

Determining Factors in the Labor Insertion of Recent Graduates of the Business Administration Program of the University of Sucre: Analysis of Trends, Selection Criteria and Hiring Modalities in the Business Market

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Abstract

The study analyzes the determining factors in the labor insertion of recent graduates of the Business Administration program of the University of Sucre. It focuses on identifying selection criteria, hiring trends, and labor modalities in the business market. The central problem is the difficulty of graduates accessing employment due to lack of experience and the disconnect between higher education and market needs. The aim is to characterize the profile of the contracting companies, the selection criteria, the most frequent types of contracts and the sectors with the highest demand for young talent.

The results show that most employers are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that prefer fixed-term contracts and the provision of services, limiting the job stability of graduates. Companies prioritize knowledge and technical skills, followed by responsibility and commitment. However, access to employment is influenced by personal networks rather than university job boards. The labor insertion of recent graduates presents opportunities but also challenges due to precarious contracts and the lack of effective labor intermediation strategies. It is necessary to strengthen the relationship between universities and the productive sector, promote formal hiring and align academic training with market demands.

Keywords: Labor insertion, Recent graduates, Selection criteria, Hiring modalities, Employability.

Introduction.

The labor insertion of recent graduates is a fundamental axis in the economic and social development of a region, given its impact on the reduction of unemployment and the optimization of available human capital. The University of Sucre, in its commitment to academic excellence and social projection, has undertaken a study with the purpose of analyzing the dynamics of hiring recent graduates in the business market. The relationship between academic training and the demand of the productive sector is a widely debated topic in the literature, given that the transition

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from higher education to employment presents multiple challenges, both for graduates and employers.

The importance of this research lies in the need to understand how companies incorporate young talent into their structures, what criteria they prioritize in the selection of personnel and what type of contractual modalities predominate in the hiring of recent graduates. Various studies have indicated that the lack of work experience is one of the main obstacles to the insertion of new professionals, which raises questions about the effectiveness of higher education programs to prepare students for the demands of the market. In addition, flexible contractual models and labour market segmentation can influence the quality of employment that recent graduate's access.

The central problem addressed by this study is the identification of the determining factors in the hiring of recent graduates, considering aspects such as the size and legal structure of the companies, the scope of their operations, the departments in which these professionals manage to be inserted and the reasons that limit their hiring. Based on these elements, it is intended to establish patterns that allow generating strategies to improve the employability of graduates, optimizing their transition to the world of work.

To address this problem, the study has the following objectives: to characterize the organizational structure and size of the companies participating in the study, to analyze the predominant criteria in the selection of recent graduates, to evaluate the most commonly used types of recruitment and to determine the sectors in which these professionals find the greatest opportunities. It also seeks to identify the main difficulties faced by graduates when looking for employment and the reasons why some companies choose not to hire them.

The methodology used in this study is based on the quantitative analysis of data obtained from surveys applied to various companies, which allows the identification of trends and correlations between the factors studied. The approach adopted facilitates the interpretation of work dynamics and allows for the establishment of recommendations based on empirical evidence. To ensure the accuracy of the analysis, relevant technical terms have been defined, such as the Minimum Legal Monthly Wages (SMMLV), used in Colombia as a reference to measure the size and economic capacity of companies; contracts for the provision of services, a form of employment relationship that does not establish a direct relationship of subordination between employer and worker; and the Simplified Stock Company (S.A.S.), a legal figure widely adopted by emerging companies due to its flexibility and ease of incorporation.

The study is based on the premise that academic training must be aligned with the needs of the market, promoting a closer relationship between higher education and the productive sector. From the analysis of the data collected, it is expected to generate useful information for decision-making in terms of employability policies, contributing to the formulation of strategies that favor the link of recent graduates with the world of work and promote their professional development in a competitive and constantly evolving environment.

Theoretical Framework.

The employability of recent graduates is a topic of growing interest in the academic and professional spheres, as it represents a key indicator of the effectiveness of education systems and the alignment between academic training and the demands of the labor market. Various studies have addressed this problem from multiple perspectives, analyzing factors that influence the employability of graduates and the strategies that can facilitate their transition to the world of work.

According to the Agency for the Quality of the University System of Catalonia (2017), the employability of university graduates is influenced by variables such as the degree obtained, the skills acquired and the opportunities in the labor market. This study highlights the importance of comprehensive training that combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills, thus facilitating a more effective adaptation to professional demands.

Alonso et al. (2008) argue that the development of transversal competencies, such as teamwork skills, effective communication, and problem-solving, is essential to improve the employability of graduates. These competencies, together with a strong technical background, enable recent graduates to more effectively face the challenges of the contemporary work environment.

On the other hand, studies such as that of Mairata (2008) indicate that graduates' satisfaction with their academic training and their perception of the usefulness of the knowledge acquired are determining factors in their labor insertion process. Training that responds to the real needs of the labor market contributes to a smoother and more successful transition to employment.

The Agency for the Quality of the Galician University System (2016) emphasises the relevance of professional internships and work experiences during the training stage. These experiences not only enrich the students' curriculum, but also provide them with a deeper understanding of work dynamics and allow them to establish networks that can be crucial in their future professional insertion.

In the Colombian context, Díaz Marín (2017) analyzes the difficulties faced by graduates in their labor insertion process, highlighting the gap between academic training and the skills demanded by the market. This study suggests the need for greater articulation between educational institutions and the productive sector to guarantee more relevant training oriented to the needs of the work environment.

Knowledge management in organizations also plays a crucial role in the employability of recent graduates. Andreu and Baiget (2016) argue that companies that promote a culture of continuous learning and that value innovation are better positioned to attract and retain young talent. These organizations offer environments conducive to the professional development of graduates, facilitating their integration and growth within the labor market.

In addition, the labor insertion of graduates of higher education institutions, as a matter of employability, is a "set of skills and attitudes that allow a person to get and keep a job" (Royal Spanish Academy, 2019). Labour insertion is related to the percentage of progress in two different goals: training and the economic system. On the one hand, a reasonable balance is needed between the criteria of academic training (knowledge, skills and attitudes) and the requirements of the job. On the other hand, it is necessary to balance the number of graduates from higher education institutions and the absorption capacity of the economic system in working conditions appropriate to their professional profiles.

