

AI for Enhancing Recruitment and Selection in A Cape Town Local Government Entity

Mr. Tendency Beretu

Department of Human Resource Management, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa

Received: 20.05.2025 | Accepted: 24.05.2025 | Published: 27.05.2025

*Corresponding Author: Mr. Tendency Beretu

DOI: [10.5281/zenodo.15528750](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15528750)

Abstract

Original Research Article

Background/introduction: The recruitment and selection process is crucial for organisational success in both the public and private sectors. However, various challenges often lead to mismatches between employees and job roles, affecting performance. This study examines the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment and selection within a local government entity in Cape Town, South Africa.

Purpose/aims and objectives: This research aimed to (1) identify factors contributing to ineffective recruitment and selection, and (2) explore AI's potential to address these challenges.

Design-methodology, approach – qualitative: A qualitative approach was employed, involving two focus group discussions with eight HRM department personnel from the selected government entity. This method provided insights into recruitment challenges and AI's potential benefits.

Findings/results: The study identified inefficiencies stemming from corruption, maladministration, political interference, employment equity pressures, fraudulent job seeker profiles, skills shortages, and subjective applicant assessments. AI was found to offer potential benefits in enhancing objectivity, streamlining processes, and reducing corruption. However, the HRM department's role remains essential, as challenges like political interference require human intervention.

Research limitations and implications: This study is limited by its small sample size and focus on one local government entity. Further research is needed to examine the broader applicability of AI in recruitment across other sectors.

Implications – practical/social/managerial/policy: AI can improve recruitment efficiency, but policies must address systemic issues like corruption. A balanced approach, where AI complements human decision-making, is crucial for success.

Contribution/originality/value of the study: This study contributes to the understanding of AI in recruitment within the public sector, offering practical insights for policy and practice.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Recruitment and Selection, Local Government, Talent Acquisition and Technological Revolution.

Citation: Beretu, T. (2025). AI for enhancing recruitment and selection in a Cape Town local government entity. *Global Academic and Scientific Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (GASJMS)*, 3(3), 84-90.

INTRODUCTION

The job-person match is a key goal for recruiters in both public and private institutions. In the South African public service, this goal is especially important in view of public service delivery challenges which have been partly due to poor performance in vital leadership areas together with other structural and system challenges (Thusi, et al, 2023). The National Development Plan (NDP) envisages the public service to become an employer of choice to build a skilled and competent public service in South Africa (Singh, 2024). To

achieve this, there is a need to strengthen internal personnel development and training as well as effective recruitment systems. Takalani and Lavhelani (2024) articulated that recruitment of persons in key senior management positions remain a challenge across local governments in South Africa, thereby making a study of AI recruitment essential to support and aid the acquisition of job matched personnel. Essentially, local government in South Africa has a skills deficit challenge, suffers from skills mismatch and many vacancies (South Africa: Department of Cooperative Governance, 2024). These challenges call for strong recruitment systems. The need for this

research is also apparent against reports of unethical and corrupt behaviour in local government recruitment and people management processes. Mthethwa, et al (2024) noted that public service institutions face such ethical challenges as appointment of inappropriate people and unprofessional work behaviours.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is generally accepted that the term AI is used to mean computer or computer-controlled that execute tasks that are ordinarily performed by intelligent humans (Chilunjika, et al, 2022). While Black and Van Esch (2020). have claimed that the concept of AI is difficult to define and there is no specific definition for it, the general view is that AI is technology that can be used to perform human tasks. It has been observed that AI can be vital in eliminating human errors and increase efficiency in the performance of tasks. These advantages of AI have led to prospects of AI to improve the performance of various tasks across various fields and human performance dimensions.

The recruitment process is not simply about acquiring employees to feel vacancies in organisations. It is a complex function that involves achieving an appropriate match between the skills, knowledge and attitudes of a potential employee with the job requirements (Carranza & McKenzie, 2024). The recruitment process starts with the development of the organisational structure with consideration of the vision and mission of an organisation. After the organisation structure follows the preparation of the job and person descriptions and the identification of vacancies which need to be advertised followed by receiving job applications, selection of possible employees, job interviews and placement. Traditionally, this process was physically, and paper based. In the contemporary context, technological developments have provided innovative and creative methods for the recruitment process (Kambur & Yildirim, 2023). AI is becoming useful for screening resumes, interviewing applicants and evaluation of recruitment assessments. AI is a rising technology in candidate matching and sourcing. Chen (2023) noted that recruiters are also finding the services of AI related talent analysis and predictive analysis that remove the human burden involved in selecting the best candidate for a job. AI can also be adequately programmed to foster diversity, inclusion and equity requirements in the recruitment process. Additionally, AI candidate matching algorithms can also perform better candidate matching when opposed to humans who may be biased or corrupt in how they perform these roles and functions (Khastgir & Shalini, 2024). This study focuses on AI for a local government entity in Cape Town. Public organisations generally suffer from bureaucratic arrangements which are hierarchical, and which relies on manual, paper-based communication (Sekhar, 2025). As a result, the adoption of AI systems in the recruitment system generally suffers from poor support. This exists in circumstances where South African public institutions suffer from effective service delivery. The recruitment process has been found to be distorted by malpractice, corruption and political interference.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Approach

