

# **Land-Based Employment Agencies as Modern Brokers: A Study on the Recruitment Strategies for Overseas Filipino Workers**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study is focused on identifying the recruitment practices of land-based employment agencies in the Philippines. It employed a qualitative research design, particularly the case study approach. Data collection techniques include key-informant interviews and in-depth interviews, with a total of 30 participants selected through chain referral sampling. Results showed three general types of recruitment strategies, namely: (1) Applicant-initiated recruitment strategy; (2) Employment agency-initiated recruitment strategy; and (3) Government-initiated recruitment strategy. For the applicant-initiated recruitment strategy, walk-in was the only identified recruitment practice. For the employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies, the common recruitment practices were computer-mediated recruitment, print-related recruitment, location-based recruitment, and referral-dependent recruitment. Lastly, for the government-initiated recruitment strategy, job fair was the common recruitment practice. The best utilized and least effective methods of recruitment by employment agencies for each worker category recruited were identified and discussed.

Keywords: labor migration, brokerage, recruitment strategies, Overseas Filipino Workers, employment agencies

## **INTRODUCTION**

Land-based employment agencies are private agencies which are licensed by the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA). It is responsible for the canvassing and enlisting of contract, and transporting, utilizing, hiring, and procuring of workers. It is also in-charge of referring, contract servicing, advertising, and promising for employment abroad (POEA, 2016). Such duties and responsibilities are solely granted by the Philippine government via POEA to private employment agencies in order for the latter to help the former in ensuring that all deployed Filipino workers are legally documented, and are situated in humane working and living conditions abroad. Since employment agencies are tasked by the government to be responsible in handling OFWs, the lives of these workers rely heavily on how their respective employment agencies are able to handle them at every step of each stage of the labor migration process.

However, land-based employment agencies are often faced with challenges. One of the most evident issues encountered by them is the presence of illegal operators (Katigbak, 2014; Aurelio, 2016; Berondo, 2006). Illegal operators or illegal recruiters are the non-licensee or the non-holders of authority that, in any manner, canvass, enlist, contract, transport, utilize, hire, or procure workers, or those that refer or promise for employment abroad whether for profit or not (POEA, 2016). An example of this is the case of the owners and staff of two travel agencies that allegedly victimized over 200 Filipino workers by promising jobs in Australia, New Zealand, Germany, and Japan in exchange for PHP. 70,000.00 to PHP. 90,000.00 each (Takumi, 2016).

The said news is an example of how land-based employment agencies are put in a disadvantageous position by illegal operators. Aside from competing with legitimate land-based employment agencies in the recruitment of potential workers, these illegal operators discourage potential workers to apply and work abroad since their illegal activities, such as fraud and extortion, make potential applicants afraid of being victimized by them. On the other hand, applicants are negatively affected by the presence of illegal operators since these applicants often fall prey to the modus of illegal operators. Thus, it can be said that both employment agencies and workers are vulnerable victims of illegal operators.

However, the presence of illegal operators within the industry is hard to combat or even regulate. The POEA Administrator Hans Leo Cacdac even mentioned in the said news that *“it will never get to a point where we can say there is no illegal recruitment and therefore there is no need to intensify our [POEA] operations and campaign”* (Takumi, 2016). Hence, given that the presence of illegal operators within the industry is inevitable, then land-based employment agencies should be more strategic in recruiting potential migrant workers. Therefore, the student-researcher deemed it necessary to study the different recruitment strategies conducted by land-based employment agencies in the Philippines to combat the challenge of illegal operators.

At the end of the study, different recruitment strategies conducted by employment agencies in the Philippines were identified. Based on the results of the study, the best utilized and least effective methods of recruitment by employment agencies for each worker category recruited were identified.

## **METHODS**

The study aimed to explore the different recruitment strategies conducted by land-based employment agencies on different worker categories; therefore, a qualitative research method was used, particularly a case study approach. It enabled the researcher to set the study's parameters: its covered geographical area and the number of participants involved.

A total of 30 participants were interviewed. These participants included company directors, members of the board, operations managers, recruitment officers, liaison officers, and other employees of land-based employment agencies. The participants were limited to those holding the aforesaid positions because they are deemed as most knowledgeable of the recruitment strategies conducted by their representative agencies. To ascertain further that the participants have grounded understanding of the recruitment strategies of their respective agencies, the population of the participants was limited to those who were affiliated with their current agencies for at least a year during the conduct of the study.