The problem of the labor insertion of university graduates has been addressed from various perspectives. For example, Fachelli and Navarro (2015) provide evidence on social origin and labour insertion, pointing out that the difficulties of professional insertion of certain groups have generated a multidisciplinary field that is usually called "transition to active life".

A quality assurance procedure for universities is the analysis of the employability of graduates. In this sense, Teichler (2003) indicates that the work of graduates can be considered as a very important measure of results when evaluating universities and curricula. Surveys of graduates can be the key to obtaining the required information.

The employability of recent graduates is a multifaceted process that depends on the interaction between the quality of academic training, the development of transversal competencies, practical experiences during the educational stage and the dynamics of the labor market. A comprehensive understanding of these factors is essential to design effective strategies to facilitate the transition of graduates to the professional world and to ensure that higher education meets its objective of training competent professionals adapted to the needs of society.

Methodological framework.

This study is framed in a quantitative approach, since it seeks to analyze and describe the labor insertion of recent graduates through the collection and statistical analysis of data obtained from surveys applied to different companies. According to Hernández, Fernández, and Baptista (2014), quantitative research is characterized by objectivity and the collection of numerical data that allow the analysis of patterns and trends within a study phenomenon.

Research design: The study adopts a non-experimental, cross-sectional, and descriptive design. According to Sampieri, Collado, and Lucio (2018), non-experimental research is based on the observation of phenomena without manipulating variables, while the cross-sectional design allows information to be analyzed at a specific point in time. The choice of this approach is justified by the need to understand the current situation of the labour insertion of recent graduates without intervening in the recruitment process or in the existing working conditions.

Population and sample: The study population is made up of companies belonging to various productive sectors, with the aim of obtaining a representative vision of the labor market to which recent graduates have access. The sample selection was carried out under a non-probabilistic sampling criterion for convenience, a recommended technique when working with an accessible population and seeking to maximize the obtaining of relevant information in a given context (Kerlinger & Lee, 2002).

The sample size was determined based on the availability of the companies to participate in the study and the possibility of accessing reliable data on their contracting processes. In this sense, the results obtained are interpreted as an approximation to the trends of the labor market in the context analyzed, without implying an absolute generalization at the national level.

Data collection technique: To obtain the information, a structured instrument was designed in the form of a survey, composed of closed and multiple-choice questions, allowing systematic tabulation and analysis of the data. According to Bisquerra (2012), surveys are an effective tool for collecting information on opinions, behaviors and characteristics of a given population.

The questionnaire was divided into sections that addressed key aspects of the study, such as:

- * General characteristics of companies (size, economic sector, legal nature).
- * Experience in hiring recent graduates (number of graduates hired, areas of engagement, type of contract offered).
- * Selection criteria used by companies when hiring new talent.
- * Reasons not to hire recent graduates, if applicable.
- * Mechanisms used for the search for university talent.
- * The application of the instrument was carried out digitally and in person, depending on the availability of the participants. This strategy made it possible to achieve a higher response rate and guarantee the validity of the data collected.

Data analysis technique: The data obtained were processed using descriptive statistical tools, in order to identify patterns and trends in the labor insertion of recent graduates. For this purpose,

frequency and percentage analyses were performed, which allow representing the distribution of the responses in relation to the study variables (Field, 2018).

The analysis was complemented with the presentation of bar graphs and tables, facilitating the interpretation of the results in a clear and visually understandable way. Additionally, comparisons were made between different categories, such as the size of the company and the number of recent graduates hired, in order to identify possible relationships between these variables.

Reliability and validity of the study: To guarantee the quality of the results, a validation process of the instrument was applied using the expert judgment technique, in which professionals with experience in educational research and the labor market reviewed the questionnaire before its final application. According to Creswell (2014), this method improves the accuracy and relevance of data collection instruments.

Likewise, the reliability of the instrument was evaluated through a pilot test applied to a small group of companies, to detect possible ambiguities in the questions and make necessary adjustments before widespread application.

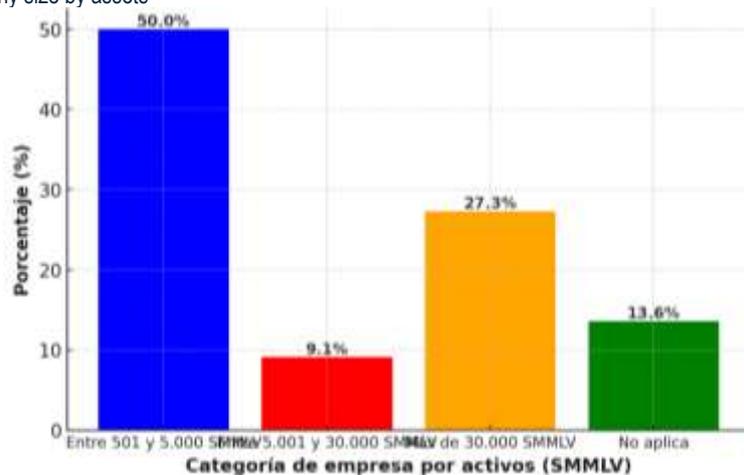
Ethical considerations: The study was carried out respecting the ethical principles of research, ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of the answers provided by the participants. Informed consent was sought from companies prior to the application of the survey, ensuring that their participation was voluntary, and that the data obtained were used exclusively for academic purposes. According to the Declaration of Helsinki (World Medical Association, 2013), research in the social sciences must be governed by ethical principles that protect the integrity and privacy of the subjects involved.

Results

The University of Sucre, aware of its social function and its commitment to sustainable economic development, focuses its efforts on the continuous improvement of its academic processes with a view to achieving significant levels in the quality of its mission axes: teaching, research and social projection, so the promotion of quality is a priority for the Institution.

Graphic 1.