This study utilised a qualitative research approach to explore collective views and insights within the HRM Department of a local government entity in Cape Town. Qualitative research is particularly suited for in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences (Elbanna & Nirwana, 2025). The focus group discussion format facilitated rich interaction and dialogue among participants, fostering the emergence of shared understandings.

Research Strategy

A case study strategy was adopted to provide an in-depth examination of the specific local government entity. This strategy allowed for an intensive exploration of the unique dynamics and collective perspectives within the selected organizational context.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Setting

The study was conducted at a local government entity in Cape Town. The focus group discussions were held during lunchtime in a familiar and comfortable environment within the organization's premises, ensuring convenience and minimizing disruptions to the participants' daily routines.

Entrée and Establishing Researcher Roles

The local government entity was selected based on convenience and proximity. Permission to conduct the study was sought from the leadership of the entity. A detailed explanation of the study's objectives, procedures, and ethical considerations was provided to the leadership. To ensure clarity and accountability, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed, outlining the terms of participation and ethical conduct. The researcher's role was primarily that of a facilitator, ensuring that discussions were guided effectively while maintaining a neutral stance.

Research Participants and Sampling Methods

The study involved eight (8) members of the HRM Department, comprising five (5) females and three (3) males. A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure that participants had relevant knowledge and experience related to the study's objectives. Participants were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate during the designated lunchtime discussions.

Data Collection Methods

Two focus group discussions were conducted to collect qualitative data. Focus groups were chosen for their ability to generate collective views and provide contextual background to the participants' perspectives. During the discussions, participants were encouraged to freely share their

thoughts and engage with one another's viewpoints.

Data Recording

To ensure accurate data collection, a secretary was elected by the participants to record the main points discussed during each session. Additionally, the focus group leader, chosen by the participants, provided a summary of key points at the end of each discussion to ensure consensus on the captured data.

Strategies Employed to Ensure Data Quality and Integrity

Several strategies were implemented to enhance the quality and integrity of the data:

- **Anonymity and confidentiality:** Participants and the local government entity's name were kept anonymous.
- **Ethical considerations:** Voluntary participation, respect for participants' rights, and confidentiality in handling data were emphasized.
- **Triangulation:** Multiple focus group sessions were conducted to verify and cross-check data.
- **Member checking:** Summaries of the main points were reviewed and validated by participants at the end of each session.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to identify, analyse, and

report patterns within the data. This method involved:

1. Familiarisation with the data through repeated review of the recorded summaries.
2. Coding of significant points and grouping them into themes.
3. Refining themes to ensure they accurately represented participants' collective views.

Reporting Style

Findings from the focus group discussions were reported thematically, with direct quotes from participants included where relevant to provide authenticity and illustrate key insights. The report adhered to an anonymous and objective narrative, ensuring participants' confidentiality was maintained throughout.

Outline of the Results/Findings

The records of the secretary on the objectives of the study were then analysed to identify the main themes. Each participant contributed to each objective and the focus group leader would provide the final summary that captured the main point provided by the 8 participants. The participants were also required to confirm their agreement to the summary themes that were relevant for every objective. The researcher simply ensured that the discussion was kept focused on the study objectives. Table 1 provides the data collected for objective 1 which was the first focus group discussion.

Table 1: Data from focus group discussion 1 – What are the causes of poor recruitment and selection in local government?