The participants were identified through snowball or chain referral sampling. Chain referral sampling was utilized given the difficulty of obtaining consent from potential participants without the referral of others who were considered as insiders of the industry.

## RESULTS

Three recruitment strategies were found in the study, namely the: (1) applicant-initiated recruitment strategy; (2) employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies; and, (3) government-initiated recruitment strategy.

### **Applicant-initiated Recruitment Strategy**

Applicant-initiated recruitment strategy is a type of recruitment strategy where the initiative to search and apply for jobs abroad is dependent on the applicants instead of the employment agencies or the POEA. Walk-in is the only identified type of applicant-initiated recruitment strategy in the study.

**Walk-in.** This term is used by employment agencies to describe the process where their potential applicants would literally walk into their respective offices to either inquire or apply for possible job positions available.

The following are the types of walk-in applicants:

**Blind walk-ins.** These applicants do not have any connections with the agency. Often, they are first-timers or those who never had any prior experiences working outside the Philippines. Blind walk-ins enter a given employment agency to be oriented about the basics of working abroad such as employment procedures, requirements, and salaries of deployed workers.

**Hoppers.** Similar to blind walk-ins, these applicants do not have any connections with the agency. Hoppers are walk-in applicants whose main objective is to scout on

different employment agencies. Their main target is to compare the varying salaries and benefits offered by employment agencies on specific positions they aim to apply for. Others compare and prioritize the length and intricacy of documentation processing over salaries and benefits. These hoppers tend to hop around different employment agencies to submit their resumes and would only stop once they receive their employment contracts.

*Job match-seekers.* These are often skilled, highly-skilled, or professional workers who are having a hard-time searching for job positions that fit them. Hence, they walk-in on different employment agencies hoping that they could find job offers that match their skills. However, there are instances when walk-in applicants are mismatched with the existing job orders of the employment agencies they have walked-in to. According to one participant, some of their walk-ins search for positions that they do not offer or had previously offered but are no longer available.

*Double dippers.* These are applicants who repeat their transactions with a given agency. Many double dipper applicants are those who had initially submitted their requirements online, but resubmit their applications personally to reassure themselves that such documents were received by employment agencies properly.

*Conditional applicants.* Walk-ins who are searching for employment agencies that are willing to redeem their passports from their previous agencies by shouldering their financial liabilities are called conditional applicants. For example, one applicant had her passports withheld by a previous agency because of debts and other liabilities. Often, these conditions happened due to last-minute back-outs or cases of unfinished contracts. The conditional applicants would walk-in and approach other employment agencies in hopes of finding allies in order to redeem their documents or solve the difficult conditions surrounding their would-be employment.

*Bait applicants.* These are those who are used by external organizations to entrap suspected employment agencies. There are two ways by which bait applicants are being used: (a) syndicates fund their applications then have them complain in the POEA or other labor-related government agencies to profit from employment agencies; and (b) NBI officers use them as undercover applicants so they could raid employment agencies that are suspected of illegal recruitment.

*Fraudulent applicants.* These are usually those who have already schemed for ways in order to profit from employment agencies without working abroad in their prior engagements with employment agencies. In some cases, some of them would file complaints against their employment agencies even prior to their departure hoping that these agencies would offer them financial assistance as settlement to avoid any cases filed by these fraudulent applicants against them. In other cases, the fraudulent applicants would consummate their applications and even spend days, weeks, or even months abroad before filing their bogus complaints against their employment agencies

and demand for their repatriation and due compensations, to which the employment agencies would just settle with in order to avoid the inconveniences of court procedures.

### **Employment Agency-initiated Recruitment Strategies**

The second recruitment strategy found in the study is the employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies. These are strategies initiated by employment agencies to attract more applicants and to strengthen their recruitments. There are four categories of employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies, namely the: (1) computer-mediated recruitment, (2) print-related recruitment, (3) location-based recruitment, and (4) referral-dependent recruitment.

***Computer-mediated recruitment (CMR).*** CMR is a strategy used by employment agencies wherein they make use of the internet to reach and recruit applicants virtually. Its target job categories are skilled, high-skilled, and professional workers. Company websites, employment websites, and social networking websites (SNS) were used under CMR.

