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Improving Hiring Processes in Manufacturing: Hiring Strategies to Support Well-being and Organizational Effectiveness

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Walden University

College of Management and Human Potential

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Timothy J. Winn

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Walden University
2025

Abstract

Improving Hiring Processes in Manufacturing: Hiring Strategies to Support Well-being
and Organizational Effectiveness

by

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MBA, University of Texas at Tyler, 2023

BS, University of Texas at Tyler, 2022

AA, Tyler Junior College, 2021

Research Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

October 2025

Abstract

Delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process can significantly hinder production and create instability within the manufacturing workforce. This, in turn, has a negative effect on employee well-being and the overall effectiveness of the organization. The purpose of this qualitative research project, grounded in the Job Demands-Resources model, was to explore successful strategies hiring managers use to address hiring inefficiencies. The study was guided by a pragmatic inquiry design and included semistructured interviews with six hiring managers in the manufacturing sector who held responsibilities related to hiring. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's six-step framework. Data triangulation through industry reports and member checking enhanced the credibility of the findings. Five themes were identified: (a) internal inefficiencies and managerial bottlenecks as primary job demands, (b) strategic alignment and role definition as foundations of hiring effectiveness, (c) process improvement and technology integration as critical job resources, (d) human and organizational costs of hiring delays, and (e) emerging trends and recommendations for sustainable recruitment practices. A key recommendation is for manufacturing leaders to simplify workflows, strengthen communication, and build proactive talent pipelines to reduce strain on employees and improve organizational performance. The implications for positive social change include the potential for organizational leaders to implement more efficient and humane hiring systems that strengthen workforce stability, support local economies, and promote organizational sustainability.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my loving wife, Kelly, my rock, my greatest supporter, and my constant source of encouragement. Your unwavering belief in me, even during the most challenging moments, has been the foundation that kept me grounded. Through long nights, countless sacrifices, and the many times I doubted myself, you stood by my side with patience and understanding. Your love and strength have been my greatest motivation, and I am endlessly grateful for your presence on this journey.

To my daughter, you are my greatest inspiration. Every day, you remind me of the importance of perseverance, ambition, and the courage to chase one's dreams. I hope this work serves as a testament to the idea that anything is possible with determination and hard work. May this achievement inspire you to believe in yourself and never back down from a challenge.

To my 7th-grade English teacher, who saw something in me long before I could see it in myself: you challenged me, pushed me, and never accepted anything less than my best. Your belief in my potential left an indelible mark on my journey, and today, I carry that same lesson forward.

This dissertation is not just the result of my hard work but a reflection of the love, support, and belief that so many have poured into me. From the depths of my heart, thank you.

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To my family, who have been my unwavering foundation, your love and encouragement have carried me through every challenge. Your patience and understanding during long research and writing nights have been a testament to your support. A special thank you to the “good idea fairy:” your faith in me never wavered, and your constant reminders that I could accomplish this goal fueled my perseverance. To my friends and colleagues, your encouragement, thoughtful advice, and well-timed words of wisdom kept me motivated through the most challenging moments. Whether through late-night conversations, shared insights, or simple reminders to keep going, your support has meant more than words can express.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Project

Background of the Problem

The specific business problem was that inefficiencies and delays in the hiring process negatively affect employee well-being and organizational performance, leading to increased workload, decreased job satisfaction, and diminished productivity (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022; Islam & Amin, 2022). Industries such as healthcare, technology, and finance, where timely talent acquisition sustained competitive advantage, face these challenges particularly acutely (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Dagogo & Ogechi, 2020). For hiring managers, these inefficiencies create constraints that hinder the timely fulfillment of staffing needs and place undue stress on existing employees, exacerbating burnout and reducing engagement levels (Fastje et al., 2023; Lubbadah, 2020). In this study, a hiring manager refers to a human resource professional, departmental supervisor, or organizational leader who is directly involved in the recruitment, screening, and selection of candidates. The study used the term to describe individuals responsible for ensuring that open positions were filled in a timely manner while maintaining alignment between organizational needs and candidate qualifications.

Hiring delays often result in an increased workload for current staff, who absorb the responsibilities of unfilled positions. This heightened job demand, combined with insufficient resources, contributes to employee stress, burnout, and ultimately, turnover (Demerouti et al., 2001; Islam & Amin, 2022). The job demands-resources (JD-R) model provided a conceptual framework for understanding how job demands (e.g., increased workload due to understaffing) interact with limited resources (e.g., inadequate support

from management) to affect employee well-being and organizational performance (Demerouti et al., 2001). Organizations that fail to address these hiring inefficiencies erode employee morale, face declining productivity, and reduce operational effectiveness, ultimately affecting their bottom line (Ahmeti, 2023; Fastje et al., 2023).

Research highlights that ineffective hiring practices also affect long-term strategic goals by reducing the organization's ability to attract and retain top talent (Dagogo & Ogechi, 2020; Theys & Schultz, 2020). Organizations with inefficient hiring processes risk losing potential high-performing employees to competitors with optimized recruitment strategies in a competitive labor market (Ahmeti, 2023). High-pressure industries, where rapid talent acquisition was critical to sustaining operations during crises or economic downturns, experience these challenges even more intensely (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022).

This qualitative pragmatic study explored how delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process impacted employee well-being and organizational performance from the perspective of hiring managers. By exploring the hiring process through the lens of the JD-R model (2001), the purpose of this study was to uncover how these inefficiencies heightened job demands and potentially reduced job resources, thereby influencing employee engagement and productivity (Demerouti et al., 2001). This research also drew insights from recent studies that emphasized the critical role of effective human resource management (HRM) practices in enhancing organizational performance (Arokiasamy et al., 2024; Theys & Schultz, 2020).

Through thematic analysis, this study explored key barriers that hiring managers faced in optimizing recruitment processes, particularly in industries where delays significantly impacted performance outcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This qualitative approach provided a deeper understanding of the challenges associated with hiring inefficiencies and offered actionable strategies that organizations could implement to streamline their hiring practices. The study aimed to contribute to the body of knowledge on how organizations could improve their recruitment processes to foster a healthier and more productive work environment (Fastje et al., 2023; Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020).

Addressing these inefficiencies is vital for enhancing employee well-being and sustaining organizational competitiveness in an increasingly dynamic business environment. As organizations navigate complex market conditions and labor shortages, refining their hiring processes has become essential for maintaining a robust workforce capable of driving strategic objectives (Islam & Amin, 2022; Tian & Tóth, 2024). The goal of this study was to generate insights that informed leaders and human resource (HR) practitioners on effective strategies to mitigate hiring delays, ultimately enhancing organizational resilience and long-term performance.

Research Question

What effective strategies do hiring managers in the manufacturing industry use to address delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process, and how do these strategies impact employee well-being and organizational performance?

Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are facts that researchers consider true without empirical verification, forming the foundation of research validity (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this study, key assumptions included participants' truthful responses and their willingness to share honest perspectives regarding the inefficiencies and delays in the hiring process. Assumptions included that hiring managers had sufficient experience and understanding to provide relevant insights into the impact of these processes on employee well-being and organizational performance. This study presupposed that the data collected represent broader organizational contexts and can be applied to similar industries. While these assumptions were integral to the study's framework, they introduced inherent risks that I both acknowledged and mitigated (Ahmeti, 2023) by designing transparent research methodologies and maintaining participant anonymity, which encouraged candid responses from participants.

Limitations

Limitations are inherent weaknesses that constrain a study's scope, applicability, or generalizability (Demerouti et al., 2001). This research's limitations included a reliance on qualitative data, which limited the study's ability to capture broader statistical trends. This study bases its findings on a specific sample of hiring managers, which may not comprehensively represent all industries or geographic regions (Arokiasamy et al., 2024). Time constraints and resource limitations also affected the depth of data collection and analysis. Moreover, participants' perceptions of hiring inefficiencies may have been

influenced by external factors such as economic conditions or organizational culture (Islam & Amin, 2022). These limitations underscore the importance of cautiously interpreting findings and considering them as part of a broader contextual framework.

Transition

Section 1 established the foundation for this study by outlining the purpose, problem statement, research question, conceptual framework, and an initial review of relevant literature. This section emphasized the critical challenges posed by delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process, particularly their impact on employee well-being and organizational performance. By framing these issues through the JD-R model (2001), the study highlighted the importance of examining how job demands, such as hiring delays, interact with organizational resources to influence outcomes like burnout, engagement, and productivity.

Section 2 built on this foundation by delving deeper into the professional and academic literature to explore recruitment inefficiencies, their effects, and the strategies to address them. A systematic literature review expanded the conceptual framework, integrated key insights from recent studies, and provided contextualization for the research focus. The goal of this section was to explore the intersection of hiring practices, employee well-being, and organizational performance while identifying gaps in current knowledge to establish the basis for the research methodology in Section 3.

Section 2: The Literature Review

A Review of Professional and Academic Literature

Approach to the Literature Review

The literature review adopted a systematic and integrative methodology to explore and synthesize existing research on recruitment inefficiencies and their effects on employee well-being and organizational performance. This approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the topic by drawing on a range of peer-reviewed journal articles. As described by Paul and Barari (2022), systematic literature reviews provide structured pathways to analyze existing studies comprehensively, ensuring the inclusion of relevant and high-quality research. The literature review emphasized peer-reviewed journals, particularly recent publications, to ensure credibility and relevance. As shown in Table 1, the majority (97.50%) of the sources included in this review came from peer-reviewed journals, ensuring a high standard of academic rigor. Additionally, 88.75% of the sources came from the past 5 years, highlighting contemporary research on recruitment inefficiencies and their impact on employee well-being and organizational performance.

Table 1

Summary of References Used in the Literature Review

Category	Count	Percentage
Peer-Reviewed Sources	78	97.50
Non-Peer-reviewed Sources	2	2.5
Published in the last 5 years	73	88.75
Total Reference	80	100

Selection of Sources

The review emphasized the use of recent and high-quality studies, focusing on peer-reviewed articles published within the most recent 5 years to maintain relevance and applicability to contemporary organizational practices. Keywords such as “hiring delays,” “recruitment inefficiencies,” “employee well-being,” “organizational performance,” “AI in recruitment,” and “Job Demands-Resources model” guided the search across academic databases, including Elicit, ProQuest, and Google Scholar. This targeted approach aligned with best practices for systematic literature reviews, prioritized inclusivity and relevance, while ensuring alignment with the research focus (Paul et al., 2023).

The thematic areas outlined in the literature offered a structured framework for analyzing the complexities of recruitment inefficiencies, their consequences, and potential solutions. Empirical studies, such as those by Gabriel and Aguinis (2022) and Langer et al. (2023), underscored the adverse effects of inefficient hiring practices on organizational performance and employee well-being. While this literature provided valuable insights, gaps remained in understanding how hiring inefficiencies specifically impacted decision-making processes and operational strategies from the hiring managers’ perspective. This work aimed to expand existing knowledge and provide practical recommendations to improve recruitment processes.

Critical Evaluation

The critical evaluation of the literature focused on assessing the methodologies, findings, and practical implications of selected studies, with an emphasis on their relevance to real-world organizational practices. This approach prioritized the practical

application of research insights rather than solely identifying gaps in existing literature. For example, Paul et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of effectively leveraging established frameworks to address organizational challenges. By concentrating on actionable insights, the evaluation ensured that the study built on well-established knowledge and aligned conceptual perspectives with practical strategies for mitigating recruitment inefficiencies and enhanced the study's capacity to offer evidence-based recommendations that promoted employee well-being and organizational performance (Kadi et al., 2023).

Integration with the Research Question

Integration with the study's central research question enhanced the alignment of each thematic section with the study's objectives. The research question focused on identifying the effective strategies that hiring managers used in the manufacturing industry to address hiring delays and inefficiencies, as well as their impact on employee well-being and organizational performance. Studies such as those by Gabriel and Aguinis (2022) and Kadi et al. (2023) emphasized the negative impact of unfilled positions on productivity and employee morale, underscoring the need for efficient recruitment strategies. Similarly, Paul and Barari (2022) advocated for using structured methodologies to synthesize research insights into practical solutions. This integration ensured that the literature review connected conceptual perspectives with actionable strategies, addressing recruitment challenges, and maintained relevance and depth. The study offered a comprehensive and evidence-based approach to improving hiring processes and organizational outcomes by building on existing knowledge.

Purpose of the Literature Review

This literature review justified the need for additional research by exploring existing studies on strategies to enhance hiring efficiency in the manufacturing industry and identified areas that remained unexplored. Prior research has emphasized that high-involvement work systems (HIWS) and managerial practices can improve recruitment and enhance workforce stability. Elorza et al. (2022) found that HIWS positively impacted organizational performance and employee well-being in manufacturing settings, highlighting the importance of leadership involvement in hiring strategies. Similarly, Arokiasamy et al. (2023) explored how HRM practices contributed to organizational performance, emphasizing the need for structured recruitment processes to enhance efficiency. Additionally, Biea et al. (2024) investigated recruitment challenges in manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), emphasizing the role of technology and innovation in optimizing hiring processes and reducing delays.

While these studies provided valuable insights into recruitment strategies, they lacked a specific focus on hiring managers' perspectives and the broader implications for employee well-being and organizational performance in manufacturing environments. Elorza et al. (2022) highlighted that effective recruitment strategies require strong managerial commitment, yet little research has explored how hiring managers tailor these strategies to address industry-specific challenges. Additionally, Arokiasamy et al. (2023) examined HRM practices in manufacturing but did not explore how hiring inefficiencies affected long-term workforce stability. Biea et al. (2024) further emphasized the need for recruitment innovations in manufacturing but did not investigate the impact of hiring

inefficiencies on employee well-being. This gap highlighted the need for further research to explore the practical application of these strategies and their long-term impact on workforce stability and operational success in manufacturing organizations.

Second, this review explored the relationship between hiring practices, employee well-being, and organizational outcomes. While existing literature suggests that well-designed hiring practices can positively influence employee well-being and organizational efficiency, gaps remain in understanding how specific strategies used by hiring managers mitigate hiring delays and inefficiencies. For instance, Elorza et al. (2022) found that HIWS improved employee engagement and job satisfaction, yet little research had explored how hiring inefficiencies impacted the successful implementation of these systems. Similarly, Gupta (2024) highlighted the role of employee well-being initiatives, such as wellness programs and flexible work arrangements, in reducing turnover and absenteeism. However, there is limited research that has explored whether delays in the hiring process hinder employees from benefiting from these initiatives or contribute to job dissatisfaction before such interventions can take effect (Jaskeviciute et al., 2021). Furthermore, Jaskeviciute et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of building organizational trust through HRM practices; however, scholars have not fully explored how persistent hiring inefficiencies affect trust and morale. These gaps underscore the need for additional research to determine how hiring managers navigate these challenges and what strategies effectively address inefficiencies while supporting employee well-being and organizational performance.

Last, this review included the identification of key strategies for hiring managers to mitigate delays and inefficiencies, highlighting the need for further research to address existing gaps. Fisher et al. (2021) emphasized the importance of structured hiring guidelines, which reduced decision-making time and improved the accuracy of candidate selection. While these guidelines offered a foundation, Sabil et al. (2023) demonstrated that integrating artificial intelligence (AI) technologies further enhanced recruitment efficiency by automating processes and reducing human error. Aubouin-Bonnaventure et al. (2023) underscored the role of HR practices in fostering a positive organizational culture that supported employee well-being. However, current research lacked a detailed exploration of how hiring managers implemented these strategies in diverse organizational contexts and the extent to which they impacted employee well-being and organizational performance. This gap justified the need for additional research to explore these strategies' practical applications and outcomes, particularly from hiring managers' perspectives.

Conceptual Framework

The Job Demands-Resources Model

The JD-R model (2001), first proposed by Demerouti et al. (2001), provided a framework for understanding how job demands and resources influence employee well-being and performance. Job demands, such as physical, psychological, and social challenges, require sustained effort and can lead to stress and burnout if not managed effectively. Conversely, resources help employees cope with these demands, fostering engagement and job satisfaction (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). Within the hiring process,

inefficiencies and delays represented significant job demands that increased stress and reduced productivity. Strategies such as improved communication and streamlined processes served as resources that could mitigate these effects (Bakker et al., 2023). However, existing research did not fully explore how hiring managers perceived and implemented these strategies as resources in real-world organizational contexts or how they influenced long-term outcomes, such as employee engagement and retention.

