

# Job or Employment Scams: A Study on Exposure, Awareness and Behavior Affecting Victimization

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**Abstract:** *The growth of digital platforms has changed the recruitment process. In recent times, job scams have evolved significantly, using different techniques like phishing, impersonation, fake interviews etc. Individuals are less informed and can easily be deceived by these scams by giving attractive offers. In this research, we studied the exposure, awareness, and behavioural reactions of the participants, which contribute to victimization. We carried out a survey targeting individuals aged 18-35, young adults who are digitally active and looking for job opportunities online. We used descriptive statistical analysis. Our results indicate that most of them have encountered job scams; within this group, some were engaged in conversation and a few were led to money loss. High salary, urgency, fear of missing out (FOMO) are some of the factors that influenced them. Additionally, the research revealed that most participants were not aware; even those who were aware lacked confidence. We also found that lack of awareness and financial pressure are the main reasons why people fall for job scams. This shows that just being aware is not enough, and people need to be more careful. Checking and verifying job messages properly can help reduce the chances of falling for these scams.*

**Keywords** - Job Scams, Cybercrime, Exposure, Awareness, Financial Loss, Victimization, Fear of missing out(FOMO).

## I. INTRODUCTION

Exploring employment opportunities through the internet has narrowed down the process that people used earlier which was challenging. Formerly individuals to a large extent relied on newspapers, public job centres and even physically walked into the workplace for pursuing job opportunities which required prolonged attempt and application process. Subsequently by the advent of the Internet; individuals currently depend on it for retrieving all kinds of information including Job searches.

Online Job platforms have made it easier for people to seek career advancement, but that have also expanded the probability of job scams. As the platform has a massive field of activity, this has made the scammers easier to deceive vulnerable job seekers by posting fake job postings and conducting fraudulent recruitment schemes.

A Job Scam or an employment scam is considered as any fraudulent activity conducted by an individual or group of people to deceive job seekers to steal money or personal information by disguising as job recruiters or agencies. Recruitment scams have obtained a more complicated structure over the past few years and use advanced techniques of phishing

and social engineering which are developed particularly to trick people by disguising as genuine organizations and conducting fake interviews.

Employment fraud has become a significant concern, impacting on all age groups, especially young job seekers lacking prior experience, leading to financial loss and emotional stress. Victims may face anxiety, stress and a loss of confidence which give rise to loss of trust in online platforms and discourage them from engaging in legitimate opportunities. A combination of factors including limited awareness, societal and family pressure, a sense of urgency and emotional manipulation increases the sensitivity of youth to such scams.

This study aims to examine the level of exposure to employment fraud and evaluate their level of awareness, while also analysing the behavioural patterns that affect their vulnerability and increase the risk of victimization.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Understanding The concept of Job scams*

Job scams involve deceptive practices like impersonating authorized organizations, conducting staged recruitment interviews demanding upfront payments and offering unsolicited opportunities that appear unrealistically attractive thereby misleading job seekers and causing them to lose money and personal data.

Existing literatures suggests that Job scams vary on the intention of the scammers whether they require personal information or money. Vidros [et.al](#)(2016) explains that some fake job postings are published only to collect personal information such as names, emails, phone numbers which might later be used to spam or sold to third parties. They also call attention to the part where scammers conduct fake job interviews as real employers and attempt to collect personal identification documents and money from victims. Similarly Scamwatch (2015) identify a pattern where individuals are asked to handle or transfer money as part of the job, while the securities and exchange commission (2013) alert us about the multilevel marketing schemes posing as employment opportunities. The Federal Trade Commission (2021) also highlights the existence of scams such as reshipping and

mystery shopper schemes, in which individuals may unknowingly become participants in illegal activities. Overall, these literatures show that they take multiple forms using different deceptive methods posing varying risks to victims. Collectively, these findings underscore the significance of identifying Job scams.