	Excerpts of responses	Discussion concepts	Themes
R1	"Local government operate following certain guidelines and protocols from leaders above within the hierarchy as a result there is no flexibility or deviation. As a result, set guidelines like advertising, interviewing, selection and appointments may have serious faults as people may fake qualifications or interview questions may leak. Some people may come to interviews with tips or prior knowledge on the selection process and even if this is observed, the person must be appointed by simply considering that the person has performed well during the interviews."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - An inflexible organisational structure. - Corrupt practices. - Hierarchical adherence to rules. - Nepotism. - Unequal access of information to interviewees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corruption and maladministration in the recruitment process.
R2	Further to what our colleague has just said, when we are recruiting and appointing for key positions, it is possible to have people who have already been recommended by our superiors. When you have such people, the recruitment process simply becomes a formality since there is already someone identified and recommended by top management following unofficial ways. Such people will obviously be appointed not on merit but because of interference from above. While this does not always happen, it sometimes happens. You all could have heard of the Gupta scandals and state capture. Things like that can also happen at local government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interference - Unofficial recruitment and selection processes - Recruitment for formality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Political interference

R3	When we recruit and select, there are cases where the need to meet employment equity guidelines affect the process. While this does not always happen, it sometimes occurs and affects effective recruitment. At times, you simply need a woman to have gender balance, or you need to employ persons with disabilities or a black person. These employment equity needs may negatively impact the effective recruitment. A qualified and skilled person may not be employed because of the need to meet employment equity targets.	- Balancing workplace demographics	- Employment equity pressure.
R4	Recruitment and selection are now a complicated process these days. There is a lot of misinformation on curriculum vitae and person profiles. Even some qualifications are fake and there are no appropriate processes or a basis for tracing applicant profiles. In government institutions which are not necessarily for profit, focus on the real abilities of applicants may not be well attended to. The idea is sometimes to simply ensure that the organisation is well staffed.	- Recruitment and selection are now complex - No true focus on job-person matches	- Failure to detect deceptive profiles of job seekers
R5	I may say that the effectiveness of the recruitment process may also be affected by the nature of the pool of job applicants whether they meet the required specifications for a job. South Africa is a country that suffers from skills shortages. Many times, we are forced to recruit from the available skills profile which may not be the best for a job.	- Having unqualified poorly skilled job applicants - A poor skills pool of job applicants	- Skills shortage in South Africa.
R6	The recruitment process cannot overall be defective in government. Problem areas are often the senior level positions which demand high level skill, abilities and attitudes. These are generally lacking in the labour market. For low level jobs we do not have many challenges.	- Senior level skills shortage.	- A poor strategy for skills development for government jobs.
R7	I think we lack appropriate objective testing techniques in the recruitment process whereby applicants are properly tested both in terms of personality and skills. The recruitment process in government may need to be treated in the same way as that of private profit-making entities.	- Poor job applicant assessment system - Follow private recruitment processes.	- Objective job applicant assessment and measurement systems.
R8	Recruitment in governments may need to focus on acquiring the right person in the beginning than relying on on-the-job training. This is the case right now. More focus is on developing the person after appointing that getting the best person right away.	- On-the-job training. - The recruitment focus must change.	- Prioritising on-the-job development of appointed people as opposed to getting the best person.

Source: Own construction from findings

Table 1 provides that the recruitment process is a complex process that is associated with various challenges that affect its effectiveness. The focus group discussions shows that poor ineffective recruitment and selection can be attributed to corruption and maladministration in the recruitment process, political interference, employment equity pressure, failure to detect deceptive profiles of job seekers, skills shortage in South Africa, a poor strategy for skills development for government

jobs, lack of objectivity in objective job applicant assessments and measurement systems and the prioritization of on-the-job development of appointed persons as opposed to getting the best person. In view of these challenges, the next focus group discussion was on whether AI can be useful in addressing them for effective recruitment and selection. Table 2 provides the data collected in relation to focus group discussion 2 which is related to objective 2.

Table 2: Focus group discussion 2 - What is the potential of AI for effective recruitment and selection by addressing the causes of poor recruitment and selection?