For example, while Demerouti et al. (2001) introduced the JD-R model (2001) to explain how job demands and resources interact to affect employee well-being, research applying this model specifically to hiring delays and inefficiencies remained limited. Bakker and Demerouti (2017) expanded on the JD-R framework, emphasizing the role of job resources in mitigating stress, yet little was known about how hiring managers strategically leverage resources to counteract the negative effects of prolonged vacancies. Similarly, Langseth-Eide and Vittersø (2021) highlighted the importance of sufficient job resources in promoting well-being and job retention. However, their findings did not directly address the impact of hiring inefficiencies on resource allocation. These gaps suggest a need for additional research on how hiring managers implemented and adapted resource-based strategies to improve employee engagement and retention in response to hiring delays.

Applying the JD-R model (2001) to hiring process inefficiencies illustrated the dynamic between job demands and resources in organizational settings. Delays in recruitment or hiring processes place additional demands on hiring managers, creating stress and increased workload, which could lead to burnout if not managed effectively

(Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). In contrast, organizational resources such as managerial strategies and process optimizations could reduce the burden of these demands, improving overall efficiency and employee satisfaction (Bakker et al., 2023). Therefore, the JD-R model (2001) offered a valuable conceptual framework for understanding how delays in hiring processes affected hiring managers and organizational outcomes.

Relevance to the Study

The JD-R model (2001) remained particularly relevant to this study, as it effectively frames the research question surrounding the impact of delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process on employee well-being and organizational performance. Hiring delays represented a significant job demand that increased the workload for hiring managers, potentially leading to negative consequences such as burnout or decreased performance if not addressed (Demerouti et al., 2001; Li et al., 2023). By exploring the interplay between these demands and the resources available to managers, this study aimed to identify effective strategies that mitigate the negative effects of delays and inefficiencies on both individual and organizational levels.

Connecting demands, such as hiring delays, with resources, including managerial strategies, provides a framework for understanding how organizational processes impacted employee well-being and performance. The JD-R model (2001) highlighted that while job demands can lead to stress and disengagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009), the availability of adequate resources, such as process improvements and support systems, mitigates these effects and enhances job satisfaction and performance (Bakker et al., 2023). Organizational interventions that equipped managers to address hiring

inefficiencies were critical in improving organizational effectiveness and employee satisfaction (Flores et al., 2021).

Existing research indicates that scholars have yet to fully explore how specific managerial strategies served as resources in diverse organizational contexts and how these interventions measurably impacted employee well-being and productivity. While Demerouti et al. (2001) introduced the JD-R model to explain how job demands and resources interact to influence employee outcomes, studies applying this model specifically to hiring inefficiencies remained scarce. Bakker et al. (2023) emphasized the role of job resources in mitigating stress and improving performance, but did not explore how hiring managers strategically deployed resources to address recruitment delays. Similarly, Elorza et al. (2022) found that HIWS improved employee well-being and organizational performance, yet their study did not assess how these systems functioned in organizations experiencing persistent hiring inefficiencies. Furthermore, Langseth-Eide and Vittersø (2021) demonstrated that providing sufficient resources enhanced work engagement and reduced absenteeism. However, their research did not address how managerial strategies within the hiring process influenced these outcomes. These gaps highlighted the need for further research into the role of hiring managers in mitigating the negative effects of recruitment delays through resource allocation and strategic interventions.

The implications of the JD-R model (2001) in this study highlighted the potential for organizations to improve employee well-being and organizational performance by strategically applying resources to address hiring delays. Langseth-Eide and Vittersø

(2021) demonstrated that providing sufficient resources to cope with demands could lead to improved health outcomes and increased work attendance. This relationship paralleled the potential benefits of equipping hiring managers with adequate resources and support systems to navigate recruitment inefficiencies. By applying the JD-R model (2001), this study included exploration of how organizations mitigated the negative consequences of hiring delays, thereby reducing job strain for hiring managers and enhancing employee well-being and organizational performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001). Understanding how job resources, such as process optimizations and managerial support, influenced hiring effectiveness sought to provide valuable insights into improving both manager and employee outcomes.

Themes in Literature

Delays in the Hiring Process

Inefficiencies such as lengthy approval processes, misaligned job descriptions, and poor interdepartmental communication often hindered the hiring process. Bureaucratic delays and hierarchical approval structures significantly slowed recruitment, leaving positions unfilled for extended periods and increasing the workload for existing employees (Bakker et al., 2023). Mismatched job descriptions that failed to align with actual role requirements created additional delays, as hiring managers had to revise expectations and navigate prolonged hiring cycles (Basch et al., 2022). Similarly, insufficient collaboration between HR and other departments exacerbated these inefficiencies, leading to delays in decision-making and an inability to prioritize hiring effectively (Langer et al., 2023; Le Barbanchon et al., 2022). However, studies such as

Basch et al. (2022) and Langer et al. (2023) often focused on isolated inefficiencies without examining how these factors interacted or how hiring managers perceived and addressed these challenges in practice. Further research, such as this study, remained needed to explore these dynamics comprehensively, offering actionable strategies to streamline recruitment and enhance organizational effectiveness.

Organizational Impact

The organizational impact of hiring delays was significant, resulting in substantial cost implications and operational challenges. Unfilled roles often led to increased workloads for current employees, causing missed business opportunities and decreased efficiency (Arokiasamy et al., 2023). These delays negatively affected team dynamics and employee morale, as employees overwhelmed by additional responsibilities often experienced heightened stress and burnout, leading to reduced productivity (Gupta, 2024). Inefficient hiring processes also contributed to high turnover rates, as employees facing persistent workload pressures often sought alternative employment opportunities (Demerouti et al., 2001; Langseth-Eide & Vittersø, 2021). While existing studies highlighted these consequences, research had yet to fully explore how hiring managers implemented strategies to mitigate these impacts or how targeted interventions could address these issues. Additional research was necessary to explore how specific managerial practices could enhance recruitment efficiency and mitigate the adverse effects of delays on employees and organizational outcomes, providing actionable solutions for sustained effectiveness (Le Barbanchon et al., 2022).

Effective Strategies for Addressing Hiring Inefficiencies

While integrating technology, such as applicant tracking systems (ATS) and AI tools, effectively streamlined recruitment, significant gaps persisted in understanding its full potential and practical implementation challenges. AI-powered solutions, including machine learning algorithms, enhanced candidate matching and expedited decision-making, reducing human error and bias (Bigman et al., 2023; Sharma, 2023).

Additionally, data-driven insights provided by these tools enabled hiring managers to make more informed decisions, improving recruitment outcomes (Sabil et al., 2023). However, current research primarily focused on the benefits of these technologies without thoroughly examining their limitations, such as potential implementation barriers, costs, and ethical considerations. Further research remained needed to explore how hiring managers navigated these challenges, how organizations integrated these tools effectively, and the broader implications for organizational performance and employee well-being. Addressing these gaps could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how technology could be leveraged to enhance recruitment efficiency.

Streamlining Recruitment Processes

While standardizing recruitment processes and fostering collaboration between HR and hiring departments were effective strategies for improving efficiency, significant gaps remained in understanding their practical implementation and long-term impacts. As Bill and Melchers (2023) highlighted, standardized interview protocols reduced redundancy and improved consistency in candidate evaluations. Researchers such as Bill and Melchers (2023) and Le Barbanchon et al. (2022) explored standardized interview

protocols and recruitment strategies. However, their studies did not fully explore how different organizational contexts influenced the adoption and effectiveness of these protocols. Arokiasamy et al. (2024) and Sutton and Atkinson (2023) highlighted the role of structured hiring processes in improving recruitment efficiency, yet they did not address how industry-specific factors or organizational culture impacted their implementation. Further research was needed to understand how organizations across various sectors adopted and adapted these protocols to optimize hiring outcomes. Similarly, although collaboration between HR and hiring departments improved communication and expedited candidate selection, researchers needed to further investigate the specific mechanisms and best practices for achieving this alignment (Tian & Tóth, 2024). Additional research remained needed to explore how these strategies were implemented in diverse organizational settings, their measurable outcomes on recruitment efficiency, and their broader impacts on employee well-being and organizational performance. Addressing these gaps could provide actionable insights for organizations seeking to enhance their recruitment processes.

Proactive Workforce Planning

Proactive workforce planning was essential to reducing hiring delays. Developing talent pipelines and engaging in succession planning ensured that organizations were prepared for future hiring needs, which helped minimize time spent filling vacancies (Ayanponle et al., 2024). Employer branding also played a vital role in attracting high-quality candidates, which shortened the recruitment cycle and ensured a smoother hiring process (Sutton & Atkinson, 2023). By anticipating workforce needs and aligning

recruitment strategies with organizational goals, companies could significantly reduce inefficiencies in the hiring process.

Impact of Hiring Delays on Employee Well-Being

Delays in hiring created significant challenges for employee well-being and organizational effectiveness, yet gaps remained in understanding how to mitigate these impacts effectively. Increased workloads for existing employees during prolonged hiring processes led to stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction, with long-term consequences on morale and engagement (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022). These pressures decreased motivation and productivity and contributed to higher turnover rates, further exacerbating organizational strain (Flores et al., 2021; Langseth-Eide & Vittersø, 2021). While existing studies highlighted these outcomes, they provided limited insight into how hiring managers could implement strategies to alleviate these challenges and support employees during staffing shortages. Further research remained needed to explore practical interventions that addressed workload imbalances and promoted employee well-being, ultimately enhancing retention and organizational performance (Lubbadeh, 2020). This gap underscored the importance of identifying actionable solutions to improve recruitment efficiency and workplace sustainability, highlighting the need for this study to explore effective strategies that hiring managers could implement to mitigate inefficiencies and enhance organizational performance.

Perceived Organizational Inefficiency

Hiring delays often contributed to perceptions of organizational inefficiency, which could significantly erode employee trust and engagement (Li et al., 2023; Murphy,

2024). Li et al. (2023) found that inefficiencies in hiring could reduce employee morale and engagement, ultimately affecting overall job satisfaction and retention. Murphy (2024) highlighted that prolonged vacancies and slow recruitment processes signaled to employees that the organization lacked strategic workforce planning, leading to decreased confidence in leadership. These studies emphasized the need for further research on how hiring managers could mitigate these negative perceptions through more efficient recruitment strategies. Slow or disorganized recruitment processes signaled to employees that the organization might not prioritize their needs or sufficiently invest in its workforce, leading to disengagement and reduced job satisfaction (Murphy, 2024). This erosion of trust could lower morale, hinder collaboration, and negatively impact productivity, creating broader challenges for maintaining a positive organizational culture (Li et al., 2023).

While existing studies identified the consequences of inefficient hiring on trust and engagement (Li et al., 2023; Murphy, 2024), they did not fully explore specific strategies for rebuilding trust and mitigating perceptions of inefficiency. Transparent communication, expedited hiring workflows, and proactive workforce planning were potential solutions, yet their effectiveness remained underexamined. Murphy (2024) suggested that organizations that fostered open communication about hiring timelines and challenges could alleviate employee concerns, but further research was needed to assess the impact of these approaches. Similarly, Li et al. (2023) highlighted that streamlining hiring procedures and reducing bottlenecks could improve employee confidence in

leadership; however, the mechanisms driving these improvements required deeper exploration.

Additional research remained necessary to determine which managerial strategies were most effective in restoring trust and engagement after hiring delays. Investigating practical approaches that hiring managers could implement to enhance recruitment efficiency, rebuild employee trust, and strengthen organizational culture was essential (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Kandi et al., 2022). These insights would help address underlying issues affecting both employee satisfaction and organizational performance.

Organizational Performance and Recruitment Outcomes

While metrics such as time-to-fill, cost-per-hire, and quality-of-hire provided valuable insights into recruitment efficiency, gaps remained in understanding how organizations could effectively integrate these metrics into actionable strategies for improving hiring processes. These metrics highlighted the operational aspects of recruitment but did not fully capture the broader implications of delays, such as their impact on employee well-being, organizational culture, and long-term performance (Kadi et al., 2023; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Delays in filling key positions often resulted in productivity losses and hindered organizational growth and competitiveness, emphasizing the need for a more comprehensive approach to recruitment analytics (Kadi et al., 2023).

Kadi et al. (2023) emphasized that organizations often struggled to leverage recruitment data to address inefficiencies, despite the potential benefits of predictive analytics and hiring metrics. Van Iddekinge et al. (2023) suggested that while these tools could enhance recruitment outcomes, their practical application in decision-making

remained underexplored. Additionally, Arokiasamy et al. (2023) highlighted the need for structured frameworks that integrated these metrics into recruitment strategies to drive meaningful improvements. Addressing this gap required further research to identify best practices for utilizing recruitment data to enhance decision-making and mitigate delays (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023).

Role of Leadership

Effective leadership was crucial in shaping the recruitment process, influencing hiring efficiency, and aligning recruitment practices with organizational goals. Research by Elorza et al. (2022) highlighted that strong leadership involvement in recruitment reduced time-to-fill and improved candidate quality. Additionally, Sutton and Atkinson (2023) found that when hiring managers received structured leadership training, they were better equipped to make strategic hiring decisions that enhanced workforce stability. These findings suggested that leadership-driven recruitment strategies streamlined hiring and contributed to long-term organizational success by ensuring that new hires aligned with company needs. Organizations that prioritized leadership development in hiring practices could create more efficient and effective recruitment processes. As leadership remained a key factor in optimizing hiring outcomes, further exploration was needed to determine which specific leadership practices best mitigated recruitment inefficiencies.

Despite the recognized importance of leadership in recruitment, existing research did not fully explore which leadership behaviors, training, or organizational structures best supported hiring managers in overcoming delays and inefficiencies. Studies suggested that transformational leadership fostered a proactive hiring culture, yet more

research was necessary to determine which leadership styles most effectively mitigated recruitment challenges (Kadi et al., 2023; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Additionally, Arokiasamy et al. (2023) emphasized that integrating leadership-driven solutions into hiring processes could enhance both short- and long-term organizational performance. These studies indicated that leadership styles and decision-making approaches significantly influenced recruitment outcomes, yet practical guidance on implementation remained limited. Identifying best practices for leadership in hiring could help organizations reduce inefficiencies, improve employee well-being, and enhance overall recruitment effectiveness. Further research remained needed to develop structured leadership frameworks that supported hiring managers in addressing delays and improving recruitment strategies.

Synthesis of Literature

Gaps in Existing Research

Researchers have significantly advanced the understanding of various aspects of recruitment processes but have yet to address several research gaps. One key gap was the need for qualitative insights into hiring managers' experiences and strategies. Although studies had explored the effectiveness of specific recruitment technologies and strategies (Basch et al., 2022; Bigman et al., 2023), there remained a limited understanding of how hiring managers perceived and navigated the challenges posed by recruitment inefficiencies (Le Barbanchon et al., 2022). Qualitative studies were needed to provide richer insights into how hiring managers implemented and adjusted strategies in real-world settings, offering a deeper understanding of their experiences (Bakker et al., 2023).

Another gap in the literature was the need for more research connecting recruitment strategies to broader employee well-being and organizational performance outcomes. While there was a growing body of work on the JD-R model (2001), which outlined how job demands like hiring delays could impact well-being, fewer studies had explicitly linked these delays to long-term organizational outcomes such as productivity, retention, and profitability (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Elorza et al., 2022). More research was needed to explore how recruitment efficiency or inefficiency directly shaped broader organizational metrics to provide a comprehensive view of its impact on well-being and performance.

More research focusing on cross-industry comparisons and longitudinal studies was necessary to address the limitations of current research. Existing studies primarily concentrated on specific industries or short-term effects of recruitment strategies, which limited their generalizability (Fisher et al., 2022; Sutton & Atkinson, 2023). Longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term effectiveness of various recruitment strategies, while cross-industry research could identify trends and strategies applicable across diverse organizational contexts (Li et al., 2023). Conducting these types of studies might reveal universal approaches to enhancing recruitment processes and offer practical guidance for organizations seeking to improve efficiency for hiring on a broader scale.

Emerging Trends

The literature also reflected several emerging trends shaping the future of recruitment and hiring strategies. Among the most prominent trends was the growing use of AI and machine learning in recruitment processes. AI technologies, including ATS and

machine learning algorithms, were increasingly being utilized to automate aspects of candidate screening, improve matching accuracy, and reduce biases (Bigman et al., 2023; Vivek, 2023). These technologies had the potential to significantly improve recruitment efficiency by streamlining administrative tasks and reducing the time spent on manual processes, ultimately addressing one of the primary causes of hiring delays (Sabil et al., 2023; Sharma, 2023).

An emerging trend in recruitment was the shift toward holistic approaches that balanced recruitment efficiency with employee well-being. Organizations were increasingly prioritizing the integration of employee well-being into recruitment processes, recognizing its potential to enhance satisfaction and performance (Ayanponle et al., 2024; Sutton & Atkinson, 2023). Flexible work arrangements and wellness programs were often cited as effective practices for achieving this balance, supporting employees' health and engagement while improving organizational outcomes (De Ruiter & Peters, 2021; Gupta, 2024). However, current studies primarily focused on the benefits of these strategies without exploring how organizations implemented them effectively or their long-term impact across different industries and workforce demographics. Additional research remained needed to investigate how recruitment strategies that emphasized well-being could be personalized to diverse organizational contexts, ensuring their practical application and sustained effectiveness. This research might fill a critical gap in understanding the intersection of recruitment efficiency and employee well-being, providing actionable insights for organizations seeking to adopt a more holistic approach.

