Employer Branding an HR Tool for Talent Acquisition

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ABSTRACT

Attracting, recruiting and selecting is the traditional and basic process of hiring potential employees within the companies. But the method of attracting the potential candidates or for being the employer of choice in context of job seekers has changed over the period of time. The idea of introducing employer brand reflects the image of the organisation and employer branding indicates developing the unique and different practices that attract new and right talent towards the company. As a result of intensified global competition and liberalisation the need for right skilled employees and war of talent has escalated at a very fast rate in a very short period of time. Hence, study of employer branding practices has become significantly important for every employer of an organisation. The paper aims to study the concept of employer branding, the practices that can be adopted by the organisation, and the psychological factors influencing these practices. This study will be very useful for HR professionals, potential employers and new researchers.

Keywords: Employer branding practices; Employee perception; Psychological factors; Talent acquisition.

1.0 Introduction

The current business scenario is marked with highly competitive global environment, rapid technological changes and rapid need for vast variety of competency requirements which makes it challenging for the organisations to survive and to bring success at its doorstep. Organisations need to wings spread its concept from product marketing to human resource management at much faster pace than ever before, today's organisations face significant challenges in attracting right talent to the company and

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nurturing the existent skills in the company. Employer branding is one of the vital strategies that help organisations to build strong employee value proposition through internal and external employer branding and to manage talent acquisition in a best possible way.

To build a strong employer brand, organisations must continue to engage with those factors, and present their brand image in a way that will attract people with the right skills and competencies. Productively utilise, retain and inspire their high calibre workforce and thus supporting its talent management by developing a competitive advantage in "war of talent". Employer branding is defined as a long-term commitment to becoming the "employer of choice" and the use of branding principles and HR practises to advertise the organisation to new and current employees (Bali & Dixit, 2016).

2.0 Literature Review

In the current competitive world, where employment is the biggest challenge for every individual, not every job seeking person wants to step into your organisation, companies need to struggle to appeal, recruit, retain and motivate the greatest possible human ability. Therefore, the organisations have to build their brand secure its image and try the best strategies to keep the reputation high as possible to survive the talent crunch.

Brands are the most valuable intangible assets that company possess and as a result brand management is the major activity the firm need to focus on. Although in corporate brand firms major focus is developing their product brand which delivers a promise about its product or services to its existing as well as potential customers (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

On the other side, the employer can be seen as a brand with which the employee develops a close relationship (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Employer brand concept adds value in an organisation with respect to internal marketing, external marketing, corporate culture, and corporate reputation, these intangible assets make the important relationship between the corporation and its employees. In order for the employee to perform well and for the corporation to perform well, employees need to be aware, have positive attitudes towards the brand, trust that the 'brand' will support them, and demonstrate loyalty. (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

2.1 Employer branding as a concept
The notion of 'employer branding' was first introduced by Ambler and Barrow in the domain of human resource management and merging the two different concepts of

brand marketing and recruitment into a single conceptual area. They saw the opportunity to attract talents to the organisation by applying the marketing techniques to the process of recruitment. According to them, "It is a combination of functional, economic, and psychological benefits offered by work and associated with the employer." (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

On the other hand, Sullivan defines employer branding as a multi-dimensional construct encompassing current and potential employees as well as stakeholders (O'Sullivan, 2004). According to Backhaus and Tikoo, "The process of creating a distinctive and unique employer identity and concept for the firm that distinguishes it from competitors is known as employer branding" (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). According to the Conference Board, "The employer brand establishes the firm's identification as an employer." It simply identifies the organisation as an employer, including its value system, policies, and behaviours, with the goal of attracting, keeping, and motivating current and potential employees. (Engaging Employees Through Your Brand | The Conference Board, n.d.)

These definitions indicate that employer branding is a continuous process that need to go on, even after the recruitment process is completed. Employer branding is an HR tool which uses the concept of branding as its main feature and help the firm in achieving superior talent acquisition than rest of the competitors on verge of war for talent.

Following conceptualising the employer branding, classifying the employer branding is next big hurdle that need to be cross over. There have been several attempts to classify the employer branding as internal employer branding and external employer branding.