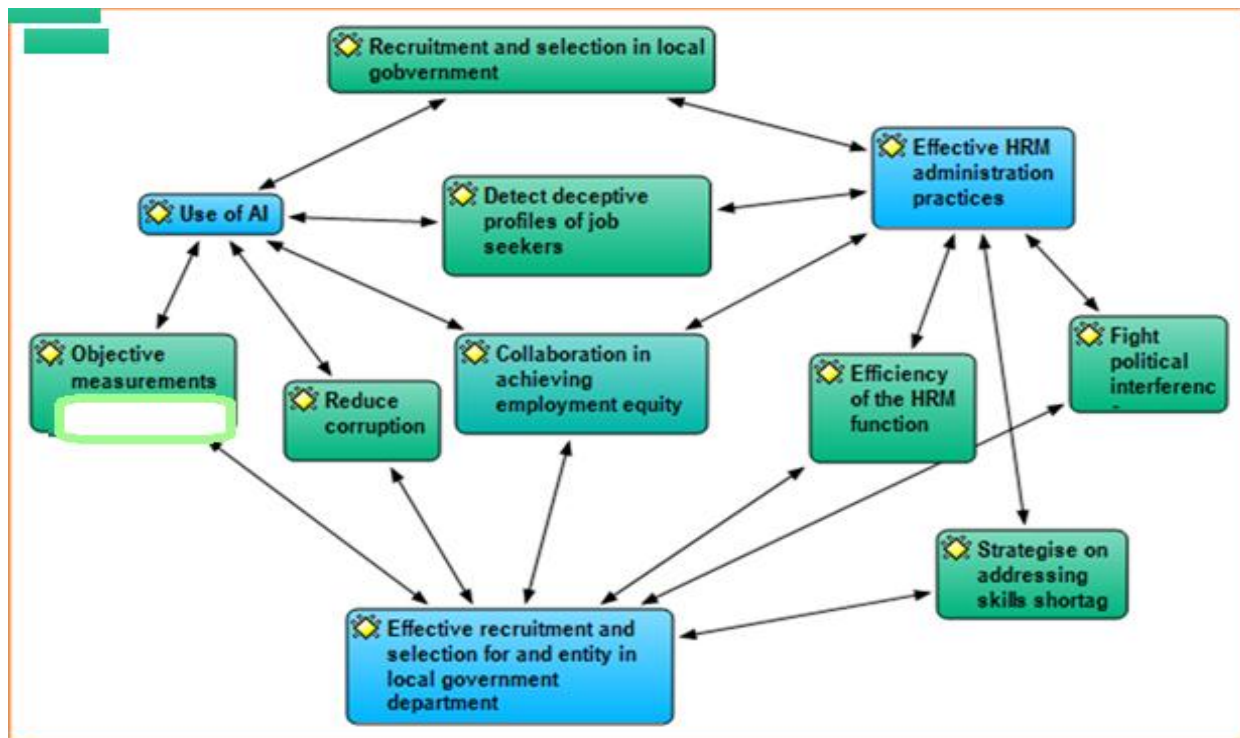
Cause of poor recruitment and selection	Focus group leader's summary
Corruption	The general acceptance in this discussion is that AI can be useful in reducing corruption in the recruitment and selection process and it can be objectively fair. Where it is used to make measurements and assessments, there is no doubt in this discussion that AI would make recruitment and selection effective.
Maladministration of the recruitment process	Administration of the recruitment and selection process cannot be fully made to rely on AI. The HR personnel have a role to play, and effective recruitment will depend on the efficiency of both the AI tools as well as the HRM personnel involved in the process. AI cannot be viewed as effective on its own entirely. Its effectiveness is also based on good administrative practices of the HRM department and its personnel.
Political interference	The discussion can conclude that political interference cannot be eliminated through AI because what political interference can do is to eliminate the use of AI and subject the entire process to people-based recruitment and selection processes.
Employment equity pressures	This is another area where AI cannot be expected to be effective on its own. There is also a need to ensure that the input of the HRM people is good and effective. We conclude that AI will be effective if the HRM personnel are also effective.
Failure to detect deceptive profiles of job seekers	While AI can be deemed to have some capacity to detect lies or inconsistencies in information, the effectiveness of the HRM personnel remains critical.
Skills shortage in South Africa	Skills shortage in the labour market is outrightly a matter for the government to address through appropriate macro-level policies. The government may find it vital to collaborate with educational institutions to ensure that there are courses that address specific skills that are required in the public sector
A poor strategy for skills development for government jobs	AI can only aid an appropriate strategy put by government for the development of vital skills that it needs.
Objective job applicant assessment and measurement systems	AI can be useful in conducting and collecting the measurements and metrics of job applicants for purposes of recruitment.
Prioritising on-the-job development of appointed people as opposed to getting the best person	AI can be useful to simply strengthen the recruitment and selection process and not-the-job training. With effective use of AI, on-the-job training will simply be important to increase the ability and competencies of a well recruited and selected workforce.

