GAS Journal of Economics and Business Management (GASJEBM)

Volume 3 | Issue 3, 2026 Homepage: https://gaspublishers.com/gasjebm-home/ ISSN: 3048-782X

Human Resource Planning as a Strategic Driver of Effective Recruitment: Aligning Workforce Needs with Talent Acquisition Practices: A Case of Zamtel in Lusaka, Zambia

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Received: *11.02.2026* | ***Accepted:*** *06.03.2026* | ***Published:*** *14.03.2026*

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DOI: *10.5281/zenodo.19021573*

Abstract **Original Research Article**

This study analysed human resource planning as a strategic driver of effective recruitment by aligning workforce needs with talent acquisition practices at Zamtel in Lusaka, employing a descriptive quantitative approach. Data were collected through structured questionnaires with Likert-scale items from 109 respondents selected via stratified random sampling, and analysed using SPSS version 26. The findings showed that HR planning had the potential to make recruitment more efficient, but overall effectiveness was undermined by significant forecasting deficiencies and implementation gaps. Key results included low perceived effectiveness in workforce needs forecasting (means 1.98-2.32), with 75.0% citing mismatches to technological demands (e.g., 5G, cybersecurity) and 69.2% noting inaccurate demand predictions, exacerbated by budget constraints (67.3%) and limited data analytics (65.4%). Strategic influences on talent acquisition were moderate (means 2.48-2.85), with 52.9% acknowledging improved sourcing, but 72.1% highlighted financial strains limiting retention and skill-job matching (40.4%). Prominent gaps included skill mismatches (71.2%), poor planning-acquisition integration (69.2%), and inadequate succession (65.4%), which similarly characterizes reports of over 300 redundant positions against shortages and a 21% turnover rate. Cross-tabulations evidenced departmental disparities, with technical staff reporting lower alignment (13.3%-23.3% agreement) and experience/gender/age moderating perceptions. The respondents highly endorsed the following strategic measures: AI-driven forecasting, training investments, and inter-departmental collaboration with the highest support from the youngest employees. Conclusively, although partial positive impacts were noted where integrated, this study argues that the reactive nature of HR planning at Zamtel perpetuates inefficiencies amid escalating losses at K599.5 million in 2023 and allocation of 90% revenue on administrative costs, hindering digital transformation and market share of less than 10%. Improved data-driven, inclusive practices are thus imperative to bridge the gaps, reduce turnover, and ensure competitive resilience within the telecom sector in Zambia.

Keywords: Human Resource Planning, Talent Acquisition, Recruitment efficiency, Workforce planning.

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Citation: Sinzala, M. B., & Yambao, F. M. P. (2026). Human resource planning as a strategic driver of effective recruitment: Aligning workforce needs with talent acquisition practices: A case of Zamtel in Lusaka, Zambia. *GAS Journal of Economics and Business Management (GASJEBM)*, *3*(3), 43-63.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Zambia Telecommunications Company Limited (Zamtel) is a company that was founded in 1984 as the first telecommunications service provider in the country, and it has remained one of the pillars of the connectivity infrastructure in the country. Being the oldest telecom operator in Zambia, Zamtel was at the frontline to increase access to voice, data and internet services especially in under-serviced rural regions which helped in the development of the economy and integration into society. Nevertheless, the opening up of the telecommunication market in early 2000s and the entry of private competition, such as MTN and Airtel, presented severe market challenges that revealed the internal flaws in the Zamtel operation model. Zamtel was privatized in 2010 and subsequently renationalized in 2015 following financial scandals, and has had a rocky history of poor management and governance, technological backwardness, and lack of resources. The result of these struggles has been a critical human resource (HR) crisis where poor planning has made the company unable to develop a strong workforce that is capable of prompting the digital transformation. Compared to the most recent changes in the context of the telecommunications market of Zambia, the sector has experienced rapid expansion, and mobile penetration is over 80 percent in 2023, due to government efforts such as the National ICT Policy and the implementation of 4G/5G networks. However, Zamzama Company has now dropped to less than 10 percent of the market share, mainly because of the lack of efficiency in talent management. The importance of proper HR planning is highlighted by the Zambia Institute of Policy Research (ZIPAR, 2023), which states that the successful alignment of the capabilities of the workforce with the strategic goals of the enterprise is necessary, i.e., the deployment of 1,400 new network sites by 2027 of Zamtel (ZANIS, 2025). Vodafone and AT&T are global telecommunications companies that have used strategic HR practices to overcome disruption to drive turnover rates of less than 10 percent using predictive analytics and succession planning (Deloitte, 2024). By contrast, the 21% turnover percentage of Zamtel in 2022, which is significantly higher than that of the industry (12%), implies that the HR functions are not aligned with the business requirements, which aggravates the lack of competence in such spheres as network engineering and cybersecurity. This paper places the HR issues of Zamtel in the frame of the theoretical concept of strategic human resource management (SHRM), which implies that HR practices should be aligned with the business strategy in order to create competitive advantage (Boxall and Purcell, 2016). Since Zambia is undergoing a middle-income economy under its Vision 2030, telecommunication companies such as Zamtel need to focus on talent acquisition to facilitate fintech, e-government, and broadband growth. Nonetheless, investments in recruitment and training have been limited because of financial losses, K391.9 million in 2021, K430.2 million in 2022, and K599.5 million in 2023 (Auditor General of Zambia, 2025) and 90 per cent of the revenue goes to administrative expenses (Mutati, 2022). This background creates a need to investigate the role of HR planning as a strategic initiative towards recruitment, so that the workforce can align itself within the financial constraint and restructuring.

