

# Candidate Experience in Participating in Virtual Recruitment on Candidate Satisfaction and Trust: A Study at State-Owned Enterprises (PLN)

Hasriani<sup>1</sup>, Altri Wahida<sup>2</sup>, Halim Usman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>123</sup>Fakultas Ekonomi dan Bisnis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palopo

Email: [anhyhasriani564@gmail.com](mailto:anhyhasriani564@gmail.com) [altri.wahida@umpalopo.ac.id](mailto:altri.wahida@umpalopo.ac.id) [halim\\_accountinglecturer@umpalopo.ac.id](mailto:halim_accountinglecturer@umpalopo.ac.id)

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## **Abstract**

### **Keywords:**

Candidate Experience,  
Satisfaction, Trust, PLN

*This study examines the importance of candidate experience in virtual recruitment as a factor that can influence candidates' satisfaction and trust in the company, particularly in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The increasing use of digital recruitment systems requires companies to ensure that online selection processes provide a professional, transparent, and responsive experience for applicants. This research aims to analyze the effect of candidates' experiences in participating in virtual recruitment on their satisfaction and trust. The study employs a quantitative approach with an associative research design. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 46 respondents who had previously participated in virtual recruitment, with the sample determined using Slovin's formula. The research instruments were tested for validity and reliability, while data analysis was conducted using simple regression analysis preceded by classical assumption tests and t-tests to examine the significance of variable effects, with the assistance of SPSS software. The results indicate that candidate experience has a positive and significant effect on candidate satisfaction, as well as a positive and significant effect on candidate trust. These findings suggest that the better the candidate's experience during the virtual recruitment process, the higher their satisfaction and trust in the company. Therefore, companies need to improve the quality of communication, clarity of information, and professionalism in digital recruitment to build organizational reputation and foster long-term relationships with candidates.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The development of digital technology over the past five years has brought fundamental changes in human resource management (HRM) practices, especially in the recruitment and employee selection process. The digitalization of recruitment has become a strategic organizational response to demands for efficiency, speed, and accountability, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic which forced restrictions on face-to-face interaction globally. Since then, virtual recruitment has no longer been positioned as a temporary solution, but has developed into a long-term recruitment model integrated into modern HRM systems (Rahman & Nordin, 2021).

Various recent studies show that virtual recruitment is able to provide significant benefits for organizations, including accelerating selection time, reducing operational costs, and expanding candidate reach geographically without location limitations (Lee & Chen, 2022; Kumar et al., 2023). In addition to efficiency, digital recruitment systems are also considered to increase the objectivity and transparency of the selection process because each stage is carried out in a standardized, documented, and system-based manner. Therefore, the use of digital technology in recruitment has become an important part of organizational transformation strategies in the knowledge-based industry era.

In line with these developments, public sector organizations have also begun adopting virtual recruitment systems as part of bureaucratic reform and improving the quality of HR governance. In Indonesia, State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) implement digital-based recruitment through integrated systems to ensure a fair, transparent, and accountable selection process. One of the strategic SOEs that implements this system is PT PLN (Persero), which has a vital role in providing national public services. In the PLN context, virtual recruitment does not only function as a workforce selection tool, but also as a means to maintain public trust and the institutional image as a professional and integrity-based organization.

This research shows that the success of virtual recruitment is not only determined by the sophistication of the technology used, but is also highly influenced by candidate experience during all stages of the selection process. Recent studies emphasize that candidate experience includes perceptions of system accessibility, clarity of information, process transparency, HR response speed, and the quality of communication between the organization and applicants (Mahajan & Gupta, 2025). Positive candidate experience has been proven to increase candidate satisfaction and shape perceptions of organizational professionalism, even among candidates who are not successfully selected (Tiwari & Srivastava, 2022).

Gautam and Li (2022) explain that the lack of face-to-face interaction in online selection processes can create an impersonal impression and reduce emotional closeness between candidates and organizations. In addition, technical problems such as internet network disruptions, system errors, lack of clarity of selection stage information, and delays in communication from HR can create negative experiences for candidates. Kumar et al. (2023) emphasize that these negative experiences have the potential to reduce candidate satisfaction and erode their trust in the credibility and integrity of the organization.