Distribution of company size by assets



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

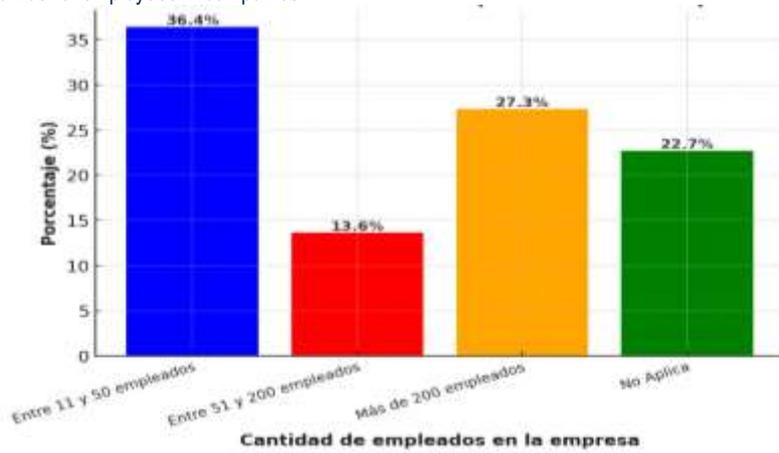
The data obtained presented in Graph 1 illustrate the distribution of the size of the companies according to their capital in SMMLV:

- * 50% of the companies surveyed have assets between 501 and 5,000 SMMLV.
- * 9.1% of companies have assets between 5,001 and 30,000 SMMLV.
- * 27.3% of companies have assets of more than 30,000 SMMLV.
- * 13.6% of respondents indicated that this classification does not apply to them.

This analysis suggests that most of the companies surveyed are within the range of small and medium-sized companies, with a significant presence of large companies.

Graphic 2.

Distribution of the number of employees in companies



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Graph 2 represents the distribution of the number of employees in the companies surveyed. From the data obtained, the following trends can be identified:

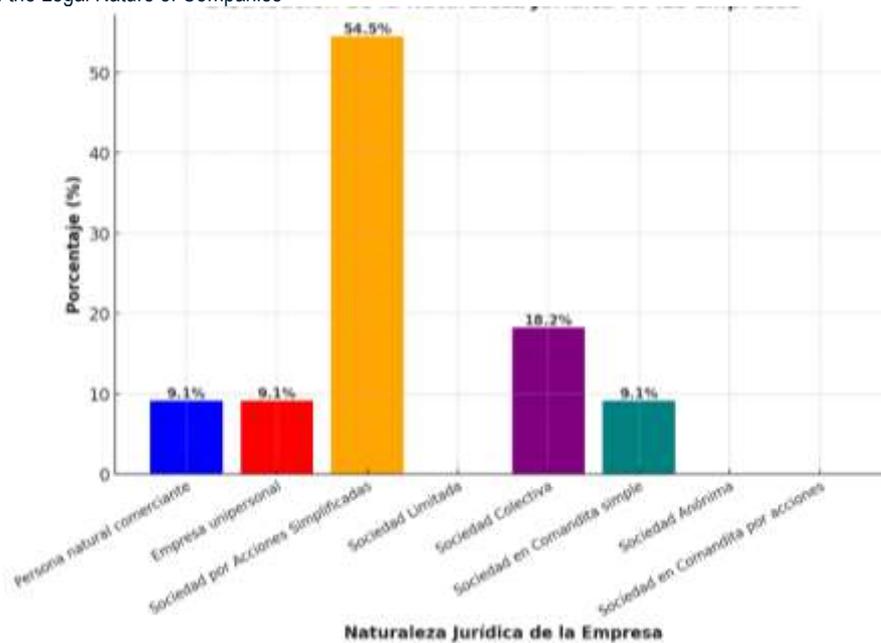
Predominance of companies with between 11 and 50 employees (36.4%): Most of the companies surveyed belong to this group, which indicates that small companies predominate within the sample. This suggests that the business fabric analyzed is largely made up of organizations with reduced structures and, possibly, with more centralized operations.

Companies with more than 200 employees (27.3%): A significant proportion of companies belong to this group, indicating the presence of large organizations within the sector analyzed. These companies can play a key role in generating employment and in the economic stability of the business environment.

Companies with between 51 and 200 employees (13.6%): This segment is the least represented, which could indicate that there are fewer medium-sized companies within the market analyzed. This may be due to growth barriers that prevent small businesses from scaling to an intermediate level.

Cases in which the classification does not apply (22.7%): A significant percentage of respondents indicated that the classification does not apply to their company. This may involve the presence of sole proprietorships, family businesses, or informal businesses that do not fit into the established categories.

Graphic 3.
Distribution of the Legal Nature of Companies



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study.

Graph 3 represents the distribution of the legal nature of the companies surveyed. From the data, the following interpretation can be drawn:

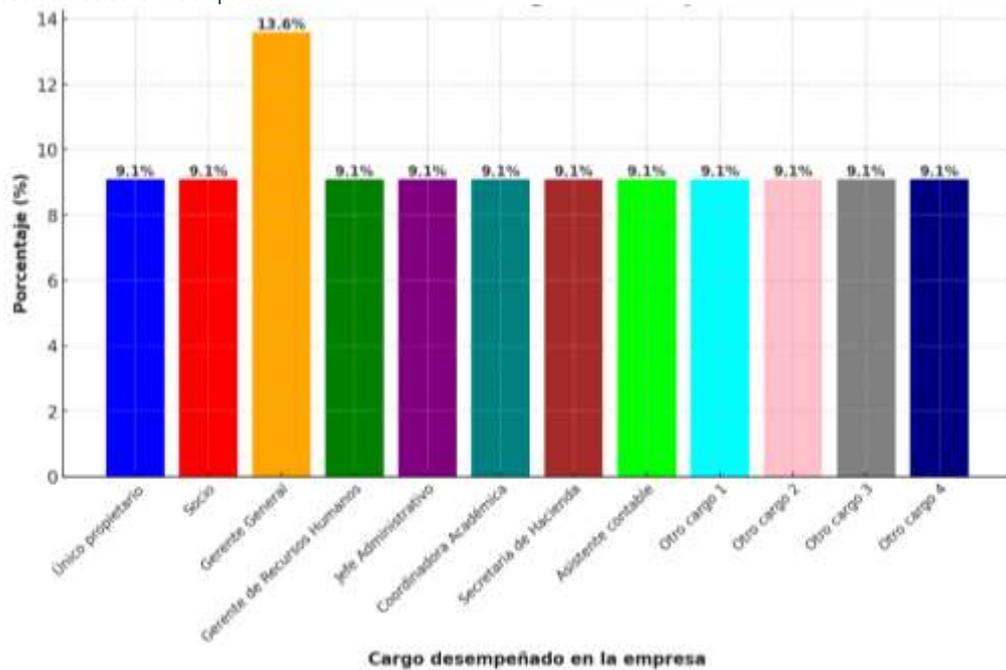
Predominance of the Simplified Stock Company (S.A.S.) (54.5%): Most of the companies surveyed have opted for this legal figure. This suggests that the S.A.S. is the most widely used option in the analyzed environment, probably due to its flexibility, ease of incorporation and lower administrative burden compared to other legal structures.

Partnerships (18.2%): A significant percentage of companies have chosen this structure, indicating a trend to form partnerships with more equal participation among partners, albeit with greater individual responsibilities.

Merchants, Sole Proprietorships, and Limited Partnerships (9.1% each): The presence of these structures indicates that there are both small entrepreneurs operating under their own name and individual companies seeking formal recognition without the need to associate with others.

Low representation of other legal entities: No responses were registered in the category of Limited Company, Public Limited Company or Limited Partnership by Shares. This may indicate that these figures are less attractive in the context analyzed.

Graphic 4.
Distribution of Positions in Companies



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study.

Graph 4 represents the distribution of the positions held in the companies surveyed. Based on the data obtained, the following observations can be highlighted:

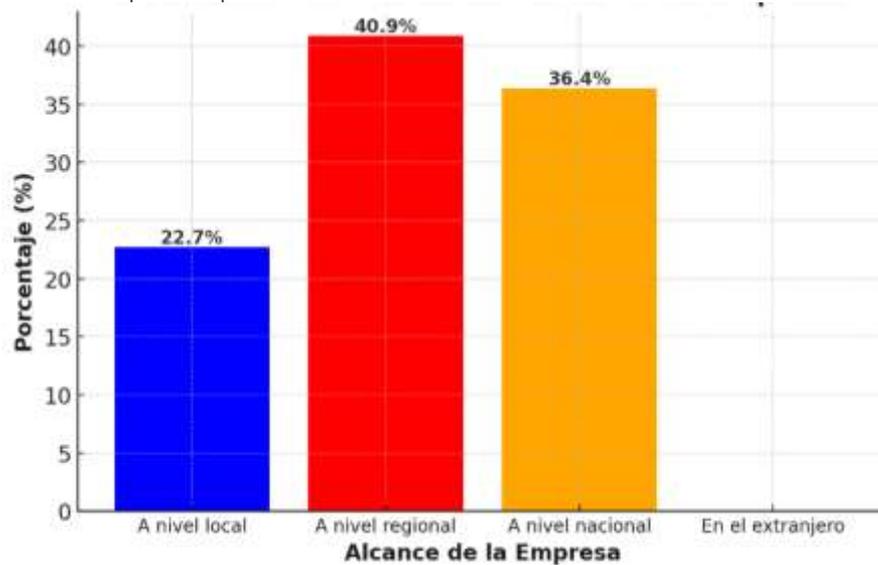
The results show a great diversity of roles within companies, without a single category that dominates in a significant way. Except for the position of General Manager (13.6%), which has a slightly higher representation, most other positions have a participation of 9.1%, which suggests a fairly equal distribution of responsibilities in the companies surveyed.

The presence of owners and managers shows the following proportions: Sole Owner (9.1%) and Partners (9.1%), which indicates that a considerable percentage of respondents have ownership or co-ownership roles within their companies. Such as General Manager (13.6%) and Administrative Head (9.1%), roles that suggest the presence of well-defined hierarchical structures in some companies.

The positions or roles of Human Resources Manager, Academic Coordinator, Secretary of Finance and Accounting Assistant have a percentage of 9.1%. This indicates that many companies surveyed have administrative and accounting departments, which could suggest an adequate level of formalization within organizations.

The existence of multiple categories in equal parts shows that companies have a variety of positions in different areas. This suggests that the surveyed sample encompasses different types of organizations, from small businesses run by a sole proprietor to more structured companies with different functional areas.

Graphic 5.
Distribution of the Sales Scope of Companies



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Graph 5 shows the distribution of the sales reach of the companies surveyed, reflecting the level at which their products or services operate. Based on the data obtained, the following points can be highlighted:

Most of the companies surveyed operate mainly at the regional level (40.9%), which indicates that their market covers several cities or areas within a specific region. This suggests that many companies have managed to expand beyond a single municipality, but without reaching full national coverage.

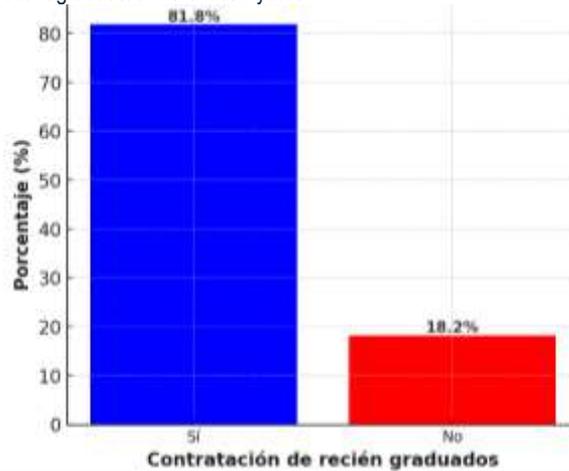
A considerable percentage of companies have a national presence (36.4%), which indicates that they have developed a structure that allows them to operate in multiple departments or throughout the country. This data is relevant, as it shows that many companies have managed to expand their reach beyond their region of origin.