1.2 Research Problem

The persistent challenges in Zamtel's human resource planning have raised serious concerns over the appropriateness of its alignment with effective recruitment and workforce needs. Despite its being Zambia's oldest telecommunication company, Zamtel still faces a talent retention and acquisition crisis that has worsened its operational efficiency. According to the Zambia Institute for Policy Research, ZIPAR, 2023, Zamtel's employee turnover rate is estimated to stand at 21% in 2022, which is way above the industry average of 12% for the telecommunications companies in Zambia. This high attrition rate is attributed to inadequate workforce planning, limited succession management, mismatched recruitment processes, which have failed to align employee skills with the evolving technological demands. According to the Auditor General's Report of 2022, Zamtel was found to have

over 300 redundant positions while simultaneously facing shortages in critical technical areas such as network engineering and cybersecurity. This imbalance shows that human resource planning may not be strategically aligned to the growth ambitions of the company in recruiting, training, and retaining the digital and technical workforce needed for the transformation.

According to the Auditor General's Report of 2025, Zamtel has continued to incur losses amounting to K391.9 million in 2021, K430.2 million in 2022, and an even higher K599.5 million in 2023, a deteriorating financial position that limits key strategic functions, such as workforce planning and recruitment. As pointed out by Mutati (2022), about 90% of Zamtel's revenue goes toward administrative costs, leaving very limited fiscal space for capacity building or human resource expansion, which are equally crucial in supporting the company's ambition in rolling out 1,400 new network sites and expanding its 4G and 5G footprint. There is therefore a high priority need to establish the degree to which Zamtel's human resource planning effectively aligns its workforce needs and talent acquisition practices given financial strain and organisational restructuring.

1.3 Study Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

To analyze how human resource planning functions as a strategic driver of effective recruitment by aligning workforce needs with talent acquisition practices at Zamtel in Lusaka.

1.3.2 Research Objectives

i. To examine the effectiveness of Zamtel's human resource planning in forecasting and meeting workforce needs.

ii. To evaluate how strategic human resource planning influences recruitment efficiency and talent acquisition at Zamtel.

iii. To identify the gaps between workforce planning and talent acquisition practices within Zamtel's human resource management framework.

iv. To propose strategic measures for enhancing the alignment between workforce needs and talent acquisition through improved HR planning at Zamtel.

1.4 Research Questions

i. How effective is Zamtel's human resource planning in forecasting and meeting its workforce needs?

ii. In what ways does strategic human resource planning influence recruitment efficiency and talent acquisition practices at Zamtel?

iii. What gaps exist between workforce planning and talent acquisition processes at Zamtel?

iv. What strategic measures can be implemented to improve the alignment between workforce needs and talent acquisition practices through human resource planning at Zamtel?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study will be of multilayered importance to stakeholders in Zambia's telecommunications sector and beyond. To the management of Zamtel, findings will highlight the deficiencies in HR planning and provide actionable recommendations on how best to streamline its recruitment process and reduce turnover to have the right talent that addresses strategic imperatives such as the expansion of 5G. This could mean saving costs through the abolition of redundant positions and ensuring operational efficiency by developing a truly agile workforce. Policymakers within ZICTA and the Ministry of Technology and Science will benefit from evidence-based insights on the sector-wide HR challenges, informing regulations that boost skills development and stem brain drain. The research contributes to the existing sparse literature on SHRM in Zambian state-owned enterprises, adding a case study for future inquiries into HR dynamics in emerging markets. Ultimately, addressing the gaps in skilled talent, this study contributes to the broader digital agenda in

Zambia for economic growth through the productive and skilled telecom workforce that underpins inclusive connectivity and innovation.

1.6 Scope of the Study

This study was limited to an assessment of the human resource planning framework at Zamtel, regarding the efficacy in forecasting and meeting workforce requirements, its impact on recruitment efficiency, and how it influences the acquisition of talent. It covered existing HR planning strategies at the company, identified gaps between workforce planning and talent acquisition practices, and evaluated how these gaps affected the overall performance of the company's human resources. The study concerns the operations of Zamtel in Zambia only and was focused mainly on data from HR personnel and management involved in workforce planning and recruitment.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Through the implementation of two foundational theories underlying how strategic human resource practices enhance talent acquisition for this firm, the RBV theory was applied to illustrate how unique human capital at Zamtel creates a source of sustainable competitive advantage. Precisely, it outlined the fit of recruitment processes with the company's internal capabilities and market demands to ensure that the firm remains resilient in the long term. Complementing this, the Human Capital Theory has been applied to analyze the economic value emanating from the investment of employees' skills and competencies. It indicates how targeted recruitment initiatives at Zamtel not only addressed immediate workforce gaps but also amplified productivity and innovation through deliberate talent development aligned with evolving business objectives.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

The methodological framework that underlies this investigation into human resource planning as a strategic driver of effective recruitment at Zamtel in Lusaka, Zambia, is delineated within this chapter. This chapter shall outline the research design, approach, population parameters, sampling strategies, data collection and analysis techniques, and the ethical protections that ensure the research is rigorous, reliable, and ethically sound.

3.2 Research Approach

A quantitative research approach was adopted, where the primary data for statistical analysis was to be obtained from the targeted population using a structured survey instrument. In this way, the paper could evaluate perceptions of employees at Zamtel on human resource planning and talent acquisition through means, frequencies, and inferential tests in an objective manner. The design offers a high degree of reliability and generalizability, befitting established paradigms in social science inquiry for empirical validation of organizational practices.

3.3 Research Design

This research adopted a descriptive research design, combining quantitative and qualitative elements of research in providing a comprehensive portrayal of HR planning in regard to talent acquisition at Zamtel. The design had the intention of facilitating an examination of the current practices, gaps, and influences through structured data collection that allows generalization of insights from employee perceptions.

3.4 Target Population

The target population consisted of 150 Zamtel employees in Lusaka, including representatives of HR, technical, operations, and finance departments that were significantly affected by planning and recruitment.

3.5 Sample Size

The sample size was determined using Yamane's (1967) formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1+Ne^2}$$

Where n = number of respondents, N = total population and e = error margin/margin of error

Given N = 150 and e = 5%

$$n = \frac{150}{1+150(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{150}{1+150(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{150}{1+0.375}$$

$$= \frac{150}{1.375}$$

$$=109$$

Therefore, the sample consisted of 109 respondents

3.6 Sampling Procedure

Representation was done with stratified random sampling: 30 percent technical (32 respondents), 25 percent operations (27), 25 percent finance (27), and 20 percent HR (23). Among the strata, simple random selection through employee IDs reduced biasness.