Internal employer branding is based on the employer-employee employment relationship exchange, in which the employer delivers material and socioeconomic rewards in exchange for the employee's loyalty and efforts (Bali & Dixit, 2016). Employer branding influences employee impressions of the organisation's identity and culture, resulting in employee brand loyalty and, eventually, staff productivity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

External branding is the most active area of employer branding for the purpose of employee recruitment. Sullivan addressed employer branding efforts as the tool that creates the perception of external employer branding (O'Sullivan, 2004).

The employee value proposition (EVP) is at the heart of employer branding. Employer branding is built on the foundation of effective employer brands, which are apparent in an organisation's actions and behaviours and evoke both potential and current employees through affective and practical benefits. (Bali & Dixit, 2016). It is influenced

by the principles, society, initiative, environment, and talent and incentive programmes of the firm. Internally and publicly, employment branding promotes a plausible understanding of what makes a company unique and appealing as an employer (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

2.2 Impact of employer branding on talent acquisition

The ultimate aim of employer branding is to maintain they key talent in an organisation. From the point of view of job seekers, in the initial stage of the decision-making process the information about the organisation is limited. Therefore, initial application decisions are heavily based on the general impressions of the attractiveness of the organisation (Trank *et al.*, 2002). Any material that job searchers examine contributes to their impressions of the employer organisation and can serve as indicator of what it's like to work there (Turban *et al.*, 1998). As a result, firms must make extra steps to retain their image as an appealing organisation and employer in the eyes of potential employees. To make it easier to attract fresh talent and more talent to the firm, more options for selecting the best talent required by the organisation will be available, which is referred to as talent acquisition. In addition to this, in order to recruit, engage, and retain employees, employer branding is an effective tool (Barrow & Mosley, n.d.).

It gives management a consistent framework for simplifying and focusing goals, increasing efficiency, and improving recruitment, retention, and commitment. (Keefe, 2007). Constant delivery of the brand promises leads to trust and loyalty ensuring a steady supply of applicants. From the perspective of the employees, belonging to a company with a good employer brand boosts their self-esteem and strengthens their organisational affiliation. (Lievens *et al.*, 2007). It attracts the proper kind of individuals who fits in the company's culture while also assuring prospective employees of the work experience they expect.(Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2008).

The summarising of all these definitions is rightly summed by Fernon, "A successful employer brand can produce organisational success by attracting and retaining the right talent, providing an environment in which employees embrace the brand, increasing organisational performance in the key areas of recruitment, retention, and engagement; and differentiating employers from other organisations to create a competitive edge." (Maximising the Power of the Employer Brand | WARC, n.d.).

2.3 Process of building employer branding

Employer in a firm creates employer branding through existing employees and potential candidates, this is developed with the help of internal and external employer branding respectively. In addition to this, potential candidates also receive a strong

employer brand with the help of employee value proposition, which act as a foundation for internal branding. The impact of strong employer brand results in attracting new talent towards the organisation, which provides organisation to recruit the candidate having the right skills and abilities. But the functioning of employer branding is not restricted up to recruitment, the post recruitment efforts require constant delivery of value proposition which helps in employee retention & engagement, employee satisfaction and employee motivation.

Employer branding allows a company to project a desirable brand image in the eyes of potential and current employees. Workers who have absorbed the organisation's desired brand image or employer image reflect that image to external potential employees (Bali & Dixit, 2016).

2.4 Psychological contract: Factor influencing employer branding

A second foundation for employer branding is the psychological contract theory and its impact on the employee-organisational relationship. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Employer branding has also been defined as the creation of a psychological contract between employees and the business that grows and solidifies over time as the employment relationship between the two develops. (Bali & Dixit, 2016). But in the case of employee and organisation relationship there are some obligations and conflicts that can be better understood with the help of the psychological contract. Backhaus and Tikoo argue that organisational culture and employer brand has the power to create a psychological contract between the employer and employee (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). These employees' perception towards the employers creates a long- term commitment towards the organisation by being "employer of choice". Employer brand is defined as 'creating the perception of a fantastic place to work in the minds of potential labour market' and 'developing an image in the minds of potential labour market' (Ewing *et al.*, 2002).