Lastly, recruiters significantly transformed hiring strategies by implementing remote recruitment, especially in the post-pandemic era. Organizations relied on virtual interviews and online assessment tools as standard practices, fundamentally altering how hiring processes occurred (Adisa et al., 2023). This shift presented new challenges, including keeping candidates engaged during virtual interviews and ensuring remote hires integrated effectively with organizational culture (Le Barbanchon et al., 2022; Revillod, 2024). The continued growth of remote hiring underscored the need for further research to explore its impact on recruitment strategies, employee retention, and job satisfaction in remote work environments (Kochling & Wehner, 2023). Addressing these gaps might provide valuable insights for organizations adapting to the evolving workplace dynamics.

Implications for Practice

Practical Strategies for Hiring Managers

Based on best practices in the literature, hiring managers could adopt several strategies to mitigate delays in the hiring process while ensuring employee well-being and improving organizational performance. One critical recommendation was the integration of technology to streamline recruitment processes. The use of ATS and AI could significantly reduce administrative burdens, expedite candidate screening, and enhance the accuracy of candidate selection (Bigman et al., 2023; Vivek, 2023). AI tools might also help identify the most suitable candidates more efficiently, ultimately reducing the time-to-fill and improving the quality of hires (Sabil et al., 2023; Sharma, 2023).

While standardizing and streamlining recruitment processes had proven effective, gaps remained in understanding how these strategies could be adapted and optimized for

diverse organizational settings. Research highlighted that uniform interview protocols and aligned expectations among interviewers could reduce redundancies and accelerate the hiring process (Bill & Melchers, 2023; Fisher et al., 2022). Enhanced collaboration between HR departments and hiring managers further contributed to efficiency by improving communication and decision-making (Le Barbanchon et al., 2022).

However, existing studies often focused on general recommendations without examining the specific challenges organizations faced when implementing these strategies. For example, Basch et al. (2022) noted that organizations struggled with candidate perceptions of digital hiring tools, which could impact employer branding and hiring outcomes. Similarly, Langer et al. (2023) emphasized that while AI-driven hiring practices enhanced efficiency, organizations faced challenges in bias mitigation and compliance with data privacy laws. Furthermore, Elorza et al. (2022) highlighted that HIWS improved recruitment effectiveness but required significant cultural and managerial commitment to implement successfully.

In addition to implementation challenges, the long-term impacts of recruitment strategies on organizational outcomes remained underexplored. Research suggested that hiring process inefficiencies negatively affected employee retention, engagement, and overall productivity (Kaczkó & Ostendorf, 2022; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). However, research had yet to comprehensively explore how hiring managers tailored strategies to maintain long-term effectiveness across different industries and workforce compositions (Basch et al., 2022; Elorza et al., 2022). Elorza et al. (2022) highlighted that while

HIWS could enhance recruitment effectiveness, their success depended on significant cultural and managerial commitment, which varied across organizations. Similarly, Basch et al. (2022) noted that organizations faced challenges in adapting digital hiring tools to different workforce needs, further complicating the customization of recruitment strategies. Additional research remained needed to explore how organizations could effectively modify these strategies to ensure sustainable improvements in recruitment efficiency and workforce stability. This exploration could provide actionable insights into the practical application of these strategies across various organizational contexts.

Proactive workforce planning played a critical role in reducing hiring delays and inefficiencies, yet gaps remained in understanding its long-term effectiveness and adaptability across different industries and organizational contexts. Organizations proactively minimized hiring delays by establishing talent pipelines, implementing succession planning, and strengthening employer branding, ensuring a pool of qualified candidates was available when needed (Ayanponle et al., 2024; Sutton & Atkinson, 2023). These approaches reduced the time required to fill positions and strengthened the organization's ability to meet strategic goals and maintain performance during staffing shortages (Arokiasamy et al., 2023). However, current research often focused on individual strategies without examining how these elements could be integrated into a comprehensive workforce planning framework or their broader impact on organizational culture and employee retention. Additional research remained needed to explore the effectiveness of proactive workforce planning in diverse settings, providing actionable

insights for organizations seeking to enhance recruitment processes and achieve long-term success.

Frameworks for Enhancing Organizational Effectiveness

Balancing hiring efficiency with employee well-being required frameworks prioritizing organizational needs and employee welfare. The JD-R model (2001) emphasized the importance of maintaining employee well-being while optimizing recruitment processes. Streamlined hiring practices and support systems for managers could reduce recruitment delays' negative impact, enhancing well-being and organizational performance (Bakker et al., 2023; Li et al., 2023). However, Elorza et al. (2022) emphasized that existing research lacked a thorough examination of how hiring managers tailored recruitment frameworks to address specific challenges and how these strategies impacted long-term employee engagement and organizational outcomes. Their findings suggested that while HIWS improved recruitment effectiveness, their success depended on significant cultural and managerial commitment, which varied across organizations. Additional research remained to assess the practical application of the JD-R model (2001) in recruitment and its broader implications for organizational effectiveness.

Organizations should adopt a holistic approach to recruitment by integrating employee well-being into their hiring strategies. Researchers showed that flexible work arrangements, wellness programs, and an inclusive culture that aligned with employee and organizational needs reduced turnover, improved job satisfaction, and increased engagement (De Ruiter & Peters, 2021; Elorza et al., 2022). Despite these benefits,

limited research explored how organizations could effectively implement such practices during recruitment and measure their impact on long-term organizational success. Further investigation remained to identify best practices for incorporating well-being into recruitment strategies, particularly in diverse industries and workforce demographics, to ensure sustainable improvements in performance (Flores et al., 2021; Gupta, 2024).

As remote work reshaped recruitment practices, organizations had to adapt their strategies to address the unique challenges and opportunities of virtual hiring. Standardized online assessments, virtual team interviews, and the integration of advanced technological tools could create a seamless recruitment experience for employers and candidates (Adisa et al., 2023; Le Barbanchon et al., 2022). While organizations increasingly relied on virtual recruitment strategies, researchers had provided limited insight into their long-term effectiveness and impact on employee retention and organizational culture. Researchers had to evaluate how organizations could optimize virtual hiring practices to sustain recruitment efficiency while adapting to the evolving demands of the modern workforce.

These frameworks and strategies could improve recruitment processes, enhance organizational effectiveness, and promote employee well-being. Integrating technology, such as ATS and AI tools, streamlined recruitment by automating routine tasks and improving candidate matching (Sabil et al., 2023; Sharma, 2023). Additionally, adopting streamlined processes, including standardized interview protocols and effective collaboration between HR and hiring managers, reduced delays and ensured consistency in decision-making (Bill & Melchers, 2023; Le Barbanchon et al., 2022). A balanced

approach to recruitment that incorporated employee well-being initiatives, such as flexible work arrangements and wellness programs, could further enhance employee satisfaction and retention (De Ruiter & Peters, 2021; Gupta, 2024). These strategies addressed recruitment inefficiencies and contributed to improved organizational performance and a more positive work environment.

Key Insights and Implications for Future Research

Summary of Key Findings. The literature reviewed revealed several strategies for improving hiring efficiency while focusing on employee well-being and organizational performance. Key strategies included integrating technology, such as ATS and AI, to streamline recruitment. These technologies expedited candidate screening and selection and reduced human error, leading to better hiring decisions (Sabil et al., 2023; Sharma, 2023). Standardizing recruitment processes, such as aligning interview protocols and enhancing department collaboration, reduced delays and improved decision-making (Bill & Melchers, 2023; Fisher et al., 2022). Proactive workforce planning, including talent pipelines and succession planning, also played a crucial role in minimizing delays by preparing organizations for future hiring needs (Ayanponle et al., 2024; Sutton & Atkinson, 2023).

While these strategies offered valuable solutions, gaps remained in understanding how organizations could effectively implement them across diverse industries and workforce compositions. Research had yet to explore how hiring managers fully tailored these approaches to address unique organizational challenges or how these strategies influenced long-term employee retention and engagement (Elorza et al., 2022; Van

Iddekinge et al., 2023). Additionally, Basch et al. (2022) highlighted that organizations faced difficulties in adapting digital hiring tools to different workforce needs, while Langer et al. (2023) emphasized the challenges of ensuring AI-driven hiring practices remained unbiased and compliant with data privacy regulations. Addressing these gaps was essential for developing evidence-based recruitment practices that not only enhanced efficiency but also contributed to sustainable workforce development and organizational success.

The literature emphasized the importance of balancing recruitment efficiency with employee well-being. High-involvement work systems and well-being initiatives, such as flexible work arrangements and wellness programs, contributed to higher employee engagement, job satisfaction, and reduced turnover (Elorza et al., 2022; Gupta, 2024). Adopting the JD-R model (2001) also provided a framework for organizations to understand and mitigate the stress associated with recruitment delays by providing sufficient resources to support hiring managers (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Li et al., 2023).

Relevance to the Research Question

The findings from the literature aligned with the research question of identifying effective strategies hiring managers used to address delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process. Research highlighted that technological solutions, streamlined processes, and proactive workforce planning were critical for improving recruitment efficiency and organizational performance (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Sabil et al., 2023). While these strategies reduced workload stress and improved job satisfaction, current studies often

lacked a detailed exploration of how hiring managers implemented these solutions in diverse organizational contexts or addressed unique challenges specific to their industries. Furthermore, limited research existed on how these strategies impacted long-term outcomes, such as employee retention and sustained organizational effectiveness (Elorza et al., 2022; Sutton & Atkinson, 2023). Additional research remained needed to explore these strategies' practical application and adaptability, providing actionable insights for organizations seeking to enhance their recruitment processes and align them with broader organizational and employee well-being goals.

Future Research Directions

While existing studies provided valuable insights into improving recruitment efficiency and its impact on organizational performance and employee well-being, there were several areas for further exploration. Future research could focus on the role of AI in recruitment, mainly on how AI-driven selection tools affected hiring outcomes and candidate experiences and how they could be optimized to reduce biases and improve decision-making (Vivek, 2023; Will et al., 2023). Longitudinal studies exploring the long-term effects of hiring delays on employee burnout and organizational performance would also provide valuable insights, particularly in industries that experienced frequent hiring challenges (Flores et al., 2021; Lubbadah, 2020).

Cross-industry comparisons of recruitment strategies could show how different sectors addressed hiring inefficiencies and delays. Such studies could highlight industry-specific best practices and offer a more comprehensive understanding of how recruitment strategies impacted organizational outcomes and employee well-being across various

contexts (Le Barbanchon et al., 2022; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). By exploring these areas, future research could further refine recruitment practices and contribute to developing strategies that optimized hiring efficiency and promoted long-term organizational success and employee satisfaction.

Transition and Summary

The literature review included analysis of existing research on recruitment inefficiencies, their impact on employee well-being and organizational performance, and the strategies designed to address these challenges. Key themes emerged, including technology integration, the importance of streamlining recruitment processes, and the need for proactive workforce planning. While the literature highlighted these strategies as effective, gaps remained in understanding how hiring managers implemented them across diverse organizational contexts and how these practices influenced long-term organizational outcomes.

Further research remained needed to explore how hiring managers adapted these strategies to address industry-specific challenges and whether they led to sustainable improvements in recruitment efficiency, employee retention, and overall organizational success. Additionally, questions persisted regarding the long-term effects of these interventions on organizational culture and workforce stability. Addressing these gaps might provide deeper insights into optimizing hiring practices and ensuring their effectiveness across different business environments.

Section 3 addressed these gaps by detailing the research methodology used to explore the practical application of these strategies. This section included information

about qualitative research design, data collection methods, and analytical techniques to gain insight into hiring managers' perspectives. By connecting the findings from literature to the research methodology, the study sought to provide actionable solutions that enhanced recruitment processes and aligned organizational goals and employee well-being.

Section 3: Research Project Methodology

Introduction

This section of the study outlines the research methodology used to address the specific business problem of hiring inefficiencies and their impact on employee well-being and organizational performance. This section includes a comprehensive description of the qualitative approach, emphasizing the ethical considerations, research design, participant sampling, data collection, and analysis techniques. The methodology reflected a rigorous and systematic approach, guided by principles of qualitative research, to ensure the study's credibility, dependability, and applicability. Each component aligned with the research objectives, leveraging best practices and established frameworks to produce actionable and reliable findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Firestone, 1987).

The project ethics section highlights the importance of adhering to Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocols and the Belmont Report principles to protect participants and maintain research integrity (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979). The study employed a qualitative methodology and a pragmatic inquiry design, chosen for their ability to explore complex organizational phenomena in depth (Dixon et al., 2023; Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). The participant sampling strategy employed purposeful selection to ensure that hiring managers with relevant expertise and experience contributed to the research. Data collection relied on semistructured interviews, which facilitated the capture of nuanced insights. Additionally, data analysis tools such as MAXQDA

supported systematic data organization and thematic analysis (Bingham, 2023; Dolczewski, 2022).

Finally, the section addresses the reliability and validity of the study by detailing strategies such as member checking, transcript review, and triangulation. These measures enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings by grounding them in participants' experiences and making them applicable to diverse organizational contexts (Arslan, 2022; Kouam, 2024). Together, the components of Section 3 provide a structured and transparent roadmap for conducting the research, ensuring alignment with the study's goals and the broader objectives of qualitative inquiry.

Project Ethics

As the researcher, my role in the data collection process was to ensure the ethical and rigorous handling of participant data, guided by the DBA Checklist, the Belmont Report principles, and IRB protocols (NCPHSBBR, 1979). Responsibilities included maintaining impartiality, safeguarding confidentiality, and obtaining informed consent prior to data collection (Bafarasat et al., 2023; Gould, 2022; Rumary et al., 2022). The qualitative nature of the study enabled an in-depth exploration of hiring managers' perspectives, while adhering to the ethical principle of respect for persons, as emphasized in the Belmont Report (NCPHSBBR, 1979). Furthermore, I interacted with participants professionally and neutrally, minimizing risks and ensuring they maintained autonomy throughout the process (Bafarasat et al., 2023; Rumary et al., 2022).

The informed consent process was central to ethical research practice. Each participant received a detailed consent form explaining the study's purpose, its voluntary

nature, and the privacy protections in place, as suggested by Gould (2022). Participants provided verbal consent prior to the interviews, in accordance with IRB-approved procedures. To align with the best practices for qualitative research, I implemented a two-step member-checking process. First, participants received a short summary of key themes from their responses via email. Then, they had the opportunity to review and clarify both the accuracy of the transcript and the meaning of their responses. This approach ensured that the data accurately reflected participants' perspectives, enhancing the study's credibility (Bafarasat et al., 2023; Gould, 2022; Rumary et al., 2022). Additionally, participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any consequences, further emphasizing the voluntary nature of their involvement (Bafarasat et al., 2023; Gould, 2022; Rumary et al., 2022).

To ensure participant privacy and data security, measures included the use of pseudonyms and secure storage of data for 5 years, as recommended by Walden University's policies (Bafarasat et al., 2023; Gould, 2022; Rumary et al., 2022). Data collection occurred through a secure platform, Zoom, with video recordings immediately deleted if captured, in accordance with the privacy guidelines outlined in the IRB manual. No incentives were offered, thereby eliminating any perceived risk of coercion, as Gould (2022) and Rumary et al. (2022) recommended. Finally, the IRB approval number for this study, 01-03-25-1215356, appeared in the final manuscript, ensuring compliance with institutional requirements and transparency in research practice (Bafarasat et al., 2023; Gould, 2022; NCPHSBBR, 1979).

Nature of the Project

This study employed a qualitative methodology due to its ability to enable an in-depth exploration of hiring managers' experiences and perceptions regarding delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process. Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative research emphasizes understanding complex phenomena within specific contexts, allowing for the collection of rich, narrative data that reflects participants' lived experiences (Firestone, 1987). This approach was ideal for exploring the nuanced effects of hiring inefficiencies on employee well-being and organizational performance because of its ability to capture subjective insights that quantitative methods might overlook (Dixon et al., 2023). For example, qualitative methods enabled participants to articulate organizational barriers and process inefficiencies that quantitative scales might overlook, making this methodology particularly suitable for studying hiring delays (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020).