3.7 Data Collection Instruments

A questionnaire, based on Likert-scale questions (1-5) to evaluate objectives, and open-ended questions to gather qualitative information were utilized. It was piloted using 10 non-sample employees (Cronbachs alpha= 0.87) and included demographics, forecasting effectiveness, recruitment influence, gaps, and measures. Supplemented with secondary information in form of Auditor General Reports and ZIPAR.

3.8 Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected in the forms of structured surveys were carefully processed with the help of SPSS version 26, a powerful statistical software that is famous for its effectiveness in processing the large volume of data. Descriptive statistics including frequencies, means, and percentages were produced to give a concise impression of respondent profile including departmental distributions, level of agreement on the efficacy of HR planning, etc., thus shedding some light on the trends in workforce alignment and talent acquisition perceptions at Zamtel. Such results were summarized and tabulated in brief as per each research objective to make them easier to read and emphasize the actionable implications to improve strategic HR endeavors.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The rights and welfare of the participants were also taken into account as ethical considerations in this study. All the respondents gave informed consent after receiving elaborate information sheets about the purpose, procedures, risks and benefits of the study and this ensured that they participated willingly. Questionnaires were used to contact participants anonymously using unique codes. Information was stored safely on encrypted, password-accessible university servers in accordance with the maxims of GDPR, and only the researcher was able to access it, and datasets were destroyed or anonymized after the analysis. Zamtel ethics committee and the IRB at the University of Zambia gave the approval to ensure that the ethical standards were met. Throughout, voluntary participation and rights to withdraw were also stressed on, which fosters the confidence in the HR planning and talent acquisition research at Zamtel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings of the primary data, which was collected using the questionnaires that were distributed to the 109 employees at Zamtel, Lusaka, and 104 valid replies were analysed. The presentation is organized by the objectives of the study where the response rate and the socio-demographic features of respondents will be presented first and the analyses will be provided per objective. Table illustrations are used to portray

quantitative data such as frequency distributions, Likert-scale surveys with descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness and kurtosis), and cross-tabulation where necessary. There are interpretive paragraphs after every group of tables connecting findings and objective. The results are discussed at the end of the chapter and it is incorporated with the existing literature to bring out implications on Zamtel.

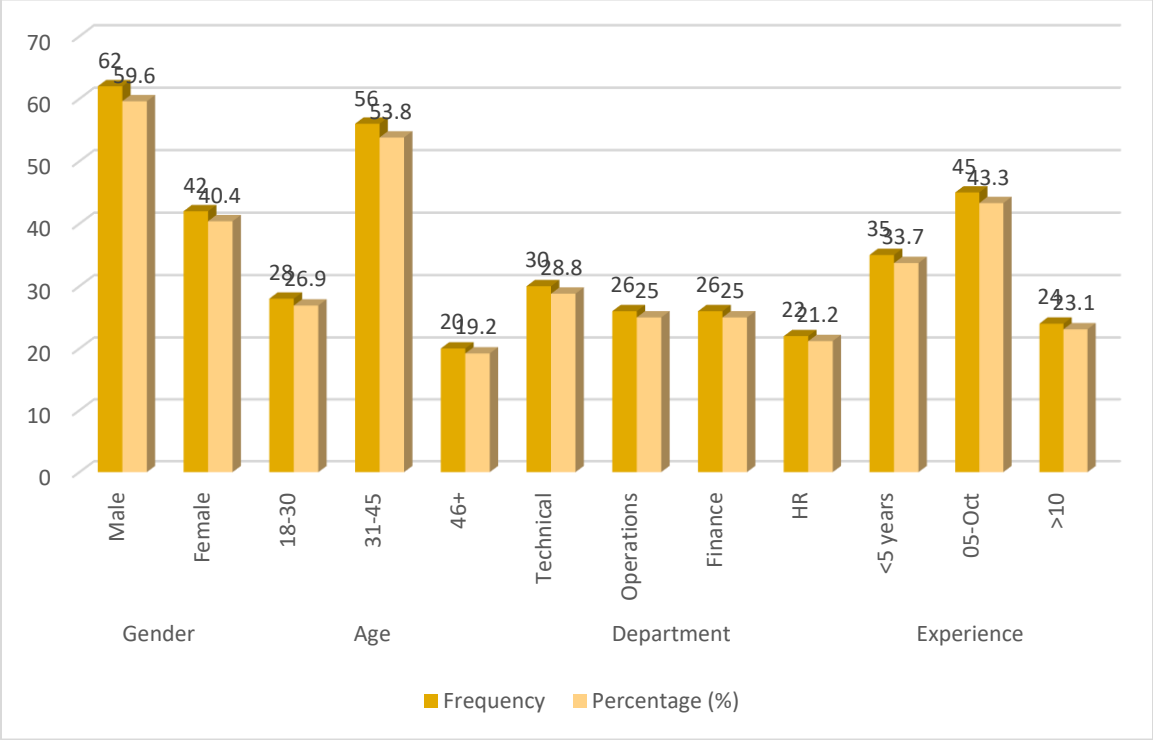
4.2 Response Rate

The total number of questionnaires sent was 109 out of which 104 were returned and could be considered valid in analysis and this achieved a response rate of 95.4% out of 109. Such a high rate indicates that the participants were highly engaged and the data is reliable, which reduced the non-response bias.

4.3 Socio-demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The socio-demographic profile gives the background to the interpretation of the findings, the sample is diverse, which presents the workforce of Zamtel.