This research also shows that candidate trust is an important construct in digital recruitment, especially in public organizations. Trust is not only related to candidates' confidence in the fairness and objectivity of the selection process, but also reflects their perceptions of organizational values, such as transparency, accountability, and professionalism. In the context of SOEs, candidate trust has broader implications because it is directly related to the legitimacy of public institutions in the eyes of society. Therefore, candidate experience in virtual recruitment becomes a strategic factor that influences not only individual satisfaction, but also public image and trust in the organization.

However, existing empirical studies still show limitations. Most research on digital recruitment and candidate experience is conducted in the private sector or profit-oriented organizations. Research that specifically examines the relationship between candidate experience, candidate satisfaction, and candidate trust in the context of public organizations, especially SOEs in Indonesia, is still very limited. In addition, studies that empirically place virtual recruitment as the main research context, not merely as a supporting variable, are also still rarely found in national literature.

These limitations indicate a significant research gap. Until now, there has not been much research that comprehensively examines how candidate experience in participating in virtual recruitment influences the level of satisfaction and trust toward public organizations such as PLN. In fact, empirical understanding of the relationship between these variables is very important as a basis for evaluating and developing digital recruitment systems that are more humane, transparent, and candidate experience-oriented.

Based on this explanation, this research is relevant and important to be conducted. This research aims to analyze the effect of candidate experience in participating in virtual recruitment on candidate satisfaction and trust at PT PLN (Persero). By raising the SOE context and focusing on candidate experience, this research is expected to provide theoretical contributions in developing digital recruitment literature in the public sector and practical contributions for PLN in improving sustainable virtual recruitment strategies that are oriented toward public trust.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **Virtual Recruitment**

Virtual recruitment represents a digital transformation in human resource management, utilizing internet technology to conduct the selection process online. The implementation of this system has been shown to increase time and cost efficiency, broaden the candidate pool, and enhance the quality of selection through automation and information transparency. Data-driven recruitment also contributes to improved organizational performance by enabling better alignment of candidates with job requirements (Marler & Fisher, 2013; Stone, Deadrick, Lukaszewski, & Johnson, 2015).

Within the e-HRM framework, digitalization of recruitment strengthens system integration and supports data-driven decision-making. This transformation alters the interaction patterns between organizations and applicants, making the quality of digital experience, ease of use, and perceptions of fairness strategic factors for selection success (Stone et al., 2015; Kumar, Banerjee, & Patel, 2023; Gautam & Li, 2022). The effectiveness of digital systems is strongly influenced by process transparency, communication quality, and the clarity of information provided to candidates.

The increasing use of algorithms and artificial intelligence in workforce selection further underscores the importance of transparency and accountability in building candidate trust (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020). Properly designed digital recruitment is also considered capable of expanding access to opportunities for applicants and increasing openness in the selection process (Rahman & Nordin, 2021).

Despite offering efficiency, virtual recruitment still faces challenges such as limited direct interaction and potential uncertainty in automated systems. Therefore, organizations need to balance technological utilization with empathetic communication and clear feedback to maintain the quality of the selection process and candidate trust (Gautam & Li, 2022).

### **Candidate Experience**

Virtual recruitment constitutes a digital transformation in human resource management, leveraging internet technology to conduct the selection process online. The adoption of such systems has been shown to improve time and cost efficiency, expand the candidate pool, and enhance selection quality through automation and transparent information. Moreover, data-driven recruitment contributes to better organizational performance by facilitating more accurate alignment between candidates and job requirements (Marler & Fisher, 2013; Stone, Deadrick, Lukaszewski, & Johnson, 2015).

Within the e-HRM framework, the digitalization of recruitment strengthens system integration and supports data-driven decision-making. This transformation reshapes the interaction patterns between organizations and applicants, making the quality of the digital experience, ease of use, and perceptions of fairness critical factors for successful selection (Stone et al., 2015; Kumar, Banerjee, & Patel, 2023; Gautam & Li, 2022). The effectiveness of digital systems is strongly influenced by process transparency, communication quality, and the clarity of information provided to candidates.