***Print-related recruitment (PRR).*** PRR is a strategy where employment agencies make use of various printed advertisements to expedite their recruitment for certain job positions, and to market their agencies and existing job orders to potential applicants. Newspapers, tarpaulins, brochures and fliers, and calling cards were used under PRR in the study.

***Location-based Recruitment (LBR).*** LBR is a strategy used by employment agencies to focus its recruitment on areas where their target applicants are geographically concentrated. LBR is also used to accommodate applicants that experience difficulties in applying due to location-related barriers.

There are two types of LBR: (a) branches, and (b) employment agency-organized fairs.

***Branches.*** Aside from having a main or central office, many employment agencies have branches which operate as extension offices. Locations of branches are often based on the type of job orders employment agencies accept and the category of workers they deploy. Employment agencies that are focused on domestic helper deployments tend to establish branches in less-developed areas like Tuguegarao and Cotabato, while those focused on skilled and professional worker deployments tend to situate their branches in developed and highly-populated cities such as in Cebu and Davao.

***Employment agency organized fairs (EAOF).*** These are events organized by an employment agency in a given area to provide information about their job offerings and to recruit interested applicants. It is relatively similar to job fairs; however, instead

of having a number of employment agencies in the event, it is solely hosted by the organizing employment agency. Furthermore, employment agencies can select their target locations in EAOF unlike job fairs because it is not sponsored by DOLE and POEA, but by the organizing employment agency itself.

Regarding location, employment agencies select based on the job orders they have and the type of worker categories they aim to recruit. Employment agencies targeting domestic workers often conduct EAOF in less-developed provinces such as in Cotabato and Zamboanga, while those targeting skilled and professional workers often conduct EAOF in schools, universities, city halls, and hospitals in cities such as Davao and Cebu.

***Referral-Dependent Recruitment (RDR).*** RDR is a recruitment strategy that uses “agents” to recruit and refer applicants to employment agencies. RDR is often used by employment agencies with strong domestic helper deployments to boost the number of their applicants. Highly-skilled and professional workers do not need agents since they are able to search and apply for jobs themselves. There are two types of recruitment agents: (1) *Non-registered agents* – the illegal and unofficial agents who are not accredited by the POEA to recruit in behalf of any given employment agency; however, they continue to conduct recruitments and deliver applicants to registered agencies; and (2) *POEA-registered agents* –the agents who are registered by their employment agencies for the sole purpose of legalizing their recruitment. They remain as external to their agency’s organization, and are still given commissions instead of salaries.

#### ***Government-initiated Recruitment Strategy***

Government-initiated recruitment strategy is a type of strategy where the initiative to link applicants and employment agencies come from government institutions such as the DOLE, POEA, and the PESO of local government units. Job fair is the only identified type of government initiated recruitment strategy in the study.

***Job fairs.*** These are events where various local and overseas employment agencies are gathered to showcase their job orders to recruit applicants. Job fairs are often sponsored by the DOLE, the POEA, and the PESO of the local government units, and other private organizations such as Workabroad.ph and Jobstreet Philippines. Job fairs are often conducted during holidays such as Labor Day and National Heroes Day. They are situated in parks, schools, malls, and city halls. Job fairs are situated in such areas since their targets are skilled and professional workers.

## **DISCUSSION**

Based on the results of the study, three recruitment strategies were found. The first strategy is the *applicant-initiated recruitment strategy*. This strategy is dependent on the potential applicants' initiative to apply. The only identified type of this strategy is the *walk-in*. However, there are different types of walk-in applicants, namely the: blind walk-ins, hoppers, job match-seekers, double dippers, conditional applicants, bait applicants, and fraudulent applicants.

The *applicant-initiated recruitment strategy* is advantageous to employment agencies because it provides instant applicants for employment agencies without requiring them to conduct tiresome and costly recruitment activities. Also, walk-ins expedite the process of application. Given that the applicants themselves personally deliver their requirements, they are able to immediately fill up application forms and be subjected to interviews at once. This is also advantageous for the applicants since they are able to know instantly if they are accepted or rejected. In case of the latter, these applicants can apply elsewhere without wasting much of their time. This method of recruitment also allows employment agencies to require their walk-in applicants to undergo instantaneous physical screening to verify their skills and competencies.