### ***Underlying factors making youth prone to scams***

Young individuals are the major victims of Job scams as their active involvement in cyberspace. BBB Institute for Marketplace Trust (2023) states that Phishing scams are the most common frauds impacting young adults from age 18-24, with phishing accounting over 10% of reported scams frequently including scammers offering fake opportunities leading victims to share personal information or transfer money for supposed training or equipment. Regular approaches include fake check schemes, where individuals send money before realizing the check is invalid, and reshipping schemes, where victims are used to handle potentially illegal goods. These types of scams are commonly executed through digital platforms including job portals, professional networking platforms and social media, which increases the vulnerability of individuals in online environment. Several factors increase youth susceptibility to such scams, including urgency to secure employment, lack of awareness, fear of missing out, financial pressure, trust in online platforms, limited experience in identifying fraudulent activities all of which make them easier targets for deception.

### ***Adverse Effects of Employment Scams on Victims***

A study conducted by Ansar and Hussain (2025) used a quantitative survey of 284 respondents to assess the effect of scams on trust and dependence on virtual employment opportunities and results of the survey showed that the exposure to scams negatively impacts people's confidence in online job advertising. Another important observation is that sensitivity to such cases are not the same, and young adults who have difficulties with finding jobs are more prone to becoming victims. In addition, beyond financial damage, victims often face psychological impacts such as stress, anxiety, and decline in self confidence. The study also conveys that exposure to scams may increase awareness, but not always enough to prevent victimization. Therefore, it becomes essential to strengthen platform security and enhance user awareness.

Comparably in the study (A Systematic literature review of profiling victims of Cyber scams,2025) by Therese Whitty describes the damage imposed on individuals both financially and psychologically as well as on the society. It also outlines that the factors such as impulsivity, loneliness also makes people vulnerable to scams.

### ***Safeguards to Protect Against Job Scams***

The widespread nature of online job scams have put forward the importance of carrying out effective safeguards to protect vulnerable job seekers from psychological, personal

information and financial exploitation. Various studies have suggested preventive measures from falling fall scams. Research by Kaspersky (2022) highlights that maintaining robust online security routines such as avoiding suspicious links, verifying information through official websites and using secure platforms significantly reduces the risk of victimization.

Furthermore, in the study online recruitment fraud detection using Deep learning approaches (2025) concludes that advanced NLP techniques can be a significant approach in enhancing the safety and dependability of online recruitment platforms, which will provide protection against online job scams.

## **III. OBJECTIVES**

- To study exposure to job scams
- To analyse awareness level
- To understand behavioural response
- To examine victimization
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## **IV. METHODOLOGY**

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### ***Target population***

For this study, we targeted individuals aged 18-35 young adults who are digitally active and use online platforms to seek jobs.

### ***Sampling Technique***

We used a non-probability sampling method, mainly purposive and snowball sampling. Initial participants were asked to share the survey among their peers.

### ***Sample Size***

The sample size of the study is 155 respondents.

### ***Data Collection Method***

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire and circulated using Google Forms.

### ***Questionnaire Design***

The questionnaire consisted of 15 items covering demographics, exposure to job scams, awareness level, behavioural responses and identification of red flags.

## V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The study was conducted on 155 respondents of the age group 18 - 35 young adults to analyse their exposure, awareness and behaviour responses affecting victimization toward job scams. The data was categorized and analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentage and graphical representation.

### 1 DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

- Age

1.1 Responders belong to the age group of 18-35.

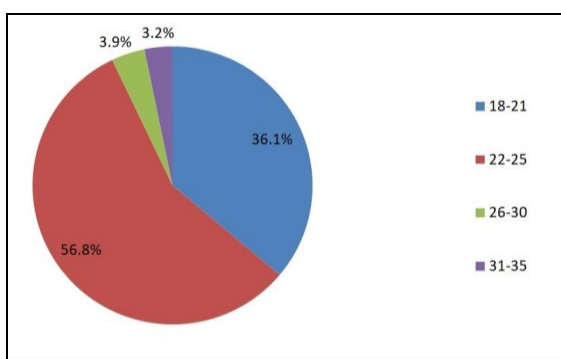


Fig. 1. Age of the respondents

The graph shows that 56.8% of the respondents belong to the age group 22 - 25 , following 36.1% of the age group 18 - 21, 3.9 % of the age group 26 - 30 and 3.2% of them belong to the age group 31 - 35. Majority of the respondents belong to the age group 22 - 25.