This study benefited from a pragmatic inquiry design, which emphasized flexibility and practicality in addressing context-specific challenges, such as hiring delays and their impact on organizational outcomes in the industry (Dixon et al., 2023). This design integrated experiential, perceptual, and contextual data to develop actionable strategies for improving recruitment practices (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). For instance, the design allowed exploration of organizational nuances, such as differences in hiring protocols across industries, and facilitated adaptation of the inquiry to capture variations in participant experiences (Baliton, 2023). Semistructured interviews served as the primary data collection method, allowing guided yet flexible discussions that could adapt to the unique perspectives of hiring managers (Firestone, 1987). By incorporating these

interviews, the study explored individual experiences and organizational cultural factors that influenced hiring practices, providing a holistic understanding of the issue (Kaczko & Ostendorf, 2022).

By adopting this methodology and design, the study provided a comprehensive understanding of how hiring inefficiencies affected organizational performance and employee well-being (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020). The pragmatic inquiry framework facilitated the exploration of complex, real-world issues by emphasizing practical solutions and stakeholder experiences (Dixon et al., 2023). This approach ensured that the findings remained applicable to the manufacturing industry, particularly for hiring managers who navigated recruitment challenges that impacted workforce stability and productivity.

To enhance the credibility of the findings, member-checking validated participant responses, ensuring accuracy and alignment with their intended meanings (Firestone, 1987; Garrison, 2022). The study used thematic analysis to identify patterns and recurring themes within the interview transcripts, grounding the findings in participants' experiences rather than researcher bias (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The study achieved cross-validation by comparing themes across participants to determine whether their experiences aligned with the conceptual categories of the JD-R model (2001). This thematic approach ensured that the identified themes emerged from participants' shared experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). At the same time, the study included exploration of divergent perspectives to explore how individual experiences either confirmed, extended, or challenged the propositions of the JD-R framework.

Establishing consistency in emerging themes, while also recognizing unique cases, strengthened the credibility of the findings and demonstrated that interpretations were grounded in robust qualitative evidence.

Population, Sampling, and Participants

This study focused on hiring managers in the manufacturing industry, exploring the crucial role they play in shaping recruitment strategies and addressing inefficiencies that impact workforce stability and operational performance. Hiring managers oversee talent acquisition processes, workforce planning, and alignment between recruitment practices and organizational goals (Arokiasamy et al., 2023). Given the manufacturing sector's persistent challenges, including high turnover rates, skill shortages, and production demands, understanding the experiences and strategies of these managers was crucial for enhancing hiring efficiency (Dang et al., 2021; Elorza et al., 2022). Prior research indicates that inefficient hiring processes contributed to workforce instability, increased costs, and operational disruptions in manufacturing environments, further reinforcing the need to explore hiring managers' perspectives on addressing these issues (Aubouin-Bonnaventure et al., 2024).

This study recruited participants through LinkedIn and personal networks, including attendance at meetings of the manufacturing association. During these meetings, I briefly introduced myself and distributed study flyers to potential participants. No interviews, data collection, or consent were conducted at the events; the sole purpose was to provide information about the study and encourage interested individuals to contact me at their convenience. Using purposeful sampling, the study invited hiring

managers, HR professionals, and operations managers in the manufacturing sector to participate. This approach ensured that the study drew insights from individuals with firsthand experience in recruitment challenges and decision-making (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Elorza et al., 2022). Previous research emphasizes the importance of engaging industry professionals to explore recruitment inefficiencies and their impact on organizational performance, particularly within manufacturing (Dang et al., 2021). By leveraging a targeted recruitment strategy, this study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of hiring inefficiencies and their effects on workforce management.

The study employed semistructured interviews to collect qualitative data, enabling participants to share their perspectives on hiring inefficiencies, recruitment strategies, and their impact on employee well-being. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts identified patterns and key themes, ensuring that findings reflected the lived experiences of hiring managers in manufacturing (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Dang et al., 2021; Elorza et al., 2022). Previous research suggests that structured qualitative methodologies, such as thematic analysis, provide deeper insight into employee well-being, organizational effectiveness, and HR decision-making (Aubouin-Bonnaventure et al., 2024; Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Braun & Clarke, 2006). The selected participants provided valuable insights into how recruitment delays and inefficiencies affected organizational productivity, employee retention, and overall workforce stability, reinforcing the need for targeted hiring strategies in the manufacturing industry.

Data Collection Activities

This study's primary data collection instrument was the researcher, supported by a semistructured interview protocol. Semistructured interviews provided flexibility to explore individual participant experiences while maintaining consistency across all interviews. This approach suited qualitative research because participants shared rich, detailed insights into their experiences with hiring delays and inefficiencies (Dolczewski, 2022). The semistructured protocol featured open-ended questions designed to elicit comprehensive responses while enabling follow-up probing to gather deeper insights (Buys et al., 2022). Including a structured protocol also ensured that the researcher remained focused on key areas while allowing participants to express their unique perspectives (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022). The appendices included a copy of the interview protocol. (see Appendix B).

The data collection process followed a structured sequence to maintain consistency and reliability. First, participants received an informed consent form outlining the study's purpose, confidentiality measures, and voluntary participation (see Appendix A). After agreeing to participate, individuals scheduled a Zoom interview at a convenient time and provided verbal consent before any interview questions were asked. To ensure standardized procedures, each interview followed a semistructured format, using a predefined set of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses while allowing follow-up questions based on participants' answers (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022). This structured approach enhanced the credibility of the findings and ensured data collection aligned with qualitative research best practices. The interviews

began with general questions to build rapport before delving into participants' detailed experiences with inefficiencies and delays in the hiring process (see Appendix B). The semistructured nature of the protocol allowed the researcher to adapt questions based on participants' responses, capturing nuanced insights that might otherwise be overlooked (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022). With participants' consent, audio recordings of the interviews provided a verbatim record for transcription and analysis. This process aligned with best practices for collecting reliable qualitative data, as highlighted by Buys et al. (2022) and Dolczewski (2022), who emphasized the importance of a structured yet flexible approach to gathering detailed participant responses.

To enhance reliability and validity, the study incorporated member checking and transcript review as part of the data validation process. Member checking involved sharing summarized interpretations of participants' responses, allowing them to confirm or clarify the accuracy of the data, which strengthened the study's credibility (Dolczewski, 2022). Additionally, transcript reviews ensured that participants had an opportunity to verify the accuracy of their recorded responses, reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation (Buys et al., 2022). Combined with a reflexive approach to interviewing, these measures ensured dependability and minimized researcher bias (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022). Including these strategies highlighted a commitment to rigorous data collection and aligned to produce trustworthy and actionable findings.

This study ensured the collection of high quality, credible data by employing a semistructured interview protocol, leveraging member checking and transcript review, and maintaining a reflexive approach throughout. These methods supported the study's

aim to explore hiring inefficiencies and delays while adhering to the standards of qualitative research (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022). The structured data collection process provided actionable insights into the specific business problem, ensuring the study's findings were both reliable and applicable across diverse contexts.

To strengthen the depth and credibility of this study, data triangulation, one of the four triangulation methods identified by Denzin (2012), validated findings and minimized bias. By incorporating multiple data sources, this approach provided a more comprehensive understanding of hiring inefficiencies. The first step involved requesting organizational documents or program policies directly related to hiring practices from participants, including HR professionals, hiring managers, and talent acquisition specialists within the participating organizations (Buys et al., 2022). Participants hesitated to share organizational documents because they considered them internal and confidential. As a result, the study used an industry report from Goodtime (2025) to supplement the data. These materials provided valuable insights into hiring practices and potential inefficiencies. Because access to internal documentation was limited, the study expanded its scope to include publicly available resources such as policy documents, strategic plans, job postings, and recruitment materials (Dolczewski, 2022). In addition, industry reports on hiring challenges provided further context for these inefficiencies. Using these supplementary sources helped validate interview responses by comparing individual perspectives from the interviews with broader organizational and industry-level data, thereby strengthening the study's overall credibility and reliability of the findings (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022).

A key secondary source for this study was the 2025 Hiring Insights Report, which presented data from over 500 talent acquisition and recruiting leaders on hiring trends, challenges, and inefficiencies (Goodtime, 2025). The report highlighted critical issues such as increased time-to-hire, difficulties in talent retention, excessive recruiter workloads, and the growing role of AI in improving hiring efficiency (Goodtime, 2025). These issues align with the study's focus on identifying hiring delays and their organizational impact. For example, the report revealed that 60% of companies experienced an increase in time-to-hire in 2024, leading to higher costs and challenges in securing top talent, while talent acquisition teams met only 47.9% of their hiring goals, underscoring significant inefficiencies in the hiring process (Goodtime, 2025).

This report provided industry-wide perspectives that directly informed responses to the study's interview questions. For instance, when participants discussed challenges and inefficiencies in their hiring processes (Interview Question 3), the report served as an industry benchmark, identifying common obstacles such as talent retention struggles, hiring technology limitations, and recruiter workload issues (Goodtime, 2025). Similarly, when participants described how hiring delays impacted their teams and organizations (Interview Question 4), the report's findings reinforced their experiences by showing that prolonged hiring timelines contributed to increased costs and hindered talent acquisition (Goodtime, 2025). The report also offered insights into the overall efficiency of hiring processes (Interview Question 6), demonstrating that many organizations struggled to meet hiring targets, further validating participant responses (Goodtime, 2025). Additionally, when participants discussed efforts to improve the hiring process (Interview

Question 8), the report's findings on AI-driven automation and process optimization provided a comparative basis for evaluating various strategies (Goodtime, 2025).

By integrating primary data from interviews with secondary data from organizational and industry sources, this study ensured a comprehensive and well-rounded exploration of hiring delays and inefficiencies. The use of triangulation, which integrates multiple data sources to cross-verify findings, strengthened the credibility and applicability of the results, ensuring that participant responses were validated within a broader organizational and industry context (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022).

Interview Questions

1. Please briefly describe your professional background and experience in managing hiring processes within your organization.
2. What is your current role, and how does it relate to overseeing or being involved in the hiring process?
3. What challenges and inefficiencies exist in the hiring process within your organization?
4. In your experience, how have delays in the hiring process affected your team and the overall organization?
5. Can you describe any specific challenges you have encountered in the hiring process that have impacted on your ability to fill positions efficiently?
6. How would you describe the efficiency of the hiring process within your organization?

7. What key factors contribute to an effective hiring process in your organization?
8. Have you been involved in any efforts to streamline or improve the hiring process in your organization? If so, what were the results?
9. How does the hiring process in your organization compare to other companies or industries you have worked in?
10. Is there any other information you would like to share?

Data Organization and Analysis Techniques

This study used MAXQDA, a robust qualitative data analysis software, to manage and analyze the data effectively. MAXQDA allowed systematic organization, coding, and retrieval of data, ensuring transparency and consistency throughout the analysis process. As Bingham (2023) highlighted, tools like MAXQDA are essential for streamlining qualitative data management while maintaining rigor. Research logs and reflective journals complemented MAXQDA to track emerging themes and patterns, fostering a structured approach to the analysis (Özden, 2024). The study included the use of these combined techniques to enhance the reliability and depth of the study's findings by thoroughly exploring hiring managers' experiences.

Thematic analysis served as the primary method for analyzing data, as it was particularly effective for identifying and interpreting recurring themes within qualitative research. Using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, the goal was to become familiar with the data, generate initial codes, and iteratively organize these codes into overarching themes. This structured process enabled researchers to extract meaningful

insights from qualitative data (Özden, 2024). MAXQDA supported this analysis by facilitating the visualization of relationships between codes and themes, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the findings (Bingham, 2023).

Thematic analysis effectively addressed the specific business problem by identifying recurring patterns in hiring managers' experiences with recruitment inefficiencies. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized that thematic analysis provided a structured yet flexible approach to qualitative research, enabling researchers to uncover meaningful themes within complex data sets. By systematically coding and categorizing responses, this method facilitated a deeper understanding of how hiring delays impacted employee well-being and organizational performance (Bingham, 2023). This analytical approach ensured that findings remained grounded in participants' lived experiences while generating actionable insights for improving hiring processes.

The study used member checking and triangulation to ensure credibility and validity. Member checking involved sharing summaries of the emerging themes with participants to verify the accuracy of the interpretations, as well as the accuracy of the transcription, as Bingham (2023) recommended. Additionally, all raw data, including transcripts and coding logs, were securely stored in password-protected files for 5 years to comply with ethical guidelines and protect participant confidentiality (Bingham, 2023).

This study leveraged MAXQDA and applied complementary deductive and inductive thematic analyses to organize and interpret qualitative data. The deductive analysis, guided by the JD-R model (2001), structured coding around predefined categories of job demands, job resources, and outcomes. In parallel, the inductive

analysis used open, data-driven coding to surface unanticipated patterns and refine categories emerging from participants' accounts. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasized that thematic analysis provides a structured yet flexible framework for identifying patterns, and Pearse (2019) showed that deductive analysis strengthens rigor by comparing participant responses to conceptual propositions. Integrating these approaches ensured findings that are both conceptually grounded and practically meaningful for addressing hiring inefficiencies and their effects on employee well-being and organizational performance.

MAXQDA further enhanced this process by facilitating the transparent organization of codes, categories, and themes, ensuring replicability and credibility in the analysis (Bingham, 2023). The integration of software-supported coding and a theory-driven analytic framework reinforced the trustworthiness of the study by making the analytic process systematic and auditable. Through this combined approach, the study generated insights simultaneously grounded in participant experiences and aligned with the JD-R model (2001), producing actionable findings that contributed to improving hiring processes and organizational outcomes.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability

Qualitative researchers ensure reliability by maintaining dependability through consistent and transparent data collection and analysis processes. To address dependability, this study employed member checking and transcript review. Member checking involved sharing interpretations of data with participants to verify accuracy and

alignment with their experiences, which strengthened the consistency of the findings (Kouam, 2024). Additionally, transcript review allowed participants to confirm the accuracy of their recorded responses, ensuring the reliability of the data used in the analysis (Arslan, 2022). Reflective journals and research logs were maintained throughout the study to document decisions, emerging themes, and coding processes. These tools provided an audit trail that enhanced the reliability of the research by ensuring that the methods used were repeatable and transparent (Kouam, 2024).

Validity

The study assessed validity through credibility, transferability, confirmability, and analytic sufficiency. Member checking confirmed the accuracy of data interpretations, and triangulation compared interview data with relevant organizational documents and industry reports to ground the findings in multiple data sources (Arslan, 2022). The study addressed transferability by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the context, participants, and findings, enabling readers to evaluate the applicability of the study to other settings (Kouam, 2024). This documentation included detailed accounts of the organizational environment, hiring managers' specific recruitment challenges, and the factors influencing hiring inefficiencies.

The study achieved confirmability by maintaining a reflexive journal to document the researcher's thoughts and decisions during the data collection and analysis process, reducing the influence of personal biases on the findings (Arslan, 2022). Finally, the study ensured analytic sufficiency by continuing data collection until no new themes or insights emerged, a strategy essential for validating the comprehensiveness of the study's

results (Kouam, 2024). By implementing these measures, this study ensured its findings were credible, transferable, and dependable, providing valuable insights into hiring inefficiencies and their organizational impacts.

Transition and Summary

Section 3 outlined the research methodology used to investigate how hiring inefficiencies impacted employee well-being and organizational performance from the perspective of hiring managers. Key components included emphasizing ethical considerations, participant sampling, data collection through semistructured interviews, and systematic data analysis using MAXQDA and thematic analysis. Strategies such as member checking, transcript review, and triangulation ensured the reliability and validity of the findings, reinforcing the study's credibility and trustworthiness. The research approach meticulously explored hiring managers' experiences and identified effective strategies to address recruitment delays and inefficiencies, providing actionable insights into the specific business problem.

Section 4 presents the study's findings and conclusions, highlighting the key themes that emerged from the analysis and discussing their implications for practice. This section includes a detailed interpretation of the results within the context of the existing literature and conceptual framework, offering recommendations for future research and practical applications to improve hiring processes and organizational performance.

Section 4: Findings and Conclusions

Introduction

This qualitative study explored how delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process affect employee well-being and organizational performance from the perspective of hiring managers in the manufacturing industry. The guiding research question asked: What effective strategies do hiring managers in the manufacturing industry use to address delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process, and how do these strategies impact employee well-being and organizational performance?

The study employed a combined deductive–inductive thematic analysis to ensure both conceptual alignment and openness to emergent insights. The initial deductive phase used the JD–R model (2001) as a guiding framework to organize and code data according to predefined constructs of job demands, job resources, and outcomes. This structured approach, consistent with Pearse (2019), provided an analytical foundation for examining how hiring inefficiencies influence employee well-being and organizational performance. The subsequent inductive phase explored the data without predetermined categories, allowing new meanings and relationships to emerge directly from participants' experiences. Through this iterative process, the inductive findings converged with the themes identified in the deductive analysis, confirming their validity and conceptual coherence. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase process, the analysis involved familiarization, coding, and theme refinement, supported by reflexive journaling and iterative engagement with the data to ensure analytic rigor and transparency (as cited in Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Pearse, 2019).