Moreover, walk-ins spare employment agencies from the burden of having brokers - those who act as middlemen; they are able to connect migrant workers to employers (Lindquist, Xiang, & Yeoh, 2012). Eliminating brokers in the process of recruitment and directly transacting with employment agencies also lessen the probability of applicants being handled by *broker-scammers* – those who entice potential migrant workers with promising jobs, high wages, and free accommodation and transportation services in return for an amount usually equivalent to a month's salary, but upon receiving such amount, these scammers will immediately cut ties with the workers and run away; and *broker-capitalists* – those who shoulder the passport, medical, and other documentation requirements in exchange for salary deductions. For example, the *go now, pay later* scheme of brokers forces migrants into debt bondage and exploitation over time. Although this relationship may start as consensual, it almost always ends in abusive experiences (Fejerskov & Zeleke, 2020). However, it must be noted here that there are instances when applicants with brokers are preferred by agencies. Some agencies are skeptical with the intentions of walk-in applicants and so they prefer applicants with agents that they know. One participant mentioned that he is doubtful of the intentions of walk-in applicants since he has heard of reports on walk-in applicants being used as baits by organizations and syndicates or walk-ins whose main objective is to extort money from agencies. In this case, bait applicants affect earnest walk-in applicants negatively since their applications are also being doubted or even rejected by some employment agencies.

Finally, through walk-ins, the employment agencies are able to collect resumes and curriculum vitae of walk-in applicants for future references since some walk-in applicants hop around different employment agencies to distribute their resumes and

curriculum vitae. There are also instances when agencies receive applications about certain positions they do not offer at the moment; however, they still accept the resumes and curriculum vitae of such applicants for future use. The said practice of providing employment agencies with copies of their resumes is also advantageous for some walk-in applicants since it increases their chances of employment.

However, the *applicant-initiated recruitment strategy* also have some disadvantages. Given that the said recruitment method is dependent upon the initiative of the applicants, walk-in is a weak recruitment strategy –it often results in bulk walk-ins, but minimal applicant turn-out. Hence, with such weakness, employment agencies cannot rely solely on walk-in applications. This recruitment strategy also fails to attract potential workers for unskilled positions. Lindquist (2010) explained that recruitment agencies are likely to depend on brokers for the recruitment of unskilled workers since this type of potential migrant worker is unlikely to approach the agency directly.

Hoppers and other uncertain applicants are disadvantageous to employment agencies as well when they pull-out their applications since agencies are penalized by their partner placement agencies abroad. An example of this was mentioned by one of the study's participants. She explained that their agency pays 200 US Dollars per pulled-out application. Furthermore, some participants mentioned that there were instances when they shoulder the documentation expenses of undocumented walk-in applicants to boost their deployments. However, there were cases when some of these undocumented applicants would decide to not push through with their applications after they were financed by their employment agencies. Hence, such agencies are disadvantaged twice. One participant shared that her agency no longer provides financial assistance for undocumented walk-in applicants since some applicants make use of this fact to fabricate stories such as being coerced by employment agencies to work abroad in order to either extort money from agencies or to escape from the bounds of the contracts they have initially agreed upon. Consequently, sincere applicants who wish to work abroad but have financial issues are affected negatively by such fraudulent applicants. Lastly, several employment agencies consider some walk-in applicants as waste of time and efforts since some walk-ins do not push through with their applications after all their queries have been entertained.

The second recruitment strategy is the *employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies*. These strategies pertain to those initiated by employment agencies to attract more applicants and to strengthen their recruitments. There are four categories of employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies.

The first type is the *computer-mediated recruitment (CMR)*. CMR is advantageous for it is accessible and convenient. Given the proliferation of internet usage, many applicants make use of the internet to effortlessly access available jobs online, while employment agencies are able to post their job hiring on various websites. CMR is



convenient since applicants and employment agencies are able to use their mobile phones to browse the web and to connect with one another. Also, it breaks distance as barrier. Since CMR does not necessitate applicants to show themselves physically to apply for the available positions posted by employment agencies, applicants in far areas are given opportunities equal with those who are situated in cities. Another advantage is its cost-efficiency since it only requires internet connection. Hence, even without subscribing to employment websites or having customized websites, employment agencies are able to recruit applicants online through free employment websites and SNSs. Furthermore, CMR also addresses job mismatch issues given that applicants for uncommon or specific job positions which were hard to find before are now found easily through CMR. It also requires lesser manpower since CMR can be managed by just one person. Postings online reach a lot of people; hence, employment agencies do not need to hire more manpower to conduct recruitments in various areas. Lastly, CMR provides an alternative publicity that is cheaper compared to newspapers and radio-mediated advertisements. Subscribing to employment websites or paying for web domains is still relatively cheaper compared to print advertisements.