### 2. EXPOSURE

This section shows how much respondents are exposed to job scam messages.

2.1 Have you seen or received job scam messages before?

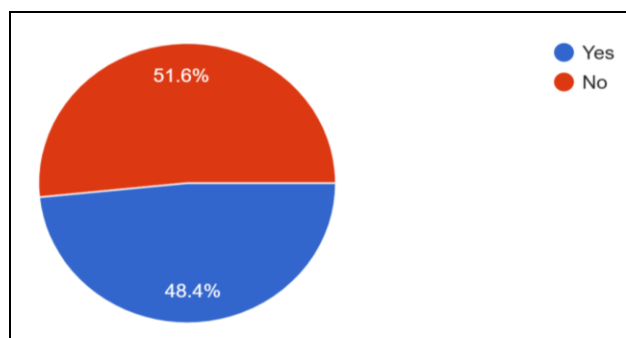


Fig. 2. Respondents exposed to job scams

According to the graph, 48.4% of the respondents have received job scam messages while 51.6% of the responders have not received such messages. This indicates that a significant portion of the population is exposed to job scams.

2.2 Where did you receive such messages?

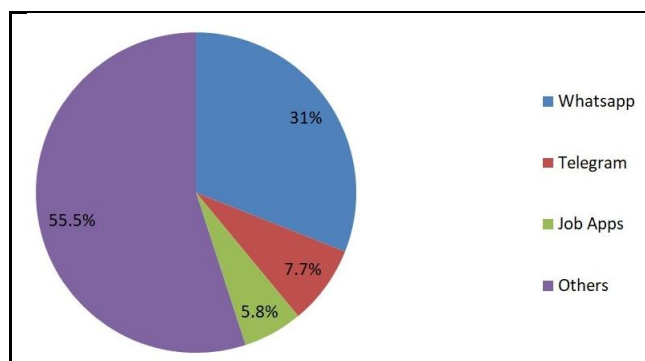


Fig. 3. Platforms used for job scam

The graph shows that the majority of the respondents received messages through other sources 55.5%, followed by WhatsApp 31%, Telegram 7.7% and job apps 5.8%. This shows that job scam messages come from different sources targeting different individuals.

### 3. BEHAVIORAL ANALYSIS

This section shows how respondents react to or deal with job scam messages.

3.1 Have you ever trusted or responded to such messages? If yes, what did you do?

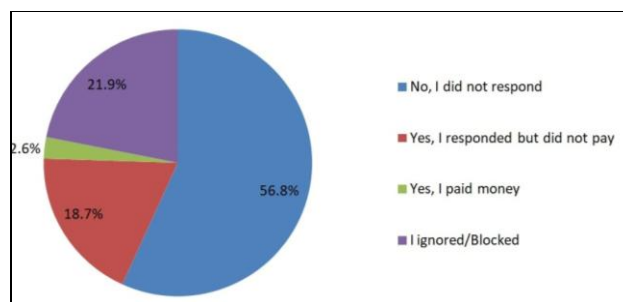


Fig. 4. Platforms used for job scams

Respondents showed different behavioral patterns. A majority of the participants 50.8% did not respond to such messages, 21.9% of them actively ignored and blocked them. However 18.7% of participants engaged with these messages and 2.6% reported making payments. This indicates that the majority of respondents did not respond to such messages and some actively blocked them while a notable minority engaged with these messages and very few experienced financial loss.

### 3.2 What influenced your decision or made you act fast?

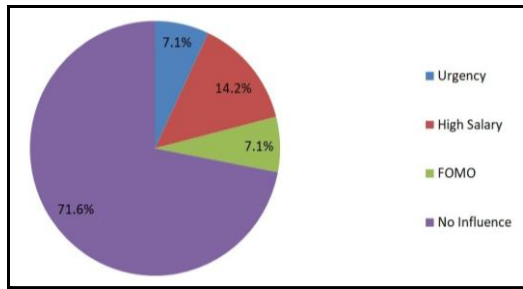


Fig. 5. Influence

The graph shows that the majority of the participants, i.e. 71.6% reported that they were not influenced. Among the other respondents, 14.2% of them were influenced by high salary, 7.1% of them by urgency, remaining 7.1% were by fear of missing out (FOMO). This shows that even though the majority of them were not influenced, some of the respondents were still influenced by high salary, urgency and FOMO.