This study found that the largest and most controllable sources of hiring delays in manufacturing are internal, including managerial engagement, approval chains, and process clarity. Efficiency and quality also hinge on strategic alignment and upfront role definition before sourcing begins. Technology, tools, and staffing can either accelerate or hinder progress depending on the fit with the candidate market and the organization's resources. Prolonged vacancies and mis-hires carry significant human and organizational costs, including burnout, lower morale, lost productivity, and reputational damage. External pressures such as shifting candidate expectations and local talent pipelines further shape outcomes, requiring proactive community partnerships. Viewed through the JD-R model (2001), delays and misalignment raise job demands and erode resources, while streamlining workflows, clarifying ownership, right-sizing technology, and building pipelines help restore balance, supporting employee well-being and organizational performance.

Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

Data were collected through semistructured interviews with hiring managers recruited from manufacturing organizations via purposeful sampling. All participants were HR managers who held direct hiring responsibilities within their organizations. While not always the operational "hiring manager" for specific departments, each participant oversaw or executed the end-to-end hiring process, including candidate selection, approvals, and onboarding. This dual perspective provided both strategic and operational insight into hiring inefficiencies and their organizational impact. Participants provided informed consent and participated in interviews conducted via Zoom, which

were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. To enhance credibility, member checking and transcript reviews were employed, allowing participants to verify the accuracy of their responses (Buys et al., 2022; Dolczewski, 2022).

Recruiting participants for this study proved more challenging than anticipated, extending over nearly 6 months to secure six interviews. This difficulty was not incidental but reflective of the very organizational sensitivities this research sought to explore. Many HR professionals were hesitant to participate due to organizational caution about how internal processes might be portrayed, a volatile job market, and a heightened political climate. These recruitment challenges, while limiting the participant pool, ultimately underscored the relevance and real-world complexity of the research topic amid market pressures.

Data Analysis Procedures

In alignment with the principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this study emphasized analytic sufficiency rather than the positive notion of data saturation. The study achieved analytic sufficiency when the dataset became rich and nuanced, providing adequate depth and breadth to develop coherent, well-supported themes aligned with the research question and the JD-R framework.

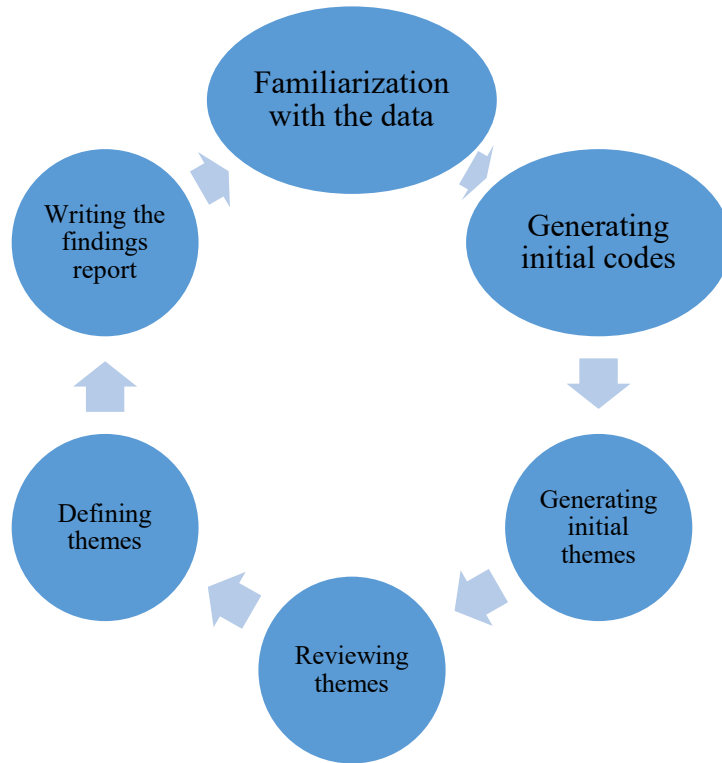
By the fifth interview, participant narratives clearly established thematic patterns that were conceptually complete and internally consistent. To confirm data adequacy and ensure analytic completeness, a sixth interview reinforced and deepened existing themes rather than introducing new or contradictory information. This convergence, coupled with the diversity of professional experience represented in the sample, validated that the

dataset was robust enough to support the study's interpretive analysis and conceptual conclusions.

The study conducted thematic analysis in two sequential cycles to ensure both conceptual alignment and openness to emergent insights. The first cycle employed a targeted deductive approach to pattern-match participant data with the conceptual propositions of the JD–R model (2001), identifying relationships among job demands, job resources, and outcomes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Pearse, 2019). The second cycle applied an inductive, data-driven approach to generate codes and candidate themes directly from participants' experiences, allowing new meanings and contextual nuances to emerge. MAXQDA supported the analysis, which followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six-Step Framework



Data Triangulation and Credibility Strategies

Data triangulation strengthened the dependability of the findings by supplementing interview data with the Goodtime 2025 Hiring Insights Report (Denzin, 2012; Goodtime, 2025). The Goodtime report, based on survey responses from more than 500 HR and talent acquisition leaders, provided contemporary, industry-level data that closely mirrored many of the challenges described by study participants, including prolonged time-to-hire, hiring manager disengagement, and the influence of candidate experience on organizational reputation. Comparing participant insights with these broader industry benchmarks reinforced the interpretation that internal inefficiencies,

rather than external labor market factors, are the primary drivers of hiring delays. Incorporating this secondary data source validated participant perspectives against industry evidence, strengthening the overall credibility and dependability of the thematic findings (Arslan, 2022; Denzin, 2012). Throughout the analysis, a reflexive stance was maintained to minimize bias and ensure that the findings remained grounded in participants' lived experiences, while being consistent with the study's conceptual framework.

Each participant received a sequential, pseudonymous identifier at enrollment (P1, P2, P3, etc.). These identifiers appear on all quotations, tables, figures, memos, and analytic notes for that participant. The only document linking real names to identifiers was a password-protected participant key stored separately from the data and accessible only to authorized personnel, as required by the IRB.

Findings and Analysis

Coding and Theme Development

The analytical process for this study began with a line-by-line immersion in the interview transcripts, a method known as initial or open coding. This first stage was crucial for breaking down the rich, qualitative data into manageable and meaningful units. The goal was not to force the data into pre-conceived boxes, but to allow the participants' own concerns and experiences to surface. As the table illustrates, this process yielded numerous initial codes, including "lack of managerial priority," "moving goal post," and "army of one." These codes were concrete and descriptive, directly tagging the specific problems and observations voiced by the participants. The analysis

coded P5's vivid description of hiring managers "throwing people at problems" as a failure in strategic problem-solving and coded P3's emotional account of how vacancies "kill team morale" as an impact on employee well-being.

The next critical phase was categorization. Here, the numerous initial codes were examined for similarities and relationships, and were grouped into broader, more abstract categories. This was a process of synthesis, moving from dozens of specific instances to a handful of unifying concepts. For example, the codes "lack of managerial priority," "indecision/changing requirements," and "abdication of responsibility" were all clear manifestations of a central problem, which was categorized as "managerial bottlenecks." Similarly, codes such as "skills gap," "geographical limitations," and "shifting expectations" were grouped under the category "candidate market challenges," as they all pertained to external forces impacting talent supply. This categorization was not merely an administrative task; it was an analytical one that revealed the underlying structures of the hiring challenges. The categorization process showed that what might initially seem like a disparate set of problems, slow approval here, a bad hire there, could be understood as symptoms of a few core dysfunctions, such as poor process design (Process & Bureaucracy) or a failure to invest in the HR function (Resource & Tool Constraints).

A key finding from this coding process was the high degree of analytic sufficiency across participants. This level of sufficiency indicated that the central concepts were well-supported and conceptually complete across the dataset. Categories like managerial bottlenecks and strategic misalignment were highly saturated, appearing in the narratives of nearly every participant, from P1 to P6. This cross-participant

consistency underscored that these were not isolated issues but pervasive, industry-wide challenges. The findings confirmed that the inefficiencies in manufacturing hiring are deeply rooted in internal cultural and procedural norms, a finding that powerfully shaped the subsequent thematic analysis.

Ultimately, these categories served as the foundation for the development of the final themes. The themes represent the highest level of abstraction in the analysis, telling a coherent story about the data. The category of “impact & consequences” became the powerful Theme 4 (The Human and Organizational Cost), elevating the discussion from simple process delays to their severe human and financial repercussions. Similarly, the analysis revealed the categories of strategic misalignment and candidate market challenges together with cultural insights to form Theme 2 (Strategic Alignment) and Theme 5 (The Evolving Talent Landscape), which argue that hiring effectiveness is determined long before a job is posted and is deeply influenced by external trends. This entire journey from the raw code “1 to 5 interviews for a \$21/hr. role” to the category “excessive bureaucracy” and finally to Theme 1’s discussion of internal inefficiencies ensures that the concluding insights of this research are firmly grounded in the lived experiences of the participants, providing a valid and compelling account of the hiring process within the manufacturing industry.

Based on the thematic analysis, five key themes emerged that address the research question and reflect progression from identifying hiring challenges to implementing strategies and anticipating future practices. Table 2 presents these themes and highlights their relationship with the overall findings of the study.

Viewed through the JD-R lens, this thematic structure powerfully illustrates the model's core mechanism: Theme 1 establishes the job demands and their negative outcomes; Themes 2, 3, and 4 detail the job resources and strategic interventions used to mitigate these demands; and Theme 5 points toward the evolution of these resources and the achievement of positive long-term outcomes.

Table 2

Themes Identified in This Study

Theme Number & Title	Participant Number	Sample excerpt from the interview
Theme 1: Hiring Challenges, Inefficiencies, and Impacts	All participants	“The process just gets stuck in layers of approvals. By the time we’re ready to make an offer, we’ve already lost good candidates.”
Theme 2: Assessing and Enhancing Hiring Effectiveness	P1, P2, P4, P5, P6	“If we don’t define the role clearly upfront, everything else gets delayed. It’s like building a house with no blueprint.”
Theme 3: Process Improvement and Streamlining	P1, P2, P3, P5, P6	“Once we automated parts of the workflow, things started moving faster, and we could focus on actual candidate engagement instead of paperwork.”
Theme 4: Comparison to Other Organizations	All participants	“People burn out when positions stay open too long. They’re doing two jobs, and eventually, they either check out or leave.”
Theme 5: Emerging Trends and Recommendations	P2, P3, P5, P6	“We’re starting to use data to forecast hiring needs instead of reacting to vacancies. That shift is making a big difference in how we plan.”

Findings

Theme 1: Internal Process and Managerial Inefficiencies as a Primary Source of Delay

Participant interviews revealed that internal and self-inflicted factors create the most significant barriers to efficient hiring. Organizational structures, internal policies,

and, most critically, the behaviors and misalignment of key stakeholders such as hiring managers and leadership drive these inefficiencies. These internal breakdowns set the stage for delayed decisions, operational strain, and increased financial costs.

The Goodtime 2025 Hiring Insights Report reinforces this theme at an industry level. The report found that 62% of HR and talent leaders identified hiring manager disengagement as the leading cause of hiring delays, and 58% cited internal approval bottlenecks as key barriers to filling roles (Goodtime, 2025). This external evidence mirrors participant accounts and confirms that inefficiencies most often originate within organizations rather than in the labor market or candidate pool. The alignment between participant experiences and industry benchmarks strengthens the dependability of this theme and underscores the need to rethink accountability, decision structures, and leadership engagement.

The Central Role of the Hiring Manager. All participants, regardless of their organizational context, identified the hiring manager as the primary driver of hiring efficiency. Their level of engagement, decisiveness, and clarity shaped how quickly or slowly positions were filled. P5 explained,

The delays are often generally the hiring manager, not making the time to commit to doing the interviews, even though they say it's a high priority [role to fill] . . . Ironically, the hiring manager internally is complaining that they cannot do their work because they do not have the people.

P3 shared the same frustration, describing hiring managers as “not engaged” and “not responsive.”

P6 described a contrasting experience in a more agile environment, where engaged and prepared hiring managers enabled a “real-time” hiring timeline that kept candidates moving quickly through the process. This contrast illustrates how hiring manager engagement acts as either a catalyst or a bottleneck. Goodtime (2025) similarly identified proactive hiring manager involvement as the strongest predictor of reduced time-to-hire, which supports the accounts of all six participants.

Process Clarity vs. Bureaucracy. Participants consistently distinguished between structured processes that create clarity and bureaucratic processes that slow hiring. P5 described conducting “5 to 7 interviews for a \$21/hr. role,” which exemplifies unnecessary complexity that delays decision-making and frustrates candidates. P6 recalled past roles where “too many people on the path to get hired” caused candidates to abandon the process after 30-day delays. P5 also explained how structured practices, like standardized headcount request forms, improved decision quality when applied intentionally but warned that “they fail if applied thoughtlessly,” particularly for pre-budgeted roles.

Goodtime (2025) found that organizations with fewer than five approval steps filled roles 48% faster than those with more complex sign-off processes. This quantitative evidence reinforces participant narratives and highlights how excessive approval chains institutionalize delay and increase the risk of candidate drop-off.

The Cost of Internal Delays. Participants described significant financial and operational costs that resulted from internal hiring delays. P5 shared a stark example: an unfilled Compliance Manager role forced the company to hire consultants at “\$500 to

\$600 an hour,” which directly impacted the bottom line. P6 explained that delayed hiring for a programmer “impacted the ability to move on to other projects,” slowing critical initiatives like cloud migration.

Goodtime (2025) estimated that unfilled roles in critical functions can cost organizations upwards of \$20,000 per day in lost productivity and opportunity costs. These examples show that internal inefficiencies not only extend time-to-fill but also create real financial strain, reduce operational agility, and increase pressure on existing employees.

Summary. The combined evidence from participant interviews and industry benchmarks demonstrates that internal inefficiencies represent the most damaging and controllable barriers to efficient hiring. Ineffective hiring manager engagement, excessive approval layers, and bureaucratic processes consistently drive delays and increase costs. While external factors such as labor market competition and candidate availability influence hiring outcomes, internal dysfunction often amplifies those challenges.

Organizations can address these problems by streamlining approval chains, empowering and training hiring managers, and ensuring that internal tools and processes enable speed rather than hinder it. Participant experiences make clear that the largest and most controllable barriers to hiring efficiency originate inside the organization rather than in external factors.

Connection to the JD-R Model. These findings align closely with the JD-R model (2001), which explains how imbalances between job demands and job resources shape employee well-being and organizational performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017;

Demerouti et al., 2001). Internal delays, disengaged hiring managers, and bureaucratic processes elevate job demands by increasing workload, time pressure, and operational uncertainty for HR personnel and frontline employees (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Simultaneously, these same inefficiencies deplete job resources, such as managerial support, decision-making autonomy, and access to practical tools, which play a critical role in buffering the effects of high demands (Bakker et al., 2004).

As the JD-R framework suggests, when demands rise and resources decline, employees face higher risks of strain, burnout, and reduced engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). These dynamics ultimately undermine organizational performance through decreased productivity, lower morale, and talent attrition (Bakker et al., 2023; Lesener et al., 2018). Viewing these internal hiring inefficiencies through the JD-R lens clarifies that they are not just administrative delays but structural drivers of resource strain with significant implications for workforce stability, employee well-being, and operational effectiveness.

Relationship of Findings to Literature. Consistent with prior research, participants described how excessive bureaucracy, indecision, and lack of accountability among hiring managers created significant process delays and productivity losses (Basch et al., 2022; Le Barbanchon et al., 2022). Their accounts of “too many layers of approval” and “moving goalposts” mirror studies that highlight how administrative bottlenecks and unclear ownership generate unnecessary job demands, increasing stress and frustration for both employees and HR professionals. These findings reinforce the JD-R model’s

(2001) assertion that structural inefficiencies function as chronic job demands, depleting employee resources and weakening engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017).

The findings further confirm that bureaucratic delays, unclear roles, and cross-functional misalignment create significant barriers to efficient hiring. Participants described approval bottlenecks and disengaged hiring managers as common pain points that slow down the process and increase workloads. These experiences mirror what Basch et al. (2022) observed regarding the impact of lengthy procedures on candidate pipelines. Similarly, Langer et al. (2023) emphasized that weak HR–line collaboration compounds delays, while Le Barbanchon et al. (2022) linked vague job definitions to extended vacancies and staff strain. Together, these findings reinforce that many hiring inefficiencies are preventable when organizations address internal misalignment and procedural complexity.

