

Perceptions of Resident Applicants About the Virtual Pre-Interview Reception

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BACKGROUND

•**Virtual pre-interview receptions (VPRs) have become a crucial component** of the residency interview process, particularly following the transition to virtual interviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

•These receptions offer applicants a **unique opportunity to interact with faculty and current residents**, providing insights into program culture, clinical training, and overall fit.

•**Unlike in-person social events, VPRs rely on structured virtual engagement**, which may impact how applicants perceive program strengths, mentorship, and camaraderie.

•**Despite widespread adoption, limited data exists on how VPRs influence applicant perceptions and final program rankings.** While some studies suggest virtual engagement enhances accessibility, others indicate challenges in conveying non-verbal communication and interpersonal dynamics.

•**Understanding how applicants perceive VPRs can help programs optimize virtual engagement strategies**, ensuring these sessions effectively convey key aspects of the program and facilitate an applicant-centered recruitment process.

OBJECTIVES

•**Evaluate how virtual pre-interview receptions (VPRs) shape applicant perceptions** of a vascular surgery residency program.

•**Assess whether VPRs influence applicants' final rank list decisions** and their perceived fit within the program.

•**Identify key aspects of VPRs that applicants find most beneficial or lacking** to improve virtual recruitment strategies.

• **Compare perceptions of VPRs across different applicant subgroups** (e.g., residency vs. fellowship applicants).

METHODS

•**Study Design:** Cross-sectional study using an electronic survey.

•**Participants:** Vascular surgery residency and fellowship applicants during the **2023–2024 application cycle** at Montefiore Medical Center.

•**Survey Distribution:** Sent **after interviews but before Match Day** and remained open for **two weeks** post-rank list submission.

•**Survey Content:** **Likert-scale and free-text responses** assessing usefulness, engagement, and impact on program ranking.

•**Data Analysis:**
• **Descriptive statistics** summarized survey responses.

RESULTS

Survey Response Rate: 29 of 63 applicants (**46% response rate**).

Applicant Demographics: Age:

- Majority were **29-32 years old (38%)**.
- **Gender: 66% male.**
- **Program Type:**
- **52% applied to integrated (0+5) residency, 48% to 5+2 fellowship.**
- **Relationship Status: 45% married or had a significant other influencing decisions, 14% dating (not influencing decisions), 41% single.**

Pre-Interview Reception Participation & Impressions: **44%** of applicants stated that **90-100% of the programs they applied to held a VPR.**

- 72%** of applicants attended evening VPR events before most residency interviews.
- 93%** reported **little to no stress** about attending these events.
- 52%** felt that **pre-interview receptions were only moderately important.**
- 50%** believed **not attending could negatively impact program impressions of applicants.**
- 41%** believed **not attending could limit their knowledge of programs.**
- 24%** described the **information provided at VPRs as highly impactful on their rank list decisions.**
- 82%** of applicants preferred **events with residents only (without faculty present).**
- 59%** received a **positive impression of the program from the VPR**, while **41%** had a **neutral impression. No respondents reported a negative impression.**

Most Appreciated Aspects of VPRs:

- **29%** of applicants valued **food vouchers and drinks.**
- 12%** appreciated the **attendance of staff outside of the vascular program.**

CONCLUSIONS

• **Virtual pre-interview receptions (VPRs) play a key role in applicant perceptions** of residency and fellowship programs, but their overall importance remains varied.

• **Most applicants found VPRs beneficial**, particularly for learning about program culture and interacting with current residents.

• **Attendance at VPRs was not universally viewed as necessary**, though some applicants believed that **not attending could negatively impact their understanding of a program.**

• **Programs may benefit from structuring VPRs to emphasize resident engagement**, as most applicants preferred events without faculty present.

