

Original Research Article

## Determining quality of hire, the holy grail of recruitment: A structuration perspective

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**Abstract: Purpose:** This research paper aims to justify the need for the Quality of Hire (QOH) construct as a value-adding focus for strategic human resource management (SHRM). The traditional focus on efficiency and cost-oriented recruitment metrics overlooks the importance of QOH in providing a competitive advantage and delivering long-term value. The study expands the economic theory of human resource development and develops a profit-building concept relevant to SHRM by exploring the practices that enable QOH in organizations. **Design:** The study utilizes a case-study method to examine a target firm's mechanisms to build QOH in its recruitment process. It applies a structuration theory lens to analyze the behavior of various actors, their agencies, and the continuous interplay between structure and action in enabling QOH. **Findings:** The findings suggest that assessing and building measures for getting QOH is a complex task for organizations due to the inherent reliance on lag measures such as performance and tenure. The study highlights that QOH can be enabled through changes in the firm's recruitment practices. **Originality:** This paper contributes to recruitment research in two significant ways. First, it expands on the under-researched construct of QOH, providing clarity on its definition and importance. Second, it identifies lead practices that organizations can incorporate into their recruitment and selection processes to enable QOH. By using a structuration theory lens, the study explores how actors in the recruitment process adapt and align with new structural rules to enable QOH. **Research implications:** The research builds on the structuration theory in recruitment and selection and exhorts practitioners in organizations to move beyond efficiency-oriented recruitment practices and focus on practices that contribute to QOH. By considering post-hire outcomes, such as job performance and long-term retention, organizations can improve their talent acquisition and retention strategies, creating long-term value for the organizations.

**Keywords:** quality of hire; strategic human resource management; talent acquisition; structuration theory; recruitment

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### 1. Introduction

Organizations continue their decades-long struggle to win the war for quality talent<sup>[1,2]</sup>. The scarcity of talent in the global economy has reached alarming levels, exacerbated by the pandemic, with shortages expected to be more than 85 million people by 2030, with over three-quarters of companies reporting hiring difficulties and talent shortages across all sectors<sup>[3]</sup>. The "Great Resignation" phenomenon across organizations during and after the pandemic further crippled the ability of organizations to hire and retain good talent<sup>[4]</sup>.

Organizational capability and sustainability are contingent upon the quality of applicants it attracts, selects, and retains, as well as those that deliver high performance<sup>[5]</sup>, and are thus a key objective of strategic human resource management (SHRM)<sup>[6,7]</sup>. A new hire's primary responsibility is to deliver high job

performance standards in the selected role. Additionally, the retention of new hires is also of direct interest to organizations as these hires add more value over time<sup>[8]</sup>. What the organization seeks and values from new hires, i.e., their performance and long-term retention, are paradoxically not measured or considered a valuable criterion for talent acquisition, nor are organizations focusing on how to achieve this from their new hires. Researchers and recruitment functions focus on efficiency-oriented metrics, measuring and rewarding recruiter productivity, with performance measures such as the number of hires made, cost per hire, and cycle time of recruitment being the preferred evaluation criteria of the recruitment function<sup>[5,8]</sup>. These pressures cause recruiters to adopt a myopic lens, adopting a high efficiency and effectiveness lens to the recruitment process while screening and selecting candidates for the job within their organization. However, effective measures are not necessarily the most impactful. While organizations have traditionally focused on the efficiency and cost aspects of recruitment<sup>[8]</sup>, the quality of hire (QOH) is the aspect of recruitment that gives a competitive advantage to the organization but remains under-researched.

Although Breugh<sup>[9]</sup> acknowledged that pre-hire strategies and efforts to improve new hires' performance are advantageous for employers, existing research seems limited on how organizations may do this<sup>[10]</sup>. Since post-hire outcomes involve the behaviors and attitudes of the hired employees, along with role skills<sup>[11]</sup>, selection systems may achieve this if they focus on practices that add value rather than expedient ones<sup>[7]</sup>.

Our paper aims to justify the need for the QOH construct as a value-adding focus for human resource management. We attempt to expand on the critical question: "What is QOH, and what practices in organizations can lead to QOH of new hires?"

The study contributes in two significant ways to recruitment research. First, we expand on the critical but under-researched construct of QOH. Most research on recruitment focuses on activities that connect applicants to organizations, the effectiveness of various recruiting strategies, recruitment experiences, and applicant outcomes<sup>[3]</sup>. By focusing on QOH and the associated enabling practices, we expand the economic theory of human resource development and help develop a profit-building concept relevant to SHRM<sup>[6]</sup>. Second, using a case-study method, we examine the mechanisms the target firm adopts to build QOH in its recruitment process. Most recruitment research hinges on resource-based views or fit theories for arguing efficiency-oriented recruitment practices. Adopting the structuration theory lens, we examine the behavior of various actors, their agencies, the 'flow' of underlying and emerging structures and processes, the continuous interplay between structure and action<sup>[12]</sup>, and how they enable QOH. Since performance and tenure are ex-ante outcomes, we further identify appropriate lead practices that the organizations may incorporate into their recruitment process, enabling the QOH.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: first, we present a review of the literature on recruitment practices and argue for a structuration lens to study the QOH construct. Then, we describe the methodology and the research context. Finally, we present the analysis, findings, and discussion, which theorize the structures and practices for building and sustaining QOH talent in organizations' recruitment processes.

