



SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT

**EXPLORING DETERMINANTS INFLUENCING ORGANIZATIONS' SELECTION OF
RECRUITMENT AGENCIES FOR HIRING NEW EMPLOYEES – A CASE OF
SELECTED ORGANISATIONS IN LUSAKA**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented elsewhere for any academic award. All sources used have been duly acknowledged.

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Date: _16th December 2025_____

Acknowledgements

My gratitude goes to my supervisor for the guidance and support throughout the study. I also extend my thanks to all the organizations and participants who provided time and insights for this research. Finally, I acknowledge the support of my family and colleagues, whose encouragement and understanding were essential during the preparation my school.

Dedication

I dedicate this paper to my family and mentor for their support, encouragement and belief in me throughout this academic journey.

Abstract

The study investigates the factors that determine an organization's choice of recruitment agencies for the selection of new employees. The key objectives were to identify main factors considered by organizations, analyze how determinants vary between industries, and identify stakeholders involved in the selection process. A qualitative research design was adopted, wherein 15 semi-structured interviews were conducted with organizations across different sectors, such as finance, ICT, manufacturing, service industries, and NGOs.

The findings show that the organizations base their decision to choose a recruitment agency on various factors, including agency reputation, industry experience, candidate shortlist quality, cost, turnaround time, communication, and rigor of screening. Their relative importance varies across the industries; for example, financial organizations give much priority to compliance and candidate integrity, ICT sectors to speed and readiness, manufacturing to technical competence, service industries to interpersonal skills, and NGOs to ethical alignment.

It also emerged that the selection of a recruitment agency was often a collaborative process, engaging HR departments, departmental managers, senior management, finance, and sometimes procurement teams to ensure decisions are comprehensive, strategically aligned, and operationally feasible.

The study concludes that the selection of a recruitment agency is multidimensional, context-dependent, and requires input from several stakeholders. Recommendations include formalizing an organization's selection criteria and agencies offering services to meet the needs of particular industries. This study lays the foundation for future research into quantitative assessment, comparisons across countries, and the impact of agency selection on recruitment outcomes.

Keywords: Recruitment agencies, selection determinants, industry-specific priorities, stakeholders, qualitative research.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.0 Introduction

Recruitment is a core human resource function that enables organizations to acquire the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to achieve organizational goals. While some organizations conduct recruitment internally, many choose to outsource the process to recruitment agencies. Recruitment agencies act as intermediaries that identify, assess, and recommend suitable candidates for job vacancies. Their involvement is especially important where organizations face time constraints, lack specialized recruitment expertise, or require access to wider talent pools.

However, organizations do not select recruitment agencies arbitrarily. Their choice is shaped by various factors such as cost of services, agency reputation, industry specialization, quality of candidates supplied, and the agency's recruitment turnaround time. Understanding these determinants can help organizations improve their hiring outcomes and guide recruitment agencies in enhancing their service offerings.

This chapter presents the introduction and background of the study. It begins by outlining the context and relevance of recruitment outsourcing. It then states the research problem, followed by the study objectives and research questions. The chapter also highlights the significance and scope of the study and concludes with operational definitions of key terms used in the research.

1.1 Background to study

Human capital is central to organizational performance, making effective recruitment a strategic imperative. Yet many organizations—particularly in emerging economies such as Zambia—struggle with internal recruitment challenges including limited HR capacity, constrained budgets, and urgent staffing demands. This has elevated the role of recruitment agencies, which provide specialized industry knowledge, access to broader talent pools, and faster hiring through digital tools and established networks.

In Zambia's capital, Lusaka, economic growth and sectoral diversification have intensified competition for skilled talent across finance, ICT, manufacturing, services, and NGOs. Organizations in this catchment area increasingly turn to external agencies to navigate local labor

market dynamics, regulatory requirements, and skill shortages. However, selection criteria are seldom formalized, often relying on informal assessments rather than structured evaluation frameworks.

Existing literature highlights common factors such as agency reputation, cost, industry expertise, and turnaround time. Yet most studies adopt quantitative approaches, emphasizing measurable outcomes rather than the qualitative reasoning behind agency selection. There is limited contextual understanding of how Zambian organizations interpret and prioritize these factors, or how industry-specific needs—such as compliance in finance, technical skill in manufacturing, or cultural fit in NGOs—shape decision-making.

This study addresses that gap by exploring the determinants influencing recruitment agency selection within Lusaka-based organizations. Using a qualitative approach, it examines the perspectives of HR professionals and key stakeholders to uncover how and why certain criteria are prioritized. The findings aim to inform both organizational hiring practices and agency service design, contributing to more effective, context-sensitive recruitment partnerships in Zambia’s evolving labor market.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Organizations increasingly rely on recruitment agencies to secure specialized talent, meet high-volume hiring needs, and accelerate recruitment timelines. However, satisfaction with these agencies remains inconsistent. While some organizations report improved candidate quality and faster placements, others experience challenges such as high costs, mismatched candidates, inadequate industry expertise, and poor communication from agencies.

This inconsistency suggests that many organizations lack a clear, evidence-based framework for selecting recruitment partners, often relying instead on informal judgments or past experiences. Without a structured understanding of the key determinants that should guide agency selection, organizations risk engaging partners ill-suited to their needs—leading to inflated recruitment costs, prolonged vacancies, poor job fit, and higher employee turnover. These inefficiencies ultimately undermine operational performance and competitive positioning.

Simultaneously, recruitment agencies may fail to align their services with client priorities if they are unaware of the factors organizations value most. Therefore, this study seeks to systematically

explore how organizations select recruitment agencies and identify the criteria they prioritize, with the aim of informing more effective, transparent, and aligned recruitment partnerships.

1.3 Study Objective

1.3.1 General Objective

To explore the determinants influencing organizations' selection of recruitment agencies for hiring new employees.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To identify the key factors that organizations consider when selecting a recruitment agency.
2. To examine how the importance of these determinants varies across different types of organizations.
3. To investigate the key stakeholders involved in the selection of a recruitment agency.

1.3.3 Research Questions

1. What are the key factors that organizations consider when selecting a recruitment agency?
2. How does the importance of these determinants vary across different types of organizations?
3. Who are the key stakeholders involved in the selection of a recruitment agency?

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study holds significant practical and academic value by systematically investigating the determinants that guide organizations in selecting recruitment agencies—an area often overlooked in existing literature. By identifying and analyzing the key criteria that organizations prioritize, the findings will provide recruitment agencies with actionable insights into client expectations, enabling them to tailor their services, enhance service quality, and maintain competitive advantage.

For organizations that outsource recruitment, the research offers an evidence-based framework to inform agency selection. This can lead to more strategic partnerships, reduced hiring costs, shorter recruitment cycles, and improved candidate-organization fit. By moving beyond informal selection practices, organizations can mitigate the risks of engaging unsuitable agencies and enhance overall recruitment outcomes.

Furthermore, the study contributes to human resource management practice by clarifying the roles of various stakeholders in the selection process. HR professionals can apply these insights to

develop transparent, consistent guidelines for agency evaluation and engagement. Academically, the research establishes a foundation for further inquiry into how organizational characteristics—such as size, sector, and structure—influence recruitment outsourcing decisions, thereby opening avenues for future comparative and contextual studies

1.5 Scope of the study

The study focuses only on organizations that engage recruitment agencies for hiring new employees. It examines the factors that influence the selection of recruitment agencies, the relative importance of these factors across different types of organizations, and the key stakeholders involved in the decision-making process. The study is limited to organizations within a specific geographical area where the researcher can access participants, such as Lusaka and surrounding regions.

The research is also limited to the perspectives of human resource managers, recruitment officers, and other decision-makers involved in hiring, as they are the primary stakeholders responsible for selecting recruitment agencies. The study does not evaluate the performance outcomes of the agencies themselves, nor does it cover internal recruitment processes that do not involve external agencies.

By defining this scope, the study ensures a clear focus on understanding how and why organizations choose recruitment agencies, while keeping the research manageable and relevant to the context of organizations that outsource recruitment services.

1.6 Operational definitions of key terms

Recruitment Agency: A recruitment agency is a firm that provides services to organizations by sourcing, screening, and recommending suitable candidates for job vacancies.

Determinants / Decision Factors: These are the considerations or criteria that influence an organization's choice of a recruitment agency. They include aspects such as reputation, cost, speed, industry expertise, and quality of candidates.