Source: Own construction from findings

Table 2 considers the views of the focus group discussion members on whether AI can deal with addressing the causes for ineffective recruitment and selection and result in better recruitment and selection outcomes. Evidence from the summaries provided by the focus group leader showed that there were some challenges to the recruitment and selection process that can be addressed using AI and some that cannot. These results show that the recruitment process can be

enhanced if both AI systems and the HRM department aid each other. AI alone cannot achieve the required efficiency in the recruitment and selection process while people alone may also not achieve the best outcomes. A hybrid recruitment and selection system based on exceptional performance of the HRM department, and the correct application of AI systems is necessary. These results were summarised in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Summary of results for of the study



Source: Own construction from findings

In Figure 1, respondents were of the view that effective HRM administration was important in fighting political interference and addressing skills shortages while it would apply AI to detect deceptive job seek profiles as well as attain employment equity. AI would be handy on ensuring that the recruitment and selection process is objective and based on appropriate measurements and assessments. It was also if AI would be vital to reduce corruption in the recruitment and selection process.

Research Limitations

The research was conducted at a specific local government unit, which may restrain the generalisability of the results. The results show the perspective of one institution and may not fully relate to other public sector organisations or private institutions.

Future Research and Recommendations

Future research could increase the sample size to involve numerous local government individuals across different regions. Including a quantitative method could offer measurable discernments into AI's efficacy in recruitment activities. The research could also investigate the long-term effects of AI incorporation on recruitment results and human capital retention. Furthermore, institutions should focus on establishing thorough training systems to safeguard human capital through effective use of AI tools. Policies tackling the ethical considerations and data privacy in AI-driven recruitment should also be observed. Lastly, partnerships between public

institutions and AI technology providers can be explored to improve implementation and scalability.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore the potential of the AI in strengthening the recruitment and selection process of a local government entity against indications of skills and job-person mismatches. The study was also inspired by the widespread use of AI to perform various organisational functions in the context of the industrial revolution. The basis of the study was to explore the potential of AI to improve the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process at a local government department. The Focus group discussions that were conducted in this study have shown that while AI can be useful in improving recruitment and selection, the role of the HRM department and its efficiency remain indispensable. While AI can increase efficiency in such functions as objective measurements and assessments of job seekers as well as aid in eliminating corrupt practices in the recruitment process, such matters as political interference and maladministration required the efficiency of the HRM department. As such the active use of AI and the effective performance of the HRM department were found to underpin the effective recruitment and selection process at the local government department.

REFERENCES

- Black, J. S., & van Esch, P. (2020). AI-enabled recruiting: What is it and how should a manager use it?. *Business Horizons*, 63(2), 215-226.
- Carranza, E., & McKenzie, D. (2024). Job training and job search assistance policies in developing countries. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 38(1), 221-244.
- Chen, Z. (2023). Collaboration among recruiters and artificial intelligence: removing human prejudices in employment. *Cognition, Technology & Work*, 25(1), pp.135-149.
- Chilunjika, A., Intauno, K. & Chilunjika, S.R. (2022). Artificial intelligence and public sector human resource management in South Africa: Opportunities, challenges and prospects. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, 20, p.1972.
- Elbanna, M. & Nirwana, A. (2025). Analysing the Role of Conti Entertain as a Gateway to Digital Gambling Among Teenagers Sharia Perspective: Challenges and Solutions. *Demak Universal Journal of Islam and Sharia*, 3(01), pp.1-12.
- Kambur, E. & Yildirim, T. (2023). From traditional to smart human resources management. *International Journal of Manpower*, 44(3), pp.422-452.
- Khastgir, P. & Shalini, S. (2024). Applying diverse AI tools to transform philanthropic operations: Insights from the for-profit sector. In *The Routledge Handbook of Artificial Intelligence and Philanthropy* (pp. 76-93). Routledge.
- Mthethwa, R., Ngqwala, N. & Mpungose, T. (2024). Consequences of unethical conduct: Dilemmas and discretions. In *Corruption, Ethics, and Governance in South Africa* (pp. 28-42). Routledge.
- Sekhar, K.S.V. (2025). Digital Infrastructure Challenges for Techno-Entrepreneurs in Rural Areas: The Need for Capacity Building. In *Digital Transformation and Innovation in Emerging Markets* (pp. 127-156). IGI Global.
- Singh, U.K. (2024). Sustainable development goals in South Africa: progress and challenges. *Regional Dimensions of Human Development in India and South Africa: Through Sustainable Development Goals*, pp.93-146.
- South Africa. Department of Cooperative Governance. (2024). Consolidated annual local government performance report 2020/2021. Pretoria: Government Printers.
- Takalani, H. & Lavhelani, P.N. (2024). The administrative effects of political killings of officials in South African Municipalities. *Journal of Local Government Research and Innovation*, 5, p.161.
- Thusi, X., Matyana, M. & Jili, N. (2023). Lack of political will: a barrier to public service delivery in South Africa and a high cost for citizens. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences and Humanities (JSSSH) E-ISSN*, 9(2), pp.137-147.