## **2. Literature review**

Robust talent selection and retention practices that help deliver new hires' performance and retain them are not a choice for organizations but a mandate to stay relevant in the market<sup>[13]</sup>. Leaders feel that effective talent acquisition is one of the most critical aspects of organizational success<sup>[14]</sup>. The challenge of winning the war for talent ranks high on the CEO's agenda, with 74% of the CEOs expressing concern about getting a good talent pool in their organizations<sup>[15]</sup>. With job searching becoming radically easier and less expensive, the

percentage of employees looking for new jobs is increasing daily, as they are becoming more selective and deliberate in their job selection choices. 74% of employed workers indicated a mindset of “always hunting even though satisfied” with their jobs<sup>[16]</sup>, presenting a challenge for organizations to retain even their new hires<sup>[17,18]</sup>. In the 2016 SHRM survey, around 46% of the managers accepted turnover as their top concern, against 25% in 2013<sup>[19]</sup>. A study conducted during the pandemic indicates that nearly 65% of employees are looking for new jobs, compared to 35% before the pandemic<sup>[20]</sup>. Widespread access to social media and internet use, employer branding information, multiple recruitment job boards, communities of practices, and affinity groups also provide job opportunity information, reducing information asymmetry and job search costs. Organizations are also struggling to recruit and retain talent even after paying large bonuses and offering perks and benefits, indicating that money is insufficient to hire and retain quality talent<sup>[21]</sup>. This increases the pressure on organizations to retain their talented employees, who are susceptible to poaching by other organizations<sup>[22]</sup>. When employees leave organizations, they take away the critical relationships and networks cultivated internally and externally over their tenure, apart from their expertise<sup>[23,24]</sup>. The cost of replacing an employee with a new one is estimated to be 1.5 times their salary<sup>[23]</sup>. These costs are often not monetized but include productivity loss, recruitment search costs of new employees, training development of new hires, increased turnover intentions of remaining employees, and loss of team morale<sup>[24,25]</sup>. Studies indicate that 65% of recruiters struggle to retain their newly hired employees<sup>[23]</sup>. The absence of new hire retention is also called a recruitment failure<sup>[26]</sup>. Hence, organizations need to determine mechanisms that drive better tenure for new hires<sup>[27]</sup>.

Organizations report that they regret more than 25% of all hiring decisions<sup>[8]</sup>. The ongoing focus for recruitment is to fulfill positions, with the axiom being “right candidate, right time, right cost”. However, studies indicate that current recruitment practices do not fulfill hiring managers’ and organizations’ expectations<sup>[4]</sup>. Technological advancements in digital platforms, adaptive computational algorithms that use substantial datasets, artificial intelligence, machine learning, and natural language processing have revolutionized recruitment practices<sup>[28]</sup>. While focusing on identifying “fit” with job requirements<sup>[5,29]</sup>, the principal value of these technologies emerged in the efficiency gains of increased recruitment speed and reduced effort and time spent by recruiters in reviewing applications<sup>[28]</sup>. Research suggests that while organizations focus on an applicant’s immediate role fit, they often fail to get the desired performance output<sup>[13]</sup>. Technological developments are also not focused on identifying applicants with high performance and organizational stability. The validity of cycle time and hiring costs as operational metrics are high<sup>[11]</sup>. However, for QOH, the validity of these metrics is low, as they are neither effective nor impactful. Within normative recruitment practices, there appears to be no accountability for post-hire performance or the long-term retention of a new hire for the recruitment function<sup>[24]</sup>.

The traditional staffing approach focuses on the behavioral-consistency-assumption model. It argues that past performance best predicts future performance<sup>[30]</sup>. However, researchers have also identified that the behavioral-consistency-assumption model only works when the current and past organizational needs are similar<sup>[26]</sup>. The rapidly changing environment and technological progress mandate that the workforce adapt quickly. The pressure on performance equally manifests in ineffective succession planning within organizations, where talented or high-potential individuals (HI-POs) cannot perform in future roles with higher responsibilities<sup>[31]</sup>. Proficiency in skills ensures compatibility with current role requirements but not future state requirements. Further, studies indicate that past performance is not a good predictor of individuals’ potential to succeed in the future<sup>[30]</sup>.

Hence, organizations need to determine mechanisms that drive better tenure for new hires<sup>[27]</sup>.

### 3. Quality of hire (QOH)

Organizational leadership has been exhorted to emphasize the quality of hire, as this would help it gain a competitive advantage in the business landscape. While business leaders and recruiters consider QOH the secret sauce that organizations can use for sustainable growth<sup>[32]</sup>, there is an apparent absence of clarity on what QOH represents and how recruiters could help enable this. Recruiters consider the construct challenging to measure because of its qualitative nature. Hence, recruitment processes and metrics that have predominantly focused on efficiency and productivity measures need to change to include relevant business value-creating structures and practices to bring appropriate focus to QOH<sup>[7]</sup>.

The various conceptualizations of QOH attribute it to post-hire measures<sup>[8]</sup>. Industry studies report QOH as one of the most valuable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) but do not state how this could be measured<sup>[32]</sup>. Lermusiaux and Snell<sup>[33]</sup> took an alternative route to define QOH, viewing it through the lens of process improvement philosophy, which is measured by analyzing the new hire's productivity by comparing it with the expectation set at the time of identification or requirement of a new hire. Congruent with this approach, some organizations measured the candidate's early job performance or used probation confirmation to determine if adequate performance standards were being met<sup>[34]</sup>.

Several researchers have defined QOH per their convenience, and HR leaders view QOH more as a "fit" construct to be determined through psychometric assessments and past job-skill experience<sup>[8,35]</sup>. Among the several suggested approaches to measuring the quality of hire, new hire performance, and turnover rates, employee engagement and culture fit with the new hire are considered the most effective<sup>[36]</sup>.