Recent studies provide additional support for these observations. Researchers show that strategic HR leadership and alignment reduce process bottlenecks and increase organizational performance (Gabriel-Wetley et al., 2025; Gupta, 2025; Mohamed et al., 2025). Aksnes and Breit (2025) demonstrated that managerial engagement practices directly influence hiring efficiency, mirroring participants' emphasis on hiring manager behavior as a critical factor. Golikova et al. (2025) and Shin et al. (2025) further linked hiring inefficiencies to skilled labor shortages and downstream operational disruptions, reinforcing the need to address internal delays to maintain competitive performance.

Theme 2: The Critical Importance of Strategic Alignment and Upfront Definition

Theme 2 includes the exploration of the foundation of hiring effectiveness. While Theme 1 addressed process execution, Theme 2 addressed the upstream factors that shaped outcomes long before a single candidate applied. Across all six interviews, participants consistently emphasized that strategic clarity established before sourcing began determined the efficiency and ultimate success of a hire. Participants also stressed that when organizations fail to define the “why” behind a role, specifically how the role addresses a business problem and the required competencies, they create downstream inefficiencies, mis-hires, and organizational strain. This theme highlights the need to move from a reactive “order-taker” model to a strategic “business partner” model in talent acquisition.

The Goodtime 2025 Hiring Insights Report supports this finding, identifying incomplete job descriptions and unclear role expectations as top contributors to extended hiring timelines and poor candidate fit. Both the participant experiences and the external data point to the same conclusion: rigorous role definition and upfront alignment between HR and operations are not optional steps but prerequisites for efficient and sustainable hiring.

The High Cost of Poor Alignment. The transcripts reveal the tangible consequences of poor upfront alignment. P5 described how “throwing people at problems” created “an overabundance of great workers, just not in the skill sets we need,” which led to re-hiring and operational inefficiencies. P1 and P3 recounted wasted time interviewing candidates for roles that lacked a clear business purpose or defined

requirements. P2 noted that “sometimes the hiring manager isn’t even sure what they’re looking for,” which resulted in vague job descriptions that resembled a “wish list” rather than a focused set of expectations. These findings demonstrate that the time invested in rigorous upfront definition is not a delay but a crucial investment that prevents far greater wastes of time and resources later.

Goodtime (2025) corroborated these experiences, reporting that incomplete role definitions extend hiring timelines and increase the likelihood of candidate misalignment. These findings demonstrate that time invested in defining the role upfront is not a delay but a strategic investment that prevents costly rework later in the hiring process.

Reactive vs. Strategic Posture. Participants described a clear divide between reactive and strategic approaches to hiring. P5 admitted, “Our approach was 100% reactive,” a sentiment echoed by P1 and P3, who described the pressure to engage in “just-in-time” hiring to address immediate gaps. This reactive posture often resulted in shifting requirements and “moving goalposts” that derailed timelines and eroded candidate trust.

By contrast, P6 operates within a strategic partnership model in which hiring aligns with long-term business goals. This alignment allows their team to forecast needs, define roles precisely, and avoid unnecessary delays. These contrasting approaches illustrate how organizations either create instability through reactionary practices or build resilience through upfront strategic clarity.

The Evolution of HR’s Role. Participants highlighted the importance of redefining HR’s role from an administrative function to a strategic partner. P5 described

implementing a new headcount request form designed to “force the strategic conversation” and ensure hiring managers clearly articulated the business need behind a role. P2 described similar efforts to move away from being “order takers” toward becoming “problem solvers” embedded in broader organizational strategy.

P6 illustrated the benefits of this shift. Their HR function operates as a fully integrated strategic partner, aligning talent acquisition with operational forecasting and workforce planning. The findings suggest that organizational buy-in for HR’s strategic role is a key enabler of hiring effectiveness.

The Cultural Fit Imperative. Participants also identified cultural alignment as a critical upstream factor that shapes hiring outcomes. P4, P6, and P2 emphasized that cultural fit is not a soft or secondary consideration but a core operational necessity. In manufacturing environments where teamwork, safety, and reliability are paramount, hiring someone technically skilled but culturally misaligned can do more harm than leaving the position open.

P6 shared how their team vets cultural fit through community engagement and behavioral questioning, which “ensures that new hires are ready to thrive in this environment.” This approach reflects a proactive strategy to build a workforce aligned not just with the job, but with the values and operational realities of the organization.

Summary. Theme 2 demonstrates that efficient hiring begins with strategic clarity. Organizations that invest in upfront role definition, align HR and operational strategy, and account for cultural fit reduce delays, prevent mis-hires, and avoid the reactive “firefighting” behaviors that drive many of the inefficiencies described in Theme

1. Conversely, organizations that neglect this foundation face increased demands, depleted resources, and hiring processes characterized by moving targets, wasted time, and organizational strain. Effective hiring is not just a transactional process but a strategic function that determines how capability enters the organization. Strategic alignment at the front end is therefore essential to ensure both hiring efficiency and long-term workforce stability.

Connection to the JD-R Model. These findings align with the JD-R model (2001), which explains how the balance between job demands and job resources shapes employee well-being and organizational performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001). A lack of strategic clarity elevates job demands by increasing workload, time pressure, and operational uncertainty for HR personnel and frontline employees. Simultaneously, unclear expectations and shifting requirements erode job resources such as role clarity, decision-making autonomy, and managerial support (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This imbalance amplifies strain, burnout, and inefficiency, which directly undermined organizational performance (Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2023; Lesener et al., 2018). Viewing strategic alignment through the JD-R lens reveals that upstream role definition is not simply procedural—it is foundational to maintaining a healthy balance between demands and resources across the organization.

Relationship of Findings to Literature. The theme of strategic misalignment aligns with existing research that emphasizes the importance of connecting hiring practices to organizational goals and workforce needs (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022; Langer et al., 2023). Like prior studies such as Basch, J. M. et al. (2022), Langer, M. et al.

(2023), and Le Barbanchon, T. et al. (2022), participants observed that unclear role definitions, shifting requirements, and reactive hiring practices lead to mis-hires and extended vacancies. This study extends the literature by demonstrating that strategic alignment must begin before recruitment starts, during the needs assessment and role design phase. Participants explained that failing to define the “why” behind a role or conduct proper skills gap analyses perpetuates inefficiency and weakens hiring outcomes.

The findings also show that role clarity, business need articulation, and early HR operations alignment prevent downstream rework and strengthen organizational performance, echoing prior studies linking structured recruitment with improved outcomes (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022; Kadi et al., 2023). The emphasis on shifting from an “order taker” model to a strategic partner role expands the literature on high-involvement work systems by showing how leadership engagement and disciplined scoping reduce restarts and improve candidate fit in manufacturing contexts (Arokiasamy et al., 2023; Elorza et al., 2022).

Recent scholarship reinforces these conclusions. Gupta (2025) and Mohamed et al. (2025) show that strategically empowered HR leaders strengthen the HRM-performance link, creating more efficient and aligned hiring systems. Gabriel-Wetty et al. (2025) argued that HR-strategy integration drives workforce planning and reduces delays. Al-Asfour (2025) provided manufacturing-based evidence that strategic alignment between operational leaders and HR improves precision in role definition. Golikova et al. (2025) demonstrated that poor planning intensifies skilled labor shortages, supporting participants’ observations of reactive hiring’s long-term costs.

Theme 3: The Double-Edged Sword of Technology, Tools, and Resource Allocation

Theme 3 explored how technology, human capital, and financial resources shape hiring efficiency. Participant experiences reveal that technology alone does not guarantee success. While modern tools can create transparency, speed, and scalability, their impact depends on implementation, cultural fit, and strategic investment. When these elements align, technology acts as a lever that accelerates hiring. When these elements do not align, technology amplifies delays, increases workload, and frustrates both candidates and hiring teams.

The Goodtime 2025 Hiring Insights Report reinforces this dynamic. The report found that 71% of HR leaders increased their reliance on ATS and automation tools, but only 43% rated their technology as effective. This gap mirrors participant experiences and underscores the reality that technology functions as both an enabler and a barrier, depending on how organizations deploy it.

The Tool is only as Good as its Implementation and Fit. Participants consistently highlighted that a tool's effectiveness depends on context and user fit. P5 described their ATS as a "force multiplier" that created "transparency" and "accountability," explaining, "If a manager says, 'When's the last time you talked to a candidate?' I can pull it up. . . I can also say, 'hiring manager, you said you were going to reach out to this person two days ago, but it's been a week now.'" P4 echoed this sentiment, stating, "A good ATS is our single source of truth. It keeps everyone honest and on the same page."

By contrast, P6 explained, “I did use one company, did use applicant tracking, and that did delay. . . the applicants I was getting were not tech-savvy. . . they just didn’t know how to navigate. . . so candidates would just disappear.” P1 added, “Our ATS is clunky and creates a poor candidate experience. It’s a gatekeeper, not a gateway.”

These contrasting experiences reveal how a tool that works in one environment can fail in another. Candidate digital fluency, system design, and process alignment determine whether technology supports or obstructs hiring. In other words, the success of hiring technology hinges less on the tool itself and more on its compatibility with the workforce, candidate market, and organizational processes. Without careful consideration of these factors, technology intended to streamline hiring can unintentionally deepen existing inefficiencies.

The Digital Arms Race for Talent. Participants described in detail how resource availability shapes an organization’s competitiveness in talent acquisition. P5 emphasized the decisive role that financial investment plays, stating, “Resource availability plays a role 100%,” and pointing to the steep cost of tools like LinkedIn Recruiter, which can range from \$50,000 to \$100,000 annually. They added, “You have to sponsor posts to win in the algorithm,” underscoring how digital visibility often depends on paid placements rather than organic reach. P2 echoed this frustration, explaining, “We are constantly fighting for budget for better sourcing tools. You get what you pay for, and we’re often fishing in a small pond with a cheap net.” Their accounts highlight how limited budgets restrict access to competitive tools and platforms, which in turn weakens an organization’s ability to attract top talent efficiently.

Not all participants relied on digital investments alone. P6 described an alternative approach that reflects strategic adaptation to budgetary constraints: “We don’t have the same digital spend, but we invest in community activism and job fairs. That’s where our candidates come from.” Unlike P5 and P2, who faced challenges in competing in a pay-to-play digital environment, P6’s strategy focused on building local networks and leveraging in-person recruiting channels. These contrasting perspectives reveal how resource allocation decisions lead to distinctly different talent acquisition strategies and outcomes.

The Goodtime 2025 Hiring Insights Report supports these participant accounts with industry-level data. The report found that organizations that invest in sponsored postings and algorithmic visibility fill roles 37% faster than those relying solely on organic reach. This finding highlights a widening talent gap between well-resourced organizations able to compete in the digital hiring landscape and those with limited budgets forced to rely on lower-cost, slower alternatives. Together, these accounts and data points demonstrate how financial resources can function as a competitive differentiator in modern recruitment.

The Human Resource Bottleneck. Human capital emerged as one of the most decisive factors in determining hiring efficiency. P3 explained the challenge directly: “As a one-person HR team, I am completely overwhelmed. I can’t be strategic when I’m just trying to fill the next req.” P6 echoed this reality, sharing, “This is the very first company I’ve been with where I’ve been fortunate enough to have another person to bounce off ideas and to help with recruiting... I’ve been an army of one.” In contrast, P5 described a

more distributed structure: “I have Joe, who focuses on sourcing and candidate outreach, which frees me up to manage strategy and stakeholder conversations.” This contrast illustrates how teams with adequate staffing can move beyond reactive, transactional hiring and engage in more strategic, proactive initiatives. Without sufficient human capital, even the most advanced tools and generous budgets fail to achieve their potential.

Goodtime (2025) reinforces the importance of human capital as a key driver of hiring efficiency. The report found that 68% of HR leaders identified limited recruiting staff as one of the primary barriers to reducing time-to-fill. Organizations with dedicated recruitment teams reported significantly faster hiring timelines and more consistent candidate quality than those with minimal staffing. These findings highlight that human capital is not simply a support function but a critical resource that directly influences an organization’s ability to execute its hiring strategy effectively.

Integrating Technology with Operational Data. P6 broadened the conversation by describing how their organization integrates technology with operational data. “We use our ERP system and KPIs from production and assembly to drive our hiring priorities,” they explained. “If the forecast changes, recruiting knows immediately, and we adjust hiring plans in real time.” This integration shifts hiring from a reactive HR function to a business-critical process by aligning people data with operational metrics, allowing the team to make hiring decisions that reflect actual production needs and long-term strategic goals. This approach demonstrates a mature model of resource alignment, where technology functions as part of a larger decision-making infrastructure rather than a standalone tool.

Goodtime (2025) reinforced this finding, noting that organizations integrating their hiring technology with operational systems achieve 34% faster time-to-fill and 27% higher forecast accuracy in workforce planning compared to organizations relying on siloed systems. The report highlighted that integrated systems enable real-time adjustments, closer alignment with production goals, and more strategic resource allocation—precisely the advantages reflected in P6’s experience.

Summary. Theme 3 revealed that technology, tools, and resource allocation functioned as both enablers and barriers to hiring efficiency. Participants emphasized that technology alone did not guarantee success; its impact depended on proper implementation, alignment with organizational culture, and strategic investment. When these elements aligned, technology accelerated hiring, improved transparency, and enhanced accountability. When implementation, cultural alignment, and strategic investment did not align, the breakdown created additional delays, increased workloads, and diminished candidate experience.

Participants described how the effectiveness of ATS varied depending on context. Some, like P5 and P4, viewed their ATS as a “force multiplier” and “single source of truth” that supported hiring managers and improved accountability. Others, including P6 and P1, experienced technology as a barrier that discouraged candidates and complicated the process. These contrasting experiences highlighted that successful implementation depended on candidate digital fluency, system design, and organizational fit.

Financial resources further shaped an organization’s ability to compete in the digital hiring landscape. Participants like P5 and P2 underscored how limited budgets

restricted access to competitive tools, forcing them to “fish in a small pond with a cheap net,” while others, like P6, relied on lower-cost community engagement strategies to fill roles. Human capital also emerged as a decisive factor: understaffed HR teams, described as “an army of one,” struggled to balance daily requisitions with strategic initiatives, whereas adequately resourced teams could operate more proactively.

Several participants also emphasized the value of integrating hiring technology with operational data. P6 described how using ERP systems and production KPIs to guide hiring priorities enabled real-time adjustments and closer alignment with business needs. Industry data from the Goodtime 2025 Hiring Insights Report reinforced these findings, showing that organizations that invest strategically in technology, resources, and integration achieve significantly faster hiring timelines and stronger operational alignment.

Taken together, these findings show that technology is not inherently a solution or a barrier. The effectiveness of technology depends on how organizations deploy it, the resources they invest, and their ability to align tools and people with operational priorities.

Connection to the JD-R Model. These findings align with the JD-R model (2001). A lack of appropriate tools, limited budgets, or insufficient staffing raises job demands by increasing workload, time pressure, and administrative burden. Misaligned or underutilized resources also reduce job resources, including decision-making autonomy, technological support, and collaborative capacity (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

This imbalance contributes to stress, burnout, and decreased performance (Bakker et al., 2004; Bakker et al., 2023; Lesener et al., 2018). Participant experiences demonstrate that technology and resources are not neutral; they shape the conditions under which HR professionals work and, in turn, the organization's ability to hire effectively.

Relationship of Findings to Literature. Participants' experiences with ATS, automation, and digital outreach support the literature that technology can reduce errors and cycle time when implemented well. However, the findings also show that impact depends on fit, change management, and capacity (Bigman et al., 2023; Sabil et al., 2023; Sharma, 2023). The "army of one" constraint illustrates how limited recruiting staff, weak data use, and uneven standardization limit efficiency gains and explain why adoption varies across settings (Bill & Melchers, 2023; Le Barbanchon et al., 2022; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Participants added to this body of research by identifying barriers such as budget limits, staffing shortages, and poor tool-to-context alignment, while also reporting benefits like increased transparency and accountability when systems fit the work. These results support concerns about scaling tools without adequate resources or ethical safeguards (Langer et al., 2023) and show that in manufacturing contexts, where digital literacy and budgets are often lower than in service or technology sectors, technology can act as either a job resource or an added demand depending on accessibility, integration quality, and alignment with organizational capabilities.

Recent studies strengthen this conclusion. Banu et al. (2025) demonstrated how AI-powered recruitment systems improve hiring performance when strategically

deployed. Maheshwari and Buddhapriya (2025) and Muhammad et al. (2025) show that integrating technology with sustainable HRM practices enhances engagement and efficiency in manufacturing environments. Kranthi et al. (2025) further link resource allocation to improved workforce outcomes. Mohamed et al. (2025) emphasized the role of strategic HR leadership in aligning technological tools with organizational goals to maximize their impact on performance. Collectively, these studies underscore that technology delivers meaningful results only when organizations pair it with a clear strategy, adequate resources, and intentional leadership.