According to Schein (1965), psychological contract is the expectation every time operating in the organisations among all its members in the form of working hours, salary, compensation, flexibility, etc. and these variables have high chances to change with respect to time and circumstances (Organizational Psychology (1980 Edition) | Open Library, n.d.). This psychological contract represents a dynamic process that unfolds gradually from pre-employment onwards and throughout the different stages of employment and is termed as 'anticipatory psychological contract' (Ruchika & Prasad, 2019).

After going through the literature review, it has been summed as the study on employer branding need to be revised regularly, as employer branding is the most

dynamic concept in the scope of HR for any organisation. The research gap has been analysed that there is somewhere untapped relation that exists between psychological factors and values that influence employees for selecting employer of choice. The direct relationship between employee's perception and experience of the employer brand needs to be fulfilled. There is a need to identify some of the reliable factors of psychological contract that can help a firm to focus on major aspects to develop strong employer brand and talent acquisition.

3.0 Research Objectives

* To understand the factors influencing employer branding practices that help in increasing talent acquisition.
* To study the impact of psychological factors influencing employer branding practices on building employee's perception for before applying in a company.
* To identify the key reliable sources of psychological factor which has major impact on employee perception and further talent acquisition.
* To understand the association between respondent's age and their employment status with respect to perception towards psychological factors for employer branding practices for employer of choice.

4.0 Research Questions

* Which factors are important in influencing employer branding practices that helps in increasing talent acquisition in the company?
* Does psychological factor influence employer branding practices which have an impact on building strong employee perception?
* What are the key reliable sources of psychological factor which has a major impact on employee perception and talent acquisition?
* Is there any association between age and employment status with respect to the perception towards psychological factors for employer branding practices for employer of choice?

5.0 Research Methodology

The present research study is quantitative in nature and research design is descriptive research design. The study majorly focused on determining the impact of psychological factors on employer branding on the minds of the potential employees who are deciding to join in the organisation.

The primary data was acquired from potential employees, and they were given a standardised questionnaire to fill out. A 5-point Likert scale was used to record the responses. The sample method was convenience sampling, and the kind of sampling was non-probability sampling. A sample size of 116 potential employees has duly filled the questionnaire which has been used for data analysis. The secondary data for one of the objectives was collected through journals, articles, books, etc.

The questionnaire has been divided into 3 parts. Part A of the questionnaire contains 3 items that are demographic questions, which tells about who our respondents are. Part B of the questionnaire consists of 20 questions, which falls under psychological factors influencing employer branding practices. Lastly, Part C of the questionnaire has 2 questions that ask about respondent's perception towards psychological employer branding practices.

6.0 Analysis and Interpretation

6.1 Profile of the respondents

Table 1 represents the profile of the respondents. It depicts that the research is studied on potential employees majorly categorised into 3 factors; current employment status, gender, and age.

Table 1: Statistics

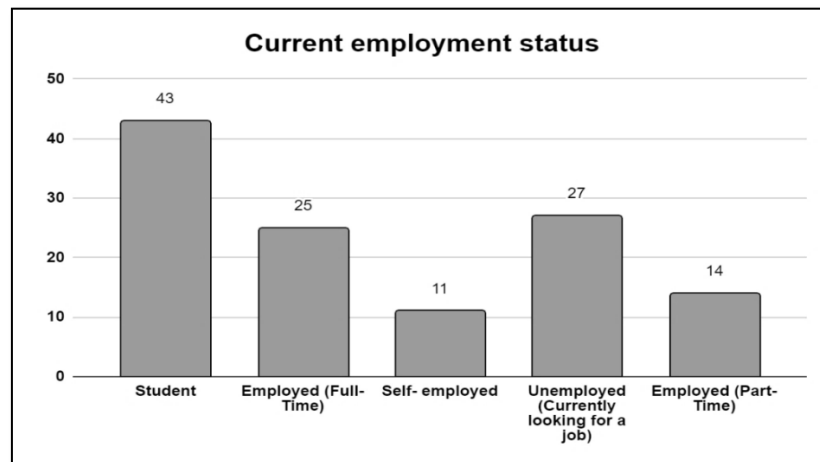|		Current employment status	Gender	Age
N	**Valid**	116	116	116
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		2.87	1.48	2.03
Median		3.00	1.00	2.00
Mode		3	1	2
Variance		1.592	.252	.547