• **Further research is needed to optimize VPR structure** and assess whether **specific VPR formats impact recruitment outcomes.**

Overall Applicant Impression of VPRs

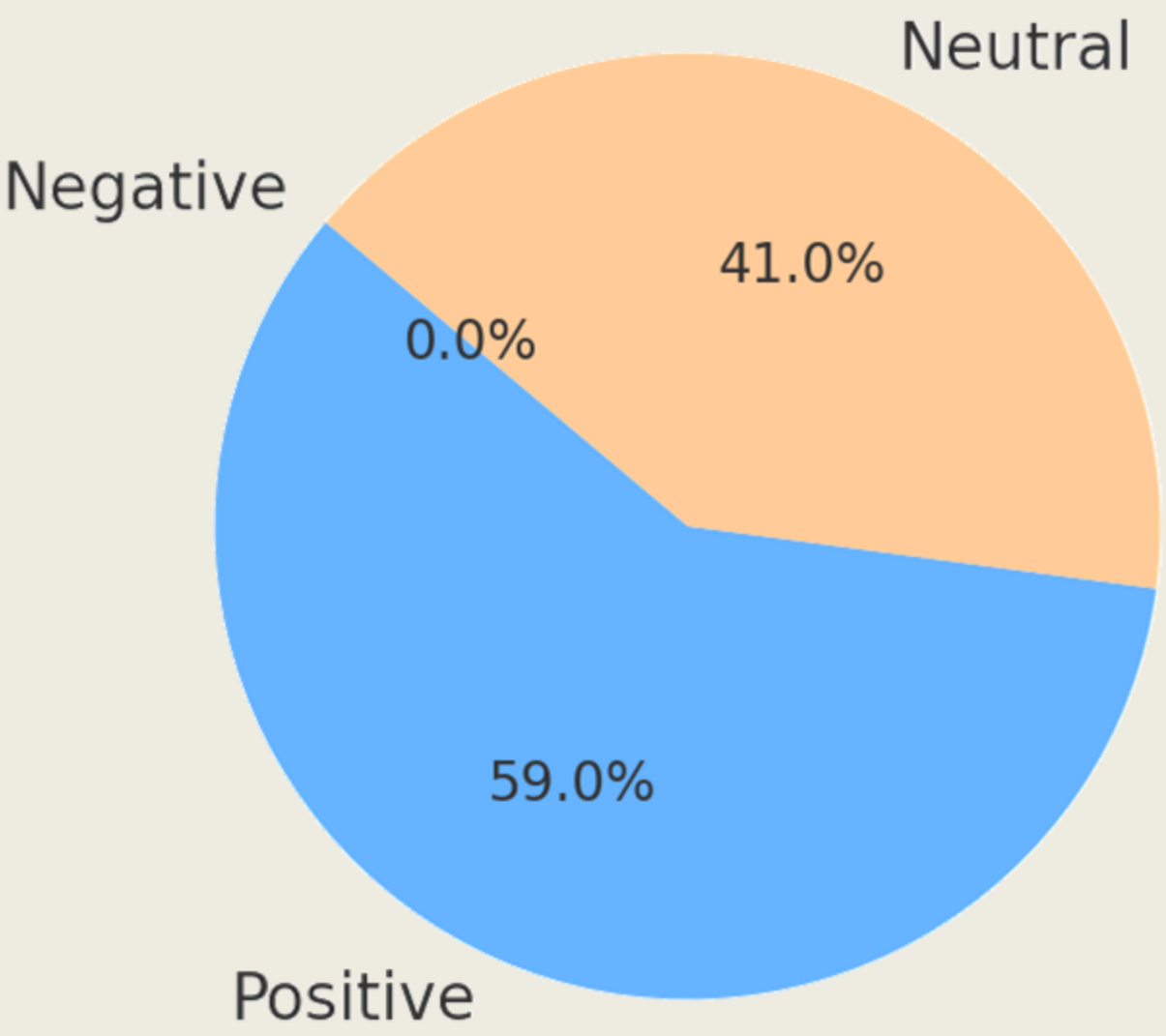


Figure 1: Overall Applicant Impression of VPRs

- Distribution of applicants' overall impressions of the virtual pre-interview reception. **59% of applicants had a positive impression**, while **41% reported a neutral impression. No applicants had a negative impression.**