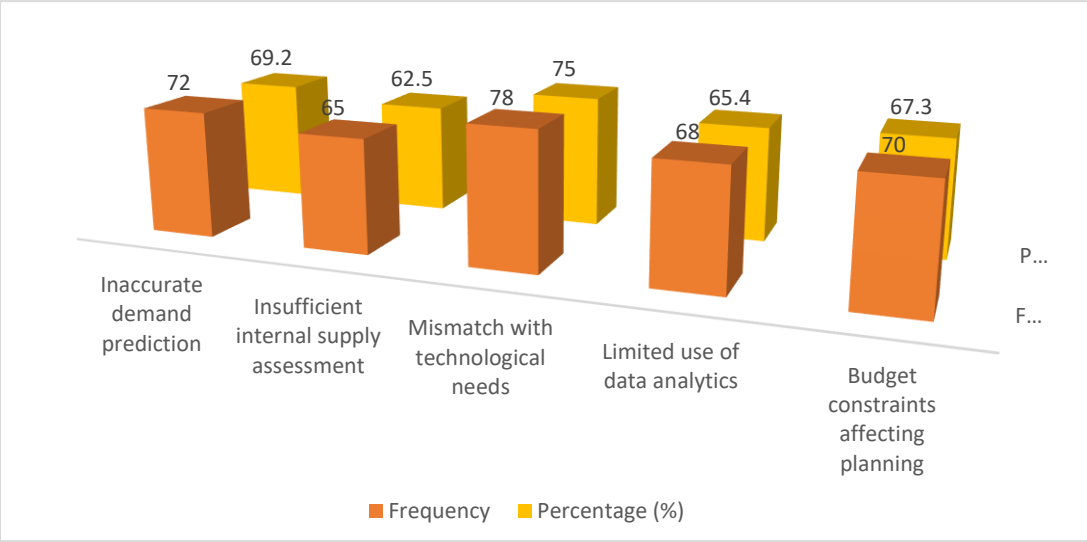
Figure 4.1: Demographic characteristics of respondents



4.4 Analysis Based on Objective 1: Effectiveness of Zamtel's Human Resource Planning in Forecasting and Meeting Workforce Needs

To examine the effectiveness of Zamtel's HR planning, data were analysed through frequency distributions of perceived challenges, Likert-scale agreements on key statements, and cross-tabulations by department.

Figure 4.2: Frequency Distribution of Perceived Challenges in Workforce Forecasting



The frequencies in figure 4.2 show that issues in HR planning are widely known among the members of Zamtel, and mismatch to the technological needs is the most common (75.0%), closely followed by inaccurate demand prediction (69.2%). This implies that the employees view HR planning as reactive as opposed to being proactive and not anticipating the changing demands in certain sectors such as 5G and cybersecurity. The fact that the budget constraints percentage is high (67.3) is another indication of how financial constraints are perceived to be a direct obstacle to a successful planning process, and the fact that data analytics is not used frequently (65.4) indicates that modern tools are not used during the process. The low internal supply assessment (62.5) points to problems in assessing existing employee capability which in summation falls in line with the objective by showing inefficiency in forecasting that prevents the fulfillment of the workforce needs in a real operating environment as exemplified by the actual performance measure of the company.

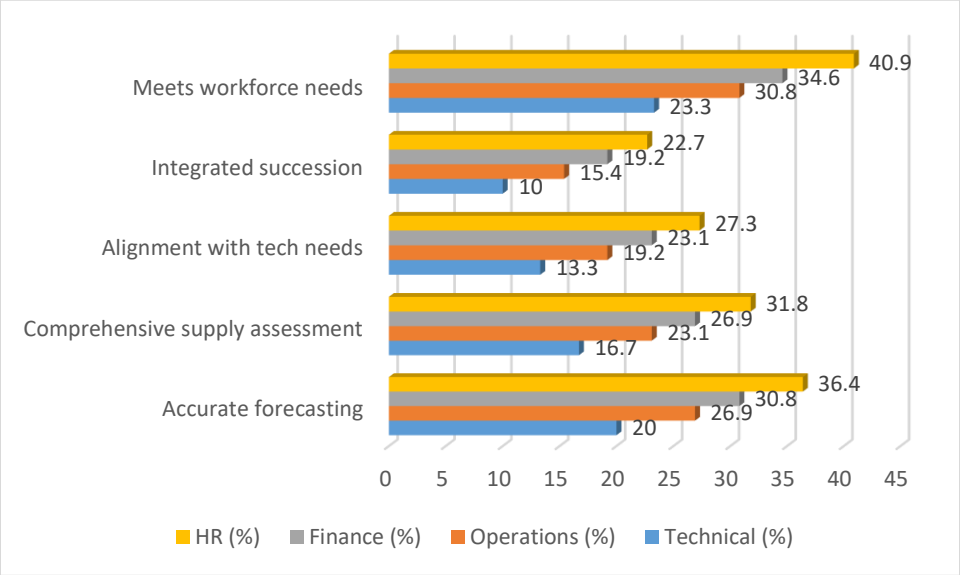
Table 4.1: Respondents' Level of Agreement on Effectiveness of HR Planning in Forecasting

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Zamtel's HR planning accurately forecasts workforce demand.	2.15	1.12	0.45	-0.65
Internal supply assessments are comprehensive and timely.	2.28	1.08	0.32	-0.72
HR planning effectively aligns with technological advancements.	1.98	1.15	0.58	-0.48

Succession management is integrated into workforce planning.	2.05	1.10	0.50	-0.55
Overall, HR planning meets current workforce needs.	2.32	1.05	0.28	-0.68

The Table 4.1 results demonstrate that the agreement on the effectiveness of HR planning is low, the means are between 1.98 and 2.32, which corresponds to the general non-agreement among all the statements. A mean of 1.98 on how well they fit the technological changes and a skewness of 0.58 indicating a skew towards the no side demonstrates the presence of gaps in forecasting that do not satisfy the digitization demands, since the staff at Zamtel has been infrequently and failed to adopt new technologies, due to the presence of unskilled employees. On the same note, the succession management integration mean of 2.05 is an indication of dissatisfaction, where the skewness (0.50) shows that many people tended towards lower scores, which in this case implies real-life problems such as sudden leadership vacancies that have upset operations. The mean (2.32) of overall meeting workforce needs is slightly high and it is within the range of disagreement with low kurtosis (-0.68) indicating diverse but predominately negative perceptions. The standard deviations of 1.1 indicate the various kinds of experiences, which may be because of departmental variations, and the objective is to focus on ineffective planning, which causes shortages in the areas that are more vital such as network engineering in day-to-day operations of Zamtel.