With regard to disadvantages, employment agencies have a hard time verifying the authenticity of the job applications they receive online since some applicants would present themselves differently online. Gauging how near or far an applicant's self-presentation in her virtual applications as compared to how he or she would present his or herself in reality is very challenging for some participants. Also, illegal recruiters imitate the accounts of employment agencies. There are illegal recruiters who imitate the online accounts of licensed employment agencies in order to extort money from applicants. Lastly, CMR provides a venue for applicants to post their negative feedbacks on their respective employment agencies. This damages the reputation of employment agencies and discourages potential applicants from applying.

The second category of employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies is the *print-related recruitment (PRR)*. PRR is advantageous since printed materials such as calling cards, fliers, and brochures can be carried around easily by applicants. Since such paraphernalia are handy, a participant claimed that she is able to distribute the PRR when meeting acquaintances. She hopes her acquaintance would also share the information provided in the materials. Also, it provides publicity for employment agencies given that the name, POEA license number, office address, contact information, and other information of their agency are printed and published in such materials. However, PRR, especially newspaper advertisements can be costly. One participant explained that each job vacancy posting ranges from almost PHP 5,000.00 to more than PHP 170,000.00, depending on the size, color, and day of publication. Another disadvantage of PRR is its limited reach. Fliers, brochures, tarpaulins, and calling cards can only reach applicants who are geographically near the agency. Some participants also mentioned that newspaper advertisements

are only able to reach ex-abroad skilled and professional workers since first-timers and unskilled workers do not utilize newspapers in their search for employments.

The third category of employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies is the *location-based recruitment (LBR)*. There are two types of LBR, namely: branches and employment agency-organized fairs (EAOF).

*Branches* pertain to the extension office/s of employment agencies. These branches are located at various areas around the Philippines. Employment agencies having branches is advantageous for these lessen their spending on other recruitment strategies. Employment agencies no longer need to conduct job fairs and employment agency organized fairs which are costly and exhausting since branches are able to provide them applicants. Also, they strengthen the credibility of employment agencies among the locals. Employment agencies with branches in provincial areas are perceived as credible and legitimate by the locals. Local applicants prefer applying in agencies with branches in their areas instead of those agencies that are only conducting fairs, since they are more familiar with those with branches; thus, they are able to recruit more applicants. Moreover, branches are useful since these allow the constant recruitment of applicants in their strategic location, unlike other recruitment strategies that are incapable of constantly supplying employment agencies with applicants. Lastly, they are able to target low-skilled and domestic helper applicants. Such employment categories often apply through employment agency branches in their respective areas given that they do not have enough financial resources to travel and apply elsewhere.

On disadvantages of branches, one participant mentioned that he experienced working with a branch manager who only made use of the employment agency's branch for self-profit. He expounded that the said manager referred the recruits of their branch to other agencies in exchange for commissions. There are also cases of branch employees collecting unwarranted fees from applicants. This is problematic since it can serve as a reason for an agency's suspension. Another disadvantage is the presence of negligent employees in branches. There are instances when branch employees relax their recruitment of applicants especially when they are not given quotas or deadlines to beat by their counterpart main office. Employees of branches are prone to neglect their duties since they are far from their bosses in the main office. Lastly, branches have high operation costs given that setting-up a branch requires a lot of expenditures on rentals, electricity, and water consumptions, salary of workers, office materials and other supplies, among others.

*Employment agency organized fairs (EAOF)* are events organized by an employment agency in a given area to provide information about their job offerings and to recruit interested applicants. Employment agencies organizing fairs is advantageous because it targets specific locations and worker categories. Some employment agencies conduct EAOFs in remote areas when they are in need of domestic helper applicants,

while they hold them in schools or malls when they are in-need of skilled and professional workers. Also, employment agencies organizing an EAOF have no other competitors during the event. Moreover, it reaches applicants in remote areas. Lastly, EAOFs allow employment agencies to create linkages. EAOFs provide an opportunity for employment agencies to be acquainted with the local officials of their targeted areas. These also allow them to establish good relationships with the locals. One participant mentioned that once an agency is able to establish many acquaintances in a given location, it will be able to recruit more applicants since it will be trusted by the locals. The said participant added that when she conducts EAOFs, she ensures that she feeds the locals of the area to establish rapport, and to make them happy whenever her agency is there.