Theme 4: The Human and Organizational Cost of Hiring Delays and Mis-Hires

While the previous themes focused on the process of hiring, theme 4 explores the profound consequences of its failures. The transcripts provide stark evidence that delays and inefficiencies in hiring create significant problems that profoundly impact the organization. Delays and inefficiencies in hiring extract a heavy toll, measured in three key areas: the well-being of existing employees, the organization's financial and operational performance, and its long-term relationship with the talent market. This theme moves beyond process to highlight the high-stakes human and business impact of a broken hiring system.

The Vicious Cycle of Burnout and Attrition. The impact on morale, as described by P1 and P3, is not a static condition; it creates a dangerous feedback loop. Overworked employees become disengaged employees. Disengaged employees are less productive and more likely to leave the organization. When employees leave, the remaining team's burden increases, accelerating the cycle. This makes efficient hiring not

just an acquisition strategy, but also a critical retention strategy. Failing to fill a role promptly can be the catalyst for losing two or three other valuable employees. The Goodtime (2025) report echoed this finding, noting that prolonged vacancies and recurring hiring delays contribute to increased employee burnout and attrition, aligning with the JD–R model’s (2001) prediction that elevated job demands and diminished resources degrade employee well-being and organizational resilience.

From Abstract Delay to Tangible Loss. P5’s specific example of the \$600/hour consultant transforms the abstract concept of a “delay” into a concrete, avoidable expense. Similarly, P6’s delayed cloud migration project shows that hiring inefficiency directly impedes strategic growth and innovation. These examples ground the study’s research problem, demonstrating that delays in hiring are not just a HR metric but also a key performance indicator for the overall health of the business. Goodtime (2025) supported this finding, reporting that unfilled critical roles can cost organizations up to \$20,000 per day in lost productivity, delayed project delivery, and missed revenue opportunities. This external evidence aligns with participant experiences and reinforces the idea that hiring inefficiencies represent a measurable financial risk with far-reaching operational consequences.

The Candidate as a Customer. The participants’ awareness of the candidate experience reflects a modern understanding of the talent market. Candidates are consumers of the hiring process. A slow, uncommunicative, or disorganized process signals a dysfunctional company culture and can damage the employer’s reputation. In a competitive market, the best candidates have options, and they will self-select out of

processes that feel disrespectful of their time and effort. Therefore, an efficient hiring process is a powerful tool for competitive differentiation. P1 observed, “A slow process tells a candidate that we are disorganized or that we don’t value their time. We lose top talent to faster-moving competitors.” P5 reinforced this point, noting, “The candidate gets cold. . . or it’s a red flag,” and acknowledged that being “ghosted” by candidates is often “our fault for lack of engagement.” P4 added, “In today’s market, candidates talk. A bad experience with us can hurt our reputation in the whole community.” These accounts show that inefficient hiring processes damage an organization’s employer brand and competitive standing, making it more complicated and more expensive to attract top talent in the future.

Goodtime (2025) supports these experiences, reporting that 78% of candidates drop out of hiring processes they perceive as too slow or poorly communicated, and 63% are less likely to reapply to organizations after a negative experience. This external evidence reinforces the participants’ concerns, illustrating that inefficient hiring processes not only damage employer brand but also reduce future applicant pools and increase the cost of attracting top talent. These combined insights underscore the strategic importance of candidate experience as a key driver of competitiveness in the talent market.

The Multiplicative Cost of a Mis-Hire. The insights from multiple participants revealed that the true cost of a bad hire extends far beyond recruitment and salary. P2 explained, “A mis-hire doesn’t just underperform; they can demotivate the entire team, create more work for others to fix their mistakes, and sometimes even drive your good people to leave.” P5 echoed this sentiment, stating, “We’ve made a lot of bad hiring

decisions in the past. . . people were not well vetted and therefore weren't necessarily able to do the roles they were hired for." P3 described how one poorly matched hire "set us back months," explaining that "instead of helping the team, they created more work, and we had to clean up their mess." P6 added, "When you hire the wrong person, it's not just their salary you lose. It's the time your good people spend fixing their errors, the manager's time in meetings, and the restart of the entire hiring process." These accounts demonstrate that the hidden costs of mis-hires include lost opportunity costs, wasted managerial and HR time, performance issues, re-hiring expenses, and damage to team cohesion and culture. P1 further highlighted the cultural damage, noting, "When you make a bad hire, everyone else feels it. It spreads fast. Morale drops, trust goes down, and people start questioning leadership's judgment." Together, these testimonies present a clear picture of how one hiring error can ripple across multiple layers of the organization, compounding financial and human costs over time.

Goodtime (2025) reinforced these concerns at an industry level, reporting that mis-hires can cost organizations up to three to four times the employee's annual salary when accounting for lost productivity, team disruption, re-hiring costs, and cultural damage. The report further found that 61% of HR leaders identified mis-hires as one of the most expensive and demoralizing outcomes of inefficient hiring processes. This aligns closely with participant accounts, which illustrate how a single hiring error can ripple across multiple layers of the organization, compounding financial and human costs over time.

This collective evidence makes the case for a more rigorous, upfront investment in defining roles and vetting candidates (as emphasized in Theme 2) overwhelmingly persuasive. The participants' experiences underscore that inefficiencies in hiring are a critical business risk, not merely an HR problem. The consequences are holistic, damaging financial performance, operational capacity, internal culture, and external market reputation. Addressing these inefficiencies is not simply about improving hiring metrics; it is about protecting the well-being of the organization's people and securing its financial and strategic future.

Summary. Theme 4 highlights the significant human and organizational consequences of delayed and inefficient hiring. Unlike earlier themes that focused on process, this theme demonstrates how hiring breakdowns directly harm employee well-being, organizational performance, and employer reputation. Prolonged vacancies increase workloads, fuel burnout, and create a self-reinforcing cycle of attrition that destabilizes teams.

Beyond the human toll, the financial and operational consequences are measurable and severe. Participant accounts and Goodtime 2025 Hiring Insights Report data reveal that unfilled critical roles can cost organizations up to \$20,000 per day in lost productivity and delayed initiatives. Likewise, inefficient hiring damages candidate perceptions and employer brand. Slow, uncommunicative processes signal dysfunction, driving top talent away. Goodtime (2025) reported that 78% of candidates exit processes perceived as too slow or poorly managed, shrinking future applicant pools and raising acquisition costs.

Mis-hires amplify these problems. Participants described how one poorly matched hire can demotivate teams, increase rework, drain managerial time, and erode trust in leadership. Goodtime (2025) reinforced these concerns, finding that mis-hires can cost three to four times the employee's annual salary and are widely regarded by HR leaders as one of the most damaging hiring outcomes.

Taken together, these findings underscore that hiring inefficiencies are not an isolated HR issue but a strategic business risk with wide-reaching consequences. Addressing them requires proactive investments in role clarity, candidate vetting, and hiring efficiency. Doing so protects employee well-being, safeguards financial performance, and strengthens organizational reputation in an increasingly competitive talent market.

Connection to the JD-R Model. The findings from Theme 4 align closely with the JD-R model (2001) by illustrating how hiring inefficiencies increase job demands while simultaneously depleting resources. Prolonged vacancies force existing employees to absorb additional responsibilities, work longer hours, and operate under sustained pressure. At the same time, the organization loses critical resources in the form of time, staffing capacity, financial investment, and operational momentum. This imbalance between escalating demands and diminishing resources creates conditions that foster burnout, disengagement, and turnover—core outcomes the JD-R model (2001) predicts when demands outweigh available supports (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001). Mis-hires further amplify these effects by increasing team workload, draining managerial attention, and eroding trust. These consequences provide clear empirical

evidence of how inefficient hiring processes disrupt the demand–resource balance and undermine both employee well-being and organizational performance (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

Relationship of Findings to Literature. The human and organizational consequences identified in this study closely align with the findings of Flores et al. (2021) and Gupta (2024), who linked hiring inefficiencies to burnout, disengagement, and turnover. Participants described how prolonged vacancies increased workloads, lowered morale, and led to operational disruptions and financial losses. The use of costly consultants and the delay of major projects provided real-world evidence of how inefficiencies drain both human and financial resources. These findings reinforce the JD–R model’s (2001) principle that sustained job demands without adequate resources lead to burnout and decreased performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017). The study extends prior work by showing that these effects reach beyond the HR function and ripple throughout the organization, weakening production, disrupting team cohesion, and undermining long-term retention.

New evidence further validates these findings. Gupta (2025) showed that weak HR execution undermines organizational performance, while Mohamed et al. (2025) demonstrated that strategic HR leadership can mitigate such impacts through better governance. Golikova et al. (2025) linked workforce shortages to firm-level constraints, and Shin et al. (2025) document how these shortages disrupt manufacturing order fulfillment, echoing participants’ accounts of cascading operational costs tied to hiring delays and mis-hires.

Theme 5: Navigating the Evolving Talent Landscape and Future Challenges

Finally, the study identified external, strategic challenges that compound the internal inefficiencies explored in earlier themes. Participants described how shifting candidate expectations, generational change, rising salary pressures, and broader labor market dynamics are reshaping how organizations must approach talent acquisition. These external pressures intensify existing bottlenecks and demand more proactive, adaptive hiring strategies.

Disconnect Between Candidate Expectations and Manufacturing Realities.

Participants consistently emphasized the growing gap between what candidates want and what organizations can offer, particularly in industries like manufacturing, where on-site work remains the norm. P6 shared, “99.9% of applicants were all work from home,” when describing challenges in hiring a programmer. This lack of alignment between candidate preferences for flexibility and the operational requirements of the job created a critical competitive disadvantage. P5 echoed this challenge, explaining, “A lot of our candidates are asking for work flexibility or remote work. We’re not a remote-first company, but that’s what they want.” P2 added, “We’re competing with companies that can offer hybrid or fully remote roles, and we just can’t match that.” These expectations reflect a broader labor market shift toward flexibility and work–life balance. According to Goodtime (2025), 73% of candidates now consider flexibility a top deciding factor when evaluating job offers, and companies unable to provide it face 42% longer time-to-fill for key roles. This external data mirrors the participants’ experiences and highlights a structural disadvantage for organizations tied to on-site work models.

Generational Shifts and Communication Gaps. Several participants described communication and engagement challenges tied to younger generations entering the workforce. P5 observed “very different communication styles” and “feelings of entitlement” among new graduates, noting that “they expect immediate responses and constant feedback.” P4 shared, “We lose some candidates because they stop responding if we don’t move fast enough. They have different expectations of what communication should look like.” P1 added, “We used to wait a week between steps, but now if you wait two days, they’ve already accepted something else.” These differences require organizations to rethink how they engage candidates, adapt communication strategies, and modernize employer branding. Goodtime (2025) supported this trend, reporting that 58% of candidates expect a response within 48 hours of an application or interview. Organizations that fail to meet this expectation experience significantly higher candidate drop-off rates.

Rebranding and Active Pipeline Development. Rather than remaining passive in the face of these shifts, some participants described taking steps to reframe how manufacturing roles are perceived. P6 shared, “We’re trying to change the narrative. Manufacturing isn’t just a job—it’s a professional career path with growth.” Participants also explained the importance of “getting from behind the desk” and “showing up in the community” to connect with potential talent early. P3 reinforced this strategy, saying, “We’re looking at local schools and community programs to build relationships. If we don’t build the pipeline, no one else will.” Goodtime (2025) aligned with this proactive approach, reporting that organizations that invest in community engagement and early

pipeline development reduce their time-to-hire by an average of 31%. These findings highlight how rebranding and outreach can mitigate external pressures and strengthen long-term talent acquisition.

Salary Pressures and Market Volatility. Participants also discussed rising salary expectations as a growing challenge in attracting talent. P2 noted, “We find great candidates, but their expectations are way out of reach for what we can offer.” P5 added, “We bring in candidates from larger markets, and their salary expectations are double what our budget allows.” P4 shared a similar frustration, “We lose candidates to companies that can pay more or offer bonuses we can’t match.” Goodtime (2025) reported that 64% of HR leaders cite salary inflation as a major barrier to hiring, particularly in competitive fields. This finding aligns closely with participants’ experiences and underscores the widening gap between candidate expectations and employer resources.

Technology and Competitive Pressures. Participants highlighted the increasing role of technology in shaping the future of hiring. P1 explained, “If you’re not leveraging platforms like LinkedIn, you’re already behind. That’s where the talent is.” P5 added, “Candidates are comparing us to everyone else online. If your process isn’t smooth, they’ll just move on.” P4 echoed this, noting, “Technology isn’t optional anymore. It’s how you stay visible and competitive.” Goodtime (2025) reinforces these observations, reporting that companies with strong digital candidate engagement strategies experience 2.4 times higher offer acceptance rates and fill roles 37% faster than those relying solely on traditional recruiting methods. This finding emphasizes the strategic role of

technology not only in sourcing but also in shaping candidate perception and decision-making.

Summary. Theme 5 highlights how external labor market forces are reshaping the hiring environment and amplifying existing internal inefficiencies. Participants consistently described a growing disconnect between candidate expectations and the operational realities of industries like manufacturing. Flexibility has become a key factor in job choice, placing on-site employers at a structural disadvantage. Generational shifts have further complicated hiring dynamics, as younger candidates expect faster communication, more engagement, and a more personalized hiring experience than many organizations currently provide.

Some participants reported taking proactive steps to counter these challenges by rebranding manufacturing careers and investing in community-based talent pipelines. These efforts aim to make the industry more appealing to younger workers and to create a sustainable source of future talent. However, salary inflation and rising candidate expectations remain significant barriers, often pricing smaller organizations out of the competition. At the same time, technology emerged as both a critical asset and a competitive differentiator. Organizations that leverage digital platforms and candidate engagement tools more effectively are better positioned to attract and secure top talent.

Findings from Goodtime (2025) mirror participant experiences, showing that flexibility, rapid response times, proactive talent cultivation, competitive compensation strategies, and strong digital engagement significantly reduce time-to-hire and improve offer acceptance rates. Collectively, these shifts signal a fundamental transformation in

how organizations must approach talent acquisition, requiring greater adaptability, strategic branding, and alignment with evolving workforce expectations.

Connection to the JD-R Model. The findings from Theme 5 closely align with the JD-R model (2001) by showing how external labor market shifts actively shape both job demands and organizational resources. Rising candidate expectations for flexibility, faster communication, and higher compensation increase pressure on organizations to adapt their hiring processes, strengthen employer branding, and accelerate engagement strategies. These pressures place heavier demands on HR teams, hiring managers, and operational leaders, especially in manufacturing, where remote or hybrid options remain limited. At the same time, resource constraints, such as limited budgets, slower decision-making structures, and inadequate technology, undermine organizational capacity to respond effectively. This imbalance between escalating demands and insufficient resources reflects the JD-R model's (2001) prediction that sustained pressure without adequate support produces strain, lowers performance, and weakens organizational resilience (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Organizations can restore this balance by actively investing in technology, building stronger talent pipelines, and adopting adaptive hiring practices that strengthen resources and sustain workforce well-being.

Relationship of Findings to Literature. Participants' reports of candidate demand for flexibility, rapid communication, and transparent processes align with literature on remote recruitment, digital hiring, and the need to modernize employer branding and response times (Adisa et al., 2023; Sutton & Atkinson, 2023). The proactive

pipeline strategies and community engagement participants described map to research on workforce planning and employer branding as buffers against tight labor markets (Ayanponle et al., 2024; Sutton & Atkinson, 2023). Evidence of salary inflation and market volatility reinforces review findings on compensation pressures and the importance of integrating analytics into strategy, not just reporting (Kadi et al., 2023; Van Iddekinge et al., 2023). Goodtime (2025) added industry-level benchmarks that validate these patterns.

Recent research expands this picture. Al-Asfour (2025) showed how manufacturing leaders are adapting workforce development strategies to meet changing market expectations. Kranthi et al. (2025), Maheshwari and Buddhapriya (2025), and Muhammad et al. (2025) demonstrate that sustainable HRM practices improve employer reputation and talent retention in shifting labor markets. Aksnes and Breit (2025) highlight how inclusive managerial engagement expands candidate pools, supporting participants' observations about the need for more adaptive strategies to compete effectively in the evolving talent landscape.

Business Contributions and Recommendations for Professional Practice

The findings of this study support several practice-oriented actions for manufacturing leaders and human resource professionals seeking to reduce hiring inefficiencies while enhancing employee well-being and organizational performance. Viewed through the lens of the JD-R model (2001), these recommendations demonstrate how streamlining hiring systems can reduce unnecessary job demands such as workload spikes, time pressure, and role ambiguity, while increasing essential resources such as

clarity, communication, and support (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017; Demerouti et al., 2001).