The growing use of algorithms and artificial intelligence in workforce selection further highlights the importance of transparency and accountability in building candidate trust (Langer, König, & Papathanasiou, 2019; Black & van Esch, 2020). When designed systematically, digital recruitment can also expand access to opportunities for applicants and increase the openness of the selection process (Rahman & Nordin, 2021).

Despite these advantages, virtual recruitment continues to face challenges, including limited direct interaction and potential uncertainties inherent in automated systems. Therefore, organizations must balance technological utilization with empathetic communication and clear feedback to ensure both the quality of the selection process and candidate trust (Gautam & Li, 2022).

### **Candidate Satisfaction**

Candidate satisfaction is an important indicator for assessing the success of digital recruitment implementation. This concept refers to an individual's affective response to the selection experience they undergo. Altri Wahida et al. (2023) explain that satisfaction is formed as

an emotional reaction to the service experience during a process. In digital recruitment, satisfaction arises when selection stages are conducted transparently, efficiently, and provide clear information regarding procedures and evaluation criteria (Zhang & Wang, 2021). Thus, the quality of the selection experience becomes a key determinant in shaping candidates' positive perceptions of the organization.

The development of e-recruitment positions system quality and communication as central factors in forming satisfaction. Nikolaou (2021) emphasizes that ease of navigation, platform stability, and clarity of technical instructions influence applicants' perceptions. Lim et al. (2022) also show that empathetic and responsive communication strengthens candidates' positive evaluations of the online recruitment process. These findings underscore that the integration of technological quality and interpersonal interaction quality is a crucial prerequisite for building candidate satisfaction.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in workforce selection also affects the level of candidate satisfaction. Raghavan et al. (2020) note that the use of algorithms can generate perceptions of bias if not accompanied by evaluation transparency. Köchling and Wehner (2022) find that perceived fairness in AI usage significantly influences candidates' attitudes toward the organization. Decision transparency and the provision of clear feedback have been proven to enhance candidate trust and satisfaction during digital selection processes (Suen, Chen, & Lu, 2023).

Beyond technological factors, operational efficiency is also important in shaping candidate satisfaction. Tumasjan et al. (2021) demonstrate that response speed, schedule certainty, and clarity of process stages affect applicants' positive evaluations. A satisfying selection experience contributes to increased organizational attractiveness and a higher likelihood that candidates will recommend the company to others (Santiago, 2022).

### **Candidate Trust**

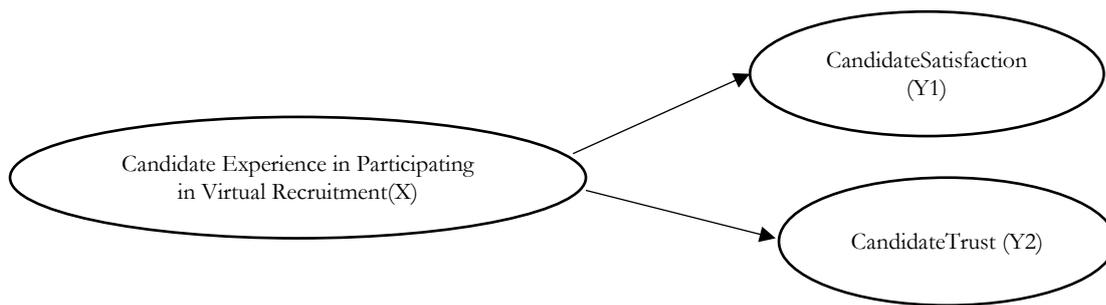
Candidate trust is a crucial construct in digital recruitment, as it reflects applicants' confidence in the organization's integrity, competence, and fairness during the selection process. Trust is formed through candidates' interactions with both the system and organizational representatives and develops when the process is perceived as honest, consistent, and free from bias (Rahman & Setyowati, 2024). From a human resource management perspective, trust is understood as a positive expectation of organizational behavior based on perceptions of credibility and procedural fairness, making the quality of the selection process a primary determinant in building candidate confidence.