With regard to its disadvantages, EAOFs often attract skilled and professional workers who do not have complete documentation. In one of the participant's experiences, many of the applicants their EAOF attracts do not have legal documents such as birth certificates, NBI clearances, and passports. Also, its success is dependent on other strategies. Some participants mentioned that an EAOF alone is unable to recruit enough applicants; it must be conducted with other recruitment strategies to ensure its success. A participant claimed that an EAOF's success is dependent on how an employment agency would market such event. He added that they distribute fliers and calling cards days before their EAOF to advertise it to the locals of the area. One participant mentioned that an EAOF cannot be conducted in remote areas where an agency does not have any point person since they will be unable to recruit anyone. Another disadvantage is that EAOFs are costly since employment agencies spend for the accommodation, food, and transportation allowance of its representative employees. One participant claimed that she spends a lot of money for the gifts she offers to the local officials to ingratiate. Other participants mentioned that they spend for food and other giveaways which they distribute to the locals to establish rapport. Lastly, an EAOF requires employment agencies to undergo various processes. One participant complained about the bureaucratic system of filing for the conduct of SRAs. This makes EAOF impractical to use when employment agencies have urgent job vacancies.

The fourth category of employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies is the *referral-dependent recruitment (RDR)*. This recruitment strategy uses brokers or agents to recruit and refer applicants to employment agencies. There are two types of recruitment agents, namely the: *non-registered agents* and the *POEA-registered agents*.

RDR is advantageous especially in targeting potential applicants for unskilled positions because those who are willing to occupy such positions are usually situated in far-flung areas. Unskilled positions do not attract potential migrant workers that are situated in the cities because the monthly salary offered by such positions (around 400 USD) competes with the monthly compensation offered by jobs within the cities. Hence, the target markets of agencies for unskilled positions are those situated in the provinces

– commonly those with no job experiences and with little to no education. However, since these potential workers for unskilled positions are situated in the provinces, private agencies have difficulties in reaching them. Given that these applicants are located in such remote areas, employment agencies need the assistance of recruitment brokers or agents who can connect them to employment agencies. Another advantage of RDR is that many recruitment agents shoulder the expenses of their referred applicant given that majority of the applicants for unskilled positions do not have enough money for their application expenses. Some recruitment agents provide pre-deployment assistance such as allowance for food, transportation, accommodation, and other expenses, and assistance in securing documentation requirements such as birth certificate, passport, and NBI clearance. RDR is also advantageous because it lessens miscommunication issues. A participant elaborated that his agency had a lot of wasted applications because they were unable to contact their applicants. However, since agents are personally acquainted with their applicants, they can immediately communicate with them when necessary. Lastly, recruitment agents pave the way for rapid problem resolution. Recruitment agents exert a lot of effort in solving issues encountered by employment agencies with their referred applicants. In exchange for the commissions they receive, agents are given the responsibility of solving the problems made by their referred applicants. Often, agents immediately take action in resolving their referred applicants' problems or issues to avoid being penalized by their employment agencies since some agencies would deduct the damages incurred by an applicant to his or her agent's commissions.

However, RDR is also disadvantageous especially in cases wherein some recruiters take commissions from applicants as referral fee although they are aware that doing so is prohibited, especially since they are already given commissions by employment agencies as payment for their referrals. Other agents take one to three months' worth of salary from their applicants as payment for their documentation and other expenses. One participant mentioned of an instance when an agent threatened an applicant of beheading her sibling if she fails to remit her salary to him. Another fraudulent activity of agents is instantly asking for the 50% of their commissions from employment agencies after referring applicants in bulk. They are knowledgeable that more than half of their referred applicants have already failed their medical examinations; hence, after receiving the 50% of their commissions, they run away. An applicant mentioned her experience of having agents promise her bulk applicants in exchange for money. However, no applicants were referred to her and the said agents have already taken her money and are nowhere to be found. She also experienced having agents ask her to finance the documentation processing of their applicants' passports; however, these agents did not deliver the applicants they promised.