Studies focused on using practice tests to manage the candidate quantity-quality dilemma. Still, they limited the definition of quality to the ability to separate qualified and unqualified candidates and reduce selection costs<sup>[37]</sup>. Several organizations also consider the tenure of employees and use it as a measure of QOH<sup>[32]</sup>. In a LinkedIn study, 97% of the respondents agreed that tenure is crucial for the organization. Further, 39% of the hiring managers argued that QOH is the most valuable metric for tracking recruitment performance<sup>[32]</sup>.

Often, issues important to practice are not the focus of researchers<sup>[35]</sup>. Despite QOH gaining substantial traction among academicians and practitioners, it remains relatively unexamined in research. Therefore, we argue that QOH is the immediate and long-term value the new hire delivers to the organization<sup>[8]</sup>. It is operationalized by the high performance of a new hire and higher affective commitment, reflected in tenure in the organization, through which a new hire contributes to the organization's growth and sustainability. Hence, appropriate metrics for the QOH are post-hire on-the-job performance and tenure served<sup>[8,32]</sup>. We lean on structuration theory, as it helps conceptualize how QOH may be enabled through a combination of systems, processes, and practices.

### 4. Theoretical background

HRM practices and system implementations are acknowledged as distinctive processes and achieved through consensus with key policymakers. However, in a multi-stage process, the translation of the intended and actual practices, the granularity of tasks to be included, and the involvement of numerous executives are not explicitly clear. Social systems exist due to the interaction between structures and agents' actions. Structuration theory<sup>[38]</sup> helps explain how social systems are created and reframed over time<sup>[12]</sup>. The effective implementation of HRM practices is not a one-sided or static process and depends on various factors, including agreement among policymakers, employee perceptions of coherence and distinctiveness, compliance with HRM professionals and line managers, and the devotion of line managers to HRM practices<sup>[12]</sup>. The dynamic

interaction between the context, organizational actors, and HRM practices, which mutually affect each other, leads to the gradual evolution of HRM system characteristics that ultimately reach a stable phase. The structuration theory is a useful framework for analyzing HRM implementation based on the continuous interaction between action and structure. According to Giddens<sup>[38]</sup>, the dimensions of the structure are signification, domination, and legitimation, which are translated into action through interpretive schemes, facilities, and norms. Interpretive schemes are the patterns of knowledge that actors incorporate into their communication to make sense of their own actions and those of others<sup>[12]</sup>. These schemes are based on information that actors have learned beforehand, such as specific organizational terms and the names of colleagues in a work setting. Facilities refer to an actor's capacity to command others (authoritative) or allocate resources (allocative). Norms are moral imperatives that are tacitly understood and give a sense of direction in daily life, informing us of what is acceptable and what is not<sup>[12]</sup>. In interactions, actors draw upon these modalities to transform them into communication, power, and sanctions.

Employing structuration theory, we attempt to explore the interplay between structures and human agents in the context of QOH. Recruitment managers are, therefore, likely to use their interpretive schemes to filter changes in HRM practices, which affect the shape and delivery of the practices to recruiters and job applicants. HRM's authoritative and allocative facilities and formal and informal norms of target metrics, resources, efficiency, and cost optimization orientations also play a role. HRM professionals are responsible for monitoring the implementation progress until the behaviors of managers and employees become routine and institutionalized.

Through this study, we help develop a comprehensive situated analysis of the processes surrounding implementing and adopting efficient QOH practices.

## **5. Methodology**

We conducted the study in two parts; the first uses a qualitative research design involving a single case study<sup>[39]</sup>. It captures how HRM processes are effectively conceptualized and deployed within an organization. The second stage of the study involves validating our findings with other industry experts and recent publications by industry bodies. This helped in theorizing the recursive processes of QOH determination.

The case design approach was appropriate because it allowed us to explore or describe a phenomenon in context by examining events through personal exploration rather than analyzing data about them under experimental conditions. It involves conducting in-depth research on real-world practices and genuine social phenomena because merely having access to publicly available information about these practices is inadequate<sup>[40]</sup>.

One method of enhancing the generalizability of case study-based research is strategically selecting cases<sup>[40]</sup>—guided by the research questions and their theoretical premises. The use of case study methodology is valuable in researching the practices that build QOH, especially in areas that concentrate on emerging techniques in a particular field and aim to develop theories that enhance the understanding of unexplored processes that cannot be adequately replicated in experimental settings.

The innovative case-study approach places a high value on the participant's perspectives by allowing researchers to ask open-ended questions, which serve as a framework for conducting interviews that aim to delve deeper into the participant's experiences and viewpoints<sup>[41]</sup>. Our study adopts an explanatory approach in case study research to examine the various practices and contexts to form an emerging theory on the quality of hiring within organizations, as this helps us analyze the phenomena in the data and create theories based on the data<sup>[39]</sup>. Here, a deliberate choice of the organization was based on the selected organization wanting to

build QOH into their hiring practices and change the pervasive “satisficing” approach adopted by recruitment functions in most organizations.

The study emerged from a five-month-long field study demonstrating a truncated analysis of practices ensuring QOH in this organization. Trends often have “street credibility” as the practitioner community creates them, but these lack scientific validity<sup>[35]</sup>. By examining the changes in the structure and processes of recruitment and selection and validating the changes with their impact on new hire performance and retention, we attempt to build the theoretical validity of QOH. Following the study’s objectives, we predicated the context for this research on a firm where the organization’s leadership and HR function had jointly determined QOH as an important strategic focus area. Furthermore, the firm validated the changes in its recruitment and selection performance and found a significant improvement in both the performance and tenure of new hires.