Manufacturing organizations can reduce inefficiencies by simplifying and clarifying their hiring processes. Theme 1 findings revealed that excessive approval layers, redundant interviews, and unclear accountability caused major delays. Participants described how “too many people have to sign off” and how “the process drags on,” which resulted in extended cycle times and increased workloads. Research supports these experiences, showing that administrative bottlenecks undermine efficiency and employee engagement (Basch et al., 2022; Le Barbanchon et al., 2022). To address this, organizations should map their workflows, identify bottlenecks, and remove redundant steps. Empowering hiring managers to make timely, informed decisions and limiting interviews to a manageable number of rounds prevents rework and accelerates the process. Establishing a clear RACI matrix clarifies decision-making and reinforces accountability. These actions reduce uncertainty and time pressure, transforming hiring into a more efficient and structured process that supports organizational goals.

Strategic alignment and communication also play a critical role in improving hiring outcomes. Theme 2 showed that poor upfront planning, particularly unclear role definitions and reactive hiring, drives inefficiencies and mis-hires. Participants emphasized that failing to define the “why” behind a role often leads to restarts and mismatches later. This finding aligns with research linking structured role definition to improved performance and hiring quality (Gabriel & Aguinis, 2022; Kadi et al., 2023). Implementing structured intake meetings between HR and hiring managers allows teams

to establish role purpose, key competencies, and success measures before posting. This clarity transforms hiring from a transactional activity into a strategic function that strengthens capability. From a JD–R perspective, early alignment provides clarity and support, which enhances engagement and retention.

Technology and resources must also align with organizational context to function as enablers rather than barriers. Theme 3 findings showed that ATS tools, automation platforms, and digital sourcing strategies either accelerated or slowed processes depending on how well they fit the organization’s candidate pool and internal capacity. Participants shared that poorly matched systems increased drop-offs and internal frustration, while well-implemented tools enhanced transparency and accountability. Research echoed these observations, emphasizing that context determines whether technology reduces or adds demand (Sabil et al., 2023; Sharma, 2023). Organizations should assess their platforms to ensure they are accessible to candidates and scalable to their hiring needs. Simplifying application processes for less digitally fluent applicants, adopting mobile-friendly solutions, and investing in analytics that match organizational capacity can turn technology into a resource that supports efficiency and strategic decision-making.

Monitoring workload and protecting employee well-being during vacancies is equally important. Theme 4 revealed that prolonged vacancies lead to burnout, frustration, and disengagement among employees covering extra duties. Participants described how “the team picks up extra work” and how “burnout sets in fast.” Research confirms that unfilled roles can erode morale and increase turnover (Gupta, 2024; Flores

et al., 2021). Organizations can address this by cross-training employees, setting overtime caps, and using contractor contingency plans to redistribute workload fairly. Regular check-ins, visual workload boards, and early warning indicators such as unplanned overtime can help leaders detect strain before it escalates. Proactively managing workload allows organizations to maintain morale and engagement, reducing the risk of burnout and preserving productivity.

Finally, proactive workforce pipeline development and employer branding can help organizations stay competitive in a changing labor market. Theme 5 highlighted the growing disconnect between candidate expectations and traditional manufacturing work models, particularly regarding flexibility, salary, and communication. Participants emphasized the need to “go out and meet them where they are,” reflecting a shift toward early engagement and rebranding strategies. External data supports this approach, showing that organizations that invest in talent pipelines reduce time-to-hire and improve offer acceptance rates (Goodtime, 2025). Building partnerships with trade schools, community colleges, and workforce boards creates stronger connections to future talent. Apprenticeships, internships, and community events increase visibility and credibility, providing a steady flow of candidates and reinforcing a growth-oriented employer brand.

Taken together, these actions align with the JD–R model by reducing job demands and increasing resources that support both employee well-being and organizational performance. Streamlined processes, early alignment, context-appropriate technology, workload management, and proactive pipeline development create a more efficient, resilient hiring system. These strategies address the root causes of inefficiencies

while equipping organizations with sustainable practices to strengthen workforce stability and long-term competitiveness.

Implications for Social Change

Improving hiring efficiency has the potential to generate meaningful social change by creating healthier, fairer, and more sustainable workplaces in the manufacturing industry. The findings of this study showed that inefficient hiring practices disrupt workflow, reduce productivity, and create sustained job demands that erode employee well-being. Participants described how prolonged vacancies increased workloads, while excessive procedural delays slowed organizational responsiveness. Addressing these inefficiencies by balancing job demands with adequate resources can strengthen both organizational performance and human outcomes. When leaders remove structural barriers and create efficient hiring systems, they establish a foundation that supports both employee health and operational stability. These findings emphasized that improving hiring efficiency is not just a management strategy; it is a meaningful avenue for advancing workplace equity, employee well-being, and broader community impact.

At the individual level, streamlining hiring processes can directly improve employees' daily work experience and overall well-being. The findings revealed that persistent vacancies and procedural delays force employees to absorb additional workloads, which leads to fatigue, frustration, and burnout. Participants described how prolonged open positions increased stress and disrupted their ability to manage responsibilities effectively. Streamlining approvals, clarifying managerial ownership, and building proactive candidate pipelines can alleviate these burdens. When employees

experience balanced workloads, clear communication, and timely staffing support, they are more likely to report psychological safety, greater job satisfaction, and healthier work–life integration. These improvements contribute to elevating the dignity of work and creating healthier, more stable work environments that support both individual and organizational well-being.

At the organizational level, efficient and equitable hiring strengthens fairness, accountability, and workforce diversity. The study revealed that inefficient hiring practices often perpetuate inequitable processes, inadvertently excluding qualified candidates or delaying advancement opportunities. Participants highlighted how slow approvals, inconsistent role definitions, and unclear decision-making created procedural barriers. Revising hiring systems through simplified workflows, accessible technology, and consistent role definitions builds fairer and more inclusive practices. When leaders act as strategic partners who prioritize equity and accountability, they create cultures of trust and transparency that strengthen organizational resilience. These inclusive practices support both ethical and economic sustainability, helping organizations attract and retain diverse talent while reinforcing long-term stability and growth.

At the societal level, efficient and fair hiring practices contribute to stronger communities and healthier local economies. The results suggest that reducing hiring delays enhances employment opportunities, supports family income stability, and improves access to meaningful work, especially in regions where manufacturing drives local economies. Participants emphasized how delays not only slowed operations but also reduced opportunities for community members seeking stable employment. By

improving workforce well-being and promoting fairness, organizations set a standard for socially responsible business practices. These changes strengthen economic participation and reduce barriers to employment, producing ripple effects that benefit families and communities. This finding demonstrated how organizational actions can extend beyond the factory floor to shape local labor markets, community stability, and broader social outcomes.

Improving hiring efficiency also reflects a deeper organizational commitment to social responsibility. The findings of this study underscore how eliminating internal barriers, investing in resources, and upholding equitable standards enhance both performance and well-being. These changes align directly with broader calls for sustainable and responsible business practices. When business leaders prioritize efficient and fair hiring, they build workplaces that foster dignity, respect, and trust. This approach strengthens organizational capacity while contributing to community resilience and economic stability. These actions advance Walden University's social change mission by showing how strategic, evidence-based practices can simultaneously increase profitability, protect employee well-being, and strengthen communities.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study generated valuable insights into how hiring inefficiencies affect employee well-being and organizational performance. The study also revealed clear opportunities for future research. The study relied on a small, purposefully selected sample of six hiring managers, which limited the ability to generalize the findings beyond the manufacturing sector. Its qualitative design also prevented the measurement of

statistical relationships among variables. These limitations point to the need for broader samples and complementary research designs that deepen understanding of how hiring inefficiencies affect various industries. Expanding the scope will strengthen external validity and support evidence-based strategies that improve both organizational effectiveness and employee well-being.

Future research could examine hiring inefficiencies across multiple industries and organizational settings. The findings from manufacturing highlighted critical issues related to process dependencies, resource constraints, and leadership engagement. Similar inefficiencies likely exist in healthcare, logistics, public administration, and service sectors. Comparative studies can help determine whether bureaucratic bottlenecks, resource misalignment, and leadership gaps are universal or context specific. Identifying cross-industry patterns would provide a clearer picture of how these inefficiencies emerge and how best practices can be adapted across different organizational environments.

In addition to expanding industry scope, researchers should incorporate quantitative or mixed-methods approaches to complement the qualitative insights gained from this study. While interviews offered valuable depth and context, they did not include empirical measures such as time-to-fill rates, turnover statistics, or employee well-being indices. A mixed-methods design that combines interviews with surveys and archival HR data would enhance validity, allow for triangulation, and offer a more comprehensive view of how hiring inefficiencies influence employee outcomes and

organizational performance. This approach would address current limitations and provide actionable insights for organizations.

Longitudinal research also offers an important next step for understanding how hiring inefficiencies evolve over time. This study captured participants' experiences at a single point, but the effects of inefficient hiring, such as burnout, turnover, and productivity loss, often accumulate gradually. Tracking organizations over several years would reveal causal pathways and provide evidence of how interventions affect culture and performance in the long term. Longitudinal studies would deepen understanding of hiring inefficiencies as evolving challenges rather than isolated events, giving organizations better guidance on sustaining improvements.

Future research should also explore how emerging technologies influence hiring efficiency, fairness, and employee well-being. Participants described both the benefits and drawbacks of digital tools, noting that their effectiveness depends on alignment with organizational context and candidate demographics. Investigating how AI, predictive analytics, and automation shape candidate experience, reduce bias, and enhance agility would help organizations assess both the ethical and practical implications of new technologies. This line of inquiry would also clarify how technology can function as either a valuable resource or an added demand, depending on its implementation.

Together, these recommendations extend the current study's findings and address its limitations by encouraging broader, more rigorous research. Expanding industry scope, integrating quantitative and longitudinal methods, and examining technological innovation will build a stronger evidence base for both scholars and practitioners. This

expanded body of research may help organizations design hiring systems that balance job demands with resources, enhance employee well-being, and improve overall performance. By doing so, future studies can contribute to more resilient, equitable, and effective workplaces.

Reflections

The DBA program has been a challenging yet transformative journey that has shaped me both professionally and personally. This milestone represents not just the last three years of doctoral research but a path that began in August 2019 when I first decided to return to school. Every late night and weekend spent at the computer, learning new concepts and developing new skills, has led to this moment. A truck driver and Army veteran who once never aspired to attend college now stands at the threshold of becoming a Doctor of Business Administration (DBA).

Balancing full-time work in the manufacturing industry, part-time teaching, and officiating sports while pursuing this degree required perseverance, focus, and resilience. There were moments in the early stages of my academic journey when the workload felt overwhelming, particularly as I tried to integrate scholarly research with professional and personal obligations. Nevertheless, through persistence, discipline, and the steadfast support of my family, faculty, and peers, I learned to adapt and overcome each challenge.

Reaching this stage has been the result of consistent dedication and sacrifice. Completing coursework, developing the proposal, and conducting research demanded long hours and constant prioritization of academic work alongside professional duties. This process taught me valuable lessons in time management, endurance, and

maintaining focus on long-term goals. More than anything, this journey has reinforced my belief in the power of perseverance and the fulfillment that comes from staying true to a purpose-driven path.

Throughout the study, I made a conscious effort to set aside personal experiences and biases, particularly as a veteran and leader who has witnessed hiring inefficiencies firsthand. By relying on the approved interview protocol and the guidance of my committee and the IRB, I ensured that the findings reflected the authentic voices of participants rather than my own perspectives. This commitment to rigor, ethics, and balance helped me grow as a true scholar-practitioner.

Looking back, I am profoundly grateful for the support and mentorship of my committee, faculty, and peers, whose encouragement made this achievement possible. The DBA program has sharpened my ability to identify and analyze complex business problems and equipped me with tools to design evidence-based solutions that strengthen both organizations and the people within them. This journey has affirmed my commitment to leadership, scholarship, and social change, and I give thanks to God for providing the strength, guidance, and perseverance that carried me from that first class in 2019 to this defining moment.

Conclusion

This study included exploration of how hiring inefficiencies impact employee well-being and organizational performance within the manufacturing industry, using a qualitative, thematic analysis approach grounded in the Job Demands–Resources model (Demerouti et al., 2001). The study derived its findings from six semistructured

interviews with experienced human resource professionals and hiring managers across diverse manufacturing firms. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic framework, supported by MAXQDA software, to identify patterns of managerial, procedural, and strategic factors contributing to hiring inefficiencies.

The analysis revealed five interconnected themes: (a) internal process and managerial inefficiencies as the primary source of delay, (b) the critical importance of strategic alignment and upfront definition, (c) the dual role of technology and resource allocation as both enablers and barriers, (d) the human and organizational cost of hiring delays and mis-hires, and (e) the evolving talent landscape and external pressures shaping future workforce challenges. Collectively, these findings demonstrated that prolonged vacancies, excessive bureaucracy, and insufficient managerial accountability elevate job demands while diminishing essential job resource conditions that the JD–R model (2001) predicts will lead to burnout, disengagement, and lower organizational performance.

By framing hiring inefficiencies as a strategic rather than administrative issue, this study contributes to the broader body of business knowledge, demonstrating that hiring effectiveness has a direct impact on both operational outcomes and employee well-being. The results highlight that leadership engagement, process clarity, and contextual use of technology are essential to balancing organizational demands with supportive resources. These insights enhance scholarly understanding of how inefficiencies in core business systems propagate throughout the workforce, reinforcing the connection between human resource practices and organizational health.

In conclusion, this research affirms that organizations achieve sustainable improvement in hiring by going beyond procedural streamlining and actively shifting their culture to define accountability, allocate resources effectively, and value the human experience within their workforce. By applying the evidence-based recommendations from this study, leaders can build hiring systems that are not only efficient and equitable but also promote long-term organizational resilience and employee well-being, fulfilling both business and social objectives.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol for Qualitative Pragmatic inquiry Research Project

Interview Protocol	
<p>Introduce the interview and set the stage. Introduce myself and the purpose of the interview thereby setting the stage.</p>	<p>Hello name is T.J. Winn, and I'm a Doctor of Business Administration candidate at Walden University. This interview is part of my doctoral study, which explores how delays and inefficiencies in the hiring process impact employee well-being and organizational performance in the manufacturing industry.</p> <p>I want to clarify upfront, this interview is not about how to hire someone or the technical steps of hiring. Instead, I'm interested in your experiences, observations, and insights as someone who manages or contributes to hiring decisions what challenges you've seen, how delays have impacted your team or organization, and what factors you believe lead to more effective hiring.</p> <p>Your participation is voluntary, and everything you share today will remain confidential. No identifying information such as your name, organization, or location will be included in the final study. The interview will take approximately 45 to 60 minutes and is being audio recorded for transcription purposes only.</p> <p>You may decline to answer any question or stop the interview at any time. If you're comfortable proceeding, please verbally indicate your consent by saying, "I consent."</p>

	<p>(Pause to record consent)</p> <p>Thank you. Let's begin with the first question.</p>
<p>Watch for nonverbal cues. Paraphrase the participant's response. Ask follow-up probing questions to get more in-depth</p>	<p>Interview Questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Please briefly describe your professional background and experience in managing hiring processes within your organization. 2. What is your current role, and how does it relate to overseeing or being involved in the hiring process? 3. What challenges and inefficiencies exist in the hiring process within your organization? 4. In your experience, how have delays in the hiring process affected your team and the overall organization? 5. Can you describe any specific challenges you've encountered in the hiring process that have impacted your ability to fill positions efficiently? 6. How would you describe the efficiency of the hiring process within your organization? 7. What key factors contribute to an effective hiring process in your organization? 8. Have you been involved in any efforts to streamline or improve the hiring process in your organization? If so, what were the results? 9. How does the hiring process in your organization compare to other companies or industries you've worked in?

	<p>10. Is there any other information you would like to share?</p>
<p>Wrap up the interview, thanking the participant.</p> <p>Schedule a follow-up interview to perform member checking with the participant.</p>	<p>That concludes all the interview questions I have for today. Thank you again for your time, your insights, and your thoughtful responses.</p> <p>Within the next few days, I will send you a copy of the transcript for your review. This step, called member checking, is a way to ensure that your perspectives have been accurately captured. You will be able to make any corrections or clarify anything you feel was misrepresented.</p> <p>Before we wrap up, is there anything else you would like to add that you feel is important to this topic?</p> <p>Again, I truly appreciate your participation in this study. Your input plays a vital role in helping organizations improve hiring practices and support employee well-being. I'll be in touch soon with your transcript.</p>