Theoretically, perceptions of procedural fairness serve as the foundation for trust formation. Gilliland (1993) explains that fairness arises when selection is conducted consistently, based on accurate information, provides candidates opportunities to demonstrate their competencies, and adheres to ethical standards. Subsequent research shows that perceptions of fairness are directly related to trust and acceptance of selection decisions (Suen, Chen, & Lu, 2023) and influence candidates' attitudes toward the organization, including trust and organizational attractiveness (Hausknecht, Day, & Thomas, 2004).

In the digital context, information transparency and the quality of e-recruitment systems strengthen organizational credibility. Nikolaou (2021) emphasizes that system design, ease of access, and platform stability contribute to trust formation. Additionally, clear communication, prompt responsiveness, and informative feedback significantly affect candidate trust (Patel & Arora, 2022). Positive perceptions of fairness not only enhance satisfaction but also reinforce intentions to recommend the organization and reapply in the future (Santiago, 2022).

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) in selection adds complexity to trust formation. Raghavan et al. (2020) highlight the potential for algorithmic bias to reduce perceived fairness if transparency is lacking. Köchling and Wehner (2022) find that fairness perceptions in AI usage significantly influence candidates' attitudes toward the organization. Algorithmic transparency, explanations of evaluation mechanisms, and human oversight in decision-making have been shown to increase acceptance and trust in digital selection systems (Suen et al., 2023).

At the organizational level, transparency in implementing e-recruitment further strengthens company credibility and reputation. In the context of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), openness of information and clarity of selection stages are key factors in building public trust (Yulianah, 2023). Candidate trust not only influences the decision to accept a job offer but also impacts long-term perceptions of organizational reputation. Overall, trust in digital recruitment is shaped by the integration of procedural fairness, system transparency, communication quality, and the ethical use of technology.



H1: Candidate experience influences candidate satisfaction in participating in virtual recruitment at PT PLN (Persero).

H2: Candidate experience influences candidate trust toward PT PLN (Persero).

**METHODS**

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal associative research design to examine the effect of candidate experience on candidate satisfaction and candidate trust in virtual recruitment at PT PLN (Persero).

The population of this study consists of 85 candidates who have participated in the virtual recruitment process at PT PLN (Persero). The sample was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate, resulting in 46 respondents. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, focusing on candidates who had completed the virtual recruitment stages.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed online. The measurement scale used in this study was a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The questionnaire items were developed based on previous literature related to candidate experience, satisfaction, and trust.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS. The analysis techniques included validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity), and simple linear regression analysis. Hypothesis testing was carried out using the t-test to determine the partial effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables. The coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) was used to measure the proportion of variance explained by the regression model.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Validity Test**

**Table 1**

**Validity Test of Candidate Experience Variable (X)**

Question	r - calculated	r - table	Description
X1	<b>0,657</b>	<b>0,297</b>	<b>Valid</b>
X2	<b>0,772</b>	<b>0,297</b>	<b>Valid</b>
X3	<b>0,704</b>	<b>0,297</b>	<b>Valid</b>
X4	<b>0,699</b>	<b>0,297</b>	<b>Valid</b>
X5	<b>0,742</b>	<b>0,297</b>	<b>Valid</b>
X6	<b>0,775</b>	<b>0,297</b>	<b>Valid</b>
X7	<b>0,742</b>	<b>0,297</b>	<b>Valid</b>

Data source: SPSS output version 2025

To assess the validity of the instrument on the Candidate Experience variable (X), product moment correlation analysis was used with a total of 46 respondents and a significance level of 0.05. Based on the product moment critical value table, the r table value obtained was 0.297. This means that if the correlation value between the statement item and the total score of the statement is greater than 0.297, then the item is declared valid. Based on the results of the analysis shown in Table 4.1, all items in the Candidate Experience variable (X) have correlation values (r-calculated) greater than 0.297. Therefore, it can be concluded that all statement items in this variable are valid and appropriate to be used as measurement tools in this research.