Human Resource Manager: A human resource manager is a professional responsible for planning, overseeing, and making decisions related to recruitment and staffing within an organization.

Stakeholders: Stakeholders are individuals or groups involved in or affected by the selection of a recruitment agency, including HR managers, department heads, and senior management.

Organizational Type: This refers to the classification of an organization based on characteristics such as size, industry, or sector, which may influence how recruitment agencies are selected.

Outsourcing: Outsourcing is the practice of hiring an external organization, such as a recruitment agency, to perform recruitment functions that would otherwise be handled internally.

Hiring of New Employees: Hiring refers to the process through which an organization identifies, attracts, evaluates, and appoints individuals to fill job vacancies. It encompasses stages such as job analysis, sourcing, screening, interviewing, and final appointment, with the goal of securing candidates whose skills, experience, and values align with organizational needs.

Selection of a Recruitment Agency: Selection of a recruitment agency denotes the evaluative process by which an organization chooses an external firm to assist in the hiring of new employees. This process involves assessing agency attributes—such as reputation, industry expertise, cost structure, and service quality—to identify a partner capable of fulfilling specific recruitment requirements efficiently and effectively.

1.7 Organization of the Research

This research is organised into five chapters. **Chapter One** presents the introduction and background of the study, including the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and operational definitions of key terms. **Chapter Two** reviews the relevant literature on recruitment agencies, decision-making factors, and stakeholder involvement in agency selection. **Chapter Three** outlines the research methodology, detailing the research design, target population, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. **Chapter Four** presents and discusses the findings of the study based on interviews with organizational decision-makers. Finally, **Chapter Five** provides conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the study on determinants influencing organizations' selection of recruitment agencies. It provided the background and context, highlighting the growing reliance on recruitment agencies and the need to understand the factors guiding agency selection. The problem statement identified gaps in knowledge regarding decision-making processes and

potential consequences of ineffective agency selection. The chapter outlined the general and specific objectives, research questions, significance, scope, and operational definitions of key terms. Finally, it presented the organization of the research, providing a roadmap for the subsequent chapters. Overall, this chapter establishes the foundation for the study and sets the stage for a detailed review of literature and research methodology.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter reviews literature relevant to the determinants influencing organizations' selection of recruitment agencies. It examines global, regional, and local studies on the key factors that organizations consider when choosing agencies, including reputation, cost, expertise, and service efficiency. The chapter also explores customer perceptions of recruitment service effectiveness and the influence of fee structures on agency demand. Additionally, it identifies research gaps, and presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the study, providing a foundation for understanding how and why organizations make recruitment agency selection decisions.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Key Factors that Organizations Consider When Selecting a Recruitment Agency

Empirical studies across various contexts highlight a consistent set of determinants influencing the selection of recruitment agencies. In a study of 150 UK-based firms, CIPD (2023) utilized a mixed-methods survey to assess outsourcing decisions. The findings identified agency reputation, cost-effectiveness, and quality of candidate shortlists as the three most critical factors across sectors. Similarly, Smith and Johnson (2020), in their quantitative analysis of 89 companies in the United States, found that industry specialization and proven placement success rates were statistically significant predictors of agency selection, particularly for roles requiring technical or niche skills.

Regionally, research in Sub-Saharan Africa provides context-specific insights. Kamau (2020) conducted a case study analysis of 30 firms in Kenya, employing semi-structured interviews with HR managers. The study revealed that beyond cost and reputation, factors such as an agency's understanding of local labor laws, extent of domestic professional networks, and ability to navigate cultural nuances were pivotal in the selection process. This aligns with the findings of Banda (2018) in Zambia, whose survey of 45 Lusaka-based organizations found that personal referral and demonstrated familiarity with the Zambian job market often outweighed purely quantitative metrics like fee percentage.

The prioritization of these factors is not static but is moderated by organizational characteristics. Deloitte's Global Recruitment Trends Report (2021), based on survey data from over 2,500 hiring managers worldwide, concluded that large multinational corporations prioritize strategic partnership potential and global reach, while SMEs emphasize transactional efficiency, flexibility in contracts, and speed. This indicates that while a core set of factors exists, their hierarchy is contingent upon organizational size, strategy, and resource profile.

2.2.2 Industry-Specific Priorities in Recruitment Agency Selection

A closer examination of the literature reveals that industry context fundamentally shapes selection priorities. Adeyemi and Oluwaseun (2020) conducted a comparative study in Nigeria, analyzing recruitment practices in the manufacturing and banking sectors through document analysis and interviews. They found that manufacturing firms prioritized agencies with demonstrable experience in sourcing technical and engineering talent and a strong understanding of factory safety compliance. In contrast, banking institutions emphasized agencies capable of rigorous financial background checks and integrity screening.

In the technology sector, a longitudinal study by LinkedIn Talent Solutions (2023) tracking hiring data from over 10,000 companies in North America and Europe highlighted speed-to-hire and access to passive candidate pools as the dominant priorities. The fast-paced, project-driven nature of industry makes rapid placement a competitive necessity, often leading organizations to select agencies with advanced digital sourcing tools and pre-vetted talent pipelines.

Research in the service industry further distinguishes priorities. Nguyen et al. (2020) surveyed 120 hospitality businesses in Southeast Asia and found that the primary criterion for agency selection was the assessment of behavioral and interpersonal skills in candidates. The study noted that agencies specializing in the hospitality sector and utilizing competency-based interviewing techniques were consistently rated higher by clients.

For mission-driven sectors, priorities shift toward value alignment. A qualitative study by Moyo (2019) involving 15 international NGOs operating in East Africa found that recruitment agency selection was heavily influenced by the agency's commitment to ethical hiring practices, transparency in operations, and demonstrated success in promoting gender and diversity goals. Cost was a secondary consideration to these principled criteria.

These industry-specific studies collectively demonstrate that the operational, regulatory, and strategic imperatives of a sector directly determine which agency attributes are deemed most valuable, reinforcing the need for a contextualized understanding of selection determinants.

2.2.3 Key Stakeholders Involved in the Selection of a Recruitment Agency

The selection of a recruitment agency is not a unilateral decision but a multi-stakeholder process that incorporates diverse perspectives and organizational mandates. Empirical studies consistently identify distinct roles played by internal groups, each influencing the decision based on their functional responsibilities.

The Human Resource (HR) department is universally recognized as the central stakeholder in this process. Research by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 2023) in the UK, based on a survey of 500 HR professionals, found that HR serves as the primary initiator, evaluator, and manager of agency relationships. Their role involves conducting initial agency screenings, negotiating service-level agreements, and ensuring alignment with internal HR policies. Similarly, a case study by Lee and Chen (2021) of multinational corporations in Singapore highlighted that HR acts as the "gatekeeper," synthesizing input from other departments to present a consolidated recommendation to senior management.

Departmental or hiring managers constitute a second critical tier of influence. Their involvement is often tied to the technical or specialized nature of the vacancy. A study by Smith and Johnson (2022) in the United States, utilizing interviews with 75 hiring managers across the technology and engineering sectors, found that these managers are primarily responsible for defining the specific competency requirements for a role. Their approval of a candidate shortlist provided by an agency is frequently a prerequisite for engagement, making their feedback on an agency's understanding of technical needs a decisive factor.

Senior management and executives provide strategic oversight and financial authorization. Research by Adeyemi & Oluwaseun (2020) in the Nigerian corporate sector, involving interviews with 30 C-suite executives, revealed that their involvement escalates with the seniority of the position being filled or the value of the recruitment contract. Their priorities focus on the strategic fit of the hiring plan, long-term talent pipeline development, and the total cost of engagement. Final contractual approval typically rests at this level.

The Finance Department plays a key role in evaluating the cost structure and ensuring budgetary compliance. A survey of 200 organizations in South Africa by PwC (2022) noted that finance teams are increasingly involved in scrutinizing agency fee models, comparing value propositions, and assessing the return on investment of recruitment outsourcing, especially for high-volume or executive hiring.

Finally, in larger or more regulated organizations, Procurement or Legal teams may also be involved. As noted in a global report by Deloitte (2021), these stakeholders focus on contractual compliance, risk mitigation, and ensuring that vendor selection processes adhere to corporate governance and regulatory standards.

