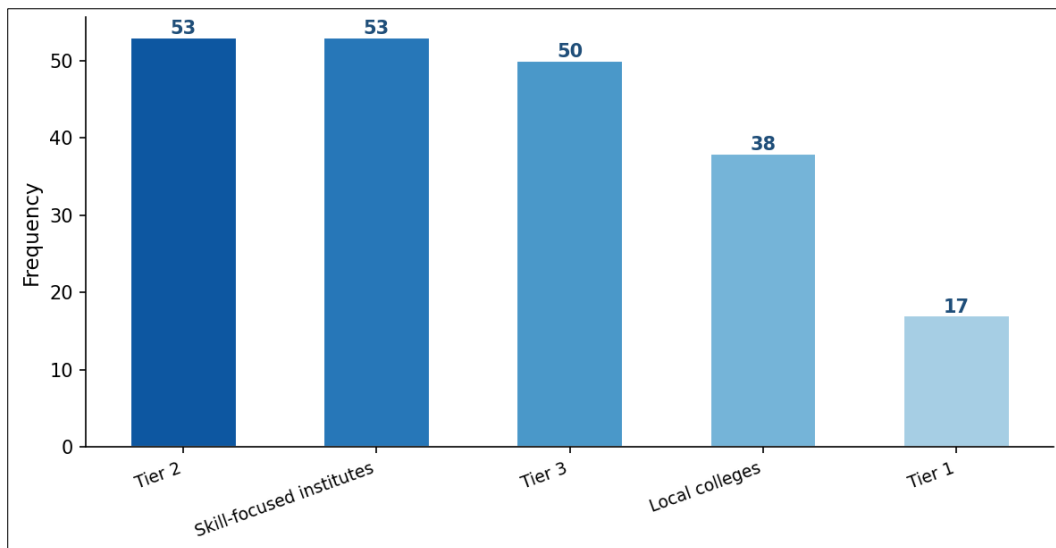


Fig 10: Types of Institutes Preferred by Corporate Recruiters (Multiple Responses)

Participants were asked to check all the categories of institutions that they would like to go to. Preferably, institutions were primarily Tier 2 and Tier 3 institutions, and the skill-based

institutions and local colleges, making up the bulk of the mentions. This is an important result as it contradicts the common assumption that companies hire at Tier 1 universities.

The reality is quite different, however, as the data shows, and is rooted in pragmatic talent sourcing logic, a form of institutionalisation that is quite egalitarian. Most firms understand that the number of hires needed, coupled with the cost-effectiveness and flexibility of Tier 2 and Tier 3 students, makes them an appealing option for mass hiring, especially for employment in sales, operations, customer service and technical support. There was a high preference for skill-focused institutes, which laid more emphasis on practical learning as compared to theoretical learning and were especially preferred by the respondents from manufacturing, logistics and retail sectors. While mostly not as well known nationally, local colleges are preferred because they can provide talent that will agree to work in the desired geographies, which is important for operationally dispersed organisations. IT, consulting and FMCG companies were most likely to select specialised management and leadership positions at elite Tier 1 institutions.

5. FUTURE SCOPE OF STUDY

The current study provides a general profile of a cross-section of corporate campus selection practices. There are some crucial questions of research that still remain unanswered. First, repeated analysis of the same pool of corporate-HEI relationships over three to five placement cycles would indicate if the factors found here would continue to have the same relative weighting over time or if the weighting would change as a result of institutional changes, such as changes in the leadership of placement cells or changes in academic programmes. Secondly, there is a need for sector-specific deep dive studies. Useful overall results, however, mask significant differences across industries. A more fine-grained understanding of the interaction between technical competency benchmarks, hackathon performance, and coding tests with institutional preferences would benefit a focused study in the IT sector alone. Third, the student voice is underrepresented in the campus hiring literature and is a valuable complement to the corporate voice that is explored here. To better understand students' perceptions and reactions to corporate selection signals and how they influence students' institutional selection, a more complete picture of campus hiring dynamics could be provided. Fourth, a comparative study of campus hiring practices in India with those in other emerging economies like Vietnam, Indonesia or Brazil could yield insights into whether the factors identified here are culturally and structurally unique to the education-industry interface in India or if they are a result of a general pattern across the globe. The new dynamics that are shaping campus selection with the help of Artificial Intelligence and HR technology, such as predictive analytics for campus evaluation, aptitude tests powered by AI and machine learning in the screening process, should be explored as it becomes an integral part of the recruitment process for companies. Last but not least, the increasing rate of offer dropouts and post-offer attrition is an area of study that warrants a special study to investigate the psychological, social, and economic causes of the offer reneges as well as the strategies that can best reduce the reneges.

6. CONCLUSION

This study has studied the various factors that are taken into account by corporate HR professionals while choosing the HEIs for campus placement drives in a systematic way. The research is based on empirical data from 73 professionals in eleven industries and provides a clear, evidence-based picture of the calculus of choosing a campus, which drives Indian corporate recruiting. The results are consistent and point toward the following generalisations across industries. Attractiveness is built on two pillars: student quality and employability – no institution can be attractive if it produces poor quality learners and/or industry-unready graduates. Many institutions overlook placement cell coordination as an operational factor that can make or break their success. Path dependencies are powerful as a result of past hiring experiences, giving an advantage to the institutions already in the corporate network, so that the initial impressions and early relationship quality become disproportionately important for newer or emerging institutions. The majority of corporates prefer a long-term partnership model with the campus that is long-term, and those institutions that proactively provide sustained engagement in the campus industry interface via internships, curriculum co-design and live project engagements are likely to have a great competitive advantage in securing and retaining corporate partners. These issues of offer dropouts, salary mismatch and quality of candidates at non-elite institutions are very structural in nature, and it will take a coordinated industry-academy response to overcome them. These include improved communication between employers and employees at the pre-placement level, internship-to-hire programmes to minimise uncertainty, and curriculum reform aligned with industry needs to address skill gaps between school and work. The strategic focus for HEIs is strong investment in the quality of graduates, professionalism of placement processes, professionalising industry links as much as academic programmes and ensuring that your students are not only subject specialists, but ready to put in the hard work, adaptability, and communication skills that employers consistently find to be the key skill sets. The findings speak volumes for the HR leaders in corporate organisations to consider campus recruitment as a long-term investment process, as opposed to a recruitment exercise, and also to reach out to a wide swath of India's higher education system, including non-elite institutions, to access the vast potential pool of talent that is far from being underestimated.

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