Source: Primary survey

The Figure 1 represents the age of the respondents in the form of pie chart. Around 27.5 percent of the respondents were between 18 to 23 years of age, around 45 percent of the respondents were between 24 to 28 years of age and rest 27.5 percent of the respondents were of the age of 29 years and above.

Figure 1: Pie Chart Representation of Age
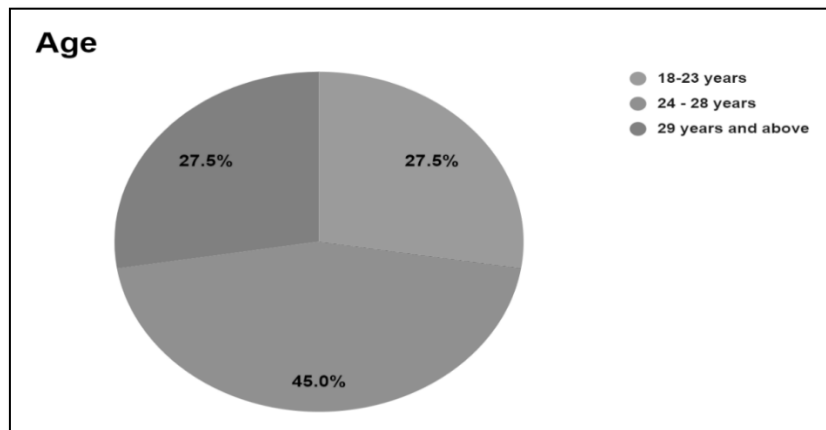
Source: Primary survey

Figure 2: Bar Graph Representation of Current Employment Status

Source: Primary survey

The Figure 2 represents the current employment status of the respondents in the form of bar graph. Around 43 of the respondents are students which ultimately becomes the primary foundation for employer branding. Followed by 27 of the respondents are unemployed and which are currently looking for a job, which become the secondary foundation for the research study. Subsequently, 25 of the respondents are employed for

full-time, 14 of the respondents are employer for part-time and 11 of the respondents are self-employed.

The gender of the respondents is depicted in Figure 3 as a bar graph. There are around 62 men and 58 women among the respondents.

Figure 3: Bar Graph Representation of Gender
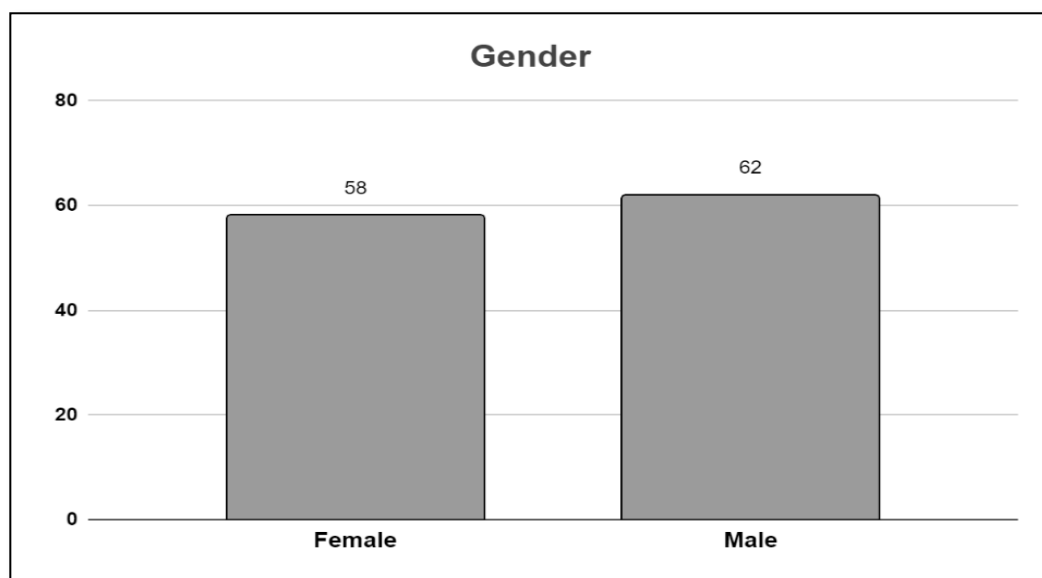
Source: Primary survey