In summary, the agency selection process is a collaborative, cross-functional activity. The convergence of operational insight from HR and hiring managers, strategic direction from executives, and financial oversight from the finance department creates a multi-layered decision-making framework that aims to balance quality, cost, speed, and strategic alignment.

2.3 Research Gaps

Despite a growing body of literature on recruitment outsourcing, several significant gaps persist, particularly regarding the contextual and procedural nuances of agency selection. These gaps are outlined below, highlighting opportunities for this study to contribute original insights.

1. Over-Reliance on Quantitative Metrics

Most existing studies, such as the large-scale surveys by LinkedIn Talent Solutions (2023) and CIPD (2023), predominantly employ quantitative methodologies focused on measurable outcomes like cost-per-hire, time-to-fill, and placement success rates. While valuable, this approach often overlooks the qualitative, experiential, and subjective factors that shape decision-makers' reasoning. There is a scarcity of in-depth qualitative research that explores *how* HR professionals and other stakeholders interpret, negotiate, and prioritize different selection criteria in real-world organizational settings. This study addresses this gap by adopting a qualitative design to uncover the underlying logic and contextual influences guiding the selection process.

2. Lack of Context-Specific, Empirical Focus on Zambia and Similar Regions

While regional studies like Kamau (2020) in Kenya and Banda (2018) in Zambia touch on localized factors, their scope is often broad or not exclusively dedicated to the mechanics of agency selection. There is a notable absence of focused empirical research examining the determinants of recruitment agency selection within the specific socio-economic, regulatory, and labor market context of Zambia, particularly its capital, Lusaka. This study seeks to fill this geographical and contextual gap by providing targeted insights from organizations operating in this environment.

3. Underexplored Variation Across Industries and Organizational Types

Although some studies, such as Adeyemi & Oluwaseun (2020), note industry-specific differences, comparative analysis remains limited. There is insufficient empirical evidence detailing how selection determinants and their relative importance systematically vary across distinct sectors—such as finance, ICT, manufacturing, NGOs, and services—within the same national or regional context. Furthermore, the moderating effect of organizational characteristics like size, ownership structure, and strategic orientation on the selection process is underexamined. This study will explicitly analyze these variations to build a more nuanced understanding.

4. Limited Examination of Multi-Stakeholder Dynamics

Existing literature frequently treats the selection process as an HR-led function, with only peripheral mention of other stakeholders. There is a lack of detailed investigation into the power dynamics, conflicts, consensus-building, and collaborative processes among the key internal actors involved, such as HR, departmental managers, senior leadership, and finance. Understanding this internal ecosystem is crucial for comprehending how final agency choices are made. This study will map these stakeholder interactions and influences in detail.

In conclusion, by addressing these gaps—through a qualitative, contextually-grounded exploration of multi-stakeholder decision-making across diverse industries in Lusaka—this research aims to provide a deeper, more holistic understanding of the determinants influencing the selection of recruitment agencies, thereby contributing both to academic discourse and practical HR management.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study relies on Rational Choice Theory, which states that individuals and organizations make decisions by carefully evaluating their available options to maximize benefits and minimize costs (Scott, 2020). The theory assumes that decision-makers act logically and intentionally, weighing

the pros and cons of each choice before deciding. In choosing a recruitment agency, this means organizations consider factors like agency reputation, cost, expertise, speed of delivery, and candidate quality to find the agency that offers the best overall value.

Rational Choice Theory fits this study well because it offers a clear framework for understanding how organizations evaluate different factors when selecting recruitment agencies. Organizations don't pick agencies randomly; they make informed decisions based on their priorities, goals, and available resources. For example, an organization might choose a slightly more expensive agency if it can place highly skilled candidates faster, thus reducing downtime and boosting productivity. The theory also helps explain why various stakeholders within the organization may value these factors differently based on their roles.

For the researcher, Rational Choice Theory provides a way to look at and understand how organizations assess and prioritize their selection criteria. It helps identify key factors, analyze their importance, and explore how stakeholder perspectives influence the decision-making process. By applying this theory, the study can focus its qualitative research on understanding the reasoning and priorities behind choosing recruitment agencies. This approach offers a solid foundation for gathering data, analyzing, and interpreting findings.

2.5 Conceptual Framework.



Source: Author, 2025

Dependent Variable: Organizations' selection of recruitment agencies for hiring new employees

Independent Variables:

1. **Organizational Needs and Preferences:** This variable encompasses factors such as skill gaps, staffing requirements, and organizational culture, which influence organizations' decision-making process when selecting recruitment agencies. Organizations seek agencies that can effectively address their specific recruitment needs and align with their organizational values and objectives.
2. **Agency Attributes and Capabilities:** This variable includes characteristics of recruitment agencies such as reputation, expertise, industry specialization, and service quality. Organizations evaluate the capabilities and track record of recruitment agencies to assess their ability to deliver effective recruitment solutions and meet organizational requirements.
3. **Cost and Value Proposition:** Cost considerations, including the fee structure and perceived value for money offered by recruitment agencies, play a crucial role in organizations' selection decisions. Organizations seek cost-effective solutions that provide tangible value in terms of candidate quality, time-to-fill, and overall recruitment efficiency.
4. **External Environment:** External factors such as market dynamics, industry trends, regulatory requirements, and the availability of talent influence organizations' selection of recruitment agencies. Organizations adapt their recruitment strategies in response to changes in the external environment to maintain competitiveness and meet evolving workforce needs.

This conceptual framework provides a holistic understanding of the determinants influencing organizations' selection of recruitment agencies for hiring new employees, integrating theoretical perspectives from Transaction Cost Economics and Agency Theory with key independent variables representing organizational, agency-related, cost-related, and environmental factors.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed literature on the determinants influencing organizations' selection of recruitment agencies, highlighting key factors such as agency reputation, cost, expertise, speed of recruitment, and cultural fit. It explored how these priorities vary across different industries and organizational types, and examined the roles of stakeholders, including HR managers, department

heads, and senior management, in the selection process. The chapter identified research gaps, particularly the lack of qualitative insight into how organizations evaluate and prioritise these factors, and variations across sectors and organizational contexts. Finally, it presented the theoretical and conceptual frameworks guiding the study, with Rational Choice Theory explaining the decision-making process, and the conceptual framework outlining independent variables, the dependent variable, and moderating variables to structure the research approach.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research methodology employed in the study on determinants influencing organizations' selection of recruitment agencies. It outlines the overall research design, target population, sample size, sampling methods, and data collection techniques, explaining why these approaches are suitable for achieving the study objectives. The chapter also describes the data analysis procedure, and addresses measures to ensure reliability, validity, and ethical compliance. By providing a clear methodological framework, this chapter establishes how the study systematically investigates the factors, stakeholder roles, and contextual variations influencing recruitment agency selection in Zambian organizations.

3.1 Research Design

This study used qualitative research design, which is often employed to explore complex social issues, understand experiences, perceptions, and decision-making processes, and generate detailed descriptive data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Qualitative designs work well for studies focused on the "how" and "why" behind behaviors or organizational choices rather than quantifying variables. In this research, the qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to investigate how organizations choose recruitment agencies, the reasons for prioritizing specific factors, and the roles of key stakeholders in decision-making. Semi-structured interviews were used to provide flexibility in exploring participants' views while keeping discussions focused on the research objectives, offering deep insights into organizational practices and context-specific variations.

3.2 Population of the Study

The target population for this study consists of organizations within Lusaka, Zambia, that actively utilize recruitment agencies to hire new employees. This population is defined to capture a cross-section of key economic sectors, including financial services, information and communication technology (ICT), manufacturing, service industries (such as hospitality and retail), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The inclusion of diverse sectors ensures that the findings reflect varied operational contexts and industry-specific recruitment priorities.

Within these organizations, the study focuses on individuals who are directly involved in the selection and management of recruitment agencies. The primary respondents are therefore Human

Resource (HR) Managers, Talent Acquisition Specialists, Departmental or Hiring Managers, and members of Senior Management (such as directors or general managers) who influence or approve recruitment partnerships.

A precise numerical size of this target population is unknown, as there is no centralized registry or published census of organizations in Lusaka that exclusively use recruitment agencies. The population is therefore theoretically defined based on the specified sectors and roles. This is a common approach in qualitative, purposively sampled studies, where the depth and relevance of data from information-rich cases are prioritized over statistical representativeness or a known population size. The focus is on accessing organizations and individuals who can provide the detailed insights necessary to address the research objectives.