Applicant Perception of VPR Importance

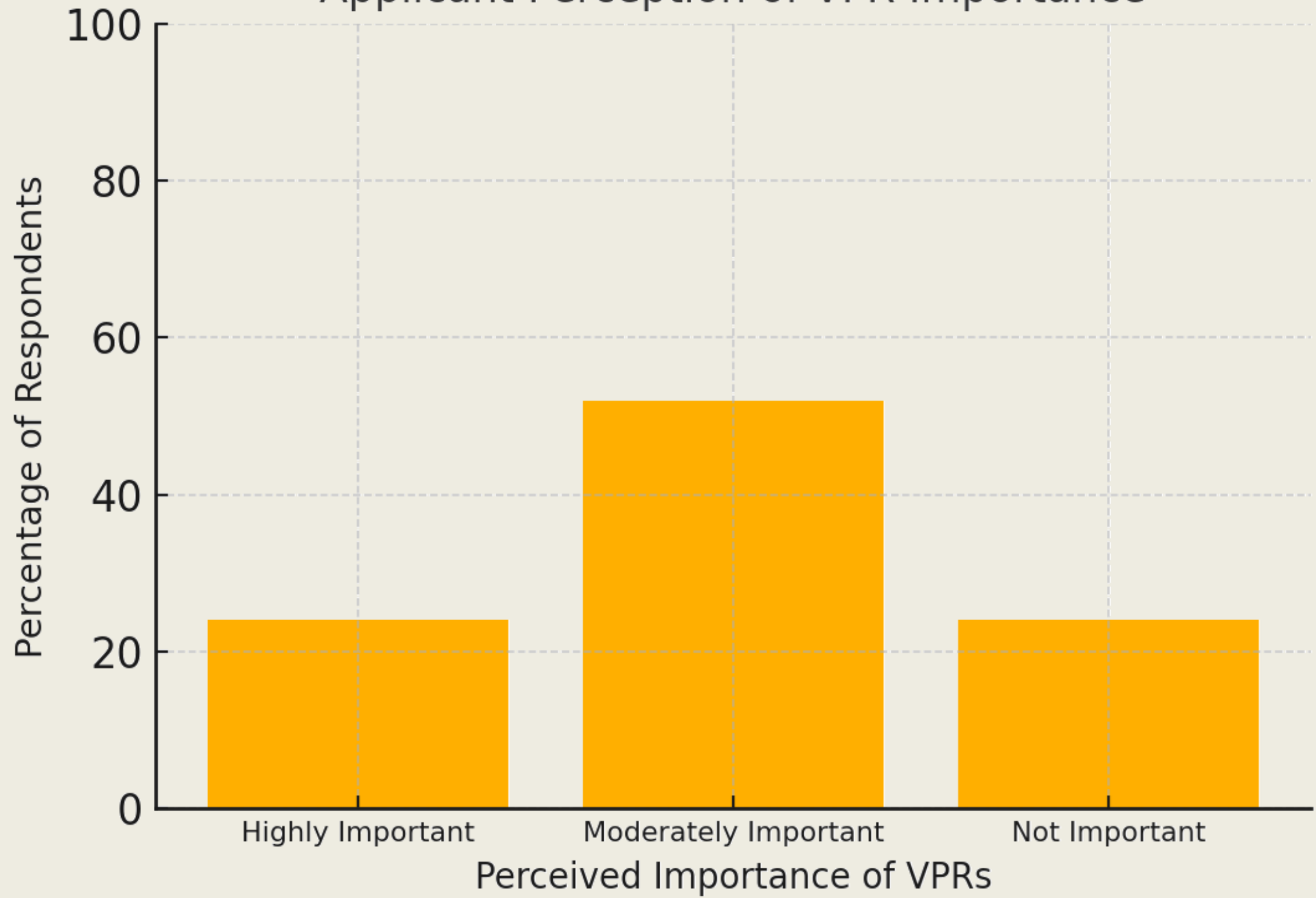


Figure 2: Applicant Perception of VPR Importance

- Distribution of how applicants perceived the importance of virtual pre-interview receptions (VPRs) in assessing program fit. The majority (**52%**) found them **moderately important**, while **24%** rated them **highly important**, and **24%** considered them **not important**.

REFERENCES

Gorodinsky, Pyotr, et al. "Impact of Virtual Residency Interviews on Applicant Decision-Making: A Multi-Specialty Survey." *Journal of Surgical Education*, vol. 79, no. 6, 2022, pp. 1302–1309. ScienceDirect, DOI:10.1016/j.jsurg.2022.05.003.