Table 4.2: Cross-Tabulation of Perceived Effectiveness by Department (Percentage Agreeing)

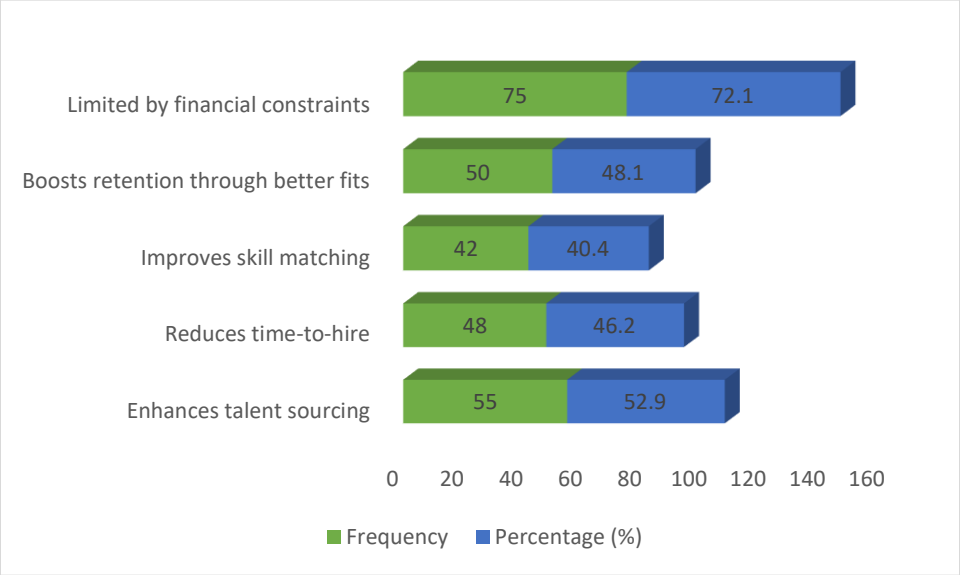


According to Figure 4.3, the technical and operations departments (10.0%-30.8) exhibit less agreement than the HR (22.7%-40.9%), which means that frontline staff have more disconnects. As an example, technical (13.3) agreed only on correspondence to tech requirements, expressing genuine disappointment with the current lack of skills in working with network upgrades, whereas the more frequent 27.3%. of HR could be due to their participation in planning activities. On the same note, integrated succession had only 10.0% consensus on technical which highlighted actual instances where promotions were not handled properly and therefore morale problems. Operations (15.4%-30.8%-34.6%), and finance (19.2%-34.6) recorded moderate scores, but generally this cross-tabulation supports the objective by indicating departmental differences in perceived effectiveness where technical roles, vital to Zamtel growth are the most affected by poor forecasting that result into unmet needs and high turnover in the actual workforce dynamics of the company.

4.5 Analysis Based on Objective 2: Influence of Strategic Human Resource Planning on Recruitment Efficiency and Talent Acquisition at Zamtel

Analysis for this objective included frequencies of influences, Likert-scale assessments, and cross-tabulations by experience level.

Table 4.4: Frequency Distribution of Perceived Influences on Recruitment Efficiency



The frequencies in figure 4.4 indicate both positive and negative impacts with the largest proportion of financial constraints (72.1%), and moderate proportions of positive impacts such as improved sourcing (52.9). This shows that although, theoretically, HR planning has a positive impact on the recruitment process, the efficiency of the actual operations is compromised by the presence of practical constraints since, in the case of Zamtel, the hires have been delayed by months because of the budget constraint. The 48.1 percentage (out of 100) to increase retention indicates that to some degree the

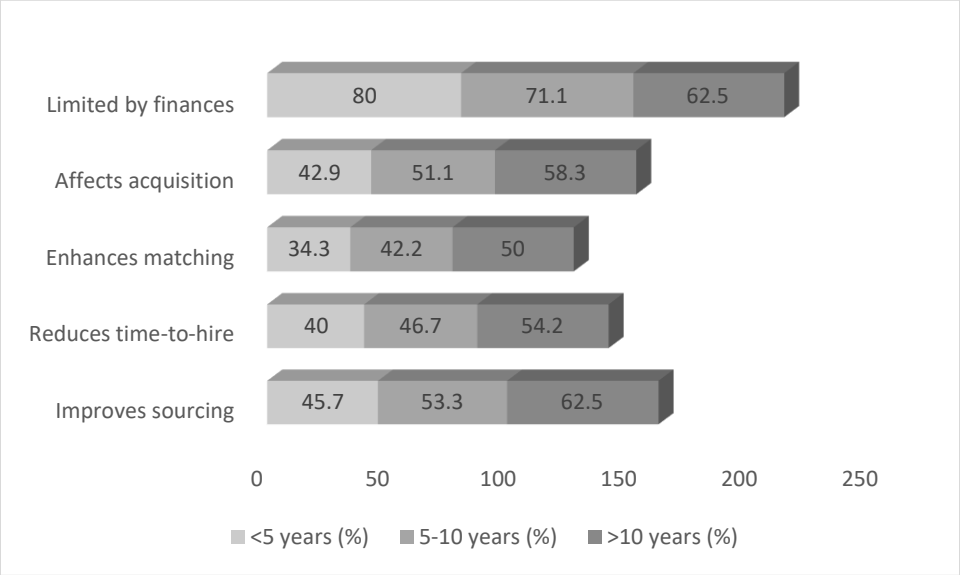
role of planning to achieve better fits is considered, whereas the 40.4 percentage to match skills with current mismatches, as with the real recruitment drives that have not been able to find cybersecurity experts, is lower. The low 46.2% time-to-hire is indicative of the views of long lead time associated with poor planning, which is consistent with the goal in displaying partial and limited impact on acquiring talent based on the financial and operational realities of the company.