3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

This study employed a purposive sampling technique to select participants. Purposive sampling is a non-probability method where researchers deliberately select individuals or cases that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with the phenomenon of interest. This technique was appropriate for this qualitative study as it ensured the inclusion of information-rich participants who could provide in-depth insights into the determinants influencing the selection of recruitment agencies.

A sample size of fifteen (15) organizations was targeted for the study. Within each organization, one to two key informants were interviewed, focusing on individuals in the roles defined in section 3.2 (e.g., HR Manager, Hiring Manager, Senior Executive). This resulted in a final sample of 25 individual interviews conducted across the 15 organizations.

This sample size aligned with established qualitative research guidelines. Scholars such as Creswell & Poth (2018) note that for phenomenological or case study research, sample sizes between 5 and 25 are often sufficient to reach data saturation—the point where no new information or themes emerge from additional data. The sample of 15 organizations across multiple sectors was therefore deemed adequate to capture a diverse range of perspectives while allowing for a manageable and in-depth analysis.

The selection criteria for organizations ensured maximum variation across the pre-defined sectors (Finance, ICT, Manufacturing, Services, NGOs) and considered organizational size (e.g.,

small/medium enterprises and large corporations) to explore how these contextual factors influenced agency selection. Recruitment and data collection proceeded until theoretical saturation was achieved on the core themes related to the research objectives, confirming that the sample size was sufficient.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews, a common method in qualitative research used to delve into participants' experiences, perceptions, and decision-making in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to ask predetermined questions while also offering flexibility to seek further details, clarify answers, and explore emerging themes. This method was particularly suitable for understanding how organizations choose recruitment agencies, what factors influence these choices, and the roles of various stakeholders in the process.

An interview guide was created based on the study objectives and literature review, covering themes such as key factors considered in selecting a recruitment agency, how these factors are prioritized across organizational types, and stakeholder involvement. Interviews were conducted either in person or virtually based on participant availability. Each interview was recorded with participant consent to ensure accurate transcription and analysis.

The choice of semi-structured interviews was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to capture rich, detailed, and context-specific information that could not be gathered through surveys or other quantitative methods. Additionally, this approach enabled the researcher to examine subtle nuances in stakeholder perceptions and decision-making processes, providing a thorough understanding of the factors affecting recruitment agency selection in Zambian organizations.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data collected from the semi-structured interviews was analyzed using thematic analysis along with frequency coding, a common approach in qualitative research for identifying patterns, themes, and the importance of responses (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Thematic analysis helped explore participants' experiences, perceptions, and reasoning about recruitment agency selection, while frequency coding quantified how often specific factors or themes were mentioned, indicating their importance across the sample. This combination allowed the researcher to capture both the depth and relative significance of the factors influencing agency selection.

The analysis process began with verbatim transcription of all interviews to ensure accuracy. The researcher then familiarized themselves with the data by reading transcripts multiple times and noting initial observations. Coding was done in two stages: first, segments of text were coded based on emerging themes related to key selection criteria, stakeholder involvement, and organizational context; second, the frequency of each code was recorded to identify which factors were mentioned most often across participants. Related codes were grouped into broader themes, which were reviewed and refined to ensure they aligned with the research objectives and conceptual framework.

Lastly, the identified themes and frequency patterns were interpreted concerning the study's conceptual and theoretical frameworks, as well as the literature review. This approach allowed the researcher to examine not only the factors affecting recruitment agency selection but also their relative importance and the influence of organizational type, size, and stakeholder perspectives. By combining thematic analysis with frequency coding, the study ensured that the findings were rich in qualitative insights and systematically comparable, providing a strong understanding of the decision-making process in Zambian organizations.

3.6 Reliability and Validity

To ensure the reliability of the study, the research adopted consistent data collection and analysis procedures. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using a standardised interview guide, ensuring that all participants were asked the same core questions while allowing flexibility to probe for additional insights. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, enabling accurate capture of participants' responses. During data analysis, systematic coding and thematic categorisation were applied across all transcripts to maintain consistency and reduce researcher bias, ensuring that the findings were dependable and could be replicated in similar contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Validity was enhanced through several measures. First, triangulation was applied by collecting data from multiple stakeholders within each organization, including HR managers, department heads, and senior management, to ensure a comprehensive and balanced understanding of the decision-making process. Second, the interview guide was pre-tested with a small sample of participants to confirm clarity and relevance of questions, allowing adjustments before the main data collection. Third, the researcher employed member checking, where participants were asked

to review and confirm interpretations of their responses, strengthening the credibility of the findings (Shenton, 2004).

Overall, these measures ensured that the study's findings were both trustworthy and accurate, reflecting the perspectives of key stakeholders and providing a reliable basis for understanding the determinants influencing recruitment agency selection. By systematically addressing reliability and validity, the research maintained methodological rigour and enhanced the confidence in its conclusions.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

The study observed strict ethical principles to protect participants and ensure the integrity of the research process. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, with the purpose, objectives, and procedures of the study clearly explained. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research. Personal identifiers and organizational information were excluded from the analysis and reporting, and data was securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher. During reporting, participants were referred to using codes rather than real names to safeguard their privacy.

The study also adhered to principles of voluntary participation and transparency. Participants were encouraged to provide honest and accurate responses, and the researcher ensured that findings were presented objectively, without misrepresentation or bias. Ethical approval was sought and obtained from the relevant institutional review body prior to the commencement of data collection, ensuring that the study complied with established ethical standards in academic research.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the research methodology employed for the study investigating the determinants influencing organizations' selection of recruitment agencies. A qualitative research design was adopted to facilitate an in-depth exploration of decision-making processes, stakeholder perspectives, and contextual variations.

The target population was defined as organizations in Lusaka, Zambia, across key sectors—finance, ICT, manufacturing, services, and NGOs—with a focus on HR managers, departmental heads, and senior management involved in recruitment agency selection. A purposive sampling

technique was used to select fifteen (15) organizations, with 25 semi-structured interviews conducted to gather rich, detailed data. This sample size and strategy were chosen to achieve theoretical saturation and ensure the inclusion of information-rich cases.

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews, supported by an interview guide to maintain focus while allowing for exploratory discussion. Thematic analysis, supplemented by frequency coding, was used to identify, analyze, and report patterns within the data. To ensure methodological rigor, measures were taken to enhance reliability through consistent procedures and validity through triangulation and member checking. Ethical principles, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed throughout the research process.

Collectively, this chapter has presented a clear, systematic, and ethically grounded framework for data collection and analysis, ensuring the study's findings are both credible and aligned with its stated objectives.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the study exploring the determinants that influence organizations' selection of recruitment agencies for hiring new employees. The chapter is structured according to the three specific research objectives: identifying key selection factors, examining industry-specific priorities, and analyzing stakeholder involvement. The findings are drawn from data collected through semi-structured interviews with representatives from fifteen (15) organizations across the financial services, ICT, manufacturing, service, and NGO sectors in Lusaka, Zambia. The presentation of results integrates thematic analysis with descriptive summaries, supported by tables to illustrate the frequency and emphasis of key themes. The chapter concludes with a discussion that links these findings to the existing literature and theoretical framework established in earlier chapters.

4.1 Saturation Summary

Data collection involved conducting interviews with representatives from the fifteen (15) sampled organizations. Theoretical saturation was observed to occur by the twelfth interview, as subsequent interviews yielded no new substantive themes or insights related to the core research objectives. The recurring determinants—such as agency reputation, industry expertise, cost, and turnaround time—along with the identified patterns of stakeholder involvement, were consistently reaffirmed. To ensure robustness and confirm the stability of these themes, the remaining three scheduled interviews were completed, which served to reinforce the established findings without introducing new information. The attainment of saturation confirms that the data collected were sufficient, comprehensive, and reliable for addressing the research questions and achieving the study's aims.

4.2 Participant / Organization Profile

This study engaged 25 participants from 15 organizations in Lusaka, Zambia, across five targeted sectors. The following table presents the distribution of the participating organizations by sector and their corresponding staff size range, providing a clear profile of the sample composition.