The organization under study is a financial services company founded in early 2000 and headquartered in India. It competes in a knowledge-intensive industry where talent acquisition and retention are challenging, offering a wide range of services, including investment banking, wealth management, asset management, and insurance. The company has a strong presence in the domestic market and is expanding its operations internationally. The organization focuses on innovation and technology and has implemented several digital initiatives to enhance the customer experience and improve operational efficiency. It strongly emphasizes employee development and has a comprehensive training program for new hires. The company also has a culture of transparency and accountability, with regular communication channels for employees to provide feedback and suggestions. This organization has achieved significant growth and success in a highly competitive industry through its focus on innovation, customer-centric approach, and strong organizational culture. However, new hire attrition and perceived low performance of the new hires were the genesis for the leadership team and HR function to revisit their recruitment and selection practices.

To build the correspondence between theory and data, we looked for changes in recruitment practices to develop emerging theoretical insights<sup>[42]</sup>. Data were collected through in-depth interviews of the employees across different functions and at various levels of the organization, such as business leaders, HR directors, and team leaders associated with the hiring processes (see **Table 1** for respondent details).

**Table 1.** Respondent details.

<b>Respondent and designation</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>	<b>Expertise</b>
<b>R1</b> —Chief HR officer, India	18	Identifying strategic HR interventions, compensation, talent management, total rewards, learning and performance management, and creating reward mechanisms
<b>R2</b> —Learning and development head	12	Talent management, designing employee development strategies, and career development planning
<b>R3</b> —Global lead—talent acquisition	13	Plan and monitor hiring demands, supervise staffing objectives, maintain stakeholder relationships, drive employee referral programs, source hard-to-fill roles, review background check compliance, maintain database and extract reports, create hiring trends and insights for business leaders, and support a transformation project
<b>R4</b> —HR business partner	12	Collaborate with talent acquisition for hiring needs, advise line managers on performance management, identify the team and individual training needs, evaluate and monitor training programs, track and manage employee escalations, and manage the employee life cycle
<b>R5</b> —Sr. business partner (Human Capital)	15	Provide advisory support to business groups, partner with managers for retention and development, analyze human capital data and recommend hiring solutions, plan and conduct engagement activities, resolve complex employee relations issues, improve work relationships and morale, provide performance management guidance, and implement HR processes and policies
<b>R6</b> —Senior lead—talent acquisition	11	Develop recruiting strategies, HR function support for the recruitment team, onboarding and background check, maintaining client relationship, strategic direction understanding and communication, upward interaction with supervisor, peer management interactions, providing guidance for new assignments, and impactful decision-making
<b>R7</b> —Manager—HR business partner	8	Implement HR strategies, drive retention and best practices, manage performance and engagement, advise on employee issues, support annual compensation activities, improve internal processes and systems, drive strategic projects, and communicate policies to employees
<b>R8</b> —Manager—talent acquisition	6	Long-term planning for multiple communication channels, cost-benefit analysis for staffing recommendations, coordination of short-term and real-time workforce management, skilling matrix and profile request monitoring, subject matter expert and training support, researching industry trends for process improvement, presenting headcount plan and attending weekly meetings, and strategic partner collaboration for service delivery and efficiency
<b>R9</b> —Manager—talent acquisition	7	Analyze and forecast hiring needs, develop talent acquisition strategies, manage employer branding, motivate employees as brand ambassadors, source top talent through job boards, execute recruitment and selection processes, review employment applications and background checks, conduct employee satisfaction assessments and workshops, enhance candidate experience procedures, and lead and supervise recruitment team
<b>R10</b> —Manager—HR operations	7	Handle employee inquiries, maintain HR records and compliance, assist with recruitment/onboarding, manage employee relations, and oversee HRIS system
<b>R11</b> —Assistant manager—talent acquisition	5	Direct recruitment efforts, collaborate with leaders and managers for sourcing strategies, coach through recruitment best practices, improve hiring metrics and KPIs, maintain relationships with strategic partners, and negotiate and close offers
<b>R12</b> —Manager—talent acquisition	6	Resource planning, budget planning, resourcing and forecasting, and staffing process management
<b>R13</b> —Assistant manager—talent acquisition	5	Manage assigned recruitment partners, conduct webinars with regional team members, attend exhibitions and conferences to attract talent pool, assist with the execution of go-to-market strategy, implement monthly promotional strategies, address partner inquiries and concerns, provide market feedback for smooth flow of application funnel, and stay up-to-date with industry trends
<b>R14</b> —Team leader—HR delivery operations	4	HR operations support for people-related areas, backend HR services for business operations, design, develop, and implement HR delivery strategy, HR operations processes like recruitment, benefits, exit, payroll, and analyze and solve complex employee engagement problems,
<b>R15</b> —Team leader—talent acquisition	4	Experience in a fast-paced talent acquisition environment, headhunting and direct recruitment expertise, C-level relationship management experience, and maintaining and utilizing multiple applicant tracking systems
<b>R16</b> —Team leader—talent acquisition	4	Build relationships with stakeholders, manage full cycle recruiting process, provide consulting expertise, ensure compliance with laws and standards, and solve process issues independently
<b>R17</b> —Sr. analyst—talent acquisition	3	Source talent and provide professional selection for internal stakeholders; apply methodologies for effective sourcing and selection, develop talent pools with high level of candidate care, manage applicant tracking system and track performance metrics, conduct LinkedIn searches and create market maps, promote roles on social media and pipeline candidates, and coordinate and attend recruitment events for the organization
<b>R18</b> —Sr. analyst—talent acquisition	3	Source candidates, manage recruitment cycle, interview candidates, collaborate with hiring managers, build relationships with recruitment channels, develop sourcing strategies, and ensure compliance
<b>R19</b> —Analyst—talent acquisition	2	Interact with peers to understand recruitment needs, some client/management interaction, individual contributor for assigned job positions, and flexible require rotational shifts
<b>R20</b> —Analyst—talent acquisition	2	Sourcing candidates, networking via various recruitment channels, resume review, headhunting, interview scheduling, job board navigation, candidate greeting