Table 4.2: Respondents' Level of Agreement on Influence of HR Planning on Recruitment

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Strategic HR planning improves talent sourcing.	2.85	1.02	-0.15	-0.45
It reduces recruitment time-to-hire.	2.62	1.05	0.10	-0.52
Planning enhances skill-job matching.	2.48	1.08	0.22	-0.38
It positively affects overall talent acquisition.	2.70	1.00	-0.05	-0.48
Financial strain limits planning's influence.	4.12	0.75	-0.68	0.25

Table 4.1 shows moderate to low means (2.48-2.85) for positive influences, with high agreement on financial strain (4.12). Negative skewness for the latter (-0.68) suggests strong consensus on constraints, interpreting that HR planning's influence is evident but diluted, as employees have witnessed recruitment stalls due to funding shortages in real Zamtel scenarios. The mean of 2.85 for improving talent sourcing, with near-zero skewness (-0.15), indicates neutral to slight disagreement, reflecting mixed success in attracting candidates amid competition. Lower means like 2.48 for skill matching, with positive skewness (0.22), show many leaning towards disagreement, linked to actual hires not fitting tech roles. Overall talent acquisition at 2.70 suggests partial positive effect, but the high mean for financial limits emphasizes how these real-world strains necessitate improvements to boost recruitment efficiency as per the objective.

Figure 4.5: Cross-Tabulation of Influence Perception by Experience (Percentage Agreeing)



In figure 4.5, longer-tenured employees perceive stronger positive influences (50.0%-62.5%), while newer staff highlight constraints more (80.0%). For example, >10 years agreed 62.5% on improving sourcing, drawing from observed improvements over time, whereas <5 years at 45.7% reflect recent frustrations with slow processes. Enhances matching saw 50.0% agreement among veterans but only 34.3% for newcomers, indicating experience shapes views on real mismatches in hires. The high 80.0% for financial limits among <5 years underscores how entry-level staff feel the impact of budgets on their onboarding. This suggests experience moderates views, but overall, the objective is met by evidencing HR planning's suboptimal influence due to gaps, affecting talent acquisition adversely in Zamtel's ongoing recruitment efforts.

4.6 Analysis Based on Objective 3: Gaps between Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition Practices at Zamtel

Gaps were assessed via frequencies, Likert scales, and cross-tabulations by gender.

Figure 4.6: Frequency Distribution of Identified Gaps

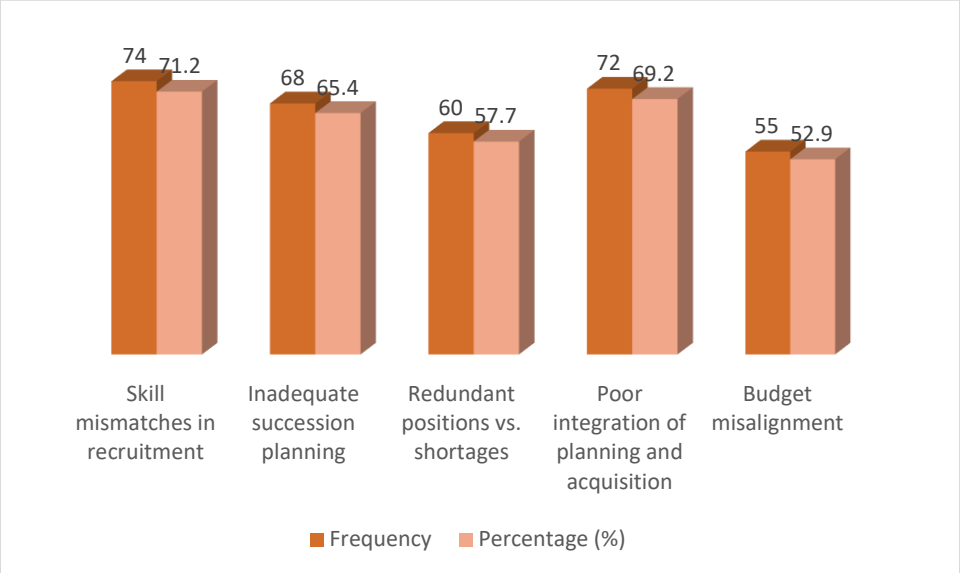


Figure 4.6 reveals prominent gaps, with skill mismatches highest (71.2%), indicating disconnects between planning and acquisition, directly addressing the objective by quantifying imbalances that perpetuate inefficiencies in Zamtel's actual HR practices, where hires often lack required tech skills. Poor integration at 69.2% highlights siloed processes, as seen in real delays between planning and hiring. Inadequate succession (65.4%) points to leadership vacuums experienced in departments, while redundant positions vs. shortages (57.7%) mirrors the Auditor General's findings of over 300 redundancies. Budget misalignment (52.9%), though lower, still signifies financial hurdles widening these gaps in day-to-day operations.

Table 4.3: Respondents' Level of Agreement on Existence of Gaps

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
There are significant skill mismatches.	4.05	0.82	-0.55	0.12
Succession planning is inadequate.	3.92	0.85	-0.48	0.08
Redundant positions coexist with shortages.	3.78	0.88	-0.42	0.05

Planning and acquisition are poorly integrated.	4.10	0.80	-0.60	0.15
Budget issues widen gaps.	3.85	0.84	-0.50	0.10

The high means - 3.78-4.10 in Table 4.3 - confirm the agreement on gaps, and negative skewness is an indication of consensus on these issues. The highest mean, 4.10, for poor integration, accompanied by a skewness of -0.60, reflects strong agreement on siloed functions. This truly reflects real-life incidences where planning documents were disregarded at Zamtel during recruitment. Skill mismatches, at 4.05, are an indication of the widespread recognition of unqualified hires who negatively affect performance. Succession inadequacy, at 3.92 with a skewness of -0.48, points to concerns over unprepared internal promotions. Redundant positions, at 3.78, highlight inefficiencies such as duplicated roles, while budget issues, standing at 3.85, underline how these are exacerbated by shortfalls in funding. Low kurtosis values indicate that there is consistency in these aspects among the respondents. This translates to systemic disconnects, underlining that the identification of gaps by the objective indicates barriers to effective talent practices in the company's lived experiences.