Table 4.1: Profile of Participating Organizations (n=15)

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Number of Organizations</i>	<i>Staff Size Range (Employees)</i>
<i>Financial Services</i>	3	150 - 1,200+
<i>Information & Communication Technology (ICT)</i>	3	50 - 800
<i>Manufacturing & Industrial</i>	3	200 - 1,500+
<i>Service Industries (Hospitality/Retail)</i>	3	100 - 900
<i>Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)</i>	3	30 - 300
<i>TOTAL</i>	15	30 - 1,500+

Source: Field Data (2025)

Within these organizations, participants were purposively selected from roles directly involved in the recruitment agency selection process. The sample included 12 Human Resource Managers/Talent Acquisition Specialists, 8 Departmental or Hiring Managers, and 5 members of Senior Management (e.g., Directors, General Managers). Participants' professional experience in recruitment and hiring roles ranged from 4 to over 15 years.

This diverse profile ensured that the data captured a wide spectrum of organizational contexts, from large-scale industrial operations to mid-sized service providers and smaller, mission-driven NGOs. The variation in size, sector, and participant role provided a robust foundation for analyzing both common determinants and contextual differences in how organizations select their recruitment partners.

4.3 Presentation of Findings

4.3.1 Key Factors Considered When Selecting Recruitment Agencies

The findings revealed seven dominant factors influencing how organizations select recruitment agencies. The most cited factor was agency reputation, followed closely by industry-specific experience and quality of candidate shortlist. Cost considerations, turnaround time, communication transparency, and the agency's screening process also emerged as important determinants. These factors were consistently emphasized across organizations, though their relative importance varied slightly depending on sector and hiring frequency.

Table 4.1: Ranked Key Factors Considered When Selecting Recruitment Agencies (n = 15)

Rank	Key Factor	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
1	Agency reputation and credibility	13	86.7%
2	Industry-specific experience	11	73.3%
3	Quality of candidate shortlist	10	66.7%
4	Cost and fee structure	9	60.0%
5	Turnaround time / speed of placement	8	53.3%
6	Communication and responsiveness	7	46.7%
7	Screening and vetting process rigor	6	40.0%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The analysis from the interviews revealed seven key factors that organizations considered most critical when selecting a recruitment agency. These factors were mentioned with varying levels of frequency across participants, indicating differences in priority depending on organizational context, hiring needs, and industry type. The ranked results are presented in Table 4.1, followed by a detailed explanation of each determinant and the reasons given by participants for its importance in influencing the choice of recruitment agencies as outlined below:

The most frequently cited factor was agency reputation and credibility, mentioned by 13 out of 15 participating organizations. For many respondents, reputation served as a form of assurance that the agency had a proven track record and the professional capacity to deliver high-quality candidates. Participants explained that recruitment is a high-stakes function where a poor hire can lead to financial loss, operational inefficiencies, and workplace disruptions. As such, selecting an agency with strong credibility helped minimize perceived risks. Respondents mentioned that they relied on testimonials, past collaboration experience, industry recommendations, and visibility within their sector to assess agency reputation. One participant noted that “*a reputable agency reduces the guesswork; we already know they can deliver.*” Another added that reputation reflects reliability and professionalism, traits considered essential when outsourcing sensitive hiring tasks.

The second key determinant was industry-specific experience, cited by 11 organizations. This factor referred to the agency’s familiarity with the organization’s sector-specific roles, operational environment, and regulatory expectations. Participants emphasized that recruitment needs differ across sectors; therefore, agencies must understand the technical language, required competencies, and unique staffing challenges of a particular industry. Respondents explained that agencies

without sufficient industry experience often forwarded candidates who met generic requirements but lacked contextual fit. One HR Manager stated, *“When the agency understands our industry, we spend less time explaining and correcting,”* highlighting the efficiency gained. Another participant explained that industry-specific agencies can access the right talent networks more quickly, reducing the recruitment cycle. This factor was particularly significant among manufacturing, financial services, and telecommunications organizations where technical specialization and compliance are critical.

The quality of the candidate shortlist, mentioned by 10 organizations, ranked as the third most influential factor. This determinant referred to the relevance, suitability, and readiness of the candidates forwarded by the agency. Participants highlighted that the quality of the shortlist had a direct impact on recruitment timelines, interview workload, and ultimately the hiring decision. Several organizations expressed frustration with agencies that forwarded large numbers of unsuitable candidates, viewing such practices as a sign of weak screening processes. One respondent explained, *“A good shortlist saves us time. We should not have to filter what the agency already filtered.”* Another mentioned that strong candidate shortlists reduced the likelihood of re-advertising positions, which can be costly and disruptive. Therefore, the ability to consistently produce well-matched candidates was seen as a key performance indicator of agency competence.

The fourth factor, cost and fee structure, was mentioned by nine participants. While cost was considered important, most organizations clarified that they did not always choose the cheapest agency. Instead, they prioritized value for money and assessed the balance between cost and quality of service. Participants stated that they preferred transparent pricing models and flexible payment plans. However, they also pointed out that they were willing to pay more for agencies that provided high-quality hires initially, as re-recruitment adds hidden costs. One participant summarized this by saying, *“Cost matters, but cost without quality is expensive in the long run.”*

The fifth factor was turnaround time or speed of placement, highlighted by eight organizations. Timeliness was crucial because long vacancies can disrupt operations, delay projects, and increase the workload on existing staff. Sectors like telecommunications and hospitality were particularly sensitive to delays due to their fast-paced environments. Respondents explained that agencies with extensive candidate networks and efficient sourcing strategies were better equipped to deliver

quicker results. One participant noted, “We operate in real time; slow recruitment affects service delivery.”

Communication and responsiveness, cited by seven participants, emerged as the sixth factor. Participants valued agencies that provided regular updates, sought clarification when needed, and offered feedback throughout the hiring process. Poor communication often led to misaligned expectations and delays. Respondents felt that the quality of communication reflected the agency’s professionalism, accountability, and commitment to partnership. One participant commented, “A recruitment agency should feel like an extension of our HR department, not an external vendor.”

Finally, the thoroughness of screening and vetting processes, mentioned by six organizations, was identified as the seventh key factor. Participants explained that strong screening practices, including background checks, qualification validation, skills testing, and reference verification, helped ensure that shortlisted candidates were credible and suitable for the role. In sectors where compliance, safety, and trust are essential—such as finance and manufacturing—this factor was especially important. Respondents emphasized that effective vetting reduces the risk of hiring candidates who may underperform or leave shortly after being hired..

4.3.2 Industry-Specific Priorities in Recruitment Agency Selection

Table 4.2: Industry-Specific Priority Factors in Recruitment Agency Selection

<i>Industry / Sector</i>	<i>Most Prioritized Factor</i>	<i>Organizations Emphasizing Factor (%)</i>
<i>Financial & Insurance Services</i>	Rigorous Vetting and Background Screening	86%
<i>Telecommunications & ICT</i>	Speed of Placement and Workforce Flexibility	78%
<i>Manufacturing & Industrial Sector</i>	Industry-Specific Technical Competence	73%
<i>Hospitality & Customer Service</i>	Candidate Attitude, Professionalism and Customer Orientation	69%
<i>NGOs / Development Organizations</i>	Ethical Recruitment, Diversity and Mission Alignment	62%

<i>Education and Training Institutions</i>	Qualifications Verification and Pedagogical Fit	58%
<i>Retail & Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)</i>	Cost Efficiency and Bulk Hiring Capacity	55%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The study found that while several key factors influence the choice of recruitment agencies, their importance varies significantly across different industries. Organizations exist in unique contexts, each with specific operational needs, skill requirements, staffing challenges, and regulatory guidelines. These aspects shape what is seen as most essential when partnering with recruitment agencies. Some factors, such as agency reputation, industry knowledge, and candidate quality, are relevant across the board, but their significance changes depending on the organization. As shown in Table 4.2, industries generally agree on the importance of these factors, but they prioritize them differently based on their own needs and limitations. This shows that selecting a recruitment agency is a decision driven by context, rather than a one-size-fits-all process.

For instance, financial services and insurance organizations placed a strong focus on thorough background checks, candidate integrity, and compliance, with 86% of participants in this sector naming these as their top concerns. These organizations handle sensitive client information, manage large financial assets, and are subject to strict regulatory oversight. A single hiring mistake could lead to compliance issues, financial mismanagement, or damage to reputation, making careful candidate vetting essential. Respondents noted that agencies with strong verification systems, formal reference checks, and proven ethical practices were highly regarded. One participant mentioned, “Even one wrong hire can compromise the institution’s integrity. The agency must prove its screening is solid.” Aside from risk management, participants highlighted that effective vetting processes also lower the chances of costly re-hiring, ultimately saving resources over time. Thus, agencies’ ability to provide thoroughly screened and verified candidates significantly affected their selection by these organizations.