**Table 2**  
**Validity Test of Candidate Satisfaction Variable (Y1)**

Question	r - calculated	r - table	Description
P1	0,774	0,297	Valid
P2	0,797	0,297	Valid
P3	0,632	0,297	Valid
P4	0,750	0,297	Valid
P5	0,734	0,297	Valid
P6	0,824	0,297	Valid
P7	0,709	0,297	Valid

Data source: SPSS Output 2025

The validity test was conducted to determine the magnitude of the relationship between each statement item and the total score of all items in the Candidate Satisfaction variable (Y1). This test used the Pearson product moment correlation technique with a total of 46 respondents and a significance level of 0.05. Based on the product moment critical value table, the r table value obtained was 0.297. This means that if the correlation value between the statement item and the total score (r-calculated) is greater than 0.297 and the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed) < 0.05, then the statement item is declared valid. Based on the results of the analysis shown in Table 4.2, all statement items in the Candidate Satisfaction variable (Y1) have correlation values greater than the r table (0.297) and significance values < 0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that all statement items in the Candidate Satisfaction variable (Y1) are valid and appropriate to be used as measurement tools in this research.

**Table 3**  
**Validity Test of Candidate Trust Variable (Y2)**

Question	r - calculated	r - table	Description
P1	0,878	0,297	Valid
P2	0,722	0,297	Valid
P3	0,851	0,297	Valid
P4	0,765	0,297	Valid

Data source: SPSS Output 2025

The validity test was conducted to determine how strong the relationship is between each statement item and the total score of all items in the Candidate Trust variable (Y2). This test used

the Pearson product moment correlation technique with a total of 46 respondents and a significance level of 0.05. Based on the product moment critical value table, the  $r$  table value obtained was 0.297. This means that if the  $r$  calculated value  $>$   $r$  table (0.297) and the significance value (Sig. 2-tailed)  $<$  0.05, then the statement item is declared valid. Based on the results of the analysis in Table 4.3, all statement items (P1 to P4) in the Candidate Trust variable (Y2) have correlation values greater than the  $r$  table (0.297) and significance values  $<$  0.05. Therefore, it can be concluded that all statement items in the Candidate Trust variable (Y2) are valid and appropriate to be used as measurement tools in this research.

### Reliability Test

**Table 4**  
**Reliability Test**

<b>N</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>r alpha</b>	<b>Reliability Value</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1.</b>	Candidate Experience (X)	0,856	0,60	Reliable
<b>2.</b>	Candidate Satisfaction (Y1)	0,866	0,60	Reliable
<b>3.</b>	Candidate Trust (Y2)	0,819	0,60	Reliable

Data source: SPSS Output 2025

If  $r$  Alpha  $>$  0.60, then the instrument is declared reliable, whereas if  $r$  Alpha  $<$  0.60, then the instrument is not reliable.

The results of the reliability testing on the questionnaire with Cronbach's Alpha value ( $r$  Alpha) as shown in Table 4.4 indicate that all research variables have values greater than 0.60. This proves that the questionnaire used in this research is reliable, so it is appropriate to be used to measure the variables of candidate experience, candidate satisfaction, and candidate trust.

### Classical Assumption Test

#### Normality Test

If the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value  $>$  0.05, then the data are normally distributed.

If the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value  $<$  0.05, then the data are not normally distributed.

**Table 5**  
**Normality Test**

<b>One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test</b>			
			Unstandardized Residual
	<b>N</b>		46
	<b>Normal Parameters<sup>a,b</sup></b>	Mean	0E-7
		Std. Deviation	2.04669663
	<b>Most Extreme Differences</b>	Absolute	.155
		Positive	.099
		Negative	-.155
	<b>Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z</b>		1.055
	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>		.216
<b>a. Test distribution is Normal.</b>			
<b>b. Calculated from data.</b>			

Data source: SPSS output 2025

Based on the test results in Table 4.5 above, the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) value obtained is 0.216, which is greater than the significance level of 0.05. This indicates that the residual data are normally distributed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the regression model used in this research meets the normality assumption, so the regression analysis can be continued to the next stage.

### Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test is conducted to determine whether there is a strong relationship (high correlation) among independent variables in the regression model. A good regression model is a model that does not experience multicollinearity, because if there is a high relationship among independent variables, it will cause inaccuracy in estimating the effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable.