Table 4.4: Cross-Tabulation of Gap Perception by Gender (Percentage Agreeing)

Statement / Gender	Male (%)	Female (%)
Skill mismatches	72.6	69.0
Inadequate succession	66.1	64.3
Redundant vs. shortages	59.7	54.8
Poor integration	71.0	66.7
Budget misalignment	54.8	50.0

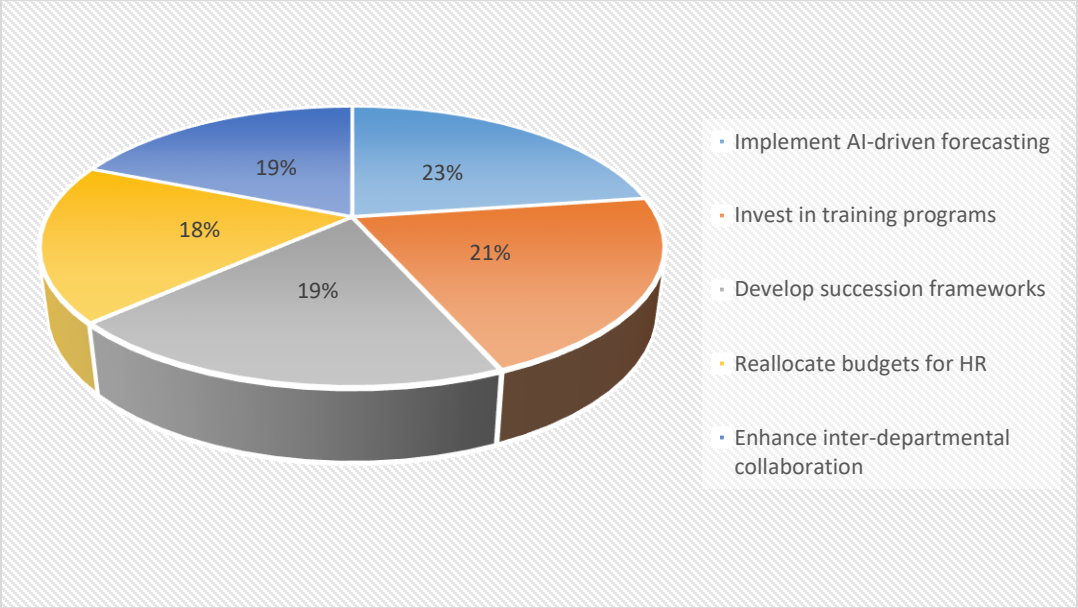
Table 4.4 indicates some slight gender difference, where males rated gaps more (54.8%-72.6%), but all agree. Males concurred 72.6% on skill mismatches, which may perhaps be simply because they are

overrepresented in technical jobs where they have to deal with these problems every day, whereas females at 69.0% nonetheless express general concern. The lack of agreement between males and females was significantly high with 71.0% and 66.7% respectively which indicates a lack of integration. There is a similar pattern with inadequate succession (66.1% male, 64.3% female), redundancies (59.7% vs. 54.8%), and the budget misalignment was lower but consistent (54.8% vs. 50.0%). This aids the cause by unveiling ubiquitous gaps in demographics, indicating that there is an immediate alignment requirement in the real workforce management at Zamtel.

4.7 Analysis Based on Objective 4: Strategic Measures for Enhancing Alignment between Workforce Needs and Talent Acquisition through Improved HR Planning at Zamtel

Measures were evaluated through frequencies of proposed strategies, Likert agreements, and cross-tabulations by age.

Figure 4.7: Frequency Distribution of Supported Strategic Measures



Frequencies in figure 4.7 are in favor of AI forecasting (81.7%), which means that employees support the use of tech solutions, which can be used to bridge the gap since Zamtel employees have indicated in feedback surveys that they require modern tools to help them anticipate the needs. Investments into training 75.0%- The wishes to upgrade skills and to cover actual deficits. The recognition of the benefits of internal development and teamwork is proposed by the succession frameworks (70.2%), collaboration (67.3%), and budget reallocation (65.4%), whereas the willingness to reprioritize funds despite the strains is suggested by budget reallocation (65.4%). This is in line with the objective where it suggests practical ways of improvement based on real employee inputs.

Table 4.5: Respondents' Level of Agreement on Proposed Measures

Statement	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
AI tools would improve forecasting.	4.25	0.72	-0.75	0.35
Training investments align needs.	4.18	0.75	-0.68	0.28
Succession programs enhance acquisition.	4.05	0.78	-0.62	0.22
Budget reallocation is essential.	3.95	0.80	-0.55	0.18
Collaboration bridges gaps.	4.10	0.74	-0.70	0.30

The means (3.95-4.25) in Table 4.5 indicate unanimity in measures, as the skewness is negative. The skew (-0.75) of the highest (4.25) of AI tools signifies that there is a high level of belief in technology to improve accuracy because staff have already witnessed the failure of manual ways. The mean of 4.18 indicates the confidence in upskilling to address the needs whereas the mean of collaboration (4.10) indicates inter-departmental solutions to address integration problems. Succession (4.05) and budget reallocation (3.95) express a little less but positive attitude, and low kurtosis is the indicator of the uniform support. This is understood to be good work strategies to create a better fit, to achieve the goal by providing data-based suggestions in the face of the existing gaps in Zamtel operations.