A smaller proportion of businesses work exclusively locally (22.7%), suggesting that most businesses surveyed are looking to expand their market rather than just focus on their immediate area.

None of the companies surveyed reported operating abroad (0%), which indicates that they have not yet ventured into international markets.

Graphic 6.

Companies that have hired recent graduates in the last 2 years



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

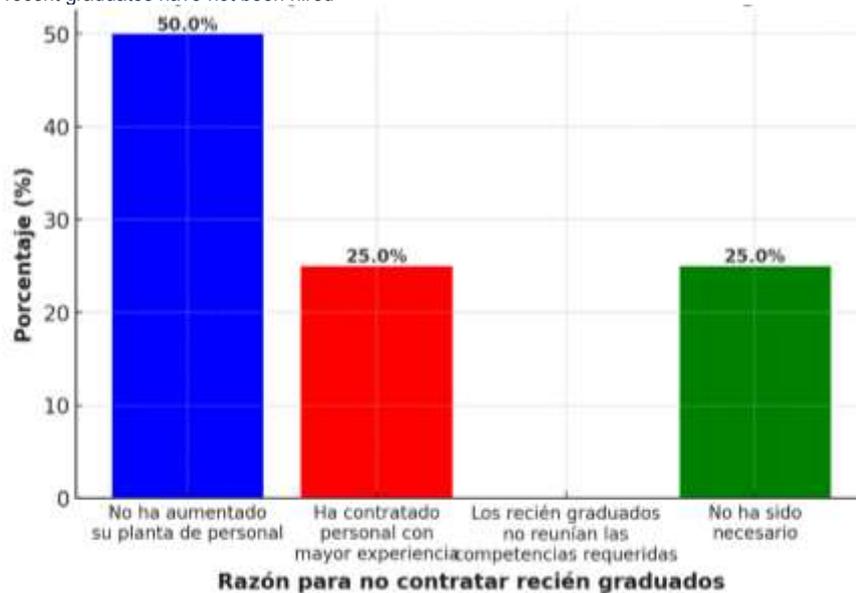
Figure 6 shows the proportion of companies that have hired university professionals, professional technicians or recently graduated technologists (with less than two years of experience) in the last two years. Based on the data obtained, the following observations can be highlighted:

Most of the companies surveyed have hired professionals with little experience in the last two years (81.8%). This indicates an opening in the labor market for new talent, which may be due to staff renewal strategies, access to government incentives, or the need for professionals with up-to-date knowledge.

A small number of companies have not hired recent graduates (18.2%). This could be related to specific experience requirements in their selection processes, budget limitations for the training of new talent, or a preference for employees with a long career.

Graphic 7.

Reasons why recent graduates have not been hired



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Figure 7 shows the reasons why some companies have not hired newly graduated university professionals, technicians, or technologists in the last two years. From the data obtained, the following observations can be drawn:

The main reason given by the businessman is that the staff has not increased (50%). Half of the companies that have not hired recent graduates indicate that they have not increased their workforce. This insinuates that their decision is not related to the experience or skills of the graduates, but to the lack of need to incorporate new workers.

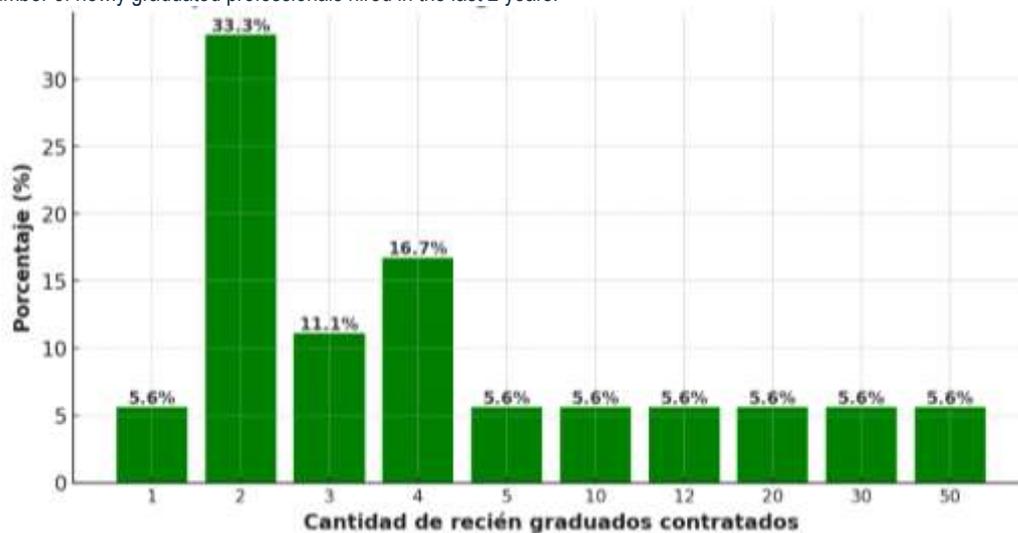
25% of companies have chosen to hire staff with more experience instead of recent graduates. This indicates that some organizations are looking for profiles with established work history, possibly due to the need for employees who can take on responsibilities without requiring additional training.

Another 25% of companies indicated that they have not hired recent graduates because it has not been necessary. This may imply that these companies have maintained stability in their work team or that they have opted for other ways to cover their labor needs.

No company mentioned that recent graduates did not meet the required skills, which points to the fact that the problem is not a lack of preparation, but a lack of hiring opportunities.

Graphic 8.

Number of newly graduated professionals hired in the last 2 years.