A total of 20 semi-structured discussions and interviews, each spanning 30–45 min with a mean of 33 min, were conducted. The participants were asked questions on recruitment practices, enabling systems and support for finding high-quality talent, the changes in recruitment practices at the individual, process, and organizational level to develop high performance and retention of new talent, and the perceived value and sustainability of the emerging recruitment and selection practices. Each interview was transcribed, and transcripts with a total of 54,385 words were analyzed. Data were collected until theoretical saturation was reached regarding informational redundancy, i.e., no additional categories relevant to the research questions were emerging<sup>[43]</sup>.

Data analysis progressed through multiple stages. At first, data reduction and data display identified parts of the interviews mentioning QOH practices and the changes in conventional recruitment processes. In the second stage, meaningful 21 first-order categories evolved into two parts—conventional talent acquisition and QOH-oriented talent acquisition. In the next stage, we made comparisons and drew contrasts between QOH practices in these conventional recruitment contexts and the organizations’ processes and practices, which enabled us to discover six emergent second-order categories. This helped us characterize the overall incidence patterns of the first-order categories. In the final stage, we identified representative quotes and examples (see **Table 2**) supporting the four categories of the aggregated dimensions (see **Figure 1**).

**Table 2.** Respondent quotes.

Sample quotes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
It is not just within a small organization that early attrition happens. Within months, people join and leave even big organizations. Most organizations and HR argue any attrition is due to money, but early attrition is mostly due to the misfit between the employee’s expectation from the organization and vice versa. <b>(R11)</b>	Recruitment metrics	Efficiency focus orientation of a service function
In my earlier organization, I was focused only on the cost of hiring. My entire focus was on getting the candidate at the lowest cost. I never bothered about whether he/she performed on the job or not. I always felt the business manager who made the hire would ensure the performance. <b>(R20)</b>	Recruitment metrics	
The situation before the pandemic was a little different. Geographical constraints limited applicants, and interviews were mostly conducted in person within our office premises, allowing us to observe them more closely and choose the right candidate. Everything is virtual, so the candidates are open to multiple organizations. With remote working becoming the norm, spatial proximity to work location is now a thing of the past. Therefore, global opportunities are opening up without needing to relocate. The same applicants now get five to ten offers, not necessarily from jobs in the same city or even country. <b>(R13)</b>	Recruitment process	
Recruiters focus on getting in warm bodies but not necessarily the highest-performing candidates. Therefore, “operation successful, patient dead!” <b>(R7)</b>	Recruitment process	Hiring manager’s short-term and ‘just-in-time’ focus
We consider the candidate’s past performance, technical skills and abilities, and educational qualifications to predict hiring quality. <b>(R5)</b>	Recruitment process	
Few organizations do psychometric, competency, and technical knowledge tests to gauge hire quality. <b>(R8)</b>	Recruitment process	
In many cases, I have seen individuals lacking the technical/behavioral knowledge relevant to the role but were successful because of a willingness to quickly understand, upskill and deliver according to the changing scenario. <b>(R2)</b>	Hiring accountability	
Normally, the hiring manager would just send us a mandate with keywords and never bother to validate the job description. The recruiters were responsible for making sense of and building a comprehensive job description from their assessments of what the role may entail. This mismatch would often result in the rejection of profiles presented by a recruiter, with no explanations for the cause. It was only the recruiters’ responsibility to hire on time and with the right fit. <b>(R12)</b>	Hiring accountability	QOH focus orientation of the business function
Recruitment is like planting a seed and hoping to reap the benefits from the tree. However, there are inherent challenges in the accountability of the recruitment function. As a recruiter, do you hire someone to deliver today or become the timber for tomorrow? In the hiring game, we have no control over what happens in the outer environment. The new hires can only grow from seed to timber if they have great learning agility and strong value congruence with the organization. <b>(R3)</b>	Hiring accountability	
A recruiter’s real test is whether he/she is adding strategic value to the organization by hiring the “right timber”, the best fit for the role, not just for now but also for the future. These hires support the organization today by delivering high-performance levels in the present and building the scaffolding, growing with the changing organization as the responsibilities evolve. <b>(R3)</b>	The changed role of recruiter	

Table 2. (Continued).