In this research, the multicollinearity test was conducted using Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values obtained through SPSS output. The decision-making criteria are as follows: If the Tolerance value  $> 0.10$  and  $VIF < 10$ , then multicollinearity does not occur. If the Tolerance value  $< 0.10$  and  $VIF > 10$ , then multicollinearity occurs.

**Table 6**  
**Multicollinearity Test**

model	tolerance	VIF
Candidate Experience (Dependent: Satisfaction)	1.000	1.000
Candidate Experience (Dependent: Trust)	1.000	1.000

Data source: SPSS output 2025

Based on Table 4.6 above, it can be seen that the Tolerance value for all variables is 1.000, and the VIF value is also 1.000. These values indicate that  $Tolerance > 0.10$  and  $VIF < 10$ , so it can be concluded that there is no multicollinearity among independent variables in the regression model. Therefore, the regression model used in this research has met the multicollinearity assumption, which means that each independent variable is able to provide a unique contribution to the dependent variable without strong correlation interference among independent variables.

#### Heteroscedasticity Test

**Table 7**  
**Heteroscedasticity Test**  
**Effect of Experience on Satisfaction**

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	6.117	1.978		3.092	.003
	EXPERIE	.812	.066	.879	12.219	.000
	NCE					

**a. Dependent Variable: SATISFACTION**

Data source: SPSS output 2025

**Table 8**  
**Effect of Experience on Trust**

		Coefficients <sup>a</sup>				
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardize d Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.997	1.474		3.390	.001
	EXPERIE	.416	.049	.785	8.397	.000
	NCE					

**a. Dependent Variable: TRUST**

Data source: SPSS output 2025

**Equation 1 (Experience → Satisfaction)**

Candidate experience has a significant effect on candidate satisfaction with a significance value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). The B coefficient of 0.812 indicates that every 1-unit increase in candidate experience will increase satisfaction by 0.812 units.

**Equation 2 (Experience → Trust)**

Candidate experience also has a significant effect on candidate trust with a significance value of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). The B coefficient of 0.416 indicates that every 1-unit increase in candidate experience will increase candidate trust by 0.416 units.

**Simple Linear Regression Test****Candidate Experience → Candidate Satisfaction**

Based on the coefficients table in Table 7, a constant value of 6.117 and a candidate experience coefficient of 0.812 were obtained, resulting in the following regression equation:

$$Y_1 = 6.117 + 0.812X$$

This means that when candidate experience is equal to zero, the level of candidate satisfaction is at 6.117. Every one-unit increase in candidate experience will increase candidate satisfaction by 0.812 units. The significance value of 0.003 ( $< 0.05$ ) indicates that candidate experience has a significant effect on candidate satisfaction.

These findings are consistent with Expectation Confirmation Theory, which explains that satisfaction arises when perceived experiences meet or exceed individual expectations. Furthermore, the results support previous studies showing that positive experiences during digital recruitment processes such as system usability, clarity of information, and effective communication contribute to increased candidate satisfaction. Therefore, improving the quality of candidate experience becomes an important factor in shaping positive perceptions of organizational recruitment processes.

**Candidate Experience → Candidate Trust**

Based on the coefficients table in Table 8, a constant value (a) of 4.997 and a candidate experience coefficient (b) of 0.416 were obtained, resulting in the following regression equation:

$$Y_2 = 4.997 + 0.416X$$

This indicates that when candidate experience equals zero, the level of candidate trust is at 4.997. Every one-unit increase in candidate experience increases candidate trust by 0.416 units. The significance value of 0.001 ( $< 0.05$ ) shows that candidate experience has a significant effect on candidate trust.

These findings are consistent with organizational trust theory, which states that individuals' trust in an organization is built through consistent, transparent, and professional interaction experiences. Positive experiences during the recruitment process signal organizational integrity and competence, thereby strengthening candidates' confidence. The results also support previous studies showing that the quality of candidate experience in digital recruitment including clarity of information, system reliability, and responsive communication positively influences applicants' trust toward the organization. Therefore, the better the experience perceived by candidates, the higher the level of trust formed toward the selection process and the organizing institution.