POEA-registered agents referring applicants to a different agency to which they were accredited was mentioned as a disadvantage. A participant mentioned that there was an instance when their accredited agents used their license to recruit, but did not bring

enough applicants to them. These agents took their recruits to other agencies since they were paid higher there. Lastly, some recruitment agents would teach their applicants to tamper with their documents. Some agents, especially those situated in Mindanao teach their minor applicants to secure late birth registrations and have their ages be adjusted in order to qualify for employments abroad. Tampered birth certificates are used by minor applicants to obtain original passports with adjusted information. One participant cited an instance when her agency experienced processing passports with tampered information. It was only after their medical examination when her agency detected that such applicants were minors. Aside from the losses incurred by advancing the 50% commission of the said applicant's employment agency, it had also paid for the damages it caused its partner placement agency abroad.

The third recruitment strategy is the *government-initiated recruitment strategy*. This strategy relies on the initiative of the government to link applicants and employment agencies through *job fairs*. The main advantage of job fairs is it creates linkages. A job fair event provides employment agencies an opportunity to meet the event's organizers and sponsors as well as other employment agency participants. Also, it expedites interview and screening processes. Job fairs can help in expediting the process of applicants since they provide venues for employment agencies to conduct interviews and to screen their applicants. When accredited employers are present, applicants can be hired on the spot. Another advantage is that sponsors lessen the expenses of employment agencies. There are instances when sponsors provide the food, accommodations, and transportation allowances of participating employment agencies. Lastly, they provide a wide selection of applicants. Since many applicants are gathered during job fairs, employment agencies are given a wider selection of applicants.

However, the glaring disadvantage of job fairs is the competition between overseas employment agencies and local employment agencies for applicants. According to one participant of the study, there are several instances wherein applicant-participants are more attracted with local employments than overseas employments, and so they are unable to recruit applicants for abroad. Another disadvantage is that some job fair participants only observe or inquire, but do not apply. According to one of the participants, he often entertains applicant inquiries, but his efforts are often wasted since these interested applicants do not apply. Lastly, some sponsors do not publicize effectively. Some participants mentioned that there are instances when sponsors are keen to organize job fairs but do not exert enough efforts to publicize it; hence, employment agencies are unable to recruit applicants from such events and have only wasted their time and efforts.

## CONCLUSION

The study was able to identify three general recruitment strategies conducted by employment agencies in the Philippines, namely: applicant-initiated recruitment strategy; employment agency-initiated recruitment strategies; and, government-initiated recruitment strategy.

The applicant-initiated recruitment strategy is best utilized by employment agencies with job orders for skilled and professional workers since applicants of the said job categories are active in searching and in comparing employments offered by various employment agencies through walking in. On the other hand, this strategy is least effective for employment agencies with job orders for domestic helpers since these workers often do not have enough financial resources to travel and walk-in on employment agencies. Several domestic helper applicants are also afraid and hesitant of walk-in on employment agencies.

The effectiveness of strategies under the employment agency-initiated recruitment depends on the intended target worker categories of employment agencies. Computer-mediated recruitment is best utilized by employment agencies in need of specialized skilled and professional workers. Through the use of websites, applicants for specialized positions are found easily by employment agencies. Print-related recruitment often targets ex-abroad skilled and professional workers who have limited knowledge of using the internet. Location-based recruitment is most strategic for recruiting low-skilled and domestic helpers since these workers have the least propensity to search for employments outside their respective hometowns. Referral-dependent recruitment is used specifically for the recruitment of domestic helpers since such applicants are in need of recruitment agents who will connect them to employment agencies, provide their financial needs, and guide them throughout their application process. Highly-skilled and professional workers do not need agents since they are able to search and apply for jobs themselves. Referral-dependent recruitment is deemed in the study as the best recruitment strategy for domestic helpers.

The government-initiated recruitment strategy is best utilized by employment agencies with job orders for common skilled and professional worker positions such as call-center agents, nurses, and engineers since job fairs are often conducted in locations convenient and accessible for the said positions such as in hospitals, universities, malls, and city halls.

These findings imply that employment agencies cannot have just one recruitment strategy as their go-to panacea to meet the demands of employers abroad. Instead, employment agencies must employ the different recruitment strategies with respect to the kind of labor in demand. An employment agency who wishes to supply both highly-skilled and professional workers would do well to combine the different strategies in their

repertoire, whereas those employment agencies who wish to focus on the low-skilled and domestic helper workers can focus its resources on the branches and referral-dependent recruitment.

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