Sample quotes	Second-order themes	Aggregate dimensions
Unlike my earlier recruiter experience, most of my time was spent sourcing, scheduling, and interviewing applicants. Now 70–80% of my time is spent aligning all stakeholders and getting concurrence on the deliverables of the role. Once this is done, the rest of the process happens seamlessly. It's like spending 80% of your time sharpening your saw. (R13)	The changed role of recruiter	
I need to give directions to the recruiter and the right job description aligning all stakeholders' current and future needs. Direct the recruiters' efforts like an arrow to the bull's eye. Without this direction, the recruiter runs around like a headless chicken, and all the effort is in vain. A bad hire impacts my business and my performance, so it's in my interest to get it (new hire) right the first time around. (R1)	Managerial ownership	
What gets measured gets achieved! If we want quality of hire, we must tell recruiters how we would measure it! We have to figure out how to do this collectively, keep validating our assumption on what is working and what is not. (R6)	Managerial ownership	
I can bring in the best talent into the organization. However, I cannot be held accountable if the manager mistreats or does not engage the employee and then they quit. I am accountable only for things that are in my circle of influence and control. (R16)	Managerial ownership	Shift in focus from short-term to long-term efficiency
Be it merger and acquisitions, or technology shift in the market, performing diverse roles or doing business during the COVID-19 pandemic, the biggest quality that helps a person survive and grow in such volatile environments is the speed to learn, unlearn and relearn. (R14)	Managerial ownership	
For new hires who are comfortable with the organization, the colleagues, the policies, and the processes, this feels like a warm fuzzy blanket! It nurtures and nourishes, and people thrive. People stay where they thrive. (R1)	Managerial ownership	
In an apple-to-apple comparison between job choices, candidates prefer to join organizations with higher perceived value congruence. (R7)	Recruitment process	

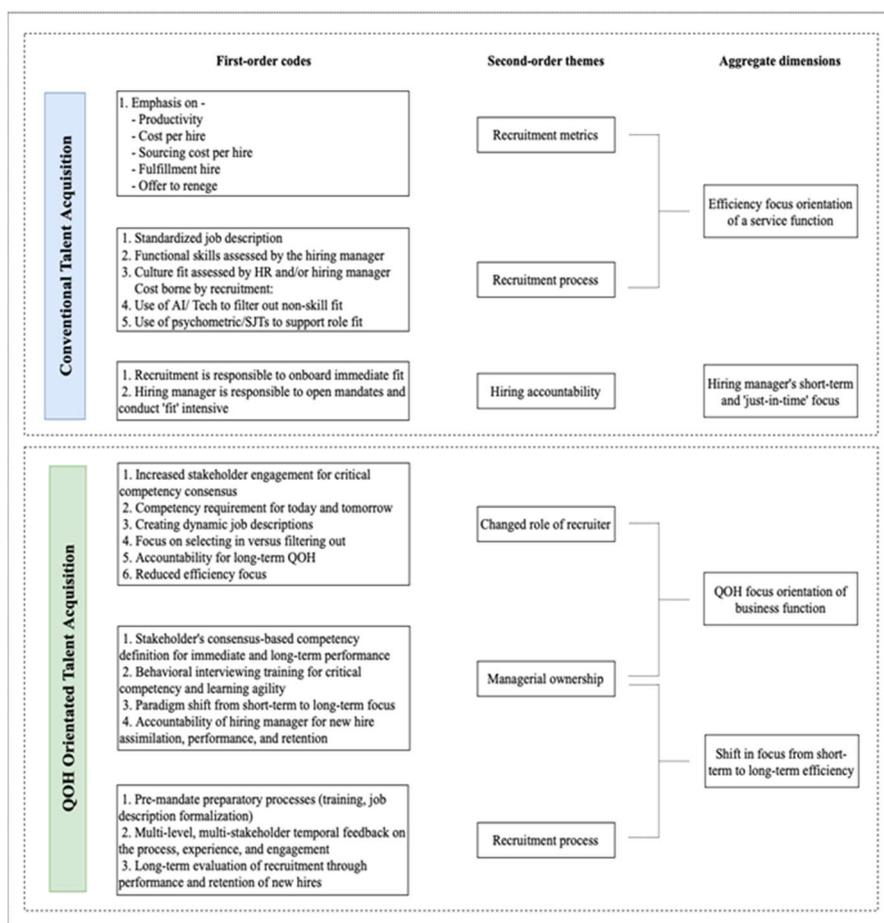


Figure 1. Data structure.

Stage 2 of our study involved sharing our findings with six other HR and recruitment heads, purposefully selected, as they are responsible for high recruitment volume in a talent-competitive environment. This process

helped us validate normative recruitment practices, differentiate the deemed acceptable existing practices, and allow us to contrast the changes in systems and practices in our target organization that enable QOH.

## 6. Findings

In most organizations, an absence of lead measures that can predict tenure and the high performance of new hires results in the recruitment function continuing to focus on efficiency measures. Moreover, the correlation between employee capability and performance is influenced by organizational and managerial factors beyond the control of recruiters. The raging war for talent ensures that managers and recruiters, in most cases, focus on “satisficing” with the first available candidate fit for the available role. The findings of this research paper suggest that determining QOH is a complex and challenging task for most organizations because the conventional lag measures of performance and tenure of new hires are difficult to assess and attribute to robust selection practices. The process typically emphasizes productivity, cost per hire, sourcing cost per hire, fulfillment hire, and offer to renege. While organizations prefer to use personality tests and behavioral tests in the selection process to assess role fit, these may indicate the ability to perform in the current role but do not necessarily predict QOH. The facilities of standardized and static job descriptions finalized by the HR team have been a common practice<sup>[5]</sup>, with functional skills assessed by the hiring manager and culture fit<sup>[36]</sup> assessed by HR and/or the hiring manager. In cases where AI/technology has been employed, we find that these support efficiency and productivity gains (filtering out candidates who do not match the required skill set), enhance cost-effective service, and reduce operational costs<sup>[28]</sup>. The use of psychometric and situational judgment tests supports role fit. The recruitment process has therefore built processes with hiring managers responsible for opening hiring mandates and supporting fit assessments, while the recruitment teams emphasize onboarding immediate fit. Interpretive schemes have characterized static job descriptions as the conventional approach that is uniformly relevant irrespective of the changing context. Recruitment has been perceived as a support function governed by metrics of resource optimization. The process’s norms involve the recruitment team’s focus on cost, fulfillment time, and immediate skill fit.