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Graph 8 shows the number of recent graduates (with less than 2 years of experience) who have been hired by the companies surveyed in the last two years. Based on the data obtained, the following observations can be highlighted:

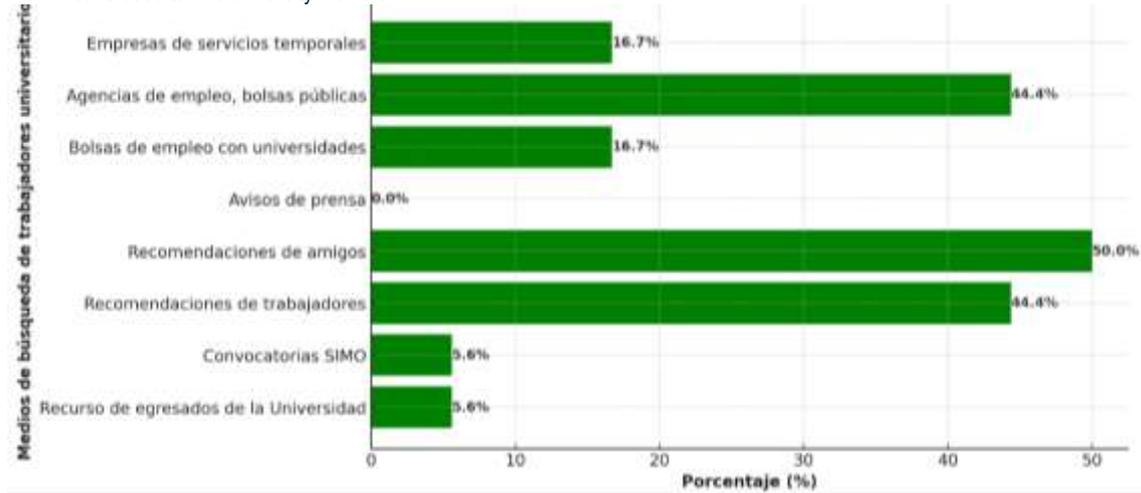
33.3% of the companies surveyed have hired exactly 2 recent graduates, which indicates a trend towards the moderate hiring of new talent in the labor market. This suggests that many companies may be including recent graduates in their teams, but in limited numbers.

11.1% of companies hired 3 recent graduates, while 16.7% hired 4. This shows that some organizations have chosen to integrate slightly larger groups of inexperienced professionals.

Several companies have hired only 1 recent graduate (5.6%), indicating a more cautious adoption of young talent. There are also companies that have hired much higher numbers, such as 10, 12, 20, 30 and up to 50 recent graduates, but each represents only 5.6% of respondents, indicating that they are less frequent cases.

Graphic 9.

Main means used to hire university workers



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Figure 9 shows the main means used by the surveyed companies to search for university-level workers. Based on the data obtained, the following reflections can be highlighted:

50% of companies indicated that recommendations from friends are one of the main means of finding talent. 44.4% of companies also rely on the recommendations of their own workers to hire university staff. This indicates that networking and trust in personal references play a key role in recruitment.

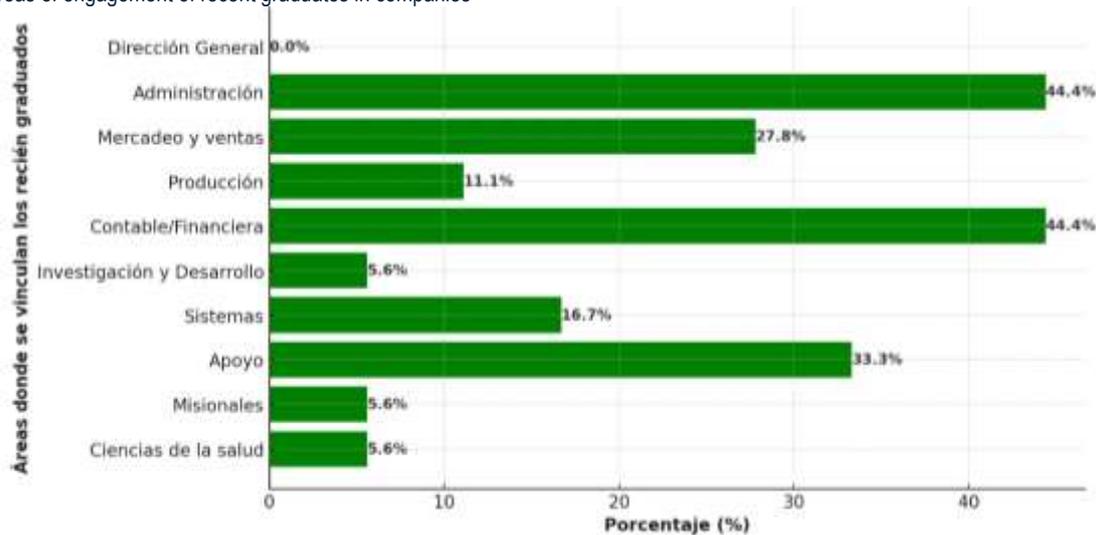
44.4% of companies use employment agencies and public stock exchanges as a means of hiring. 16.7% use university job boards, which suggests that some companies do look for talent directly in academic institutions. 16.7% hire through temporary service companies, which indicates that some employers prefer this type of labor intermediation.

Only 5.6% of companies resort to SIMO (Merit and Opportunity System) calls or resources from university graduates. This indicates that institutional university job portals are not a primary source of recruitment for many companies.

No company reported using press ads to hire university workers, which confirms that this medium has lost relevance compared to digital platforms and personal references.

Graphic 10.

Areas of engagement of recent graduates in companies



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Graph 10 shows the main areas or departments where recent university graduates were linked to the companies surveyed. From the data obtained, the following can be highlighted:

The areas of Administration and Accounting/Finance are the most closely linked (44.4%). Both areas represent the main options for the labor insertion of recent graduates. This indicates that many companies require young personnel in administrative management and financial management tasks, key functions in any organization.

A significant number of companies have recently hired graduates in support roles (33.3%), pointing to organizations integrating new talent into operational and logistical tasks.