**t Statistical Test****t Test of Experience on Satisfaction**

The results of the t-test show a calculated t-value of 12.219 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), indicating that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted. This means that candidate experience has a positive and significant effect on candidate satisfaction. The B coefficient value of 0.812 indicates that each one-unit increase in experience increases satisfaction by 0.812.

These findings are consistent with Expectation Confirmation Theory, which explains that satisfaction is formed when individuals' perceived experiences meet or exceed their initial expectations. In the recruitment context, positive experiences such as ease of process, clarity of information, and professional interaction enhance candidates' positive evaluation of the selection process. This result also supports previous studies stating that the quality of candidate experience

is a primary determinant of satisfaction in digital recruitment. Therefore, the better the experience provided by the organization, the higher the level of candidate satisfaction formed.

### t Test of Experience on Trust

The t-test results show a calculated t-value of 8.397 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ), indicating that  $H_0$  is rejected and  $H_1$  is accepted. This means that candidate experience has a positive and significant effect on candidate trust. The B coefficient value of 0.416 indicates that each one-unit increase in experience increases trust by 0.416.

These findings are consistent with organizational trust theory, which states that individuals' trust in an organization develops through positive, consistent, and transparent interaction experiences. Positive experiences during the recruitment process such as clarity of information, system reliability, and responsive communication signal organizational integrity and competence, thereby strengthening candidates' confidence. The results also support previous studies showing that the quality of candidate experience in the selection process contributes to the formation of trust toward the organization.

### Coefficient of Determination Test

**Table 9**  
**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.879 <sup>a</sup>	.773	.771	1.245

a. Dependent Variable: SATISFACTION

Data source: SPSS output 2025

Based on Table 9, the R Square value of 0.773 indicates that the experience variable is able to explain 77.3% of the variation in satisfaction, while the remaining 22.7% is influenced by other variables outside the research model. This shows that experience has a very strong influence on satisfaction.

**Table 10**  
**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.785 <sup>a</sup>	.616	.613	1.118

a. Dependent Variable: TRUST

Data source: SPSS output 2025

Based on Table 10, the R Square value of 0.616 indicates that the experience variable is able to explain 61.6% of the variation in trust, while the remaining 38.4% is influenced by other factors outside the research model. Thus, experience has a strong influence on trust.

## DISCUSSION

### The Effect of Candidate Experience on Candidate Satisfaction

The results of the study indicate that candidate experience in participating in virtual recruitment has a positive and significant effect on candidate satisfaction at PT PLN (Persero). A regression coefficient of 0.812 with a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ) demonstrates that the better the experience perceived by candidates during the online selection process, the higher their level of satisfaction. Furthermore, an  $R^2$  value of 0.773 indicates that candidate experience explains 77.3% of the variation in candidate satisfaction, suggesting a very strong influence within this research model.

These findings can be explained through Expectation Confirmation Theory (ECT), which posits that satisfaction arises when an individual's experience meets or exceeds their initial expectations.

In the context of virtual recruitment, candidates have expectations regarding organizational professionalism, clarity of selection stages, responsiveness, and ease of use of the digital system. When the actual experience received by candidates meets or exceeds these expectations, a positive affective evaluation, in the form of satisfaction, is formed.

Moreover, these results align with Applicant Reactions Theory, as proposed by Gilliland (1993) and further developed by Hausknecht, Day, and Thomas (2004), which states that applicants' perceptions of the selection procedures influence their attitudes toward the organization. Procedural fairness, consistency of information, and respectful interpersonal treatment are primary determinants in forming positive evaluations. In digital recruitment systems, clear instructions, system transparency, and responsive HR communication serve as concrete manifestations of procedural fairness.

Empirically, these findings support Nikolaou (2021), who found that the quality of e-recruitment systems, ease of navigation, and platform stability significantly affect candidates' positive evaluations. Lim et al. (2022) also report that empathetic and responsive communication during online selection processes strengthens applicant satisfaction. This indicates that satisfaction in virtual recruitment is influenced not only by technological factors but also by the quality of organizational interaction with candidates.

In the context of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) such as PLN, candidate satisfaction carries broader strategic implications. Satisfaction affects not only individual perceptions but also the public image of the organization. Candidates who feel satisfied are likely to perceive the institution as professional, even if they are not selected. Therefore, candidate experience becomes a crucial instrument for maintaining organizational reputation and attractiveness.