Finally, we propose a recursive process model for QOH implementation (see **Figure 2**), adapted from van Mierlo et al.<sup>[12]</sup>, which incorporates elements of conventional hiring practices and structures as well as QOH enabling practices. The recursive process aims to shift the accountability for QOH from the talent acquisition team to the business, resulting in improved hiring outcomes.

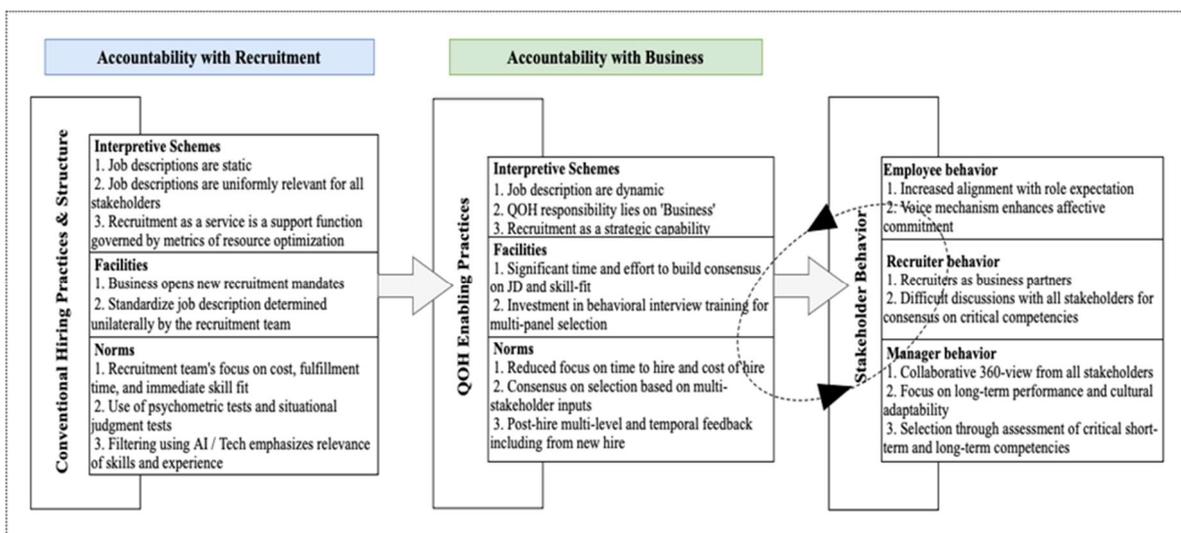


Figure 2. The recursive process of QOH implementation.

The findings demonstrate that QOH may be enabled through a paradigm shift in perspective and process, with increased emphasis on business and hiring manager ownership and transferred ownership of QOH from recruiters to business leaders, significant changes in the recruitment processes and practices, and a morphed recruiter role. The interpretive schemes under this approach envision dynamic job descriptions, with QOH responsibility resting with the business rather than recruitment. This is a significant paradigm shift, with recruitment perceived as a strategic capability, and the facilities provided include significant time and effort to build consensus on job descriptions and skill fit, as well as investment in behavioral interview training for multi-panel selection. The proposed approach includes increased stakeholder engagement to establish critical competency consensus and competency requirements for present and future needs. The critical functional and behavioral skills are collaboratively agreed upon by all stakeholders engaging with the job role holder. A view of future skills is also considered while finalizing the requirements. Thus, dynamic job descriptions are advocated, focusing on selecting candidates who fit the role rather than filtering them out. The shift involves transitioning from a short-term to a long-term focus and holding hiring managers accountable for new hire assimilation, performance, and retention. Accountability for long-term performance, internal talent growth through high learning agility, and reduced efficiency in recruitment emerged as recommended practices.

The process's norms prioritize consensus-based selection using multi-stakeholder inputs and post-hire multi-level and temporal feedback, including input from new hires. There is now a reduced focus on time to hire and cost of hire, and the implementation included significant investments in behavioral interview training for hiring managers. The recruiter's emphasis changes from the operational activities of applicant sourcing, screening, and interviewing to business collaboration, advisory, and negotiation among stakeholders. This becomes important as the nature of the job role is dynamically changing, and the diverse stakeholders' expectations are morphing as they engage with the role holder. These pre-mandate preparatory processes, such as training, job description formalization, and multi-level, multi-stakeholder temporal feedback, form a solid basis for enabling QOH. With this change in interpretive schemes, norms, and practices, the recruiter's efforts are more likely to result in better fit, better performance, and longer retention. The long-term evaluation of recruitment is suggested through the performance and retention of new hires. The case findings suggest that the new hire's performance was validated, but more to check the process's robustness and not as a reflection or accountability of the recruiter. However, the organization emphasized the rigor of the pre-mandate processes (job description finalization processes, hiring manager training, and continuous feedback from all levels, i.e., hiring managers, relevant stakeholders, and selected employees) for evaluating recruiter performance.