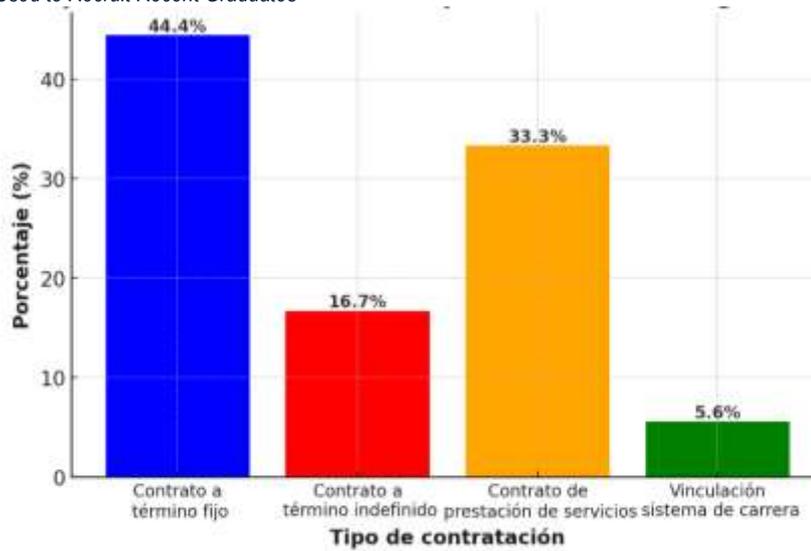
The Marketing and Sales area also has an important participation (27.8%). This percentage indicates that companies are hiring recent graduates in the commercial area, which could be related to the need to attract customers, manage sales strategies and strengthen market presence.

Participation in Production, Systems and Research and Development is low. Production (11.1%) and Systems (16.7%) are underrepresented, which could indicate that these areas require specific expertise or advanced technical skills. The Research and Development area also (5.6%) has a low participation, which insinuates that companies may not be investing significantly in innovation or that they prefer to hire professionals with more experience in this area.

Engagement in specialized areas such as Health Sciences and Missionaries (5.6%) is low, which may be because these areas require additional certifications, hands-on experience, or more specialized training.

There were no recent graduates in management positions (0%), which was to be expected given that these positions are usually reserved for people with more experience and a track record in the company.

Graphic 11.
Type of Hiring Used to Recruit Recent Graduates



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Graph 11 shows the types of hiring most used by companies to hire recent graduates. From the data obtained, the following can be observed:

Most of the companies surveyed prefer to employ recent graduates through fixed-term contracts (44.4%), which indicates that organizations opt for temporary modalities before offering job stability. This suggests that companies may be evaluating the performance of recent graduates before offering them a more stable contract.

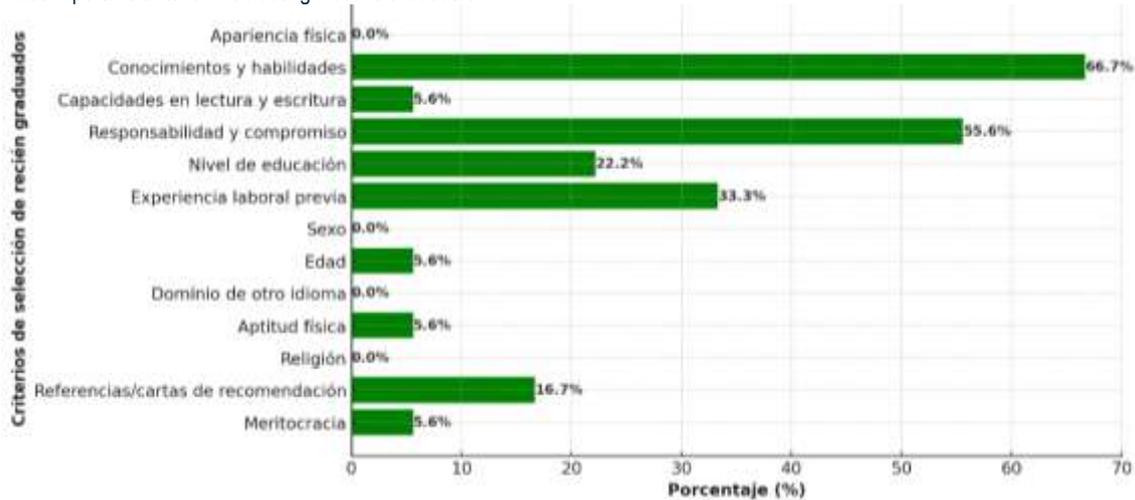
33.3% of companies link recent graduates through service provision contracts, which indicates that many organizations prefer this flexible modality instead of a formal employment contract.

Less than 20% offer indefinite-term contracts (16.7%). Only a minority of the companies surveyed offer open-ended contracts to recent graduates, indicating that access to job stability remains limited for these professionals. This may be related to the lack of experience of graduates and the hiring policies of companies.

The presence of career system linkage (5.6%) is low. Linkage within a career system, which would allow for structured growth within the company, is the least used, indicating that there are few long-term career development opportunities for recent graduates in many companies.

Graphic 12.

Most Important Criteria in Selecting Recent Graduates



Note: Authors. Based on the results of the Study

Figure 12 shows the most important criteria that companies consider when selecting recent graduates. From the data obtained, the following can be highlighted:

In 66.7%, knowledge and skills are the most important criterion. Most companies prioritize the level of knowledge and skills when hiring a recent graduate. This indicates that technical skills and mastery of specific tools are determining factors in hiring.

Responsibility and commitment are the second most valued criterion at 55.6%. More than half of companies look for attitudes of responsibility and commitment to work in candidates. This highlights the importance of soft skills and professional ethics in the selection process.

In 33.3%, previous work experience is also relevant. Although candidates are recent graduates, a significant percentage of companies still consider work experience as an important criterion. This suggests that many companies value internships, internships or previous work carried out during academic training.

The level of education influences the selection process by 22.2%. Although to a lesser extent, some companies consider the level of academic training as a key criterion. This may reflect a preference for certain degrees or specializations when hiring new talent.