In conclusion, these results affirm that candidate experience is a key determinant in shaping satisfaction in virtual recruitment. The integration of technological quality, procedural transparency, and professional communication is essential for enhancing candidates' positive evaluations of the selection process.

### **The Effect of Candidate Experience on Candidate Trust**

The results of the study also indicate that candidate experience has a positive and significant effect on candidate trust in PT PLN (Persero), with a regression coefficient of 0.416 and a significance level of 0.000 ( $< 0.05$ ). An  $R^2$  value of 0.616 shows that 61.6% of the variation in candidate trust can be explained by the experience they perceive during the virtual recruitment process.

These findings can be explained through Organizational Trust Theory, which posits that trust is formed based on individuals' perceptions of organizational integrity, competence, and consistency. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) explain that trust emerges when individuals believe that the other party possesses ability, benevolence, and integrity. In the context of virtual recruitment, candidate experience serves as a primary source of information for evaluating these three aspects. Positive experiences, such as clear information, transparency of selection stages, and reliable digital systems, signal that the organization demonstrates high integrity and competence. This aligns with Signaling Theory, which states that the recruitment process acts as a medium for organizations to convey signals regarding their quality and values. When the selection process is conducted professionally and transparently, candidates receive positive signals about organizational credibility, thereby enhancing their trust.

These findings are also consistent with Suen, Chen, and Lu (2023), who found that transparency and clarity in digital selection systems significantly affect candidate trust. Köchling and Wehner (2022) similarly emphasize that perceptions of fairness in the use of technology and selection algorithms are positively related to candidates' attitudes and trust toward the organization.

In the context of public organizations such as PLN, candidate trust is more complex than in private organizations. Candidate trust not only relates to job opportunities but also reflects the legitimacy of the public institution. Transparency in the selection process serves as an indicator of the organization's accountability to the public. Therefore, candidate experience in virtual recruitment acts as a mechanism for building trust that impacts the institution's long-term reputation.

However, the 61.6% contribution indicates that other factors still influence candidate trust, such as organizational reputation, perceptions of selection outcomes, the image of SOEs, and candidates' prior experiences with public institutions. This opens opportunities for future research to include mediating or moderating variables such as perceived fairness, organizational reputation, or employer branding.

Overall, these results confirm that candidate experience is a critical foundation for building trust in digital recruitment systems. The more professional, transparent, and responsive the selection process, the stronger the trust candidates place in the organization.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study aims to analyze the effect of candidate experience in virtual recruitment on candidate satisfaction and trust at PT PLN (Persero). The results indicate that candidate experience plays a crucial role in shaping both satisfaction and trust in the organization. Virtual recruitment processes that are managed professionally, transparently, and communicatively, supported by a reliable system, generate positive evaluations from candidates toward the organization. These findings confirm that virtual recruitment is not merely a technology-based administrative process but also a strategic interaction that influences candidates' perceptions and attitudes toward the institution. Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of Expectation Confirmation Theory, Applicant Reactions Theory, and Organizational Trust Theory in the context of digital recruitment. Candidate satisfaction is formed when the selection experience aligns with initial expectations, whereas trust develops through perceptions of organizational consistency, fairness, and integrity. By examining the context of a state-owned enterprise (SOE), this research provides empirical contributions to the development of digital recruitment literature in the public sector, which remains relatively limited, particularly in Indonesia.

Practically, the findings offer important implications for organizations, especially SOEs, to prioritize candidate experience in virtual recruitment management. Transparency of selection stages, clarity of information, responsive communication, and professionalism in every interaction are key factors in building positive relationships with candidates. In the context of public organizations, a positive candidate experience not only increases individual satisfaction and trust but also contributes to strengthening the institution's reputation and legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Nonetheless, this study has limitations in terms of organizational context and the variables examined. Therefore, future research is recommended to expand the scope to other sectors or public institutions and to integrate additional variables, such as organizational reputation, employer branding, or perceived fairness, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of candidate satisfaction and trust in digital recruitment.

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