This paper proposes a model to implement a shift in determining the quality of hire, emphasizing the responsibility of business leaders and promoting stakeholder engagement, dynamic job descriptions, and a focus on long-term outcomes. By implementing these practices, organizations can strive for higher-quality hires who deliver immediate performance and possess the potential for growth and adaptation in a rapidly changing environment.

## **7. Discussion**

The rapid technological change and acute talent shortages have compounded the challenge for talent acquisition functions, where reduced skills' shelf-life leads to many jobs and skills becoming redundant in a few years<sup>[2,29]</sup>. Hence, organizations focusing on building QOH through robust practices have higher chances of competitive business advantage<sup>[44]</sup>.

The conventional and widely pervasive hiring practices and structures, characterized by interpretive schemes involving static job descriptions that are uniformly relevant for all stakeholders<sup>[5]</sup>, appear as myopic

and non-value-adding processes. Recruitment is perceived as a support function governed by metrics of resource optimization where, while the business is opening new recruitment mandates, it is the recruitment team unilaterally determining standardized job descriptions. Norms guiding the process focus on cost, fulfillment time, and immediate skill fit, with the use of psychometric tests and situational judgment tests to filter candidates based on skills and experience relevance.

In contrast, the QOH enabling practices emphasize a shift towards increased responsibility for QOH lying with the business. Here, recruitment is perceived as a strategic capability, wherein business and recruitment partnerships involve spending significant time<sup>[6]</sup> and effort to build consensus on job descriptions and skill fit and to invest in behavioral interview training for selecting panels. Norms guiding this approach prioritize reduced focus on time to hire and cost of hire, consensus-based selection using multi-stakeholder inputs, and post-hire multi-level and temporal feedback, including input from new hires.

The recursive process between QOH enabling practices and stakeholder behavior is crucial to achieving successful QOH implementation. The model emphasizes the desired employee behavior, which includes increased alignment with role expectations and the implementation of voice mechanisms to enhance affective commitment. An important finding of this paper is to suggest that new hire behavior can be positively impacted by increased alignment with role expectations and the implementation of voice mechanisms to enhance affective commitment. Recruiters are encouraged to act as business partners and engage in difficult discussions with all stakeholders to establish consensus on critical competencies. Manager behavior involves adopting a collaborative 360-degree view of all stakeholders, focusing on long-term performance and cultural adaptability, and selecting candidates based on assessing critical short-term and long-term competencies.

By adopting and integrating the structuration perspective into the proposed QOH implementation model, organizations can strive for higher-quality new hires who deliver immediate performance and possess the potential for growth and adaptation in a rapidly changing environment. This recursive process ensures continuous improvement and alignment between facilities and norms of QOH enabling practices and the desired employee, recruiter, and manager behaviors. By implementing the recommended QOH-enabling practices and focusing on stakeholder behavior, organizations can improve their hiring outcomes and align with the dynamic nature of HRM implementation. This model provides a framework for organizations to adopt a more strategic and collaborative approach to recruitment, resulting in long-term performance, internal talent growth, and the desired QOH. We also contribute to structuration theory research by examining the broader organizational actors' roles beyond the recruitment and HR manager. By highlighting the continuous interaction between actors and the reproduction of outcomes, specifically QOH, we reinforce the principle of structuration theory as a recursive process that extends beyond the recruitment and HRM function domains. For QOH to be institutionalized within the organization, the intended-actual-perceived recruitment outcomes are collaboratively co-created by a larger ecosystem of agents, emphasizing the structural forces and actions and the dynamic process of QOH implementation.

Successful HRM plays a vital role in fostering the development of both successful organizations and high-performing employees, promoting mutually beneficial improvement. Further, by examining mechanisms that enable QOH in new hires, we suggest theoretical and practical ways of leveraging new hires for competitive advantage. Changing HRM practices are likely to be valued by organizations if they contribute to sustainability-oriented performance. By theorizing on the recursive nature of enabling QOH in organizations, we suggest that recruitment processes must constantly revisit and challenge the existing paradigms and engage new actors outside of the HRM function in the recruitment process to deliver value-adding and sustainability-oriented performance. While our paper brings to the forefront the elusive concept of QOH, highlighting the

importance of evaluating existing HRM policies and practices in a turbulent and high-change environment, our study is not without limitations. The firm examined had strong QOH practices, and it would be helpful for researchers to examine the hiring practices of firms in other industries without robust QOH policies. Further, multiple case studies can be explored that could validate our structuration theoretical model. Emerging technology increases the feasibility of using AI for determining the quality of hire, but this is likely to be adopted by large and technology-enabled organizations and HRM. Future researchers may examine the application of large-scale data and AI tools for enabling QOH within firms.

## 8. Conclusion

QOH has remained an ephemeral concept desired by organizational leadership but considered vague and elusive by the recruitment functions. There is a pressing need to shift recruitment focus from traditional recruitment metrics to delivering QOH, with the increased challenges of talent acquisition and retention and the dynamic nature of evolving jobs. Our study crystallizes a loose concept by articulating clear outcome measures of performance and tenure that can be used to deliver a QOH. Through the structuration lens, we contribute to the theory of value-adding practices and processes that provide a competitive advantage in a dynamic world. Further, through clearly defined and changed interpretive schemes, norms, and facilities, we provide a guided approach for practitioners seeking to inculcate QOH within their organizations.

## Author contributions

Conceptualization, DD; methodology, DD; software, DD and CV validation, DD and CV; formal analysis, CV; investigation, DD and CV; resources, DD and CV; data curation, DD and CV; writing—original draft preparation, DD; writing—review and editing, DD and CV; visualization, CV; supervision, DD; project administration, DD. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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