The study presents other criteria that have less impact, such as references and letters of recommendation (16.7%), which indicates that they still play a role in some hires, although they are not the main factor; the abilities in reading and writing, age, physical aptitude and meritocracy (5.6%), which have a low incidence in the selection of recent graduates; Physical appearance, gender, proficiency in another language and religion (0%) are not considered determining factors in the selection, which is positive in terms of inclusion and equity in the labor market.

Discussion.

The analysis of the results obtained in the research allows us to identify significant trends in the labor insertion of recent graduates, evidencing both opportunities and challenges within the labor market. The information collected from the surveys applied to different companies suggests that, although there is an openness towards the hiring of young talent, the stability and working conditions of these professionals still have significant limitations.

One of the most relevant findings is that most of the companies surveyed belong to the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector, with a significant representation of large companies. This is crucial, as SMEs tend to have greater flexibility in hiring new talent, but at the same time they can offer less job stability compared to larger companies (Müller & Wolter, 2020). This pattern is in line with previous studies that indicate that SMEs play a key role in the absorption of graduates, although with more dynamic and, in some cases, precarious hiring modalities (Valverde et al., 2018).

In terms of the number of employees, it is observed that companies with between 11 and 50 workers predominate, which suggests a smaller and less hierarchical organizational structure. This type of organization can facilitate the practical learning of recent graduates, allowing them to take on multiple responsibilities from the beginning of their professional careers (OECD, 2019). However, the lower presence of medium-sized companies could indicate difficulties in the transition of small companies to structural growth, which could affect the generation of stable employment for new professionals.

From the point of view of the legal nature of companies, the predominance of Simplified Stock Companies (S.A.S.) is explained by the flexibility of this business figure in Colombia, which facilitates their incorporation and operational management (Díaz & López, 2021). However, this structure may be related to less formal hiring models and less access to labor benefits for recent graduates, compared to companies with a greater structural tradition.

Regarding the selection criteria, the results indicate that companies prioritize technical knowledge and skills, followed by the responsibility and commitment of candidates. This finding is consistent with previous research that indicates that, although work experience is a relevant factor, companies increasingly value the transversal skills and development potential of graduates (González-Romá et al., 2019). Despite this, 33.3% of companies still consider previous experience as an important criterion, which represents a challenge for recent graduates who have not had opportunities to carry out professional internships during their training.

In relation to the modalities of contracting, it is evident that fixed-term contracts are the most used option, followed by contracts for the provision of services. This reinforces the hypothesis that the hiring of recent graduates occurs, in many cases, under temporary schemes that limit their job stability and their access to social benefits. Studies such as that of Valverde et al. (2018) have pointed out that this type of hiring, although it provides initial employment opportunities, also generates uncertainty in the professional planning of graduates.

The analysis of the areas of linkage shows that administration, accounting and finance are the sectors where recent graduates are most inserted. This coincides with the needs of the market in terms of business management and planning, but it also suggests that other areas, such as research and development or information technology, may not be absorbing young talent in the same proportion. The low representation in sectors such as science and technology is a point of interest, as it may reflect limitations in the articulation between the academic sector and industry in the promotion of innovation (Teichler, 2020).

Another key aspect of the study is the identification of the main talent search channels. Personal recommendations and references from current workers appear as the most commonly used mechanisms, indicating the persistence of informal recruitment networks. This could limit equitable access to employment, since those who do not have connections within the labor market may face greater difficulties in getting their first job opportunity (Granovetter, 1995). On the other hand,

university job boards are underrepresented, suggesting the need to strengthen the relationship between higher education institutions and the productive sector in terms of labor intermediation.

Finally, the main barrier to the hiring of recent graduates identified in the study is the lack of growth in the workforce of companies, which indicates that the limitations in job creation are not necessarily related to the lack of skills of graduates, but to structural factors of the labor market. This finding reinforces the importance of public policies that promote the generation of youth employment and that encourage companies to hire young talent through support programs and tax benefits (OECD, 2021).

The results of the study confirm the existence of opportunities and challenges in the labor insertion of recent graduates. While companies are open to hiring young talent, the modalities of recruitment are still mostly temporary and depend largely on factors external to the candidate's profile. To improve the employability of graduates, it is necessary to strengthen training strategies in transversal skills, promote articulation between universities and companies, and promote policies that encourage the hiring of professionals in strategic sectors of the economy.

Conclusion.

The study shows that most of the companies surveyed belong to the small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector, which highlights their role in the absorption of recent graduates. However, their limited capacity for growth and the use of temporary contracts affects the job stability of graduates. It is key to promoting policies that encourage stable hiring in this segment.

Companies mainly value technical skills and specific knowledge in their selection processes. However, soft skills such as responsibility and commitment are gaining relevance. This reinforces the need for universities to promote comprehensive training that combines specialized knowledge with transversal skills, using active methodologies and practical experiences.

In terms of hiring, fixed-term contracts and contracts for the provision of services predominate, while permanent contracts are rare. This reflects the lack of job stability for recent graduates and highlights the importance of encouraging formal hiring and improving working conditions.

The areas with the highest demand for young talent are administration, accounting and finance, while strategic sectors such as research, development and innovation have low absorption of graduates. It is essential to strengthen the relationship between academia and the productive sector to promote insertion in these emerging sectors.

Access to employment is also influenced by recruitment mechanisms. Companies prioritize personal recommendations and internal references over university job boards, which can lead to inequalities in access to opportunities. It is necessary to strengthen the link between universities and companies, promoting more inclusive labor intermediation strategies.

A relevant finding is that the main barrier to hiring recent graduates is not the lack of skills, but the availability of positions in companies. This indicates that access to employment depends not only on academic training, but also on structural factors of the labor market. It is recommended to implement policies that encourage the creation of youth employment and strategies to constantly update the skills of graduates.

Finally, there are opportunities and challenges in the labor insertion of recent graduates. Although companies are willing to hire them, working conditions are still limited. It is essential to strengthen

the ties between academia and the productive sector, improve training in key skills and promote the creation of formal employment. This will ensure an effective transition of young people into the world of work, benefiting both graduates and companies and economic development in general.

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