Even though this question was about what influenced them, more people (44) said they were influenced compared to those who actually responded (33). This shows that some people felt influenced but still didn't act on it.

## 4. VICTIMIZATION

This section shows how many respondents have been victims of job scam messages and whether they have lost money due to such scams.

### 4.1 Have you ever lost money in such cases?

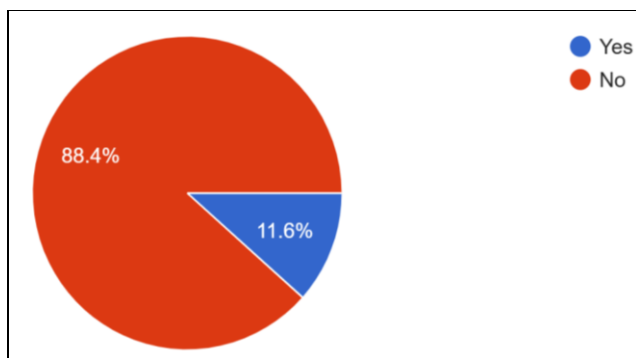


Fig. 6. Victimization

The responses show that 88.3% of respondents did not lose money, while 11.6% (18 respondents) reported financial loss due to job scams. This shows that even though most people are not affected a small number still lose money leading to victimization.

## 5. CAUSES

This section examines the factors affecting the occurrence of job scams.

### 5.1 What do you think is the main reason people fall for job scams?

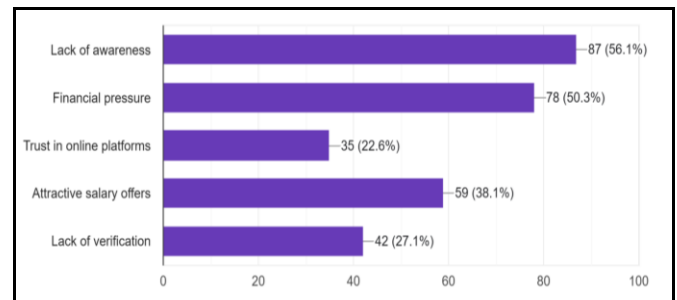


Fig. 7. Causes of job scams

According to the above graph, respondents think that lack of awareness (56.2%) is the main reason for job scams. Around 50.3% believe it is due to financial pressure while 38.1% think it's because of attractive salary offers. Additionally 27.1% feel a lack of verification, 22.6% attribute it to trust in online platforms. This shows that lack of awareness and financial pressure are the main reasons why people fall for job scams.

## 6. RED FLAG IDENTIFICATION

This section identifies the common red flags noticed by respondents in job scam messages.

### 6.1 What was the biggest red flag you noticed?

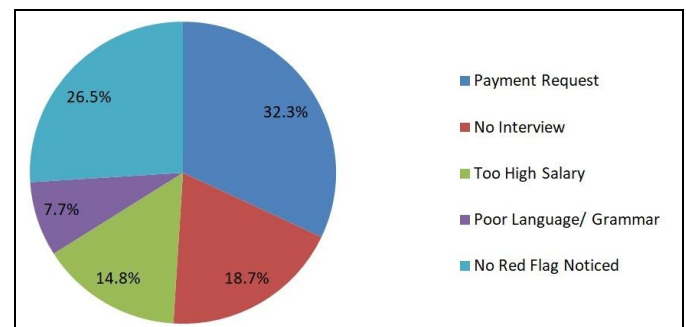


Fig. 8. Red flags in job scams

The findings show that 32.3% of respondents identified payment requests as the biggest red flag, 18.7% considered the absence of an interview. Additionally, 14.8% pointed that high salary as a red flag, 7.7% of them identified poor language or grammar. However, 26.5% of the respondents did not notice any red flag suggesting that many individuals may lack the ability to recognize warning signs of job scams. This highlights a gap in practical awareness which can increase the risk of victimization.

## 7. AWARENESS

This section analyses the awareness of the respondents regarding job or employment scams.