Table 4.6: Cross-Tabulation of Measure Support by Age (Percentage Agreeing)

Statement / Age	18-30 (%)	31-45 (%)	46+ (%)
AI forecasting	89.3	80.4	75.0
Training investments	82.1	73.2	70.0
Succession programs	75.0	69.6	65.0
Budget reallocation	71.4	64.3	60.0
Collaboration	78.6	66.1	65.0

Table 4.6 suggests that younger respondents live up to innovation more (71.4%-89.3%) indicating that they are generational buyers in. The 18-30 age bracket had a 89.3 rating in AI as tech savvy and modernized planning is preferred, with 46 and above at 75.0 also in support of but not as enthusiast. On

training, there was 82.1% agreement among the youths compared to 70.0% among the older ones meaning that there is different focus on development. Similar patterns are observed with succession (75.0% vs. 65.0%), budget (71.4% vs. 60.0%), and collaboration (78.6% vs. 65.0%) with middle-age moderate. This facilitates the goal by suggesting policies to deal with loopholes with mixed but general approval among the Zamtel workforce consisting of diverse age groups.

4.8 Discussion of Findings

This section synthesizes the key findings from the survey, evaluating how HR planning at Zamtel aligns with workforce needs and talent acquisition. It discusses each objective, linking empirical results to theoretical frameworks and prior studies.

4.8.1 Effectiveness of Zamtel's Human Resource Planning in Forecasting and Meeting Workforce Needs

The analysis showed that Zamtel had a lot of inefficiencies in its HR planning as 75.0% of the respondents indicated that there was a mismatch with technological needs and that 69.2% indicated that there was inaccurate demand forecasting as a major challenge. The means of Likert spread between 1.98 and 2.32, demonstrating the lack of agreement on the effectiveness, especially with the current level of compliance with the latest technological developments (mean = 1.98). Lower perceptions were found with lower levels of agreement in the technical departments (13.3%-23.3% agreement), which reflected frontline effects. Such results indicate reactive planning, which is not addressing shortages in key areas, which contributes to the 21% turnover rate identified by ZIPAR (2023).

The findings are in line with empirical studies that point at proactive HR planning within telecommunication industries. Similar dysfunctions of telecom HR planning were identified by Munyeka (2014): having been under-manned in technical positions (66.7%) because of lack of participation, as at Zamtel. Zeleke (2023) also found low alignment in Ethio Telecom (grand mean 2.42) and explained it by poor forecasting methods, which is similar to insufficient data analytics at Zamtel (65.4%). Globally, Al-Tarawneh (2023) also emphasized that Jordanian telecoms are successful due to integrated planning, which is the opposite of the problems faced by Zamtel. This theoretically backs up RBV (Barney, 1991) in which poor planning depletes human capital as a source of competitiveness, and the SHRM (Schuler and Jackson,1987), which urges the strategic integration. Therefore, Zamtel needs to improve forecasting to satisfy requirements since fixed methods in the developing environment cause imbalances (Anyim et al., 2012).

4.8.2 Influence of Strategic Human Resource Planning on Recruitment Efficiency and Talent Acquisition at Zamtel

Findings indicated moderate influence of HR planning on recruitment, with 52.9% noting enhanced sourcing but 72.1% citing financial constraints as limitations. Means for positive influences were 2.48-2.85, while financial strain scored high (4.12). Longer-tenured staff perceived stronger effects (50.0%-62.5%), suggesting experience mitigates views, but overall, planning's impact is constrained, affecting talent acquisition amid losses (Auditor General, 2025).

This resonates with studies on talent management in African telecoms. Kireru et al. (2017) found talent acquisition drives competitiveness in Kenyan firms, but gaps in rewards lead to retention issues, similar to Zamtel's constraints. In Nigeria, studies on telecom retention (e.g., talent retention and resilience, 2022) showed positive correlations with planning, yet opportunism erodes efficiency without integration. Globally, Alrowwad et al. (2021) linked HPWS to 28% recruitment improvements in Jordan, contrasting Zamtel's delays. Per RBV, planning fosters inimitable talent (Wright et al., 2001), while Contingency Theory (Donaldson, 2001) stresses adaptation to financial contexts. Zamtel's findings echo Hampongo and Foya (2020), where job rotation aids but incentives are needed, underscoring the need for strategic enhancements.

4.8.3 Gaps between Workforce Planning and Talent Acquisition Practices at Zamtel

Prominent gaps included skill mismatches (71.2%) and poor integration (69.2%), with high Likert means (3.78-4.10) confirming existence. Gender cross-tabs showed slight variations, but consensus highlights systemic disconnects, including 300 redundant positions (Auditor General, 2022), widening imbalances. Empirical parallels abound; Munyeka (2014) identified over-manning in Zambian telecom support (77.2%) alongside technical shortages, akin to Zamtel. Regionally, Kaunyangi (2014) noted talent wars in Kenyan telecoms due to mismatched acquisition, while South African studies (e.g., knowledge retention, 2022) stress cross-border mobility exacerbating gaps. Globally, Rabii (2015) in Malaysia linked misalignments to performance declines. SHRM theory posits integration for advantage (Boxall & Purcell, 2016), yet Zamtel's gaps reflect agency issues (Jensen & Meckling, 1976) like opportunism. Thus, addressing these, as in Basheka and Mugurusi (2011) for African public firms, is crucial for Zamtel.

4.8.4 Strategic Measures for Enhancing Alignment between Workforce Needs and Talent Acquisition through Improved HR Planning at Zamtel

Respondents strongly supported measures like AI forecasting (81.7%) and training (75.0%), with means 3.95-4.25. Younger staff endorsed more (71.4%-89.3%), proposing tech and collaboration to bridge gaps. These align with recommendations in literature; Deloitte (2024) advocates AI for predictive planning in telecoms, echoing Al-Tarawneh (2023). In Africa, Kehinde (2012) emphasized training for Nigerian retention, while Wandia (2013) in Kenya suggested succession for competitiveness. RBV supports building rare skills via measures (Barney, 1991), and Contingency Theory calls for context-specific adaptations (Otley, 1980). Zamtel's proposals mirror Zeleke (2023) for Ethio Telecom, urging reviews and involvement to up its game amid strain

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