6.2 Descriptive analysis of individual questions

From Tables 2 and 3, it can be inferred that before applying for a job in a company, potential employees perceive information about majorly (above mean average of 4.29) on these following psychological factors:

Employee experience, employee recognition, employee expectations met or not met, employee health & well-being, trust & respect, freedom of employee opinion, continuous learning, self - growth opportunities, collaborative decision making, exciting work environment, transparency, and fairness.

On the other hand, respondents prefer companies where employers are actively involved in developing above psychological employer branding practices to get them attracted towards the company and psychological factors are the deciding factors for potential employees to apply in the company.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Employer Branding Practices Through Psychological Factors.

Descriptive Statistics			
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Corporate image of the company	116	3.74	.886
Employee experience	116	**4.66**	.604
Employee recognition	116	**4.66**	.561
Employee expectations met or not met	116	**4.67**	.540
Employee health & well-being	116	**4.76**	.504
Future self-image	116	3.78	.914
Proud as an employee	116	3.78	.902
Trust & Respect	116	**4.40**	.671
Belongingness with the workplace	116	**4.73**	.500
Self – confidence	116	3.47	.964
Freedom of employee opinion	116	**4.83**	.423
Employee autonomy	116	4.23	.738
Continuous learning	116	**4.56**	.608
Self - growth opportunities	116	**4.61**	.556
Collaborative decision making	116	**4.30**	.675
Happy and enjoying work culture	116	4.01	.860
Exciting work environment	116	**4.34**	.781
Innovative & Creative employer	116	4.19	.684
Transparency & fairness	116	**4.36**	.762
Ethical & moral responsibility	116	3.91	.928
Valid N (listwise)	116		

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of Employee Perception

Descriptive Statistics				
	N	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**Variance**
I prefer companies, where employers are actively involved in developing above practices to get them attracted towards the company	116	1.64	.665	.442
In my opinion, psychological factors like motivation, learning, perception and belief are deciding factors for potential employees to apply in the company	116	1.50	.626	.391
Valid N (listwise)	116			

6.3 Reliability test

The degree of consistency with which an instrument measures the attribute it is designed to assess is the instrument's dependability. The lower the fluctuation in repeated measurements of an attribute, the more reliable is the instrument. A measuring tool's reliability might be defined as its stability, consistency, or dependability. The degree to which an instrument measures what it is designed to measure is referred to as validity.

The reliability test was done for two sets of items in the questionnaire in order to examine the reliability and validity of the research instrument. Cronbach's alpha is 0.857, according to Table 4 above. It demonstrates the validity of the scale of psychological employer branding methods.

Subsequently, Table 5 tells us that Cronbach's alpha is 0.837. It shows the scale of employee perception is reliable.

Table 4: Reliability for Psychological Employer Branding Practices

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.857	.864	20

Table 5: Reliability for Employee Perception

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.837	.863	2

6.4 Hypothesis testing

6.4.1 Hypothesis 1

Null Hypothesis (H0) = There is no significant impact of psychological factors on the employee perception towards talent acquisition.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1) = There is a significant impact of psychological factors on the employee perception towards talent acquisition.

There was independence of residues, as assessed by a Durbin- Watson statistics of 1.722. The value is suitable for regression test (Table 6).