### 7.1 How aware are you about job scams?

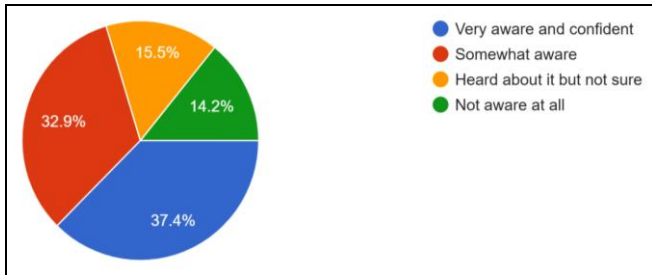


Fig. 9. Awareness level of respondents

According to the graph 37.4% of the respondents are very aware and confident. However, 32.9% of the respondents are somewhat aware, 15.5% of the respondents have heard about job scams but not sure, 14.2% are not aware at all. This indicates that although a good proportion of respondents have awareness, a significant number still lack clear understanding, which may increase their vulnerability to job scams.

## VI. DISCUSSION

In this study, we examined the exposure, awareness and behavioural analysis affecting victimization of the respondents related to job scams. We targeted the individuals aged 18-35 young adults who are digitally active and use online platforms to seek jobs. The findings shows that job scams are quite common, with 75 out of 155 respondents (47.1%) being exposed to such messages.

These scams are not limited to a single platform, but are spread across different sources, such as WhatsApp, Telegram, job apps, and other online platforms. Despite this level of exposure, only around 20% of respondents engaged with these messages, and about 11% (18 respondents) reported financial loss.

Even though the response rate to job scam messages is low the awareness regarding job scams are conditionally low, only 37.4% of the respondents were aware and confident, the rest of them were somewhat aware but not confident or not aware at all.

Also, participants were able to identify red flags such as requests for registration fees and absence of interviews, offering high salary or by poor language/grammar, however not everyone was able to recognize these warning signs.

The findings show that many respondents were exposed to job scam messages. At the same time, a large number of them were not fully aware or confident about such scams. While most people did not respond, some still engaged with these messages and a few even lost money. The findings show that just being aware is not enough to be safe.

In real cases, urgency, financial pressure, and FOMO can affect decision making. Scammers take advantage of these situations and create trust and pressure making it difficult for individuals to identify scam messages even if they are aware.

Overall it shows that awareness alone is not enough and real life situations and pressure can also influence how people actually respond.

## LIMITATIONS

**The sample size:** The total sample consists of only 155 respondents in the age group 18–35, this can affect the descriptive statistical analysis. Among them, 75 encountered job scams and only 18 lost money. This can affect the analysis of victimization. If the survey was conducted with more people in the same agegroup then the response and finding might have been different.

**Self-Reported Data Bias:** The data is self reported data so the responses can be biased. Individuals may not answer genuinely, or some may not understand the questions and can answer them randomly.

**Sampling limitation:** Since we used snowball and purposive sampling in this survey, the responses were only collected among the individuals in the same network. Which can affect the diversity of the responses.

**Scope limitation:** In this study we focus on only one particular type of cybercrime i.e. job scams. Because of this, the response related to exposure, awareness and victimization can be different if other cybercrimes are included.

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The study shows that job scams are quite common, with many respondents being exposed to such messages. Young adults in the age group of 18–35 are more vulnerable as they are digitally active and seek jobs online. Even though some respondents were aware of job scams, a few still engaged with these messages and some even lost money leading to victimization.

The findings show that awareness alone is not sufficient as there is a difference between what people know and how they behave. Factors like urgency, fear of missing out and high salary offer can influence decision making and lead to financial loss.

Therefore, awareness alone is not enough and stronger preventive measures are needed to address job scams. Proper verification of job related scam messages can help reduce the chances of falling for such scams.

This study highlights the increase in risk of job scams and the importance of awareness and the need for more preventive strategies among young adults.

For future research, including a larger sample size and wider geographical areas can improve the findings and also focus on psychological factors that influence individuals in such situations.

Future work can also develop a secure job platform where employers are properly verified using features such as digital certificates or official verification processes. Such platforms can help users identify legitimate job opportunities and reduce the risk of job scam

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