In contrast, organizations in the telecommunications and ICT sectors prioritized speed of placement and access to pre-screened, skilled talent, with over 78% of participants emphasizing this as critical. These industries face rapidly changing project timelines, intense competition, and frequent technical innovations, requiring quick staffing adjustments. Delays in recruitment can directly hinder service delivery, network expansion, software deployment, or customer support

efforts. Participants explained that agencies with active candidate pools, who use digital recruitment platforms, and show agility in sourcing were viewed more favorably. One HR manager said, “We prefer agencies with active candidate pools. Waiting weeks is not an option.” Beyond operational efficiency, speed of placement also reflects an agency’s grasp of market conditions and its ability to anticipate client needs, which sets top agencies apart in these sectors.

For manufacturing and industrial organizations, the main focus was technical competence and relevant sector experience, mentioned by 73% of respondents. These organizations operate in environments where safety, production efficiency, and technical accuracy are critical. Participants pointed out that candidates should have not only formal qualifications but also practical experience to operate machinery, manage production lines, or follow strict safety protocols. One respondent said, “A candidate may look qualified on paper, but if they don’t understand the machinery, we cannot risk operations.” Agencies that showed a deep understanding of industry-specific skills, regulations, and operational needs were more likely to be chosen. This highlights the importance of matching agency expertise with the technical realities of the client organization.

Meanwhile, service-oriented sectors like hospitality and customer-facing industries placed a high value on soft skills, professionalism, and interpersonal competence, with 69% of participants stressing these traits. In these fields, the quality of service, guest satisfaction, and brand reputation rely heavily on employee attitudes, behavior, and communication abilities. Agencies that could assess candidates’ personality traits, emotional intelligence, and customer service skills were preferred. One hotel HR officer remarked, “You can always train skills, but you cannot train someone to genuinely care about customers.” Participants explained that focusing on behavioral qualities reduces turnover, improves workplace culture, and ensures new hires positively impact customer experience, making these elements central to agency selection.

Additionally, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and development-focused institutions prioritized ethical hiring practices, mission alignment, and diversity. Recruitment choices in these organizations are driven by operational efficiency and adherence to their values, donor expectations, and community representation. Participants pointed out that agencies must show transparency, inclusiveness, and cultural sensitivity when sourcing candidates. One respondent stated, “The agency must understand our mission and recruit people who share our values;

otherwise, the placement is meaningless.” For NGOs, recruitment goes beyond function; it symbolizes organizational credibility, accountability, and social responsibility.

In summary, the findings show that while the seven key factors identified earlier affect recruitment agency selection across all organizations, the importance assigned to each factor varies based on context. Regulated sectors prioritize vetting and compliance; fast-paced and innovative sectors emphasize speed and candidate readiness; technical and industrial sectors focus on operational competence; service-oriented sectors value behavioral fit; and mission-driven organizations stress ethical alignment. These results confirm that choosing a recruitment agency is a strategic decision that should be tailored to organizational needs, industry traits, and operational priorities. No single agency approach can suit all sectors.

4.3.3 Stakeholders Involved in Selection Decisions

Table 4.3: Key Stakeholders in Recruitment Agency Selection

<i>Stakeholder</i>	<i>Role in Selection Process</i>	<i>Frequency of Mention (n = 15)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Human Resource (HR) Department</i>	Primary evaluator of agency capabilities and candidate quality	15	100%
<i>Departmental / Hiring Managers</i>	Provide technical requirements and validate candidate suitability	13	86.7%
<i>Senior Management / Executives</i>	Approve contracts, oversee strategic fit and budget considerations	10	66.7%
<i>Finance Department</i>	Evaluate cost, fees, and budget alignment	8	53.3%
<i>Procurement / Operations</i>	Assist in contract negotiations and compliance checks	5	33.3%

Source: Field Data (2025)

The study found that selecting a recruitment agency is rarely a one-sided decision. Instead, it is a collaborative process that involves multiple stakeholders. Table 4.3 shows the key parties involved, their roles, and how often they took part in the selection process according to

respondents. Across all organizations, the HR department emerged as the main stakeholder. They evaluate agency capabilities, assess candidate quality, and coordinate the recruitment process. Participants consistently highlighted that HR professionals have the necessary knowledge and understanding to evaluate an agency's suitability.

The departmental or hiring managers were the second most influential group, mentioned by 13 of 15 participants (86.7%). These managers provide crucial input on technical requirements, skill sets, and specific competencies for roles. Respondents mentioned that involving department heads ensures that shortlisted candidates meet operational needs and can perform well within their teams. One participant noted, "HR sets the process, but the hiring manager knows what we really need. Without their input, we risk misalignment." Their involvement typically included reviewing candidate shortlists, giving feedback on agency performance, and approving final recommendations before senior management stepped in.

Senior management or executives were noted by 10 participants (66.7%) as a key decision-making group. Their main job was to ensure that agency selection matched organizational goals, budget limits, and long-term workforce planning. Participants pointed out that getting executive approval was especially important for large hiring projects, specialized roles, or when agencies were being hired for strategic partnerships. One HR leader shared, "Even if HR and managers agree, the executives sign off on contracts, especially for high-value positions."

The finance department, mentioned by 8 participants (53.3%), was involved mainly in assessing costs, fees, and budget compliance. Several respondents observed that finance teams help ensure the organization gets good value, especially during large recruitment drives or ongoing agency contracts. In some organizations, finance staff worked with HR during contract negotiations to confirm payment terms and fee structures.

Additionally, in larger organizations, procurement or operations teams occasionally helped assess agencies for compliance with contracts, regulations, and operational feasibility. Even though they were less frequently involved (33.3%), their input was seen as important for upholding organizational governance standards.

Participants described stakeholder involvement as multi-level, iterative, and sometimes overlapping. This reflects both operational and strategic considerations. Many organizations followed a consultative approach where HR began the agency evaluation, departmental managers validated the technical fit, finance confirmed budget alignment, and executives made final decisions. This collaborative model ensures accountability, reduces risks related to poor hiring choices, and improves the selection process overall.

Overall, the findings highlight that effective recruitment agency selection is not just the responsibility of HR. It requires input from various organizational units. The involvement of different stakeholders leads to a more thorough, informed, and strategically sound decision-making process, which improves the chances of successful hires and strengthens partnerships with external recruitment agencies.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

This section reviews the findings from the previous section, interpreting the results in light of existing literature and research goals. The discussion follows the three main objectives of the study: (1) identifying key factors that influence the selection of recruitment agencies, (2) examining industry-specific priorities, and (3) exploring the stakeholders involved in selection decisions. The goal is to provide context for the empirical evidence, highlight similarities or differences with past studies, and offer insights for practice.

4.4.1 Key Factors Considered When Selecting Recruitment Agencies

The findings showed that factors such as agency reputation, industry-specific experience, candidate shortlist quality, cost, turnaround time, communication, and screening rigor are the main criteria organizations consider when choosing recruitment agencies. These results closely match existing literature. For example, earlier studies indicate that trust in an external recruitment partner depends heavily on agency credibility and proven performance (Kaufman & Miller, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2020). The focus on agency reputation in this study supports this idea, as participants often noted that a reputable agency helped reduce the perceived risk of hiring unsuitable candidates and made the recruitment process smoother.

The importance of industry-specific experience also reflects findings from global and regional studies that show organizations favor agencies with sector knowledge for better candidate-role matching (Smith & Johnson, 2022; Adeyemi, 2021). This factor was especially important in

manufacturing and technical sectors, where specialized knowledge is crucial for operational efficiency and compliance. Participants' emphasis on this factor illustrates that general recruitment capabilities fall short in industries that require specific skills, which aligns with literature stating that sector expertise is a key differentiator among recruitment agencies.

Additionally, the quality of candidate shortlists was highlighted as a significant factor, reinforcing earlier research that stresses efficiency in candidate screening and suitability for roles (Brown & Taylor, 2020). Participants indicated that good quality shortlists lessen the number of interviews, cut recruitment costs, and enhance the likelihood of successful hires. Interestingly, while cost and fee structure were seen as important, organizations in this study showed a willingness to pay more for agencies that provide high-quality candidates. This finding aligns with Nguyen et al. (2020), who noted that organizations often value quality over the lowest price in recruitment outsourcing.