Table 6: Model Summary[b]

odel	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.775[a]	.601	.598	.552	1.722
a. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological factors					
b. Dependent Variable: Employee perception					

6.4.1.1 Regression analysis

R is multiple correlation coefficient, here in simple regression correlation. R is simply Pearson correlation coefficient between the dependent variable and independent variable. It measures the strength of association between the two variable (perception and psychological factor) R = 0.755, which indicates a strong correlation.

R square represents the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by our independent variable. R square = 0.601, which in percentage = 60.1 percent. This value represents the percentage of variance in the dependent variable employee perception that can be explained by the independent variable psychological employer branding practices for talent acquisition. Adjusted R square is the percentage of variation explained by the model in the population. It corrects positive bias to provide a value that would be expected in the population. Adjusted R square = 0.598, which as a percentage = 59.8 percent.

Graph 4: Regression Standardized Residual
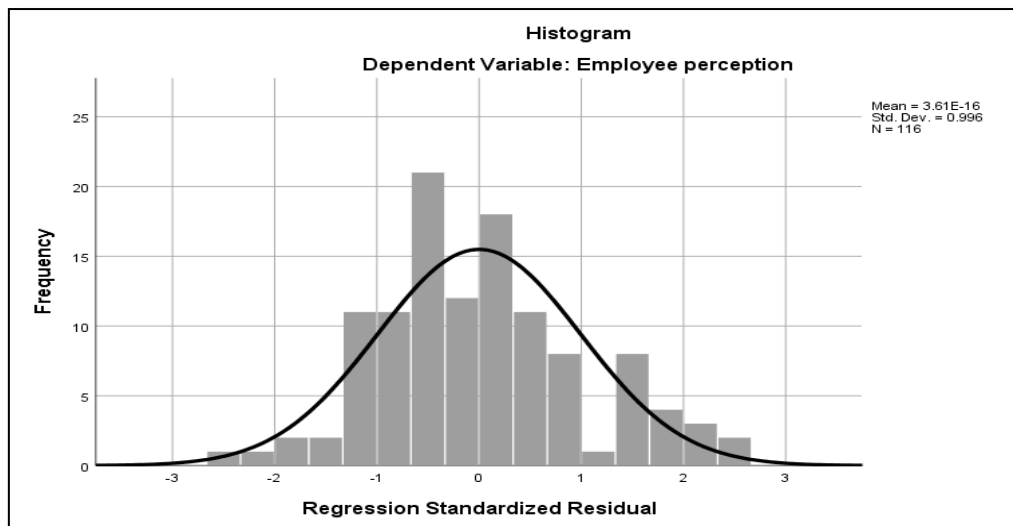
At adjusted R square, 59.8 percent is less than the value of R square, which is 60.1 percent, because it corrects for the positive bias in order to provide a value that you would expect in the population. Employee perception towards talent acquisition accounted for 60.1 percent of the variation in psychological factors with adjusted R square = 59.8 percent, a medium size effect according to Cohen (1988).

Residuals were normally distributed as assessed by visual inspection of a normal probability plot (Figure 4).

6.4.1.2 ANOVA test

The significance level is 0.001 which is less than 0.05. Hence null hypothesis is rejected and accept the alternate hypothesis. The null hypothesis, there is no significant impact of psychological factors on the employee perception towards talent acquisition is rejected. Therefore, we can confirm that there is a significant impact of psychological factors on the employee perception towards talent acquisition (Table 7).

Table 7: ANOVA[a]

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	52.325	1	52.325	171.817	.000[b]
	Residual	34.718	114	.305		
	Total	87.043	115			
a. Dependent Variable: Employee perception						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Psychological factors						

6.4.1.3 Normality test

Table 8 shows that the Shapiro-Wilk significance values are less than critical value of 0.05, which tells that the data is not normal. Hence, we need to apply chi-square test for comparing two variables.

Table 8: Tests of Normality

	Current employment status	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Employee perception	Employed (Full- Time)	.193	25	.018	.873	25	.005
	Employed (Part- Time)	.218	14	.070	.769	14	.002
	Student	.204	39	.000	.814	39	.000
	Unemployed (Currently looking for a job)	.219	27	.002	.864	27	.002
	Self- employed	.292	11	.009	.779	11	.005
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

Table 9 shows that the Shapiro-Wilk significance values are less than critical value of 0.05, which tells that the data is not normal. Hence, we need to apply chi-square test for comparing two variables.

Table 9: Tests of Normality

	Age	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Employee perception	18 - 23 years	.199	30	.004	.826	30	.000
	24 - 28 years	.231	53	.000	.831	53	.000
	29 years and above	.178	33	.009	.885	33	.002
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction							

6.4.2 Hypothesis 2

Null Hypothesis (H0) = There is no association between respondent's age and their perception towards psychological employer branding practices for choice of employer.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1) = There is an association between respondent's age and their perception towards psychological employer branding practices for choice of employer.

Table 10: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.037[a]	14	.524
Likelihood Ratio	15.464	14	.347
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.130	1	.288
N of Valid Cases	116		
a. 15 cells (62.5 percent) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .26.			

The significance value = 0.524 which is greater than 0.05 (Table 10). Hence, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and cannot accept the alternate hypothesis.

Therefore, we can say that there is no association between age of the individual and their perception towards psychological employer branding practices for choice of employer.

6.4.3 Hypothesis 3

Null Hypothesis (H0) = There is no association between respondent's employment status of and their perception towards psychological employer branding practices for choice of employer.

Alternate Hypothesis (H1) = There is an association between respondent's employment status of and their perception towards psychological employer branding practices for choice of employer.

Table 11: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	39.190[a]	28	.078
Likelihood Ratio	39.396	28	.075
Linear-by-Linear Association	.003	1	.954
N of Valid Cases	116		
a. 30 cells (75.0 percent) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .09.			

The significance value = 0.078 which is greater than 0.05 (Table 11). Hence, we fail to reject the null hypothesis and cannot accept the alternate hypothesis.

Therefore, we can say that there is no association between employment status of the individual and their perception towards psychological employer branding practices for choice of employer.

7.0 Findings and Discussions

The key findings of the study indicate that employer branding practices influencing perception for attracting potential employees through psychological factors are strongly correlated, which means that both the variables are highly dependent on each other. Change in any one variable leads to change in another variable in the same aspect. Therefore, we can say that adapting psychological employer branding practices by employers in a company can work as an effective tool at the time of talent acquisition.

Furthermore, the study discussed that age of the respondents and their employment status are not significantly associated with their perception of psychological employer branding practices before applying for a job in a company. As a result, the psychological factors described in the study invariably develop a strong perception towards the company for choice of an employer.

8.0 Recommendations

The factors influencing employer branding practices are dynamic in nature, with change in competitive environment these factors will also vary. Thus, to further improve in talent acquisition, researchers should study and find new factors that influence employer branding practices.

Earlier studies found that functional factors directly influence employer branding in the long run and further talent acquisition. But with the change in time, the assumption states that psychological factors play an effective role in influencing employee perception for choice of an employer.

Furthermore, identifying the key sources through which employers can be able to build strong employer brand is crucial to attract more and the right talent pool to the company. Also, the need to find the relation between perception and other demographic factors like employee's gender, age, marital status, employment status, etc. affecting the factors influencing employer brand are equally important for generating better talent acquisition.

9.0 Conclusion

In order to create an employer brand that is effective for attracting and hiring talent, organisations should understand factors that significantly affect how employees perceive themselves and their choice of employer.

This study has shown that employers can focus more on the psychological factors which has strong impact on employee's perception before applying for a job in a company. Also, the study tells us those factors which need to be focussed more, so that the company can be able to attract more and right talent for itself. This tends to be in contrast with available literature suggesting that the employee perception varies with the individual age group. However, we have found that there is no significant difference between individual's age and their perception as well as individual's current employment status and their perception towards employer branding practices for selecting the employer of their choice.

It is anticipated that the application of the findings of this study can be of considerable benefit to company's HRM professionals in building strong employer brand for the company for talent acquisition, followed by employee expectation, employee experience, and employee retention.

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