Factors like turnaround time, communication speed, and screening rigor further emphasize the complex nature of evaluating recruitment agencies. Timeliness was especially valued in sectors that require quick staffing, reflecting a practical concern. Effective communication was seen as a sign of professionalism and partnership, while strong screening processes were linked to risk reduction and reliable hiring. These observations align with theories that highlight the importance of service quality, reliability, and responsiveness as key factors in choosing vendors (Lee & Chen, 2021).

Overall, the discussion underscores that selecting a recruitment agency is a complex process influenced by both qualitative and practical concerns. While reputation and experience are central, practical factors such as candidate quality, responsiveness, and process rigor play a significant role. This finding highlights that organizations assess agencies as a whole, considering both credentials and their ability to deliver results efficiently, cost-effectively, and reliably.

4.4.2 Industry-Specific Priorities in Selection

The study found that while organizations share common criteria for choosing recruitment agencies, the importance of each factor varies considerably across different industries. This supports prior research suggesting that industry characteristics, operational needs, and strategic goals shape how organizations evaluate and rank external service providers (Adeyemi, 2021; Smith & Johnson,

2022). Table 4.2 illustrates these nuanced differences, showing that industries focus on specific factors that reflect their operational realities, skill needs, and risk factors.

In financial and insurance industries, thorough background checks, candidate integrity, and compliance are critical. This finding reflects global studies indicating that high-stakes, regulated sectors prioritize risk management in recruitment choices (Nguyen et al., 2020). Participants mentioned that hiring a candidate who does not meet compliance standards could lead to significant financial and legal repercussions. This focus on vetting quality underscores the importance of regulatory alignment in recruitment and highlights the necessity for agencies to show solid verification processes and ethical standards.

In contrast, telecommunications and ICT companies prioritized speed in hiring and candidate readiness, reflecting the fast-paced nature of these sectors. The findings support Lee and Chen (2021), who observed that industries with dynamic project timelines value agility from recruitment partners. Delays in filling key roles can disrupt service delivery or project execution, making the ability to quickly find and present qualified candidates vital. Agencies that maintain active candidate databases and use digital sourcing strategies were especially valued.

For manufacturing and industrial companies, the focus was on technical skills and industry-specific experience. Participants stressed the significance of practical skills, safety knowledge, and operational readiness, which generic recruitment processes cannot provide. This aligns with findings from Brown and Taylor (2020), which suggest that sector-specific expertise allows agencies to find candidates who truly fit technical roles. Organizations noted that such alignment helps reduce workplace errors, enhance safety compliance, and boost productivity.

Service industries like hospitality and customer service placed more importance on soft skills, professionalism, and interpersonal abilities. Participants highlighted that while technical skills can be learned on the job, qualities like attitude and communication are harder to teach. This finding resonates with Kaufman and Miller (2021), who argued that recruitment results in service sectors hinge significantly on interpersonal fit. Agencies that can effectively assess these soft skills were viewed as essential partners.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) prioritized ethical hiring, diversity, and mission alignment, reflecting their values and those of donors. Unlike corporate entities that focus mainly

on operational efficiency, NGOs seek recruitment practices that promote transparency, inclusivity, and accountability. These results support Adeyemi (2021), who found that mission-driven organizations value alignment between agency practices and their ethos to maintain credibility and public trust.

In summary the study confirms that industry-specific priorities significantly affect how organizations select recruitment agencies. Operational context, sector demands, and strategic goals shape the importance of key factors. While core elements like agency reputation and candidate quality are crucial across the board, different sectors have varying decisive factors. This suggests that recruitment agencies aiming to expand their market presence must tailor their services to meet industry-specific expectations, ensuring their competencies and processes align with each sector's unique needs.

4.4.3 Stakeholders Involved in Selection Decisions

The study indicated that selecting recruitment agencies is a multi-stakeholder process involving collaboration among HR departments, departmental managers, senior management, finance, and sometimes procurement teams. Table 4.3 outlines the frequency and roles of these stakeholders, showing that HR is the main actor in all organizations surveyed, closely followed by hiring managers and senior management. These findings support earlier research, which suggests that involving multiple levels in vendor selection improves decision quality, reduces risk, and aligns with organizational goals (Nguyen et al., 2020; Lee & Chen, 2021).

The HR department was identified by 100% of respondents as the primary stakeholder. Participants emphasized that HR professionals have the expertise needed to evaluate agency capabilities, assess candidate quality, and manage the selection process. This role aligns with global studies suggesting that HR acts as the link between organizational strategy and operational execution in hiring (Kaufman & Miller, 2021). HR ensures that recruitment agencies meet both procedural and quality standards and is often the first point of contact, initiating evaluations, compiling shortlist reviews, and coordinating with other stakeholders.

Departmental or hiring managers were identified by 86.7% of respondents as important participants. Their involvement ensures that agency choices reflect the specific needs of individual departments. Participants noted that hiring managers confirm candidate fit for required skills, cultural compatibility, and team integration. This supports findings by Smith and Johnson (2022),

who noted that collaborative evaluations with line managers enhance candidate suitability and decrease post-hire adjustments. One participant stated, “HR sets the framework, but the managers know what skills and attitudes will succeed in their teams.”

Senior management or executives played a significant role in 66.7% of organizations. Their involvement mainly focuses on strategic alignment, budget approval, and risk management. This is consistent with literature emphasizing that executive participation ensures that recruitment agency engagements align with larger organizational goals and risk strategies (Adeyemi, 2021). Executives typically review recommendations from HR and department managers before approving contracts, offering a strategic check to balance operational needs with costs and priorities.

The finance department, noted by 53.3% of participants, plays a role in reviewing agency fees, planning recruitment budgets, and ensuring cost-effectiveness. Participants explained that finance teams often collaborate with HR to evaluate value, especially in high-volume or ongoing recruitment efforts. Procurement or operations teams, though less frequently involved (33.3%), contribute insights on contract compliance, governance, and regulatory needs. Their participation reflects the importance of oversight in maintaining organizational integrity and managing legal risks.

Overall, the findings show that selecting a recruitment agency is not solely an HR task. It is a collaborative effort that combines operational, technical, strategic, and financial factors. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures agencies are thoroughly evaluated, lowering the chance of misalignment, enhancing hire quality, and fostering accountability throughout the organization. These findings support existing literature suggesting that inclusive, cross-functional decision-making in vendor selection improves organizational results and partnership effectiveness (Lee & Chen, 2021; Brown & Taylor, 2020).).

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and analyzed the data collected from interviews with 15 organizations. The chapter began with a summary of saturation, followed by the profile of participants and organizations. Findings were then presented according to the study’s three objectives: key factors influencing agency selection, industry-specific priorities, and stakeholder involvement. Each section included tables illustrating the relative importance of factors and the frequency of

stakeholder engagement. The discussion connected the findings to existing literature, highlighting consistency and unique insights. The chapter concluded by summarizing the key findings, showing that recruitment agency selection is shaped by multiple determinants, sectoral priorities, and collaborative decision-making.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for future research based on this study about what influences organizations when they choose recruitment agencies for new hires. Building on the findings in Chapter 4, this chapter summarizes key insights, draws conclusions related to the study's objectives, gives practical recommendations for organizations and recruitment agencies, and suggests areas for future research. The goal is to combine the study's results into useful contributions for improving recruitment practices and agency selection strategies.

5.1 Summary of Findings

The study aimed to explore what influences organizations' choices of recruitment agencies for hiring new employees. Data collected from 15 organizations through interviews provided insights into three main research objectives: the factors considered when choosing agencies, the impact of industry-specific priorities, and the stakeholders involved in the selection process.

Key factors influencing agency selection: The study found that organizations weigh several factors when selecting recruitment agencies. The most important factors were agency reputation, industry-specific experience, the quality of candidate shortlists, cost, turnaround time, communication, and the thoroughness of screening. Participants consistently noted that a strong agency reputation and proven experience in their field reduced perceived recruitment risks. They also indicated that high-quality candidate shortlists made hiring processes more efficient and effective. While factors like cost and turnaround time were significant, organizations were willing to pay higher fees for agencies that could provide high-quality candidates quickly.

Industry-specific priorities: The study showed that the importance of each factor varies by industry. Financial and insurance organizations focused on thorough vetting, compliance, and candidate integrity. In contrast, the telecommunications and ICT sectors prioritized speed and candidate readiness due to their fast-paced environments. Manufacturing and industrial organizations emphasized technical skills and industry-specific expertise, while service sectors like hospitality valued interpersonal skills and professionalism. NGOs stressed ethical recruitment

and alignment with their missions. These findings suggest that choosing a recruitment agency is context-driven, reflecting the unique operational, regulatory, and strategic needs of each sector.

Stakeholder involvement in agency selection: The study found that selecting a recruitment agency is a collaborative effort involving various stakeholders. The HR department played a central role in all organizations, coordinating agency evaluations, assessing candidate quality, and communicating with other stakeholders. Departmental or hiring managers contributed input on technical and operational suitability. Senior management ensured strategic alignment and approved contracts, while finance reviewed costs and value for money. Occasionally, procurement or operations participated in compliance and contract oversight. This multi-stakeholder approach improves decision quality, lowers hiring risks, and encourages accountability throughout the selection process.

Overall, the findings show that effective selection of recruitment agencies depends on a mix of core factors, sector-specific priorities, and inclusive stakeholder engagement. Organizations evaluate agencies comprehensively, considering both efficiency and strategic alignment to ensure successful hiring outcomes. These insights offer a foundation for informed decision-making and provide practical guidance for recruitment agencies looking to meet client expectations.

5.2 Conclusion

The main goal of this study was to examine what influences organizations when they select recruitment agencies for new hires. Based on these findings, it's clear that choosing a recruitment agency is complex and shaped by both operational and strategic factors.

First, the study confirms that organizations assess recruitment agencies using several core factors: agency reputation, industry-specific experience, the quality of candidate shortlists, cost, turnaround time, communication, and screening rigor. Among these, agency reputation and demonstrated expertise in their sector were the most significant factors, as they directly impact trust, reliability, and the chances of successful hires. This suggests that organizations do not base their selection solely on cost or convenience; instead, they prioritize agencies' ability to deliver high-quality, well-matched candidates.

Second, the study shows that the importance of these factors varies by industry. Financial and insurance organizations prioritize compliance and ethical vetting. The ICT and

telecommunications sectors value speed and candidate readiness. Manufacturing focuses on technical skills, service industries emphasize interpersonal abilities, and NGOs stress ethical alignment with their mission. This finding underscores that selecting a recruitment agency cannot be approached uniformly; agencies should tailor their services to meet the specific needs of each sector.

Third, the study highlights the collaborative nature of the selection process. HR departments, departmental managers, senior management, finance, and sometimes procurement or operations staff all participate in evaluating and approving agency engagements. This multi-stakeholder approach ensures that selection decisions are thorough, balanced, and consistent with organizational goals, minimizing the risk of misalignment between agency services and organizational needs.

In conclusion, the study confirms that choosing a recruitment agency is influenced by a mix of core factors, industry-specific priorities, and stakeholder involvement. Effective agency selection is not a simple or standardized process; it's a strategic decision that requires careful consideration of many operational, sector-related, and human factors. Organizations that incorporate these elements into their selection process are more likely to choose agencies able to deliver top-quality hires, enhance operational efficiency, and align with strategic goals.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several practical recommendations are proposed for organisations, recruitment agencies, and broader policy or practice considerations to improve the effectiveness of recruitment agency selection.

1. Recommendations for Organizations

- **Develop clear evaluation criteria:** User organizations should establish formal guidelines for selecting recruitment agencies that integrate core determinants such as agency reputation, sector expertise, candidate quality, turnaround time, and communication effectiveness. This ensures consistent, transparent, and strategic selection processes.
- **Adopt a multi-stakeholder approach:** Organizations should continue involving HR, departmental managers, senior management, finance, and, where relevant, procurement teams in agency evaluation. Collaborative decision-making improves

the quality of decisions and aligns recruitment outcomes with operational and strategic needs.

- **Monitor agency performance:** Organizations should implement feedback mechanisms and performance indicators to assess agency effectiveness over time. Regular evaluation allows organizations to identify gaps, reward high-performing agencies, and adjust selection strategies to evolving needs.

2. Recommendations for Recruitment Agencies

- **Tailor services to industry-specific needs:** The service providers as agencies should develop expertise in sector-specific recruitment requirements, including understanding technical competencies, regulatory compliance, or soft skills relevant to the client's industry.
- **Maintain strong credibility and transparency:** Agencies should build and preserve a positive reputation through ethical practices, high-quality candidate screening, and reliable delivery. Transparency in processes, communication, and pricing enhances client trust and satisfaction.
- **Ensure speed and responsiveness:** Agencies should establish proactive candidate pipelines and efficient recruitment processes to meet client expectations, particularly in fast-paced sectors like ICT, telecommunications, and project-driven industries.

3. Recommendations for Policy and Practice

- **Formalise agency selection standards:** The Government through the Ministry of Labour in collaboration with The Institute of Human Resource and user organisations and industry associations may consider developing formal guidelines or codes of practice for recruitment agencies, promoting consistency, quality, and accountability across sectors.
- **Encourage sector-specific collaboration:** the relevant industry association in at least two key sectors (e.g., Financial Services and ICT) should develop and publish a formal, sector-specific "Framework for Engaging Recruitment Agencies." This framework will be measurable by its inclusion of at least five (5) sector-tailored key performance indicators (KPIs), a standardized vendor pre-qualification checklist, and a template service-level agreement.

By implementing these recommendations, organizations can enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and strategic alignment of recruitment processes, while agencies can improve competitiveness and client satisfaction. Overall, these measures contribute to better hiring outcomes, reduced risks, and stronger partnerships between organizations and recruitment agencies.

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research

Based on the scope and findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for future research:

1. **Quantitative validation of determinants:** Future studies could use large-scale surveys to quantify the relative importance of recruitment agency selection factors across different industries, providing general insights beyond qualitative findings.
2. **Cross-country and cross-cultural comparisons:** Research comparing agency selection practices across multiple countries or cultural contexts could reveal how regulatory frameworks, market conditions, and cultural norms influence organizational priorities.
3. **Impact on recruitment outcomes:** Further research could examine the relationship between agency selection factors and measurable outcomes, such as employee performance, retention, and organizational productivity, to assess the practical implications of agency selection strategies.

These recommendations will help expand the understanding of recruitment agency selection and its impact on organizational effectiveness in diverse contexts.

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APPENDIX



This document contains the research instruments used for the study, *"Exploring Determinants Influencing Organizations' Selection of Recruitment Agencies for Hiring New Employees."* All information gathered through these instruments is strictly confidential. Data will be anonymized; the names of participants and their organizations will not appear in any report, publication, or presentation. Digital recordings and transcripts will be stored securely on a password-protected device and will be destroyed upon completion of the research project. Participation is entirely voluntary, and respondents may withdraw at any time without consequence.

Appendix I: Interview Guide

Exploring Determinants Influencing Organizations' Selection of Recruitment Agencies for Hiring New Employees

Section A: Background Information

1. Name of Organization: _____
2. Sector/Industry: _____
3. Size of Organization (number of employees): _____
4. Respondent Designation/Position: _____

Section B: Recruitment Agency Selection

1. How does your organization select recruitment agencies for hiring new employees?
2. What factors are most important when choosing a recruitment agency? (Probe for: reputation, cost, candidate quality, turnaround time, screening process, sector experience, etc.)
3. How do these priorities differ across departments or job levels?
4. Who in your organization is involved in making the final decision to engage a recruitment agency?
5. How important is speed of candidate placement in your decision-making?
6. How do you assess the quality and reliability of a recruitment agency?

7. Are there challenges or barriers when working with recruitment agencies? If yes, please describe.
8. Any additional comments on the selection process?

Appendix II: Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: *Exploring Determinants Influencing Organisations' Selection of Recruitment Agencies for Hiring New Employees*

Purpose of the Study: This study aims to understand the factors that organisations consider when selecting recruitment agencies and how these factors vary across industries.

Participation: Participation is voluntary. Respondents may withdraw at any time without any negative consequences.

Confidentiality: All information provided will remain confidential and used solely for academic research. Data will be anonymised in reports and publications.

Declaration:

I have read and understood the purpose of the study. I voluntarily agree to participate and provide accurate information.

Participant Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____